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Goucher College Poll results: Gov. Moore popular, meeting expectations; Reducing crime, improving schools among most important issues residents want Moore to address; Marylanders are divided on direction of the state and economic conditions

BALTIMORE (May 2, 2023)—The Goucher College Poll was conducted from April 18 to 23, 2023. It surveyed 800 Maryland residents (MOE=+/-3.5%). Residents were asked their opinions on Gov. Wes Moore, President Joe Biden, and the Maryland General Assembly; the direction and the economic conditions of the state; current and expected cannabis use; and transportation preferences.

The poll was funded and co-sponsored by the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics at Goucher College and *The Baltimore Banner*. See the results by demographics.

Governor Wes Moore

Gov. Wes Moore earns a solid job approval rating nearly five months into his first term. **Fifty-three percent** of Marylanders approve of the job he is doing as governor, **26 percent disapprove**, and **20 percent** say they don't know.

Fifty-seven percent of Marylanders indicate that Moore is doing the job as governor "about as well" as they expected. **Seventeen percent** think he is doing better than expected while **14 percent** think he is doing worse.

Marylanders were also asked about a set of broad policy goals. The following represents the percent who say it's "extremely" or "very" important that Gov. Wes Moore make progress toward that goal during his first term:

Reducing crime: **83 percent**
   Among Democrats: 81 percent
   Among Republicans: 89 percent
   Among Independents: 82 percent

Improving public schools: **83 percent**
   Among Democrats: 88 percent
   Among Republicans: 74 percent
   Among Independents: 81 percent

Improving the economy and jobs: **79 percent**
   Among Democrats: 79 percent
   Among Republicans: 81 percent
   Among Independents: 79 percent

Eliminating childhood poverty: **77 percent**
   Among Democrats: 87 percent
   Among Republicans: 61 percent
   Among Independents: 76 percent

Addressing racial equity issues: **60 percent**
   Among Democrats: 81 percent
   Among Republicans: 29 percent
   Among Independents: 48 percent

Improving public transportation: **48 percent**
   Among Democrats: 63 percent
   Among Republicans: 27 percent
   Among Independents: 42 percent

Expanding renewable energy like offshore wind: **41 percent**
   Among Democrats: 59 percent
   Among Republicans: 15 percent
   Among Independents: 33 percent

Residents were also asked to broadly label Gov. Moore's politics**: 4 percent** say Moore is "very conservative" or "conservative," **25 percent** say he is "moderate," **38 percent** say he is "progressive," and **20 percent** say he is "very progressive." In October 2022, the Goucher College Poll found that 22 percent of Maryland likely voters viewed Moore as a "moderate" and 36 percent viewed him as a "progressive."

"Wes Moore is on solid footing with the public after his first legislative session as governor of Maryland," said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics at Goucher College. "The numbers reflect a 'what you voted for is what you got' attitude: Like they did before the election, the public still views Moore as holding a mix of progressive and moderate political positions, and they broadly believe that he is doing the job as governor 'about as well' as they expected."

Legalized Recreational Cannabis

Voters supported a ballot referendum to legalize recreational cannabis for individuals aged 21 and older by a wide margin this past November. Previous polls on the issues have consistently found widespread support for legalization.

Residents were asked about their current and expected cannabis consumption habits.

Seventy-six percent of Marylanders say during a "typical" month they "never" use cannabis for recreational or medicinal purposes. **Twenty-three percent** indicate they use cannabis for recreational or medicinal purposes at least once a month.

Poll results suggest that the legalization of recreational cannabis will potentially have a modest effect on cannabis use: **16 percent** say that they will be more likely to use cannabis for recreational purposes now that it is legal, but **76 percent** say that the change in the law makes no difference to them.

Statewide Perceptions: Direction, Economy, Transportation, and the Maryland General Assembly

Attitudes toward the direction of the state and the state economy are effectively unchanged since September 2022.

Forty-seven percent of residents say Maryland is heading in the right direction, and **42 percent** say Maryland is off on the wrong track. In September 2022, 45 percent of residents said that Maryland was heading in the right direction, and 39 percent said Maryland was off on the wrong track.

Like findings from the September 2022 poll, residents remain divided in their perceptions of the Maryland economy: **47 percent** held a mostly positive view of the current economic situation in Maryland; **46 percent** hold a mostly negative view.

When asked to give their preference on where the government should focus its spending regarding transportation, **51 percent** of residents indicate the state government should focus more on improving roads and highways and **29 percent** say the focus should be on improving public transportation. For comparison, in February 2017, **59 percent** of residents wanted the state government to focus more on improving roads and highways and 35 percent thought the focus should be on improving public transportation.

Almost half of Maryland residents (**48 percent**) approve of the job the Maryland General Assembly is doing, **35 percent** disapprove, and **16 percent** say they don't know.

Job Approval Rating: President Joe Biden

Forty-six percent of Marylanders approve of the job President Biden is doing as president, **49 percent disapprove**, and **4 percent** say they don't know. Marylanders held similar attitudes toward Biden in September 2022: 48 percent approved of the job he's doing as president and 48 percent disapproved.

About the Goucher College Poll

The Goucher College Poll is conducted under the auspices of the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics at Goucher College. The center is directed by Dr. Mileah Kromer, associate professor of political science.

The Goucher College Poll is funded by the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics endowment and partnerships with trusted media organizations. The mission of the Goucher College Poll is to improve public discourse in Maryland by providing neutral, unbiased, and independent information on resident perceptions and opinions. The data collected by the poll are used to support faculty and student research.

The Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics is a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations and the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative.

For more information, or to view archived polls, please visit www.goucher.edu/poll.

Survey Methodology

The poll is conducted using random digit dialing (RDD) random sample using landline and cellular telephone numbers. Braun Research collected the data and Dynata supplied the sample of telephone numbers. The survey was conducted **April 18 to April 23, 2023**. During this time, interviews were conducted from 1 to 9 p.m. Interviewers attempted to reach respondents with working phone numbers a maximum of five times. Only Maryland statewide residents aged 18 years or older were eligible to participate. Interviews were not conducted with adults who were reached at business or work numbers.

Eighty-two percent of the interviews were completed on a cell phone and **18 percent** were conducted on a landline. **Ten percent** of the cell phone interviews were conducted via text-to-web. Interviews for this survey were completed with **800 adults**. For a sample size of 1,008, there is a 95 percent probability the survey results have a +/-3.5 percentage point sampling error from the actual population distribution for any given survey question. Margins of error are higher for subsamples. In addition to sampling error, all surveys are subject to sources of non-sampling error, including question wording effects, question order effects, and non-response bias. Margin of error is not adjusted for design effects. Data is weighted by gender, age, race, region, and educational attainment to represent adult population targets established by the most recent five-year average American Community Survey (ACS) estimates and U.S. Census.

Survey Question Design

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

BRACKETED ITEMS [ ]: Items and statements in brackets are rotated to ensure respondents do not receive a set order of response options, 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 respondents if their responses are more intense than initially provided.

Example: Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of President Joe Biden?
PROBE: Would you say very favorable/unfavorable?

OPEN-ENDED: No response options are provided for an open-ended question, 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 the respondent; 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 interviewer. 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

The sample is weighted by the following demographic characteristics:

		Maryland population parameter	Weighed sample estimate (<u>adults</u>) n=800 MOE=+/-3.5%
Gender	Male	48	48
	Female	52	52
Age	18-24	11	11
	25-34	17	17
	35-44	17	17
	45-54	17	17
	55-64	17	17
	65+	20	22
Race	White	59	61
	Black	31	31
	All other	10	8
Education	High school graduate/GED or less	35	32
	Some college or associate degree	27	26
	4-year college degree	21	23
	Advanced/post-grad degree	17	20
County/Region	Montgomery County	17	17
	Prince George's County	16	16
	Baltimore County	14	14
	Baltimore City	10	10
	Anne Arundel County	10	10
	Central Region	12	12
	Western Region	6	6
	Eastern Shore Region	9	11
	Southern Region	6	4

*Counties included in region:
- <u>Central</u>: Carroll, Harford, and Howard
- <u>Western</u>: Allegany, Garrett, Frederick, and Washington
- <u>Eastern Shore</u>: Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester
- <u>Southern</u>: Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's

Other sample demographics

The sample is <u>not</u> weighted by the following demographic characteristics:

		Weighed sample estimate (<u>adults</u>) n=800 MOE=+/-3.5%
Party*	Democrat	50
	Republican	28
	Unaffiliated/Independent	18
	Other	4
Ideology	Conservative	27
	Moderate	38
	Progressive	28
	Don't know/Refused (v)	7
Income	Under $40,000	20
	$40,00 to under $75,000	22
	$75,000 to under $125,000	27
	$125,000 or more	31

*Of the 800 Maryland adults surveyed, 768 (MOE=+/-3.6%) indicated they were registered to vote.

The following questions were asked to the full sample of 800 Maryland adults. Results are in percent and may not add up exactly to 100 due to weighting and rounding. Questions appear in the order in which they were administered to the respondent.

Q: TRACK	Do you think things in Maryland are [heading in the right direction or are off on the wrong track]?	Percent
	Wrong track	42
	Right direction	47
	Don't know (v)	10
	Refused (v)	1

Q: MOOREJOB	Do you [disapprove or approve] of the way Wes Moore is handling his job as governor?	Percent
	Strongly disapprove	13
	Disapprove	13
	Approve	36
	Strongly approve	17
	Don't know (v)	20
	Refused (v)	2

Q: MDGAJOB	Now, thinking about the Maryland state legislature—the legislature located in Annapolis—do you [approve or disapprove] of the way the Maryland General Assembly is handling its job?	Percent
	Strongly disapprove	17
	Disapprove	18
	Approve	38
	Strongly approve	10
	Don't know (v)	16
	Refused (v)	1

Q: MDECON	Do you have a [mostly negative or mostly positive] view of the current economic situation in Maryland?	Percent
	Mostly negative	46
	Mostly positive	47
	Don't know (v)	6
	Refused (v)	1

Q: BIDENJOB	Do you [approve or disapprove] of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as president?	Percent
	Strongly disapprove	35
	Disapprove	14
	Approve	30
	Strongly approve	16
	Don't know (v)	4
	Refused (v)	1

Q: POT1	Changing topics, in a typical month, how often—if at all—do you currently use cannabis for recreational or medicinal purposes:	Percent
	Never	76
	Once a month	4
	A couple times a month	5
	Once or twice a week	3
	A couple times a week	3
	Almost every day or every day	7
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: POT2	In the coming months the recreational use of cannabis will be legal for adults aged 21 and older in Maryland—this includes smoking and other forms of consumption, like edibles. Will you be more likely to use marijuana for recreational purposes now that it's legal, or does the change in the law make no difference to you?	Percent
	Makes no difference	76
	More likely	16
	Less likely/Some other opinion (v)	5
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Question held for future release

Q: TRANS_SPEND	Next, I'm going to read you two statements about where the state government should focus their spending in regard to transportation in the state…please tell me which one comes closest to your opinion:	Percent
	The state government should focus more on improving roads and highways.	51
	The state government should focus more on improving public transportation	29
	Spend on both equally (v)	19
	Some other opinion (v)	1
	Don't know (v)	1

Q: EXPECT	I want to ask you a few more questions about Governor Wes Moore. Thinking broadly, is Wes Moore doing a [better or worse] job as governor of Maryland than you thought he would, or is he doing the job about as well as you expected?	Percent
	A lot worse	7
	A little worse	7
	A little better	12
	A lot better	5
	As expected	57
	Don't know/Not sure (v)	12
	Refused (v)	1

Q: MOORE_ISSUE	Next, I'm going to read you some different goals. For each one, please tell me if you feel it is [extremely, very, somewhat, or not] important to you that Gov. Wes Moore makes progress toward that goal during his first term:

Q: CRIME	Reducing crime	Percent
	Not important	2
	Somewhat important	13
	Very important	33
	Extremely important	50
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: POVERTY	Eliminating childhood poverty	Percent
	Not important	5
	Somewhat important	15
	Very important	36
	Extremely important	41
	Don't know (v)	2
	Refused (v)	1

Q: PUBTRANS	Improving public transportation	Percent
	Not important	16
	Somewhat important	34
	Very important	30
	Extremely important	18
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: ECONOMY	Improving the economy and jobs	Percent
	Not important	2
	Somewhat important	17
	Very important	38
	Extremely important	41
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: SCHOOLS	Improving public schools	Percent
	Not important	3
	Somewhat important	13
	Very important	36
	Extremely important	46
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: ENERGY	Expanding renewable energy like off-shore wind	Percent
	Not important	26
	Somewhat important	29
	Very important	25
	Extremely important	17
	Don't know (v)	2
	Refused (v)	1

Q: EQUITY	Addressing racial equity issues	Percent
	Not important	18
	Somewhat important	20
	Very important	29
	Extremely important	31
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: MOORE_IDEO	From everything you've seen or read thus far, which label best describes Governor Wes Moore's politics, is he: [very progressive, progressive, moderate, conservative, or very conservative]?	Percent
	Very conservative	1
	Conservative	3
	Moderate	25
	Progressive	38
	Very progressive	20
	Some other opinion (v)	3
	Don't know (v)	10
	Refused (v)	0

Questions held for future release