



**RESULTS EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, MARCH 12, AT NOON EST**

**Press Contact Information**

Dr. Mileah Kromer  
Director, Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center  
[mileah.kromer@goucher.edu](mailto:mileah.kromer@goucher.edu)  
Cell: 724-840-0990

Kristen Pinheiro  
Director, Media Relations  
[kristen.pinheiro@goucher.edu](mailto:kristen.pinheiro@goucher.edu)  
Office: 410-337-6316

**Goucher Releases Poll Results on Sequester; Trust in Federal Government; and Approval Ratings of Obama, Cardin, and Mikulski**

**March 12, 2013**

**Baltimore** – The Goucher Poll asked citizens for their perspectives regarding the job approval and favorability ratings of President Barack Obama, senators Ben Cardin and Barbara Mikulski, and the U.S. Congress. Citizens also were asked their opinions about the sequester and their trust in the federal government.

**Favorability and Job Approval Ratings**

Fifty-six percent of Marylanders have a favorable view of President Barack Obama, a small decline from his 60 percent approval rating measured by the Goucher Poll five months ago. Thirty-eight percent hold an unfavorable view of the president. When asked to rate how well he is handling his job as president, 38 percent disapprove, and 57 percent approve.

Senators Ben Cardin and Barbara Mikulski fared much better individually than the legislative body in which they serve. Fifty-one percent of residents view Senator Mikulski favorably, while 23 percent view her unfavorably, and 26 percent indicated they “don’t know” how to rate the senator. Forty-one percent of residents view Senator Ben Cardin favorably, while 22 percent view him unfavorably, and 36 percent indicated they “don’t know” how to rate the senator.

Marylanders are displeased with the U.S. Congress: 84 percent disapprove, and only 10 approve of the way Congress is handling its job.

Residents are more divided when asked how much they trust the federal government: 51 percent say they can trust the federal government “very little” or “none of the time,” and 47 percent think

they can trust the federal government “some” or “all of the time” to do what is in the public’s interest.

## **Sequester**

Citizens also were asked their opinions toward the sequester—budget cuts to federal spending that began on March 1, 2013. A sizable majority of Maryland citizens, 67 percent, indicated they were familiar with the sequester.

Residents indicating they were familiar with the sequester were then asked who they held responsible for the government not being able to reach an agreement before the sequester:

37 percent hold the Republicans in Congress responsible

20 percent hold President Obama responsible

22 percent hold all of Congress and President Obama equally responsible

14 percent hold all of Congress, but not President Obama, responsible

4 percent hold the Democrats in Congress responsible

Residents indicating they were familiar with the sequester were also asked about the potential economic impacts, if any, of the sequester:

47 percent believe the sequester will have a negative impact on their personal financial situation

75 percent believe the sequester will have a negative impact on the Maryland economy

68 percent believe the sequester will have a negative impact on the U.S. economy

“Marylanders are paying attention to and are concerned about the sequester,” said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center. “With such a large proportion of the Maryland economy tied directly to federal government expenditures and funding—whether it be through defense spending, biotech research, or simply employment in a government agency—it is no wonder three-quarters of Marylanders believe the sequester will have a negative impact on the state’s economy.”

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](mailto:mileah.kromer@goucher.edu) or 724-840-0990.



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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 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
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	.48	.50
Female	.52	.50
<b>Age</b>		
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
<b>Race</b>		
White	.63	.63
Black	.29	.23
Other	.08	.14
<b>Region</b>		
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?

<b>Party Identification</b>	
Republican	.31
Democrat	.53
Independent	.10
Other	.06

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

<b>Gun Ownership</b>	
Yes	.33
No	.67

## Survey Results<sup>1</sup>

### Approval Ratings

#### Q: OBAMAFAV

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

PROBE

	Percent
Very Unfavorable (p)	24.0
Unfavorable	13.9
Favorable	26.5
Very Favorable (p)	29.3
Don't Know (v)	5.6
Refused (v)	0.7
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

#### Q: OBAMAJOB

Do you [approve or disapprove] of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Disapprove (p)	23.3
Disapprove	14.4
Approve	34.6
Strongly Approve (p)	22.8
Don't Know (v)	4.6
Refused (v)	0.4
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

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

**Q: CARDFAV**

Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of Senator Ben Cardin?

**PROBE**

	<b>Percent</b>
Very Unfavorable (p)	8.4
Unfavorable	13.9
Favorable	30.8
Very Favorable (p)	10.0
Don't Know (v)	36.1
Refused (v)	0.8
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

**Q: MIKFAV**

Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of Senator Barbara Mikulski?

**PROBE**

	<b>Percent</b>
Very Unfavorable (p)	9.4
Unfavorable	13.4
Favorable	30.6
Very Favorable (p)	20.4
Don't Know (v)	26.0
Refused (v)	0.3
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

**Q: CONG**

Do you [approve or disapprove] of the way Congress is handling its job?

**PROBE**

	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Disapprove (p)	57.3
Disapprove	26.6
Approve	9.1
Strongly Approve (p)	0.9
Don't Know (v)	5.5
Refused (v)	0.6
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

**Q: FEDINT**

What about the federal government—the government in Washington, DC? How much of the time—[none, very little, some, or all of the time]—do you think you can trust the federal government to do what is in the public's interest?

	<b>Percent</b>
None of the time	21.1
Very little of the time	30.3
Some of the time	44.6
All of the time	2.0
Don't Know (v)	1.5
Refused (v)	0.6
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

## Sequester

### Q: SEQKNOW

Changing topics, are you at all familiar with the sequester?

	Percent
Yes	66.5
No	30.7
Don't Know (v)	2.8
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

### SKIP LOGIC

If "Yes" respondent then was asked SEQRES to SEQECON3

If "No" or "Don't Know" respondent then was taken to demographics.

### Q: SEQRES

Who do you hold responsible for not reaching an agreement before the sequester—  
[President Obama, the Democrats in Congress, or the Republicans in Congress]?

	Percent
President Obama	20.3
Republicans in Congress	36.5
Democrats in Congress	4.2
All equally responsible (v)	22.0
All of Congress, but not Obama (v)	13.6
Don't Know (v)	2.7
Refused (v)	0.7
Total=526, +/-4.27	100.0

**Q: SEQECON**

Next, I'm going to ask you about the effects, if any, of the sequester. For each of the following, please tell me whether you think the sequester will have [a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect] on it ...

**SEQECON1 to SEQECON3 Randomized/Rotated****Q: SEQECON1**

Do you think the sequester will have [a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect] on your personal economic situation?

**Q: SEQECON2**

Do you think the sequester will have [a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect] on the Maryland economy?

**Q: SEQECON3**

Do you think the sequester will have [a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect] on the U.S. economy?

	Personal Financial Situation	Maryland Economy	United States Economy
Negative Effect	46.6	75.2	68.3
No Effect	44.6	15.9	18.8
Positive Effect	3.5	5.8	10.2
Don't Know/Refused (v)	5.3	3.1	2.7
Total=526, +/-4.27	100.0	100.0	100.0