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Center for the Study of Local Issues
Anne Arundel Community College
101 College Parkway, Arnold MD, 21012-1895
Contact: Dan Nataf 410-777-2733

Mixed Views on Local Economy, Ballot Measures Focus of Anne Arundel County Survey

A survey of 510 Anne Arundel County residents conducted Oct. 15-18 by students assisting the Center for the Study of Local Issues (CSLI) at Anne Arundel Community College focused primarily on perceptions of the local economy and its impact upon residents, public support for various ballot items and specific questions about public health and pet spaying and neutering programs. A detailed review of these main themes as well as other results follows the summary of findings. The actual questionnaire and percentages can be found in Appendix A at the end of the press release.

Summary of Findings

A summary of issues covered by the CSLI survey is presented below.

Most important problem facing county residents: 27 percent cited the economy, a 21 point drop since October of last year.

Perceptions of the economy: 48 percent viewed the county's economy as excellent or good – a 3 percentage point drop from spring; 33 percent said the same for Maryland's economy (down 5 points) and 16 percent favorably rated the national economy, up 3 points.

Right direction/wrong direction: There was a rise in the percentage of those saying that the county was moving in the right direction (from 43 to 50 percent). Smaller numbers (36 percent) felt that the state or the country was heading in the right direction. Individuals generally felt that they themselves were headed in the right direction (78 percent).

Economic conditions experienced by individuals: Various measures have been tracked since March 2008 – the major changes for fall 2012 were decreases in nearly all negative aspects of the economy, with fewer individuals saying that they had “significant losses in your stock or retirement accounts” (-6 percentage points), were unable to find affordable housing (-6), that it was hard to afford the cost of utilities (-7) or transportation (-6) or were facing house foreclosure or loss (-4). Conversely, fewer respondents said that they had experienced positive news such as having received a salary increase (-4) or found a new or better job recently (-5).

Consumer confidence: All four indicators showed improvement, with larger percentages than last fall saying that economic growth, inflation, unemployment and personal financial situation would improve over the next 12 months.

Economic conditions compared to four years ago: Regarding individuals' personal situation, nearly equal numbers said their situations were better (34 percent) as worse (35 percent). A majority claimed that the American economy was worse than four years ago: 58 percent.

Ballot items: The public's likely voters were not very receptive to the addition of a sixth casino (34 percent supported it). Regarding the legalization of same sex marriage, the survey revealed a

nearly equally divided public – 43 percent in favor, 46 percent against. There was less sympathy for the measure that would provide in-state tuition to the children of illegal immigrants (37 percent support, 54 percent oppose). Congressional districts created by the Maryland General Assembly were also not favored: 35 percent in favor, 41 percent against. A measure to permit the removal of the county executive was widely supported (73 percent favored). Also supported was a measure to permit the central committees of political parties to break a tie within the county council when filling a vacancy: 57 percent in favor, 25 percent against. President Obama was the choice of 42 percent of the county’s likely voters; Mitt Romney was favored by 47 percent.

Obama’s job approval: President Obama’s job approval went up 2 points to 44 percent.

Which party do you trust? The percentage favoring Democrats was nearly equal to that favoring Republicans, 37 vs. 38 percent.

Low-cost spaying and neutering: A proposal to create a low-cost spaying and neutering program for low-income pet owners was supported by 71 percent of the respondents.

Public health: There were two open-ended questions focusing on public health. The first asked for public input regarding ways in which individuals can maintain a healthy weight. The second sought suggestions for ways in which the Health Department could work with disadvantaged groups to improve health outcomes. A variety of answers are noted in the text.

Methodology: The survey polled a random sample of 510 county residents who were at least 18 years old. It was conducted Oct. 15-18, 2012 during evening hours. Phone numbers were derived from a database of listed landline numbers as well as computer-chosen, randomly assigned numbers. There was about a 4.3 percent statistical margin of error for the overall sample; the error rate was higher for subgroups such as “Democrats.” The dataset was weighted by gender and political party to better represent the general population. College students were trained and used as telephone interviewers.

Contact Dan Nataf, Ph.D., center director, for additional comments or questions at 410-777-2733 and ddnataf@acc.edu. Check the CSLI website for results from this and previous surveys: www2.aacc.edu/csli.

The Economy

The Most Important Problem Facing Residents

Recent CSLI surveys have consistently shown high levels of concern about the state of the economy in answer to the question, “What is the most important problem facing the residents of Anne Arundel County at the present time?” In this as with some other questions, an improving economic climate was signaled by the continuing decline in the percentage mentioning the economy (27 percent), down from 48 percent one year ago.

This fall’s survey saw no change in the percentage citing high taxes (17 percent) nor in the percentage mentioning government as corrupt or unethical (6 percent – see Appendix A for details on this and other items not included in Table 1).

Table 1: “Most Important Problem facing Residents” – Fall 2007 to Fall 2012¹

	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10	Fall '10	Spring '11	Fall '11	Spring '12	Fall '12
Economy	8	23	38	48	33	36	36	35	48	30	27
Taxes – too high	17	16	12	10	12	11	13	11	9	17	17
Growth / development	16	12	9	5	5	5	2	4	4	4	3
Education / school problems	12	12	10	8	7	8	9	10	5	7	8
Traffic congestion/problems	12	7	6	4	5	6	6	3	5	5	6
Crime / drugs	10	6	4	6	8	6	6	6	8	4	7
Unsure/no answer	6	9	7	8	10	10	8	12	8	9	9
Other answer	19	15	14	11	21	17	21	19	13	24	23 ²
Total	100	100	100	100	101	99	101	100	100	100	100

Note: In this and other tables, totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Rating Economic Conditions – Anne Arundel County

Since March 2002, the CSLI semi-annual survey has asked a benchmark question about the economy: “How would you rate economic conditions in Anne Arundel County – ‘excellent,’ ‘good,’ ‘only fair’ or ‘poor?’ ”

As shown on Table 2, since fall 2006 the county’s historical average saying that the economy was a combined “excellent” or “good” was 53 percent. Since spring 2010 when the percentage reached a low of 44 points, most surveys had shown a growing percentage of respondents saying

¹ From spring 2007 to spring 2010, surveys’ answer categories for “most important problem” included “lack of affordable housing” for interviewers to check off. Previously, that answer to the open-ended question would have been categorized under “economy” a practice which was resumed in fall 2010. The running totals in Table 1 combine both answers into the single “Economy” category. Similarly, crime includes those saying “crime” and “illegal drugs.”

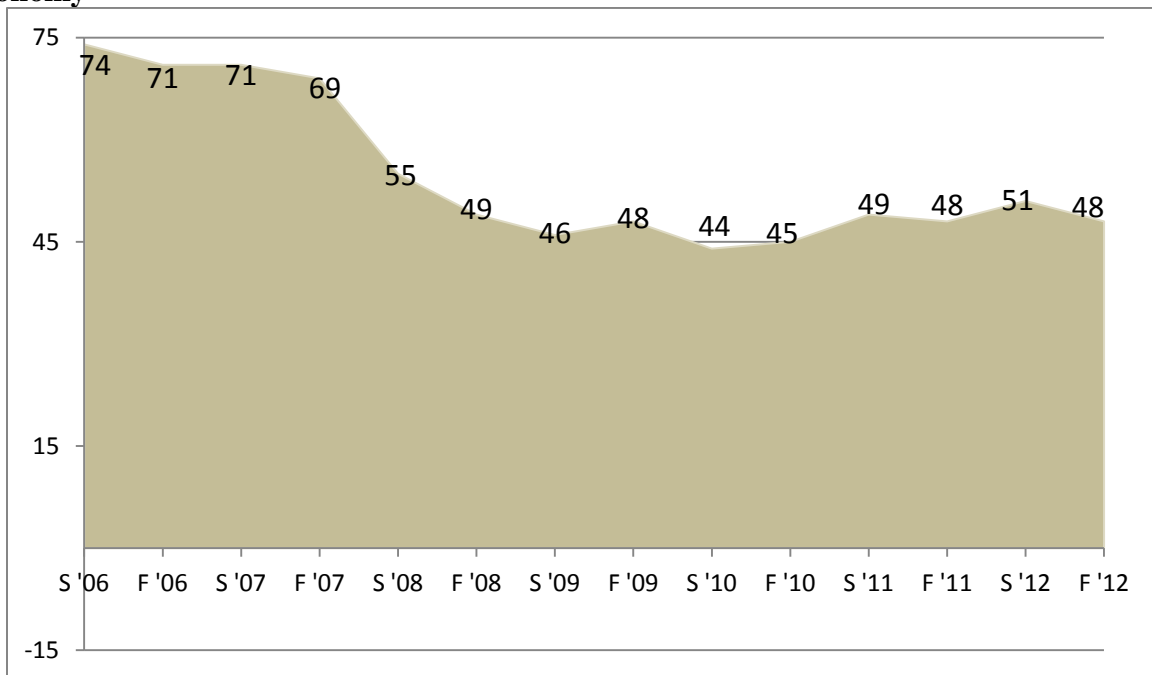
² There was a dispersion of answers in this survey so that some categories not included in the table received a relatively large number of citations. For example, 3 percent cited the environment, 6 percent cited government corruption.

that the county economy was excellent or good, peaking last spring at 51 percent. This fall signaled a reversal, as the percentage dropped to 48 percent. Graph 1 displays the overall trend from spring 2006 to the latest survey in fall 2012.

Table 2: Perceptions of County Economic Conditions

Condition	Fall '06	Spring '07	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10	Fall '10	Spring '11	Fall '11	Spring '12	Fall '12	Mean
Excellent +good	71	71	69	55	49	46	48	44	45	49	48	51	48	53
Excellent	9	12	10	6	6	2	4	3	3	3	4	2	5	5
Good	62	59	59	49	43	44	44	41	42	46	44	49	43	48
Fair	23	22	25	36	37	43	38	41	45	38	40	37	39	36
Poor	3	4	5	8	12	10	11	13	8	12	11	11	12	9
Don't know	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Total	100	100	101	101	100	101	100	100	100	101	101	100	101	100

Graph 1: Percentage saying “Excellent” or “Good” about Anne Arundel County’s Economy



Rating Economic Conditions – Maryland and the National Economy

Since spring 2009, the question about rating economic conditions has been extended to the state of Maryland and the country overall.

Regarding the state of Maryland, Table 2.1 shows a pattern similar to that described for the county – a general if irregular rise in the percentage of ‘excellent/good’ scores. As with the county, the state suffered a decline, dropping 5 points from last spring to 33 percent.

Table 2.1: Perceptions of State Economic Conditions

Condition	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10	Fall '10	Spring '11	Fall '11	Spring '12	Fall '12
Excellent+good	27	30	31	32	35	33	38	33
Excellent	1	2	2	1	3	1	4	3
Good	26	28	29	31	32	32	34	30
Fair	49	45	46	47	43	41	40	42
Poor	22	21	21	19	21	24	21	23
Don't know	2	4	2	2	1	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	101	100

Regarding the national economy, local residents have tracked national polling results closely. One year ago, the national excellent/good score was 9 percent increasing to 13 percent in spring – identical to a national Gallup tracking poll produced around that time.³ A Gallup poll taken Oct. 16-18 yielded 15 percent saying the national economy was excellent or good; the CSLI survey taken at the same time resulted in a value 16 percent, reinforcing the similarity between national and local perceptions of the U.S. economy.

Table 2.2: Perceptions of National Economic Conditions

Condition	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10	Fall '10	Spring '11	Fall '11	Spring '12	Fall '12
Excellent+Good	5	11	11	11	11	9	13	16
Excellent	0	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
Good	5	10	10	9	9	7	12	14
Fair	30	39	42	41	43	28	47	37
Poor	63	48	46	47	45	62	39	46
Don't know	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
Total	99	100	101	100	101	101	101	100

Economic Conditions Applying to Respondents

Respondents were asked: “Thinking about your personal circumstances, please tell me whether any of these economic conditions apply to you or your household.” Table 3 shows the results for the last nine CSLI surveys. The fall 2011 survey added two new questions asking about a “salary increase or other increase in income recently” and whether the respondent had “found a new or better job recently”; both questions were continued in fall 2012.

³ See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/110821/gallup-daily-us-economic-conditions.aspx> for Gallup’s running totals for this question.

Table 3: Economic Conditions Applying to Personal Circumstances, Fall 2008 to Fall 2012

Condition	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10	Fall '10	Spring '11	Fall '11	Spring '12	Fall '12	Spring '12- Fall '11
Received a salary increase or other increase in income recently	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	26	35	31	-4
Found a new or better job recently	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	14	16	11	-5
Significant losses in your stock or retirement accounts	71	75	70	56	60	52	60	44	38	-6
Delay in making a major purchase such as a home or car	n.a.	51	46	47	44	47	51	45	38	-7
Facing the possibility of unemployment	15	24	24	19	21	20	21	17	14	-3
Hard to afford cost of utilities such as electricity or gas	50	53	42	44	43	46	39	39	32	-7
Health care insurance is unavailable, too expensive or inadequate	30	29	33	32	34	35	32	32	27	-5
Facing the possibility of house foreclosure or loss	4	6	8	7	7	9	8	8	4	-4
Unable to find affordable housing	11	12	13	15	10	14	11	15	9	-6
Taxes are too high in relation to the govt. services provided	58	59	59	63	60	63	58	63	63	0
Hard to afford cost of transportation	32	21	17	21	24	41	30	36	30	-6
Wages or salaries are not rising as fast as the cost of living	59	55	55	56	56	63	59	66	59	-7

Table 3 is organized to place possible positive experiences near the top and negative experiences near the bottom.

The fall 2012 survey revealed that respondents were less likely to have received an increase in income or found a new or better job recently (down 4 and 5 percentage points respectively).

However, in keeping with the mixed economic picture that characterizes this survey, 9 of 10 negative experiences showed declines – meaning that fewer individuals were troubled by an, e.g., inability to find affordable housing (down 6 points) or said that it was hard for them to “afford the cost of utilities such as electricity or gas” (down 7 points). Indeed, 7 of the 10 negative indicators tied or were below the lowest percentages since fall 2008. Only “taxes are too high in relation to the government services provided” remained at a historically high level among all the indicators of economic distress.

“These results could be a sign that a broader recovery is lessening economic hardships, even though increases in real income may still be hard to find,” Nataf said.

Consumer Confidence

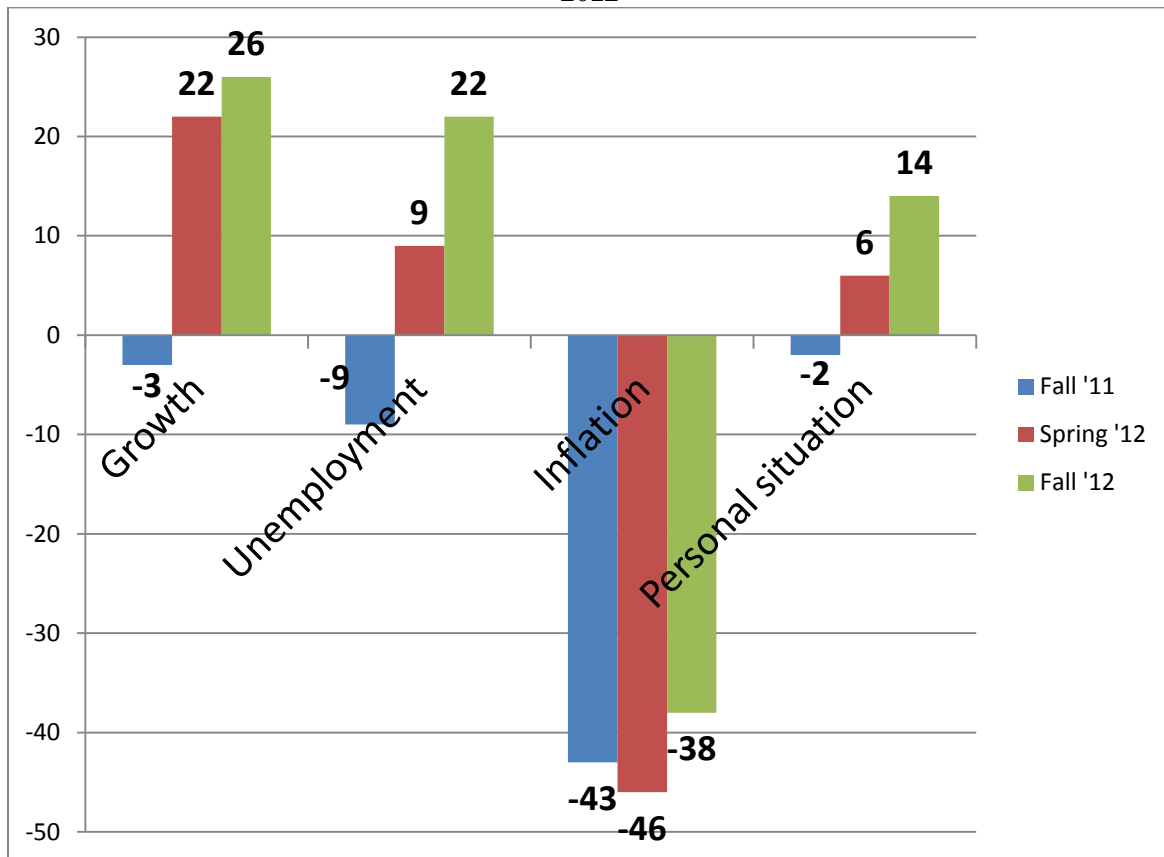
Since fall 2011, four questions have been used to measure the public’s confidence in the future of the economy. These questions reference economic growth, unemployment, inflation and the respondent’s personal financial situation and ask the respondent to think about the next 12 months and say whether a particular condition will be better, the same or worse. Table 4 shows the results just for fall 2012; Graph 2 shows the results since fall 2011, calculated by subtracting the value of “worse” from the value of “better.”

Graph 2 shows that there have been steady gains in consumer confidence over the last year. Signs of improvement were already evident last spring; this fall the ratio of better to worse improved especially for unemployment and personal situation, with smaller improvement in growth and inflation.

Table 4: Economic Conditions over the next 12 Months

	Better	Same	Worse	Unsure/NA	Total
Economic growth	41	34	15	10	100
Unemployment	42	30	20	9	101
Inflation	10	33	48	9	100
Your personal financial situation	28	54	14	4	100

Graph 2: Economic Conditions over the next 12 Months – Better-Worse for Fall 2011 through Fall 2012



Change from Four Years Ago

Given the presence of a presidential election, the fall 2012 survey added two questions asking respondents to reflect on changes in their personal situations or the U.S. economy generally compared to conditions four years ago.

There was a nearly even division between those who felt that their own circumstances were better (34 percent) or worse (35 percent). Pessimism about the national economy was much greater, resulting in a 2 to 1 ratio of worse to better, as shown on Table 5.

Table 5: Economic Situation Now Compared to Four Years Ago

	Better	Same	Worse	Don't know	Total
Personal situation	34	29	35	2	100
U.S. Economy	29	13	58	1	101

While the relationship between partisanship and personal economic situation was not statistically significant, perceptions of the national economy were statistically related: 47 percent of Democrats felt that the economy had gotten better, but only 7 percent of Republicans agreed. Unaffiliated respondents were a bit closer to the Democratic value at 34 percent – 13 points down from the Democratic percentage, but 27 points higher than the Republican percentage.

Ballot Items

Gambling – Adding a New Site, Expanding the Scope of Gambling to Table Games

“Question 7” was the target of considerable advertising by those forces supporting or opposing the measure. The CSLI survey indicated relatively weak support for the proposal, with only 34 percent favoring, and 57 percent opposing. Previous county votes related to permitting slots within Maryland or at Arundel Mills obtained around 60 percent support. “Clearly, Anne Arundel residents did not view the rise of a new gambling venue in Prince George’s County as favorable to their interests,” Nataf said.

Table 6: Allowing the Creation of a Sixth Casino and Table Games

	Agree
Support	34
Oppose	57
Unsure	6
No answer	3
Total	100

All ballot item percentages in this and subsequent tables include “likely voters” only, not all registered voters.

Same Sex Marriage

Regarding same sex marriage, the results from the fall 2012 survey were consistent with previous polls conducted by CSLI: the public splits its views nearly evenly between supporters and opponents as seen on Table 7.

Table 7: Same Sex Marriage

	Agree
Support	43
Oppose	46
Unsure	7
No answer	4
Total	100

Dream Act – In-state Tuition for the Children of Some Illegal Immigrants

Another ballot item focused on the children of illegal immigrants, allowing them to attend Maryland community colleges and universities at “in-state” tuition rates under certain conditions. This item did not fare very well; only 37 percent of the public favored this proposal (see Table 8).

Table 8: Allowing Children of Illegal Immigrants to Pay “In-State” Tuition

	Agree
Support	37
Oppose	54
Unsure	7
No answer	3
Total	101

Congressional Boundaries

Respondents were nearly evenly divided on the idea of “upholding the boundaries for congressional districts created by the state legislature.” While slightly more residents opposed (41 percent) rather than favored (35 percent), another 25 percent either were unsure or had no answer. “It seems likely that voters are not as aware of the nature of this issue compared to the other state referendum items,” Nataf said.

Table 9: Uphold New Congressional Districts

	Agree
Support	35
Oppose	41
Unsure	18
No answer	7
Total	101

County Executive Replacement

The county council placed an item on the ballot meant to clarify the terms under which a county executive could be replaced. The CSLI poll used the following phrasing to address the issue: “Allowing the county council to replace the county executive if convicted of certain crimes – without waiting for any appeals.”

Table 10: County Executive Replacement

	Agree
Support	73
Oppose	18
Unsure	6
No answer	4
Total	101

As shown on Table 10, this proposal was supported by nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of those polled.

Filling a Vacancy in the County Council or with County Executive

The county council also sought to clarify the method by which a tie could be broken in the event the council could not choose a replacement by a majority decision, particularly when considering the replacement of a council member. Specifically, the proposal would allow the members of a party’s central committee to break a tie. While generally supported, this measure was not as favored as the previous one, showing a larger percentage of unsure and no answer responses.

Table 11: County Council/Executive – Filling Vacancies

	Agree
Support	57
Oppose	25
Unsure	13
No answer	6
Total	101

Presidential Vote

Among the ballot items was a request that respondents indicate their current voting preference among presidential candidates. President Obama, who lost the county vote by two percentage points in 2008, is shown on Table 12 as losing by 5 points among likely voters to challenger Mitt Romney.

Table 12: Presidential Vote

	Choice
Barack Obama	42
Mitt Romney	47
Undecided	7
Someone else	1
Wouldn't vote	0
No answer	2
Total	99

As indicated on Table 13, the defection of registered Democrats to the Republican candidate (14 percent) was more common than the defection of registered Republicans to President Obama (8 percent). Unaffiliated voters were more inclined to support Romney as well.

Table 13: Presidential Vote by Party Registration

	Overall	Democrats	Republicans	Unaffiliated
Barack Obama	42	77	8	34
Mitt Romney	47	14	84	49
Undecided	7	5	8	8
Someone else	1	2	0	2
Wouldn't vote	0	0	0	2
No answer	2	2	1	6
Total	99	100	101	101

Respondents were asked an open-ended question, "What is the most important issue or factor shaping your vote for president?" Table 14 shows the results by presidential vote preference.

Table 14: Most Important Issue by Presidential Vote

	Overall	Obama	Romney	Undecided
Economy	49	35	59	68
Trust, honesty, character	7	9	6	8
Foreign affairs, national security, defense	7	5	9	0
Health care	6	9	4	4
Women's issues (abortion, contraception, equal rights)	5	9	3	4
Dislike of other candidate	5	6	5	0
Other answers	20	28	14	16
Total	99	101	100	100

Table 14 indicates that the economy (mentioned in general or using terms such as “jobs,” “unemployment,” “growth”) was the predominant national concern for respondents (mentioned by 49 percent). Aspects of the candidate’s character – either trust and honesty, or dislike of the candidate – were also significant (totaling a combined 12 percentage points). Other aspects receiving at least five percentage points included health care, women’s issues and foreign affairs. Receiving fewer than five percentage points were issues such as the deficit/debt, taxation, Supreme Court nominations, protecting the middle class, same sex marriage, political party, debate performance, good record and general agreement.

A further examination of the results depicted on Table 14 shows that Romney and undecided voters were much more focused on the economy as the most important issue than were Obama voters. “Given the uneven qualities of the economic recovery, it is not surprising that Obama supporters would find a host of other reasons to support their candidate – resulting in the much larger “other” score compared to Romney voters. By contrast, the large concentration of Romney voters upon the economy suggests that their voting preference is less motivated by an antipathy to “Obamacare” or social issues, and more of a referendum on economic performance by the incumbent,” Nataf said.

In the same section of the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate a variety of motivations for choosing their preferred candidate. Table 15 shows the percentage saying “very important” for the overall sample as well as by individual candidate preferences.

Table 15: Motivations for Vote – Overall and by Preferred Candidate

Item	Overall	Obama	Romney	Undecided
The candidate has the right ideas for improving the economy*	89	89	91	87
The ability of the candidate to work with Congress	87	86	88	90
The candidate will better defend America’s national interests*	85	77	91	90
The candidate’s ability to relate to people like yourself*	58	71	47	53
The candidate’s choice for vice president	48	46	52	41
The candidate’s personal background is appealing*	34	39	34	13
My dislike for the other candidate*	29	35	29	13

* Indicates statistical significance, $p < .05$.

Three items obtained very high scores: the right ideas for the economy, ability to work with Congress and better defending America’s national interests. Of these, the largest difference among voters was the percentage emphasizing defending America’s national interests, with Obama voters less likely than Romney or undecided voters to cite this item. In addition, a substantial difference between Obama and Romney voters was found regarding the candidate’s “ability to relate to people like yourself.”

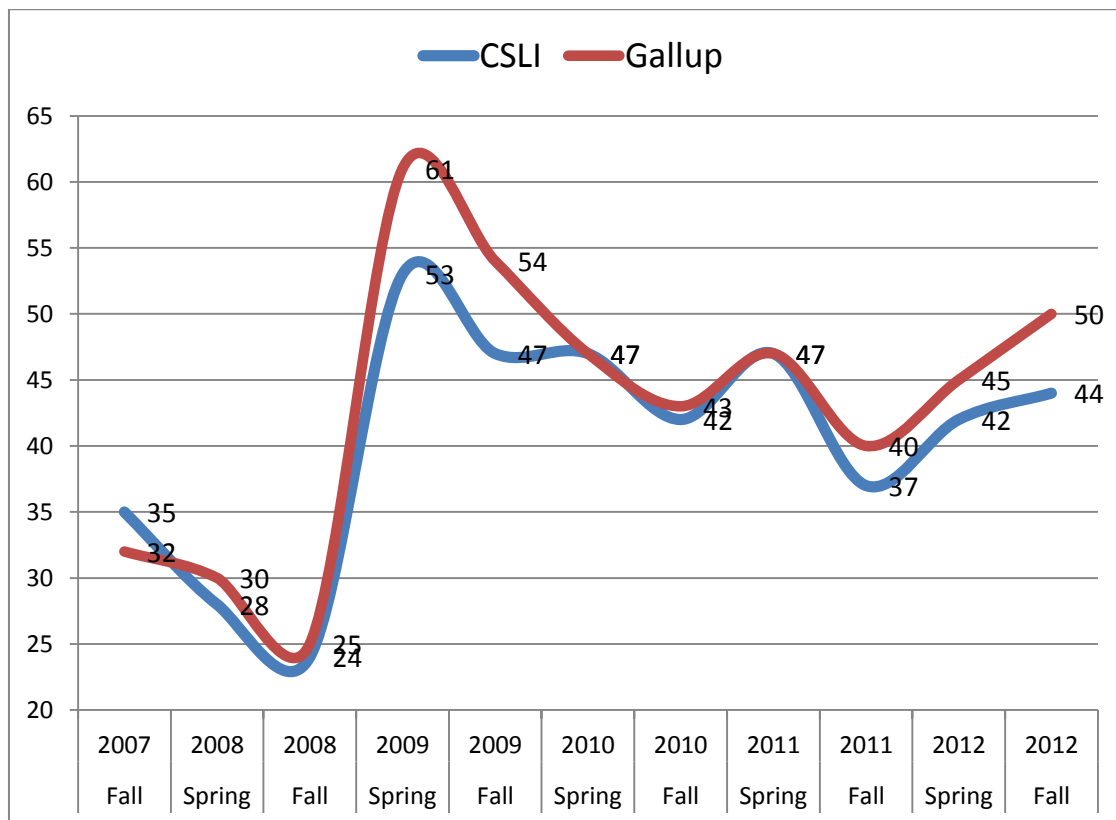
Presidential Job Approval

Since fall 2006, CSLI polls of county residents have closely tracked national presidential job approval trends as indicated by Gallup surveys.⁴ For the period closest to that during which CSLI was calling residents, Gallup’s presidential job approval surveys conducted Oct. 16-18 indicated that 50 percent approved of the president’s performance. CSLI’s own polling revealed a percentage that was somewhat lower: 44 percent (see Table 16 and Graph 3). That finding is consistent with a tendency for President Obama’s job approval in Anne Arundel County to run a few points lower than in the country as a whole.

Table 16: Job Approval for Presidents Bush and Obama

Issue	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2008	Spring 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Fall 2010	Spring 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012
Approve	35	28	24	53	47	47	42	47	37	42	44
Disapprove	57	62	69	31	42	45	49	44	56	49	50
No answer	9	10	8	16	11	8	10	9	7	8	6
Total	101	100	101	100	100	100	101	100	100	99	100

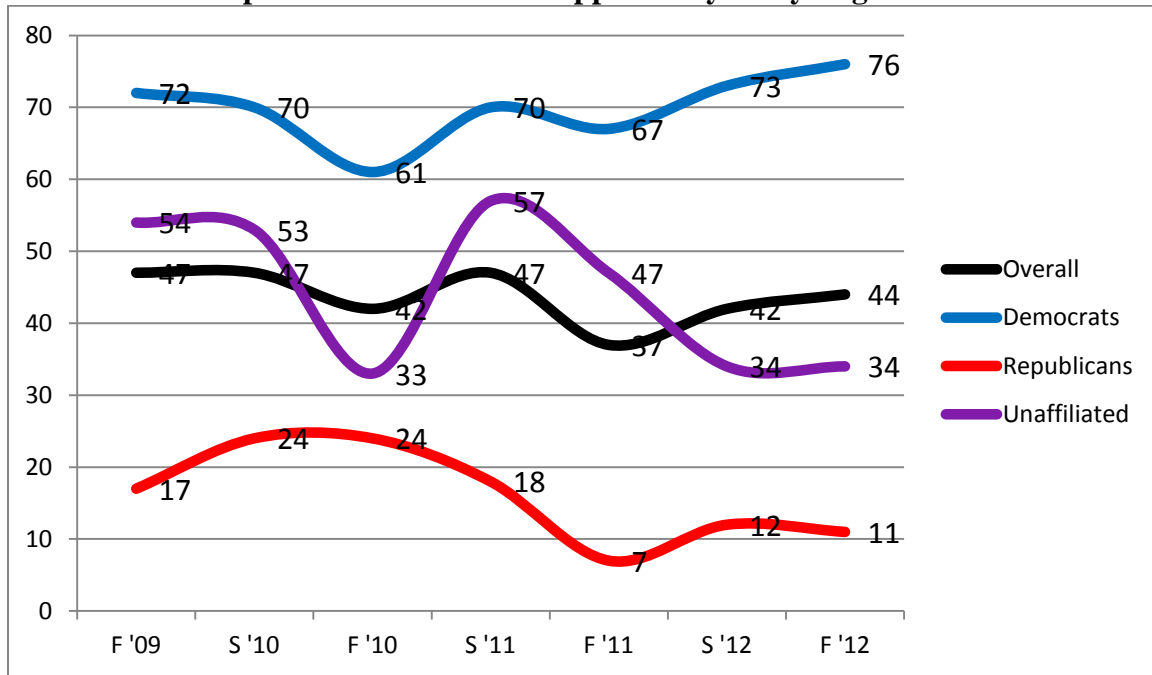
Graph 3: Presidential Job Approval – CSLI and Gallup 2007-2012



⁴ See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/113980/gallup-daily-obama-job-approval.aspx> for findings cited here. All respondents were included in job approval calculations, not just likely voters.

As seen on Graph 4, Obama’s popularity among Democrats increased from last spring, moving up to 76 percent from 73 percent. There was little or no change among Republicans (from 12 to 11 percent). Unaffiliated voters showed no rebound in support to levels found in 2011, staying unchanged from last spring at 34 percent.⁵

Graph 4: Presidential Job Approval by Party Registration



Trust in Political Parties

Since 2009, the CSLI survey has asked which party “do you trust to do a better job in coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years.” Table 17 shows Democrats unchanged from their spring score (37 percent), while the Republican score rose four points to 38 percent. The “neither” option (which is volunteered without prompting by the respondent) dropped to its lowest level since this question was added in spring 2009.

Table 17: Which Party do you Trust?

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
Democrats	42	37	33	34	34	31	37	37
Republicans	30	28	31	37	32	30	34	38
Neither	20	27	31	21	29	32	21	17
No opinion	8	6	6	8	4	7	7	9
Total	100	100	101	100	99	100	99	101

⁵ The number of unaffiliated voters is quite small; any estimates for this group are subject to much larger margins of error.

Other Findings

County – Right or Wrong Direction?

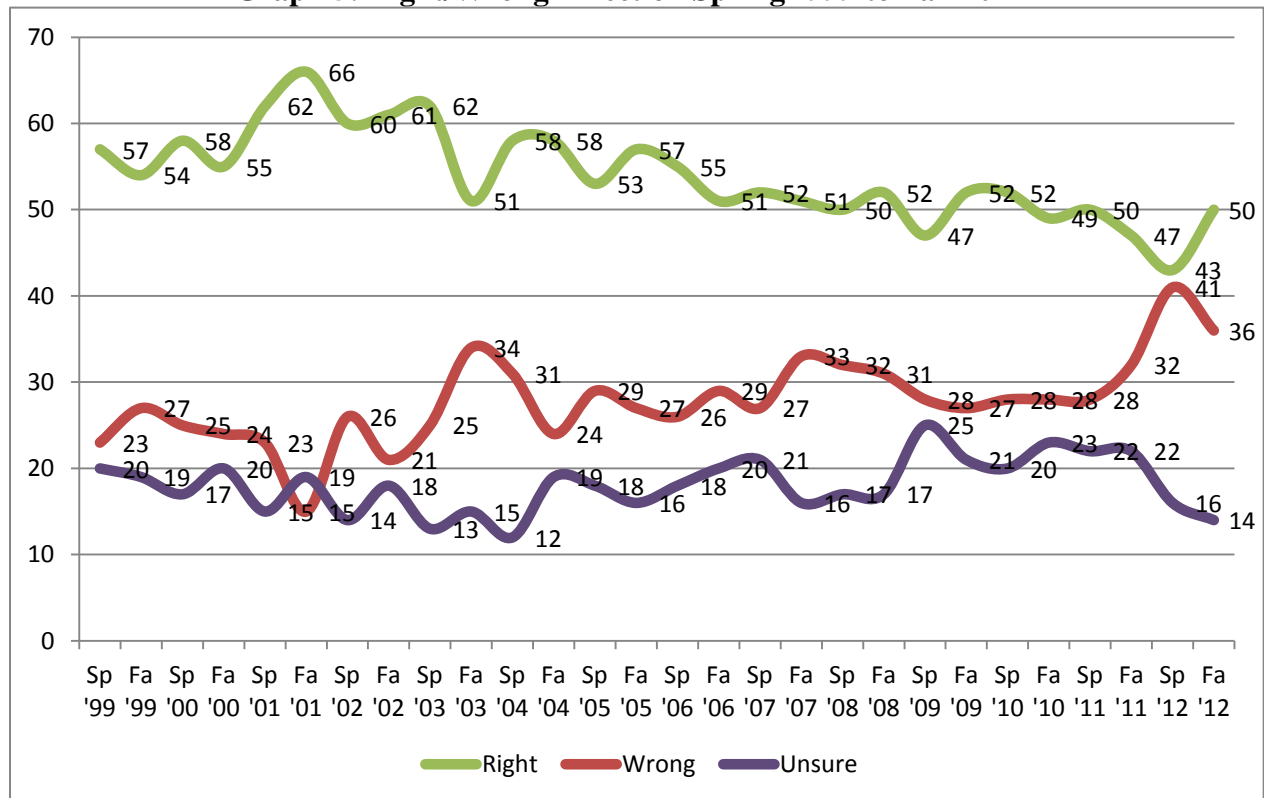
The survey included a CSLI benchmark question whose results are seen on Table 18: “Overall, would you say that the county is headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction?”

Table 18 and Graph 5 show that downward movement seen in the previous two surveys was reversed in fall 2012, with the “right direction” percentage rising from a historic low of 43 to 50 percentage points and very near the mean since fall 2009 (49 percent). The “wrong direction” value was still high by historical standards (36 versus a mean of 31 percent). As the row indicating the “right-wrong” value shows, prior to fall 2011, there was over a 20 point advantage of right scores over wrong scores. Since fall 2011, that value has stayed at 15 points or below.

Table 18: Anne Arundel County - Right vs. Wrong Direction Fall 2009 to Fall 2012

Response	F '09	S '10	F '10	S '11	F '11	S '12	F '12	Average
Right direction	52	52	49	50	47	43	50	49
Wrong direction	27	28	28	28	32	41	36	31
Unsure	21	20	23	22	22	16	14	20
Right-wrong	25	24	21	22	15	2	14	18
Total	100	100	100	100	101	100	100	100

Graph 5: Right/Wrong Direction Spring 1999 to Fall 2012



The survey also asked individuals to indicate right/wrong views about the state, nation and themselves. Table 19 shows the results along with those for the county. The Gallup organization asks a similar question - “satisfaction about the way things are going in the country.” Its most recent finding (for Oct. 19, 2012) showed that 30 percent of Americans were satisfied – just 6 percent less than the CSLI score for national “right direction.”⁶

Table 19: Right/Wrong Direction for County, State, Nation and Respondent

	Right	Wrong	Unsure/ Don't know
County	50	36	14
State	36	56	7
Nation/Country	36	57	7
You personally	78	13	9

Table 20 shows how the respondent’s assessment of his/her personal situation affected perceptions of other levels. Those saying that their personal circumstances were going in the “right” direction were inclined to see the county, state and nation in a more favorable light.⁷

Table 20: Right/Wrong Direction – Individual by County, State, Nation

Levels	Individual		
	Right	Wrong	Right- wrong
County	54	35	19
State	43	16	27
Nation	44	9	35

The values below the individual right/wrong labels indicate the percentages of those within each category who said “right direction” for themselves personally.

Table 21 shows how the respondent’s party registration affected perceptions of other levels. Majorities of Democrats thought that the county, state and nation were going in the right direction; Republicans’ highest scores were for the county (40 percent) with very low scores for the state (16 percent) and country (13 percent). There was a 12 point difference between the percentages of Democrats saying that their personal circumstances were going in the “right direction” compared to Republicans.⁸

⁶ See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158123/satisfaction-stable.aspx> for details about the Gallup poll. It also discusses historic patterns of satisfaction scores as these relate to previous presidential elections as well as demographic breakdowns.

⁷ There was no statistical relationship between individual scores and those for the county; such relationships did exist for the state and national levels (p<.05).

⁸ Relationships between party and views of the state and nation were statistically significant (p<.05). Relationships between party and views of the county and individual circumstances were not.

Table 21: Right Direction – Party Registration by County, State, Nation, Individual

Levels	Dem.	Rep.	Dem-Rep.	Unaff.
County	58	40	18	56
State	55	16	39	35
Nation	59	13	46	33
Respondent	83	71	12	83

The values below the party labels indicate the percentages of those within each category who said “right direction” for the county, state, national and individual levels

Policy Proposals: Low-Cost Spaying and Neutering

The survey asked respondents whether they supported a program “to subsidize low-cost spaying and neutering for low-income pet owners to lessen the problem of stray dogs and cats.” A large majority favored the program. Those who expressed support were then asked about four methods to pay for the program. As seen on Table 22, only the proposal to add a “dollar or two to your annual state income tax” failed to garner a majority of support.

Table 22: Spaying and Neutering Proposals

	Support	Oppose	Unsure/Maybe	No answer
Program overall	71	25	3	1
Dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots	81	13	5	2
Penny or two when buying pet food	72	20	6	2
Dollar or two added to your annual state income tax	46	48	5	2
Dollar or two when renewing pet licenses	72	21	5	3

The survey asked whether individuals owned a pet dog or cat. Table 23 shows the percentages of those supporting the various proposals by pet ownership status.

Table 23: Spaying and Neutering Proposals – Support by Pet Ownership

	Own Pet	Don't own pet
Program overall	77	62
Dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots	89	73
Penny or two when buying pet food	79	64
Dollar or two added to your annual state income tax	48	43
Dollar or two when renewing pet licenses	75	69

As seen on Table 23, pet owners were more willing to support the program generally and each specific funding proposal than non-pet owners despite the fact that the cost of funding in three or the four cases would fall disproportionately upon pet owners.

Public Health Issues – Maintaining a Healthy Weight and Working with Disadvantaged Groups

Two questions asked the public for recommendations and suggestions dealing with “having people achieve and maintain a healthy weight” and having the Health Department “work with disadvantaged groups in the county to improve their health outcomes.” Both questions were open-ended, with student interviewers recording comments expressed by respondents.

Table 24 shows some of the most typically cited categories of answers. Generally, there were eight main areas of attention: (1) exercise; (2) food characteristics – portions, quality, content; (3) general diet; (4) educational programs; (5) school-related suggestions (healthy choices, portions, educate students); (6) access to exercise facilities (gyms, parks, bike trails, sidewalks); (7) specific proposals; and, (8) personal responsibility, commitment and a view that it isn’t government’s business to worry about such matters.

The most commonly cited general category was exercise (26 percent). Somewhat related to exercise was the “facilities” category that focused on a need to increase the presence or access to venues for exercising – gyms, parks, bike trails and sidewalks (8 percent). Food characteristics such as quality, portions or cost was the second most cited (24 percent – excluding such mentions in association with schools). Educational programs were cited by 11 percent; actions within schools were cited by 7 percent. A general mention of maintaining a healthy diet was offered by 10 percent. A few respondents (5 percent) underscored the individual’s personal responsibility – exhibiting self-discipline, taking the initiative to find information and make better personal choices regarding food and exercise. In keeping with the personal responsibility perspective was the notion that government should not be interfering with personal lifestyle choices.

Table 24: Public Responses to “How to maintain and achieve healthy weight”

Answer category	Percent citing (N=276)
Exercise	26
Food quality/content	12
Education programs	11
Food intake/portions	11
General diet	10
Facilities – create, provide less expensive access	8
School-related actions	7
Proposals – specific measures (see paragraph below the table)	6
Personal commitment, not a govt. concern	5
Other	3
Food cost	1

Beyond general categories of responses, the public also made some specific recommendations including: subsidize healthy foods or gym memberships (possibly through health insurance policies), encourage gyms in workplaces, tax unhealthy foods, restrict food stamps to just healthy foods, offer free nutrition classes/subsidize “weight watcher” types of programs at evening hours, better advertise existing programs, provide guides for healthy living, legislate clearer food/calorie labeling, provide free clinics for the uninsured.

The second question concerned “ways in which the Health Department can work with disadvantaged groups in the county to improve their health outcomes.” The public’s suggestions were mostly within four groups: (1) improving access to health care resources (clinics, pro-bono physicians, free immunizations and wellness/preventive care, expanded Medicaid); (2) education and outreach programs or efforts (through charities, schools, churches) that improve citizens’ awareness of healthy choices; (3) providing more and lower cost access to venues for exercising (parks, gyms, transportation); and (4) structuring programs for the poor to reward healthy lifestyles (e.g., using food stamps and Medicaid to reinforce healthy choices).

Methodology

The survey polled a random sample of 510 county residents who were at least 18 years old. It was conducted Oct. 15-18, 2012 during evening hours. Phone numbers were derived from a database of listed landline numbers as well as computer chosen, randomly assigned numbers. There was about a 4.3 percent statistical margin of error for the overall sample; the error rate was higher for subgroups such as “Democrats.” The dataset was weighted by gender and political party to better represent the general population. College students were trained and used as telephone interviewers.

Contact Dan Nataf, Ph.D., center director, for additional comments or questions at 410-777-2733 and ddnataf@acc.edu. Check the CSLI website for results from this and previous surveys: www2.aacc.edu/csli.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

CSLI Semi-Annual Survey – Fall, 2012

(All numeric values in answer categories are percentages unless otherwise indicated.
Totals may not be 100 percent due to rounding.)

1. What do you think is the most important problem facing the residents of Anne Arundel County at the present time? (DON'T READ THE LIST! Have them *volunteer* an answer)

Problem	Code
Crime/Drugs	7
Economy – (e.g., no jobs, high cost of living, business closing or losses)	27
Education, problems with schools	8
Environment (e.g., air or water pollution, saving the Bay)	3
Government – corrupt, unethical	6
Government – inefficient, wasteful, spends too much	3
Government – lacks resources for roads, schools, services	1
Growth/overpopulation- too much development	3
Health care (cost, access)	1
Taxes – too high	17
Transportation problems/traffic congestion	6
Other answer - write in:	9
Unsure/No Answer	9

2. The next questions ask you to say whether things are going in the right or wrong direction. First, would you say that the county is headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction? How about the state of Maryland? How about the nation as a whole? How about you personally?

	Right	Wrong	Unsure/Don't know
2.1 County	50	36	14
2.2 State	36	56	7
2.3 Nation	36	57	7
2.4 You personally	78	13	9

3. Next I would like to know how you would rate economic conditions in Anne Arundel County, in Maryland, and in the United States generally. First how would you rate economic conditions in Anne Arundel County -- excellent, good, only fair or poor? How about the state? How about the nation?

	Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	Unsure/Don't know
3.1 County	5	43	39	12	2
3.2 State	3	30	42	23	2
3.3 Nation	2	14	37	46	1

4. Thinking now about your personal circumstances, please tell me whether any of these economic conditions apply to you or your household.

	Applies	Doesn't apply	Unsure, no answer
4.1 Wages or salaries are not rising as fast as the cost of living	59	38	4
4.1a Received a salary increase or other increase in income recently	31	67	2
4.2 Facing the possibility of unemployment	14	84	2
4.2a Found a new or better job recently	11	88	1
4.3 Significant losses in your stock or retirement accounts	38	60	3
4.4 Facing the possibility of house foreclosure or loss	4	95	1
4.5 Unable to find affordable housing	9	90	1
4.6 Hard to afford the cost of transportation	30	68	2
4.7 Hard to afford the cost of utilities such as electricity or gas	32	67	1
4.8 Delay in making a major purchase such as a home or car	38	61	0
4.9 Health care insurance is unavailable, too expensive or inadequate	27	72	1
4.10 Taxes are too high in relation to government services provided	63	34	3

5. Thinking about the next twelve months and the county's economy, please answer the following questions by saying whether a particular condition will be better, the same or worse:

	Better	Same	Worse	Unsure/NA
5.1 Economic growth	41	34	15	10
5.2 Unemployment	42	30	20	9
5.3 Inflation	10	33	48	9
5.4 Your personal financial situation	28	54	14	4

5.5 Thinking about your personal financial situation, is it better, the same or worse than four years ago?

(1) Better 34% (2) Same 29% (3) Worse 35% (0) Unsure, don't know 2%

5.6 How about the U.S. economy – is it better, the same or worse than four years ago?

(1) Better 29% (2) Same 13% (3) Worse 58% (0) Unsure, don't know 1%

5.7 The county’s Health Department is asking the public to help it identify approaches to having people achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Do you have any recommendations?

_____ see analysis in text _____

5.8 The Health Department is also looking for input about ways in which it can work with disadvantaged groups in the county to improve their health outcomes. Do you have any suggestions in this regard?

_____ see analysis in text _____

6. The upcoming November elections will feature a variety of state and local ballot items for citizens to consider. When I read a proposal to you, indicate whether you support or oppose it.

	Support	Oppose	Unsure	No answer
6.1 Legalizing same sex marriage	43	46	7	4
6.2 Allowing the children of illegal immigrants to attend Maryland community colleges and universities at “in-state” tuition rates	37	54	7	3
6.3 Upholding the boundaries for congressional districts created by the state legislature	35	41	18	7
6.4 Allowing the creation of a sixth casino in Prince George’s County, table games at all casinos and more slot machines overall.	34	57	6	3
<i>The next two proposals apply to the county.</i>	73	18	6	4
6.5 Allowing the county council to replace the county executive if convicted of certain crimes – without waiting for any appeals.				
6.6 Allowing the party leaders in the relevant central committee to break a tie when the county council cannot pick a replacement county executive or council member.	57	25	13	6

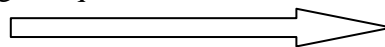
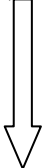
7.0 Maryland is considering a program to subsidize low-cost spaying and neutering for low-income pet owners to lessen the problem of stray dogs and cats.

Do you support or oppose the creation of such a program?

71% (1) Support If SUPPORT go to question 7.1 below

(2) Oppose 25%

(3) Unsure 3% (0) No answer 1%



If Oppose, Unsure or No answer go to question 8 next page



If “SUPPORT” for question 7, ask: **Do you support or oppose the following ideas for financing this program...**

Paying an extra...	Support	Maybe	Oppose	N.A.
7.1. Dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots?	81	5	13	2
7.2. Penny or two when buying pet food?	72	6	20	2
7.3. Dollar or two added to your annual state income tax?	46	5	48	2
7.4. Dollar or two when renewing pet licenses?	72	5	21	3

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

(1) Approve 44 (2) Disapprove 50 (0) No answer 6

9. Overall, which party, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans), do you trust to do a better job in coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years?

(1) Democrats 37 (2) Republicans 38 (3) Neither (volunteered) 17 (4) Other (volunteered) 3 (0) No answer 6

10. With which political party, if any, are you registered?

(1) Democratic 42
 (2) Republican 38
 (3) Unaffiliated (or “independent”) 15
 (4) Other (e.g., Green, Libertarian parties) 1

(5) None (NOT REGISTERED) 3
 (0) No Answer 1



Go to question 15 Next page

11. How likely are you to vote in November ? (1) Very likely 93 (2) Somewhat likely 3 (3) Not very likely 3 (0) No answer 0

12. For whom would you vote if presidential elections were today and the candidates were Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney?

(1) Barack Obama 42
 (2) Mitt Romney 47
 (3) Undecided 7
 (4) Someone else (volunteered) 1

(5) Wouldn't vote (volunteered) 0 **Go to question 15=>** (next page)
 (0) No answer 2 **Go to question 15=>** (next page)

Go to question 13

13. What is the most important issue or factor shaping your vote for president?
 _____ see analysis in text _____ (write in)

14. Thinking about your choice for president, please say whether the following items are very important, somewhat important or not very important...

Item	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	No opinion, don't know
14.1 The ability of the candidate to work with Congress	87	11	1	1
14.2 The candidate has the right ideas for improving the economy	89	8	2	1
14.3 The candidate will better defend America's national interests	85	15	0	1
14.4 The candidate's personal background is appealing	34	32	33	2
14.5 The candidate's ability to relate to people like yourself	58	25	16	2
14.6 My dislike for the other candidate	29	24	41	5
14.7 The candidate's choice for vice president	48	32	18	3

=>15. Which of the following best describes your political beliefs: Conservative, Moderate or Liberal?

(1) Conservative 36 (2) Moderate **43** (3) Liberal 17 (0) Other, No Answer 4

16. What is your age? _____ (Write in)

Age Range	Percentage
18-30	9
31-40	12
41-50	23
51-60	21
61-65	13
66+	23
Total	101

17. I am going to read some categories relating to education. Please stop me when I reach the category in which the highest level of your formal education falls.

(1) less than a high school diploma 1	(5) Completed a 4 year bachelor's degree 25
(2) a high school diploma 12	(6) post graduate work 27
(3) some college 24	(7) Something else? 1
(4) Completed a 2 year associate college degree 8	(0) No Answer 1

18. I am going to read some categories relating to income. Please stop me when I reach the category in which your household income falls.

- (1) Less than \$30,000 8
- (2) \$30,000 to \$50,000 7
- (3) \$50,001 to \$75,000 15
- (4) \$75,001-\$100,000 16
- (5) \$100,001-\$150,000 18
- (6) \$150,001-\$250,000 13
- (7) Over \$250,000 5
- (0) No Answer 17

19. Stop me when I reach the employment category that best describes your situation

Answer choice	Choose one
Retired and not working	27
Retired and working	8
Self-employed	8
Employed full time for a company in the private sector	20
Employed full time for government in a non-defense-related activity such as education, public works or public safety	13
Employed full time in a defense-related activity	8
Employed in a private non-profit organization	3
Employed part-time	4
Student (and possibly working part-time)	3
Unemployed and seeking a job	3
Unemployed and not seeking a job	2
No answer	1

20. Regarding race, how would you describe yourself?

- (1) White 83
- (2) Black or African American 10
- (3) Hispanic or Latino 2
- (4) Asian 2
- (5) Other 2
- (0) No answer 2

21. Regarding religion, how would you describe yourself?

- (1) None (e.g., *atheist, agnostic*) 11
- (2) Non-practicing 5
- (3) Evangelical or born again Christian (*possibly Baptist, Pentecostal*) 14
- (4) Catholic 31
- (5) Jewish 2
- (6) Protestant (*possibly Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterian, Anglican, Episcopalian*) 24
- (7) Some other Christian (*possibly Mormon*) 5
- (8) A 'spiritual person' not associated with an organized religion 3
- (9) Other (e.g., *Hindu, Muslim*) 3
- (0) No Answer 3

22. What is your current marital status?

(1) Single 12 (2) Married 70 (3) Separated/divorced 8 (4) Widowed 10 (5) Other 1 (0) No answer 0

22.1 . Do you currently own a dog or a cat? (1)Yes 58 (2) No 42 (0) No answer 0

23. I have one last request: In an attempt to provide students with more opportunities to survey the public, the Center is asking respondents if they would like to be contacted no more than once or twice a semester by email to participate in short surveys. Can we count on your help?

(1) Yes 43 (2) No 57

**23.1 IF YES: What email address shall we use to contact you?
(CLEAR SPELLING/HANDWRITING PLEASE!)**

SAY: That concludes our survey, thanks for participating.

Once the respondent hangs up, make sure to enter GENDER and ZIP CODE

24. Gender of respondent to whom you were speaking: (1) Male 50 (2) Female 50
(weighted)

25. Zipcode (from calling sheet)

	Percent
20224	0
20711	1
20724	1
20733	0
20751	1
20755	0
20758	0
20764	1
20775	0
20776	1
20778	1
20779	1
20784	0
21012	4
21030	0
21032	2
21035	2
21037	3
21043	0
21049	0
21054	1
21060	3
21061	10
21076	2
21090	3
21108	3
21112	0
21113	6
21114	5
21122	13
21140	0
21144	6
21146	9
21207	0
21226	1
21307	1
21401	9
21402	0
21403	4
21405	0
21409	5
21601	0
27114	0
Total	99

