

MARYLAND POLICY CHOICES: 2007

PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY CHOICES

**SCHAEFER CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY**



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ABOUT THE SCHAEFER CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Schaefer Center for Public Policy was established in 1985 with a mission to bring the University of Baltimore's academic expertise to bear in solving problems faced by government and nonprofit organizations. The Center offers five primary services: strategic planning, performance measurement, program evaluation and analysis, opinion research, and management training. It is through the Schaefer Center that the University of Baltimore and the College of Liberal Arts meet one of the central components of the University's mission of applied research and public service to the Baltimore Metropolitan Area and the state of Maryland.

As a state supported higher education institution in a major urban area, the University of Baltimore and the School of Public Affairs faculty place strong emphasis on teaching, research, and public service. Faculty members in the School of Public Affairs are expected to contribute to the scholarly literature in the field of public administration and be involved in applied research activities.

The Schaefer Center is committed to serving its constituency - the public sector in the Maryland region. The values we espouse in our training, consulting, educational, and other activities are the values we live by: quality and efficiency. The result of this commitment can be seen in the quality of our work. Over the past twenty years, the Schaefer Center has been awarded hundreds of grants and contracts from various local, state, and federal agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations. The Center's staff has trained 4,600 State of Maryland public servants in the Maryland Managing for Results Program. Our service commitment is also indicated in the pro bono work we complete, including consulting services to nonprofit organizations, research and report writing on issues of interest to public officials, and conducting educational conferences.

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MARYLAND POLICY CHOICES: 2007

During the period from December 2 through December 16, 2006, the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore conducted a statewide public opinion survey to elicit public perceptions and opinions on a broad range of public policy topics including: state priorities, the economy, the state budget, education, and health care. These are issues public officials will likely be facing during the 2007 Legislative session.

SAMPLING

Surveyors telephoned and interviewed 810 randomly selected Maryland residents over the age of 21. Phone numbers were selected from a computer generated list of all possible phone numbers in Maryland. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.44% at the 95% confidence level.

REPORTING CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

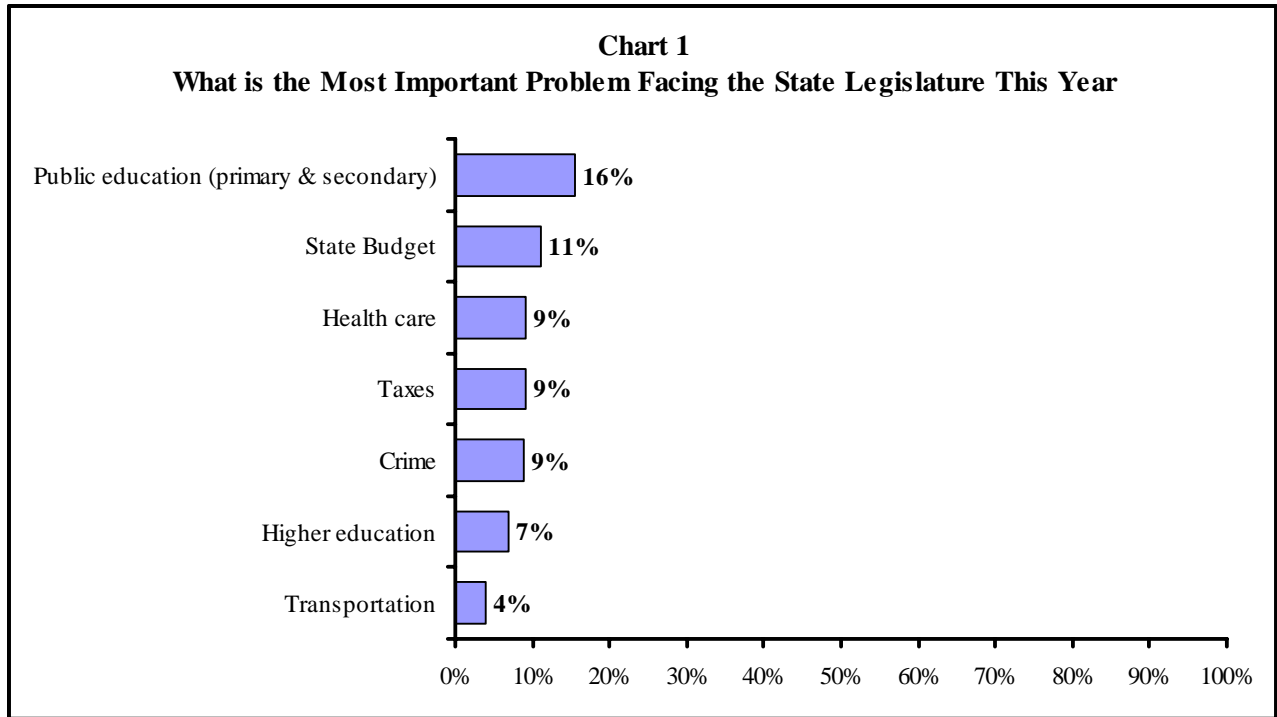
To simplify reporting, survey results described in this document have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage. In some cases, where missing data and refusals are not presented, the figures reported will not sum to 100. In effect, this creates a relatively more conservative interpretation of the data.

CONTRIBUTORS

The survey was designed and implemented by the staff at the Schaefer Center for Public Policy of the School of Public Affairs at the University of Baltimore. Principals include Dr. Ann Cotten, Director of the Schaefer Center, Dr. Don Haynes, Director of Survey Research at the Schaefer Center, Mr. Christopher Scalchunes, Survey Research Supervisor, Ms. Mary Lovegrove, Assistant Director of the Schaefer Center, the professional CATI Lab survey interviewers, and the Schaefer Center for Public Policy Graduate Fellows.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE

The first question asked the respondents to identify what they believed to be the single most important issue facing the Maryland State Legislature in 2007. Respondents were not prompted with a list of priorities, but were allowed to identify the issues on their own. Chart 1 displays the results for this first question.

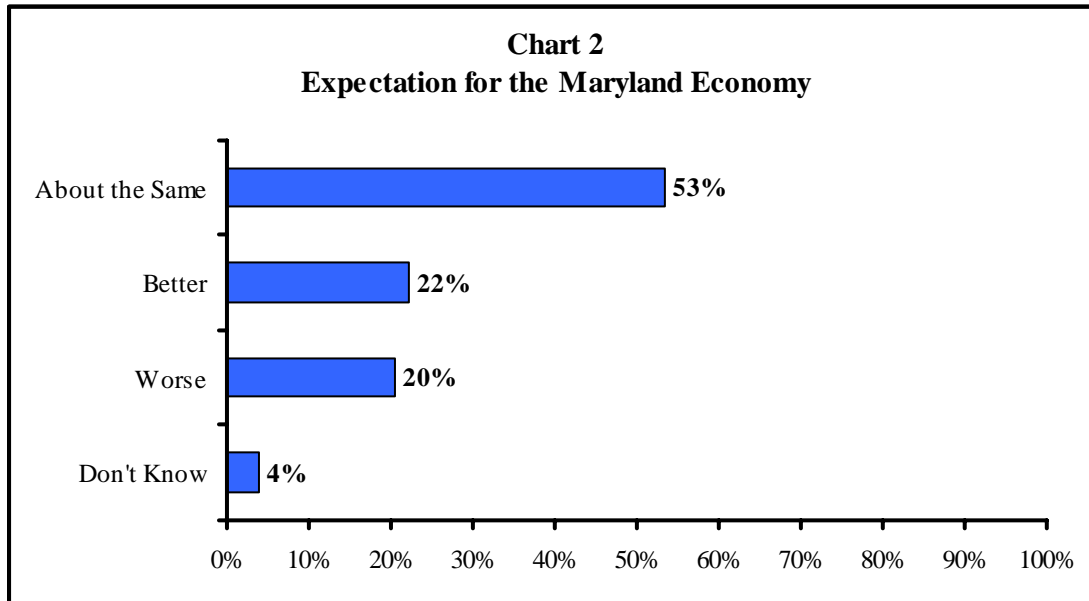


“What do you consider to be the most important problem facing the state legislature in the next year?”

Public education (16%), the state budget (11%), healthcare (9%), taxes (9%), and crime (9%) accounted for 54% of the responses. Drugs, terrorism, unemployment and gambling/slot machines were mentioned by only a few of the respondents as being of primary importance to the Maryland Legislature. Collectively these issues accounted for about 6% of all responses.

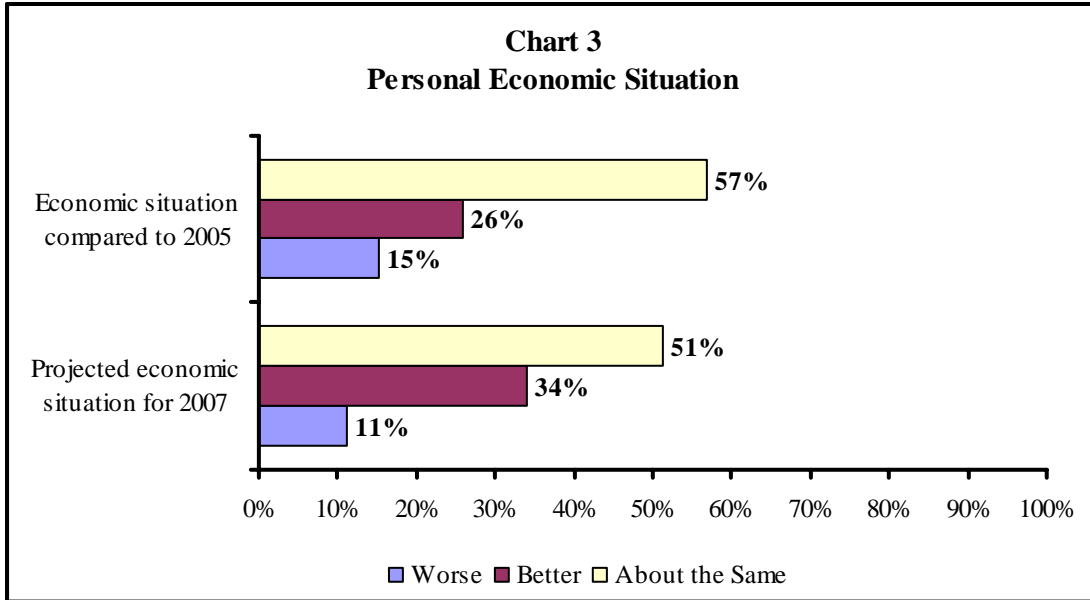
For the first time in many years, public education tops the list as the most important priority facing the state legislature. The state budget once again appears to be of rising concern to Marylanders moving up three places from last year’s survey.

Respondents were asked if they thought the Maryland economy would get better, get worse, or stay about the same in 2007. Chart 2 shows that 75% of those surveyed believed the Maryland economy would either stay the same or improve over the next year. Differences between last year's results and this year's results are minimal. Last year 20% thought the economy would be better in the upcoming year and 18% thought it would be worse. These differences are statistically insignificant.



“In terms of the overall Maryland economy, do you think things in the next year will get better, will get worse, or do you think things will stay about the same?”

Most respondents (75%) believed that the Maryland economy in 2007 will either be the same or better than in 2006. When asked about their personal economic situation this year and their expectations for their personal economic situation for the upcoming year, respondents are similarly more optimistic than last year. As indicated in Chart 3, the results are quite similar to the results for the question concerning the Maryland economy as discussed above.



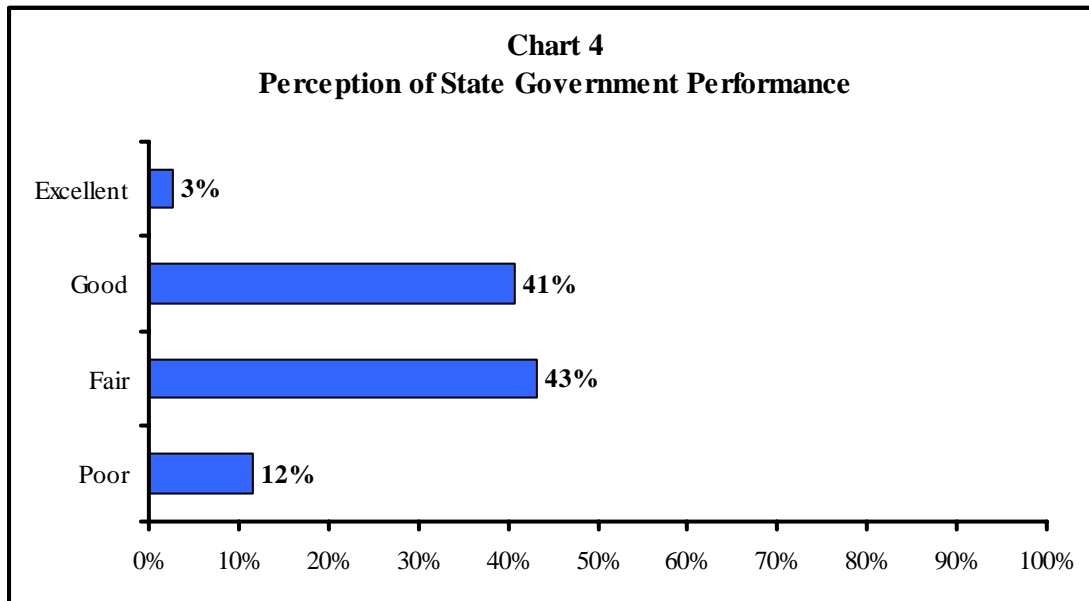
“What about your personal economic situation, are you better off, are you worse off, or do you think you are about the same as you were last year?”

“Again, thinking about your personal economic situation, do you think you will be better off, worse off, or do you think you will be about the same a year from now?”

A large majority of respondents (83%) believed that their own personal economic situation was either better or the same when compared to last year with only 15% percent who were of the opinion that they are economically worse off compared to last year.

Respondents were more optimistic that their economic situation would improve in the next year with 34% who stated that they expected their situation to improve in 2007. Only 11% percent of those surveyed believed that they would be economically worse off in 2007 than in 2006.

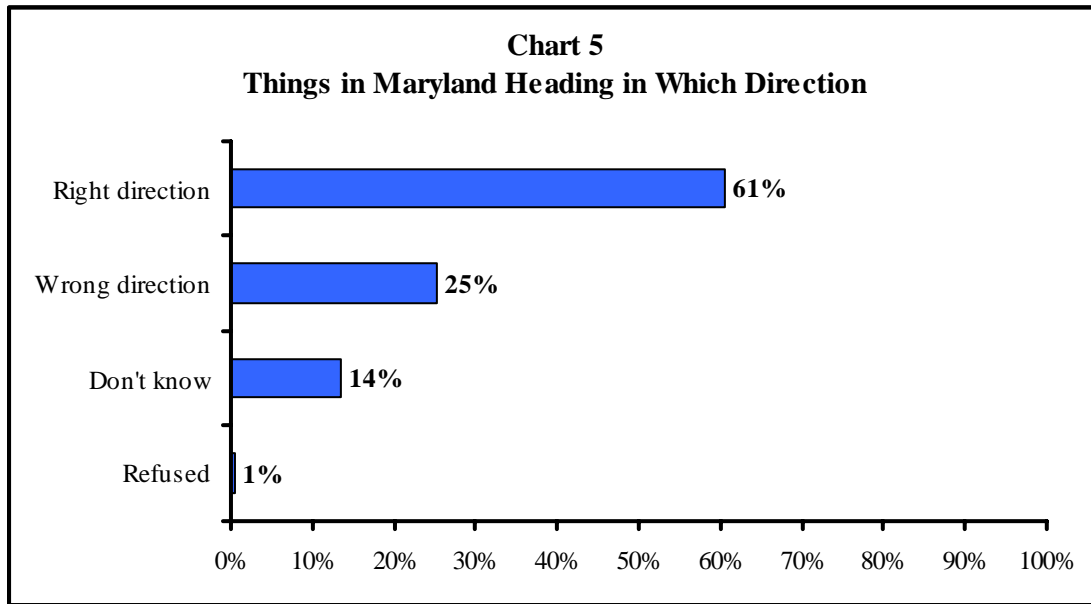
The state of Maryland has invested a lot of time in its “Managing for Results” (MFR) training program. Managing for Results was implemented in State government in order to meet the needs of Maryland's customers and stakeholders more effectively and efficiently. This investment appears to be paying some dividends. Respondents were next asked to rate the performance of the Maryland State Government.



“In general, how would you rate the performance of state government in solving problems in Maryland? Would you say excellent, good, only fair, or poor?”

Just over forty percent (41%) rated the performance of Maryland’s government as “good” in solving the problems in our state. This is a 6% improvement over last year and a 13% improvement over 2005 when only 35% of the respondents rated the state’s ability to solve problems as “good”. An additional 43% rated the performance of Maryland’s government as “fair”, while only 12% felt Maryland’s government performance is “poor”. A handful (3%) of the individuals surveyed believed the government does an excellent job of solving the problems in our state.

A new question was added to the survey this year. Respondents were asked if they thought things were headed in the right or wrong direction in Maryland.



“Would you say things in Maryland today are generally headed in the right direction, or would you say things are headed in the wrong direction?”

A large majority of respondents (61%) responded that Maryland was headed in the right direction. Not surprisingly those who identified themselves as Democrats were much more likely to believe that things are headed in the right direction (69%) than were those who identified themselves as Republicans (49%).

Respondents were read a randomized list of priorities for the State of Maryland and asked whether they thought the priority was “very important”, “important”, “somewhat important”, or “not at all important”.

<i>Program Area</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Somewhat Important</i>	<i>Not at all Important</i>
Controlling crime	83%	12%	5%	1%
Improving public education	80%	12%	6%	2%
Developing & keeping jobs	70%	18%	9%	3%
Protecting the environment	63%	22%	14%	1%
Protecting the public from terrorist attacks	62%	17%	16%	5%
Improving education at colleges and universities	60%	21%	13%	5%
Preserving farmland	53%	22%	18%	6%
Managing growth & development	53%	26%	17%	3%
Avoiding tax increases	51%	19%	23%	7%
Lowering taxes	46%	21%	24%	9%
Attracting new business	44%	27%	22%	6%
Improving public transportation	42%	24%	23%	10%
Building more or better roads	37%	29%	25%	9%
Reinvesting in older communities	32%	28%	28%	10%
Reducing the size of government	29%	20%	30%	18%
Revitalizing downtowns	23%	27%	34%	15%
Buying open space & parkland	23%	28%	31%	16%

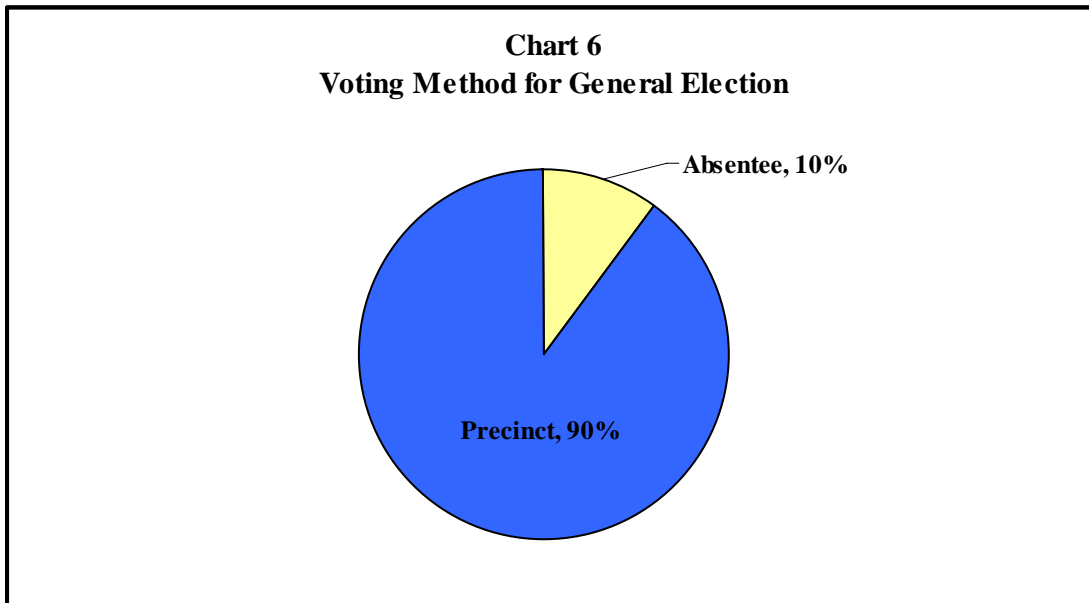
“I’m going to read you a short list of priorities for the state of Maryland. Please rate each of the following priorities by telling me if it is very important, just important, only somewhat important, or not important at all, to you.”

Controlling crime (83%) and improving public education (80%) were deemed “very important” priorities by a vast majority of respondents. Developing and keeping jobs (70%) and protecting the environment (63%) also received a majority of respondents who were of the opinion that these issues are very important. Five years after the September 11th terrorist attacks 62% of those surveyed stated that protecting the public from terrorist attacks was an important priority for the state of Maryland.

Buying open space and parkland, revitalizing downtowns, and reducing the size of government round out the bottom of the seventeen categories

VOTING IN THE NOVEMBER 2006 GENERAL ELECTION

In the 2006 Maryland primary elections some jurisdictions experienced challenges during the voting process. In light of this, respondents who were identified as having taken part in the November 7th election were asked in what manner they voted (absentee ballot or at a precinct) and if they experienced any problems or difficulties in casting their ballot.

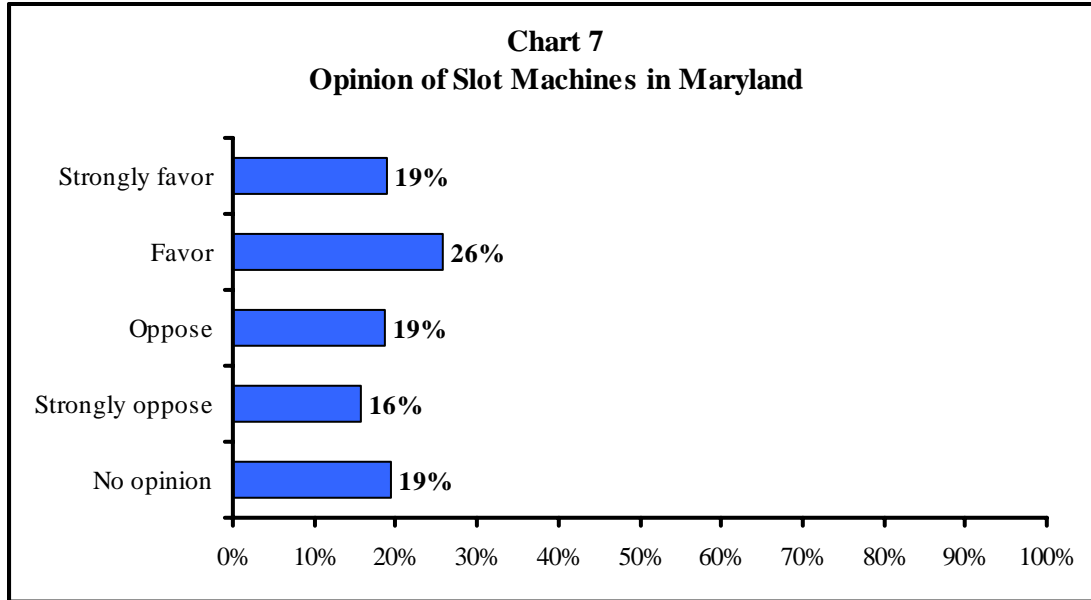


“In the November 7th election, did you vote by absentee ballot or in person at your local precinct?”

Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents stated that they voted at their local precinct. Of perhaps more interest is the fact that when the respondents were asked *“Did you personally experience any problems or difficulties in voting on November 7th, or did it go smoothly, without problems?”* only 23 respondents (3%) stated they had some kind of problem casting their ballot. Of these 23, only 8 respondents (1% of those who voted) stated that they had a problem with the voting machines.

SLOT MACHINES AND LEGALIZED GAMBLING IN MARYLAND

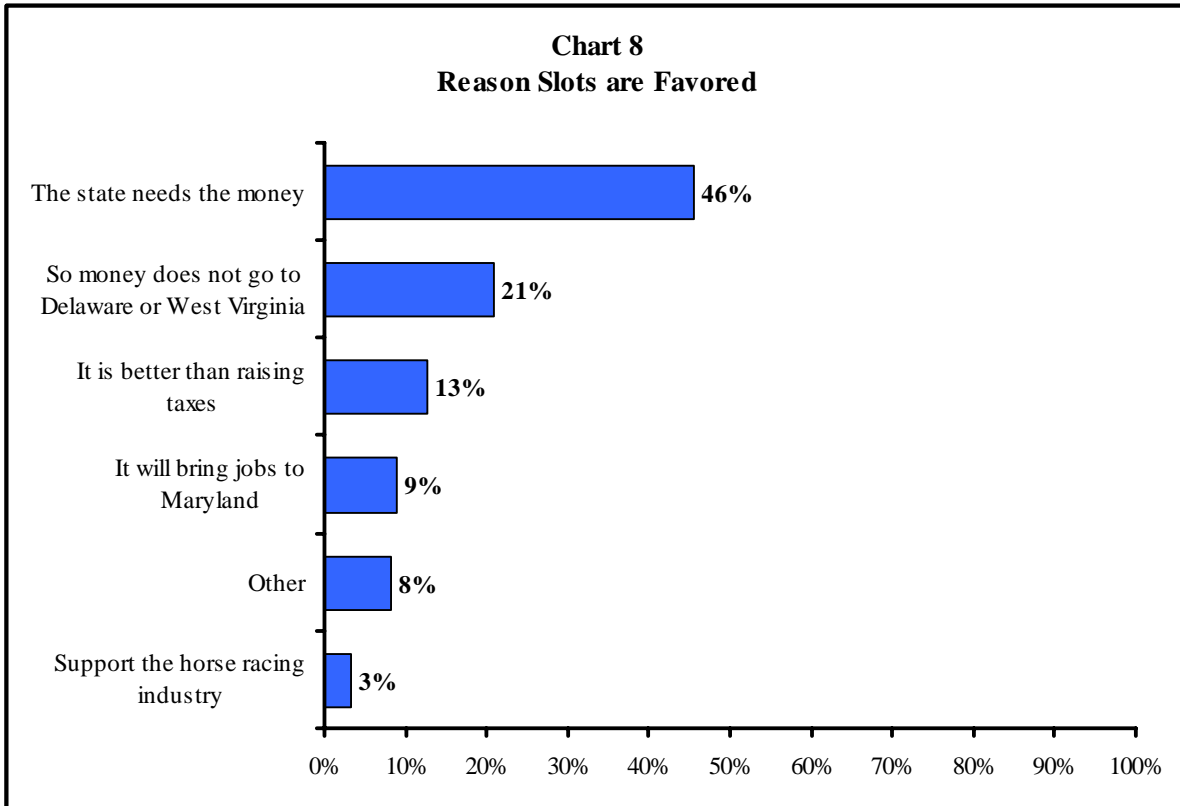
This year along with a new gubernatorial administration comes renewed discussion about the possibility of legalizing slot machines in Maryland.



“Would you strongly favor, just favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the legalization of slot machines in Maryland or is this something on which you have no opinion?”

Fewer than 50% of respondents (19% strongly favor, 26% favor) would like to see the legalization of slot machines in Maryland. While opposition to slot machines is relatively low (35% either opposing or strongly opposing), less than a majority of respondents actually favor legalizing slot machine gambling in Maryland.

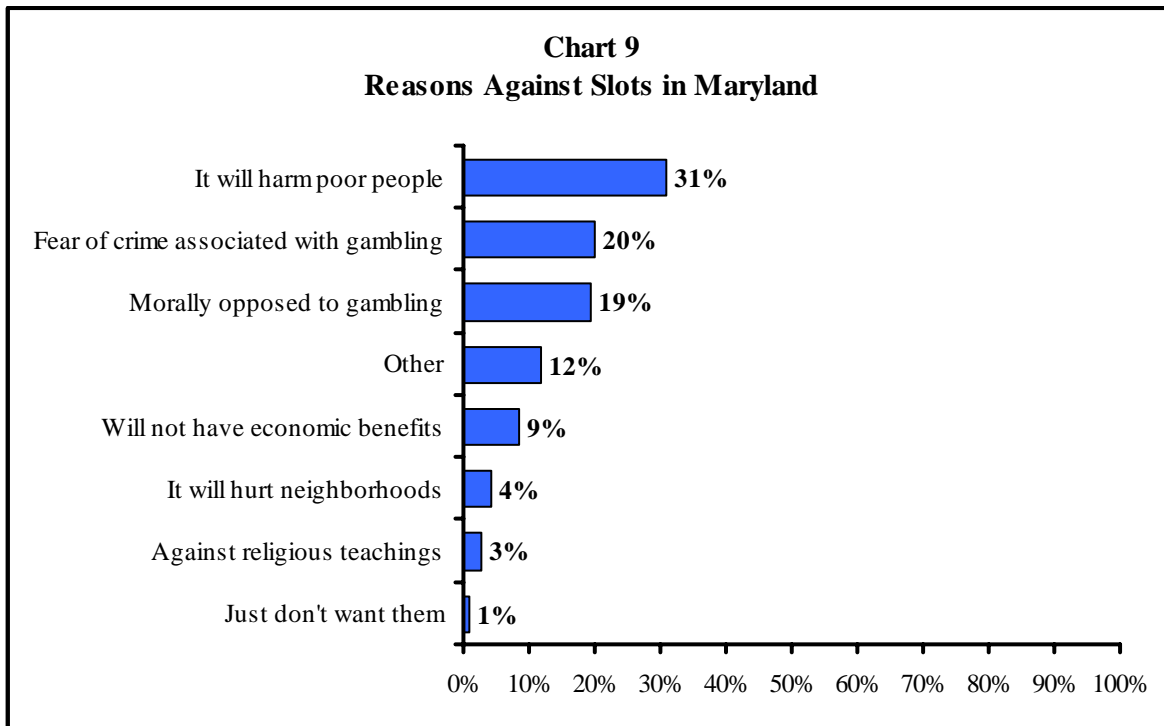
Those respondents who favored slot machines in Maryland were asked the main reason why they favored slots. The answers were not prompted and responses were coded by the phone interviewers.



“What would you say is the biggest reason for why you would favor slot machines in Maryland?”

Almost half (46%) of the respondents were of the opinion that Maryland needs the money that would be generated by the legalization of slot machines. To a lesser extent (21%) of those who favor slots do so to keep Marylander’s money here in Maryland and not in Virginia, Delaware, and now Pennsylvania.

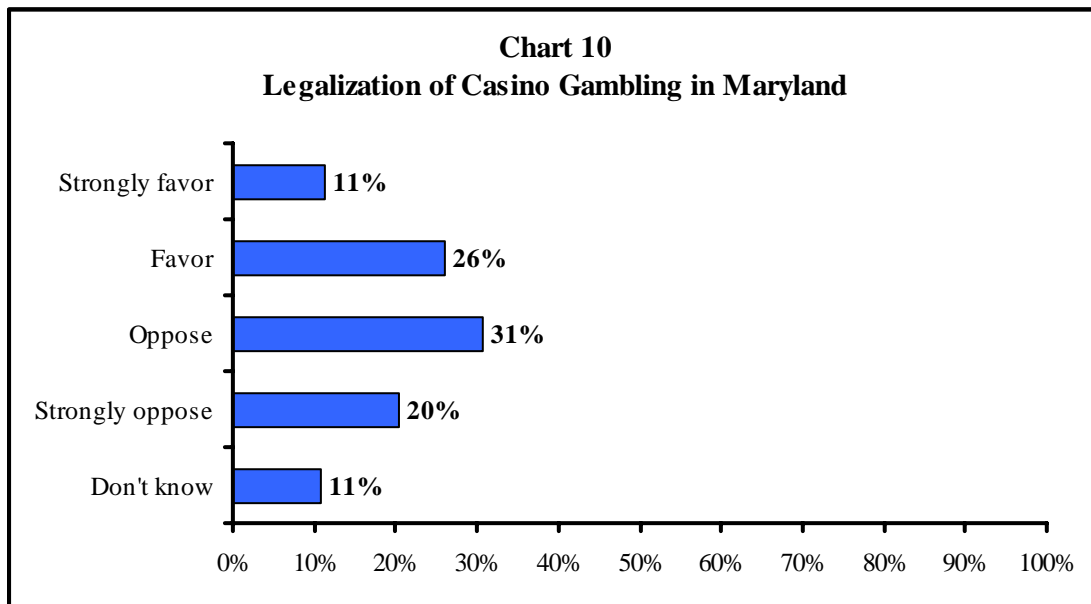
Those respondents who stated they opposed slot machines in Maryland were also asked the main reason why they were opposed to legalizing slot machines in Maryland. Once again respondents were not prompted.



“What would you say is the biggest reason for why you oppose slot machines in Maryland?”

Almost one-third of those who oppose slots do so because they fear it will somehow harm those who are considered poor. Twenty percent (20%) fear that the legalization of slot machines will lead to an increase in crime, while 19% are opposed to slot machines on moral grounds.

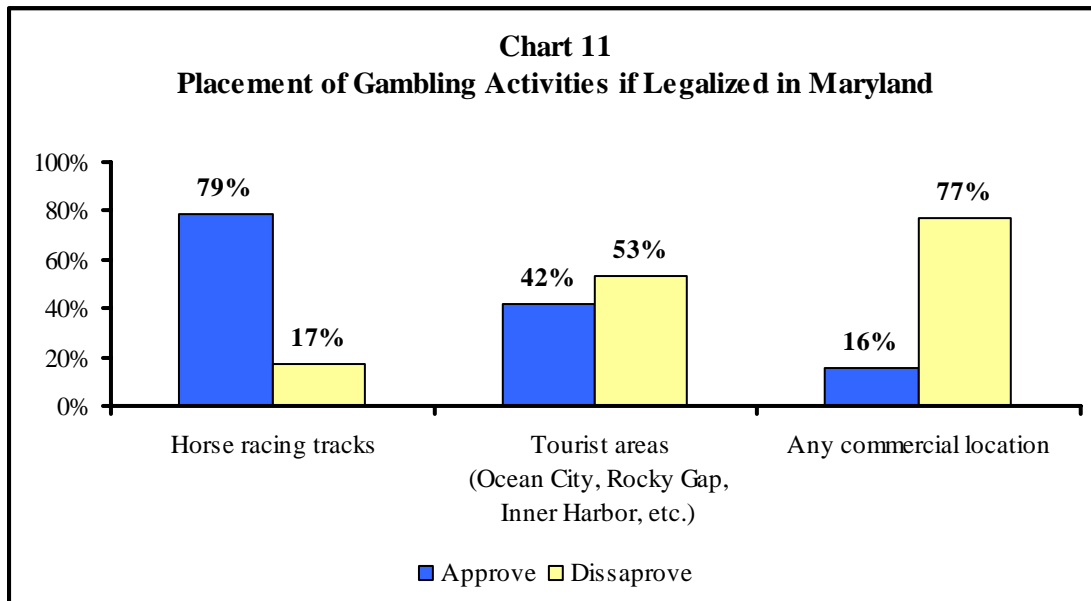
All respondents were then asked about the possibility of casino gambling becoming legal in Maryland.



“Would you Strongly favor, just favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the legalization of casino gambling in Maryland?”

A majority (51%) of respondents either opposed or strongly opposed the legalization of casino gambling in Maryland. Only 11% replied that they strongly favor casino gambling in Maryland

Survey respondents were then presented with a scenario in which slot machines or gambling became legal in Maryland and respondents were asked where these types of activities should be allowed.



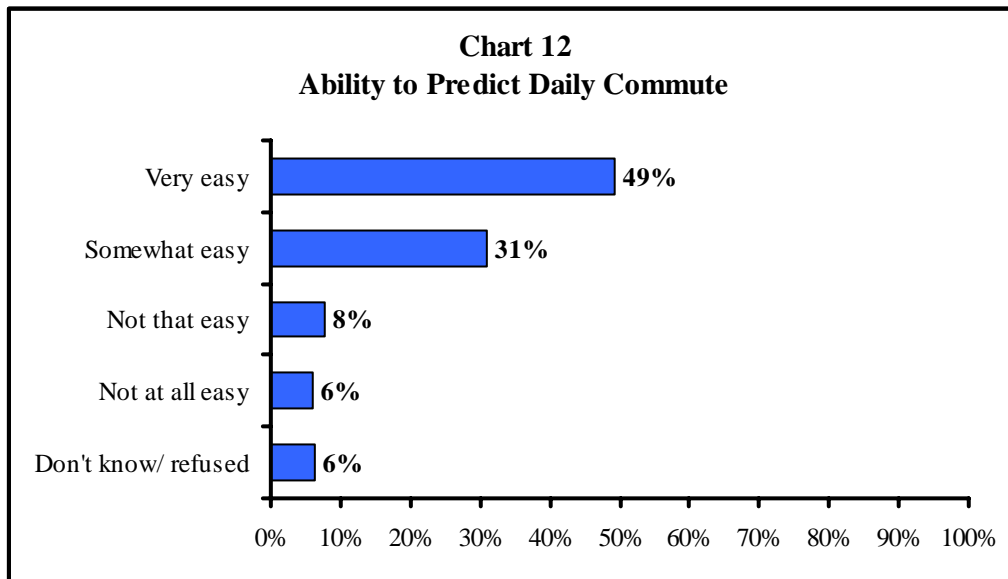
“If slot machines or casino gambling are legalized in Maryland, where should they be allowed. For each of the following, tell me if you would approve or disapprove of gambling being allowed there?”

If slot machines or casino gambling became legal in Maryland the only place Marylanders would support such a scenario would be at horse racing tracks. Although there seems to be some tolerance for placing gambling activities at tourist areas such as Ocean City, Rocky Gap or the Inner Harbor, a majority of respondents (53%) disapproved of gambling taking place at these venues.

COMMUTING IN MARYLAND

A 2003 study performed by the Texas Transportation Institute found that Washington, D.C. area commuters spent an average of 69 extra hours per year in commute time due to traffic congestion. In that same study Baltimore area commuters had an average of fifty hours per year of extra commute time due to traffic congestion and delays.¹

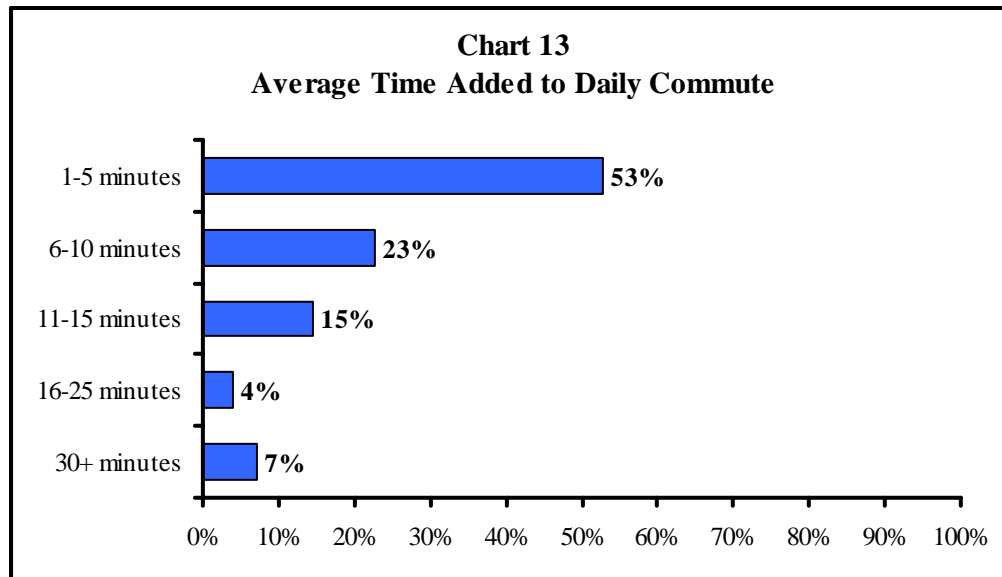
The next series of questions were asked of those respondents who stated that they made the same trip to the same destination on two or more days during the week. These questions relate to the respondent's experiences traveling on Maryland state roads and highways.



“How easy is it for you to predict your daily commute to work, school or to your routine destinations?”

Eighty percent of the respondents thought it was at least somewhat easy to predict their daily commute, with 49% of the respondents who stated it was “very easy” to predict their commute.

Just over half of the respondents (52%) stated that they allowed for extra time in their daily commute due to traffic congestion and delays. Chart 13 displays the distribution of the average time added to the daily commute of respondents.



“On average, about how much time (in minutes) do you typically add to the time it would normally take to make these trips to allow for congestion or traffic conditions?”

Of those respondents that indicated that they allowed extra time for their commute, a majority (53%) stated that they added 5 minutes or less and a full three-quarters (76%) added 10 minutes or less to their commute.

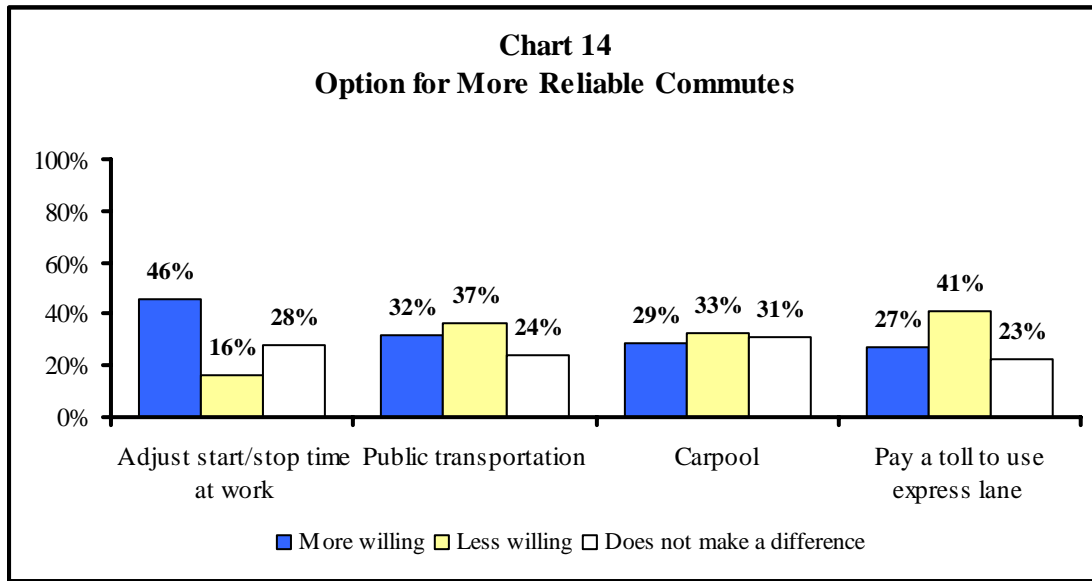
Respondents were then read two statements about congestion and travel time and asked which statement came closest to their view:

Statement 1: *“I don't mind the congestion as long as I can make an accurate prediction about how long it will take me to get where I need to go.”*

Statement 2: *“I really dislike just sitting in traffic waiting for congestion to clear.”*

Although 62% of the respondents identified with Statement 2 (they did not like sitting in traffic due to congestion), not quite one-third (31%) responded that Statement 1 was closer to their view. An additional 7% either had no opinion or refused to answer the question.

Respondents were then given four different options they might consider in order to make their commute times more predictable or reliable.



“To make your commute times more predictable/ reliable how willing would you be to...”

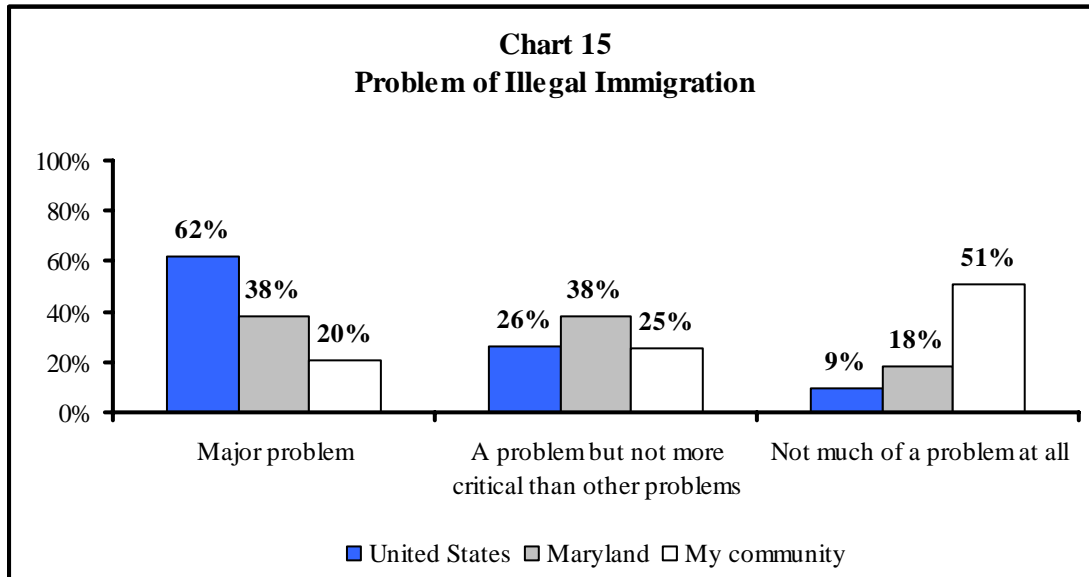
The most popular option among respondents was the adjustment of their workplace start and stop times. Forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents would, if presented with the option, be more willing to adjust their work hours if it meant a more predictable or reliable daily commute.

Thirty-two percent (32%) were more willing to use public transportation if it meant a more predictable commute. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Transportation Planning Package only 7.2% of Marylanders use public transportation (down from 8.1% in 1990)². This appears to be an opportunity for our state and local governments to work together to significantly increase the use of public transportation in Maryland.

Carpooling (29%) and paying a toll to use express lanes (27%) saw the fewest respondents who would be willing to use these options as a method for making their commute times more predictable. Nonetheless, any and all of these options would reduce the amount of congestion and hence travel time we face as citizens of Maryland.

IMMIGRATION

There has been an increasing concern that illegal immigration into this country may pose economic, social, and national security risks. Immigration, “Guest Worker Amnesty” and “Minutemen Border Patrols” filled news headlines for much of the past year. Nine questions concerning immigration issues were posed to the respondents.

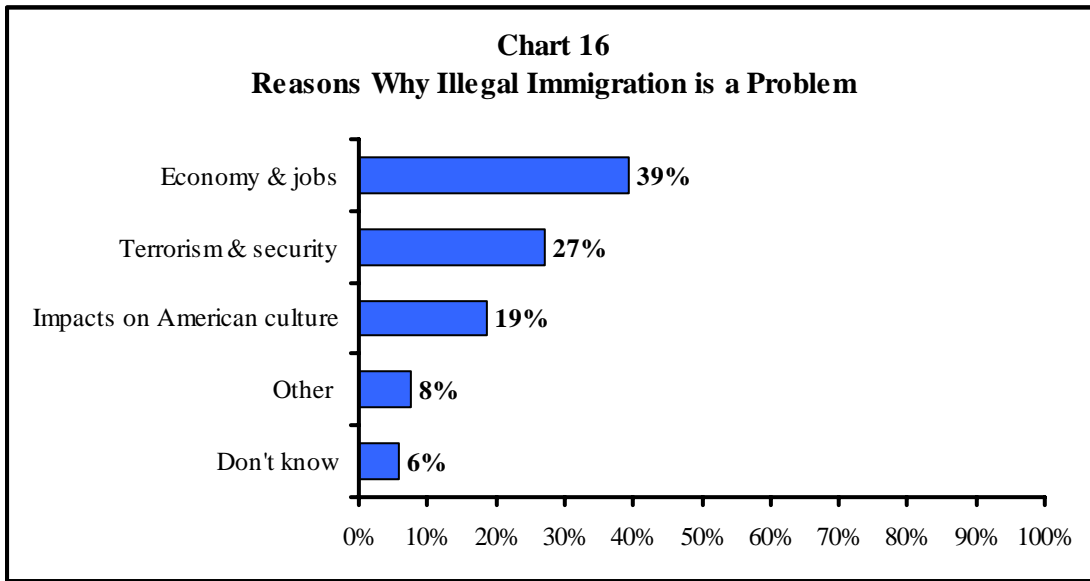


“How big a problem do you think illegal immigration is for (the United States, Maryland, your community)... Would you say it is a major problem, a problem but not more critical than other problems, or not much of a problem at all?”

Marylanders believe that the problem of illegal immigration is one that has a greater impact on other areas than on their own. Not surprisingly respondents were much more likely to identify illegal immigration as a problem this year than they were last year.

This year 62% of the respondents believed that illegal immigration is a major problem in the United States; last year only 50% believed the same thing. Thirty-eight percent (38%) now believe that illegal immigration is a problem in Maryland (compared to 33% in 2005) and 20% believe that illegal immigration is a problem in their community (up from 15% in 2005).

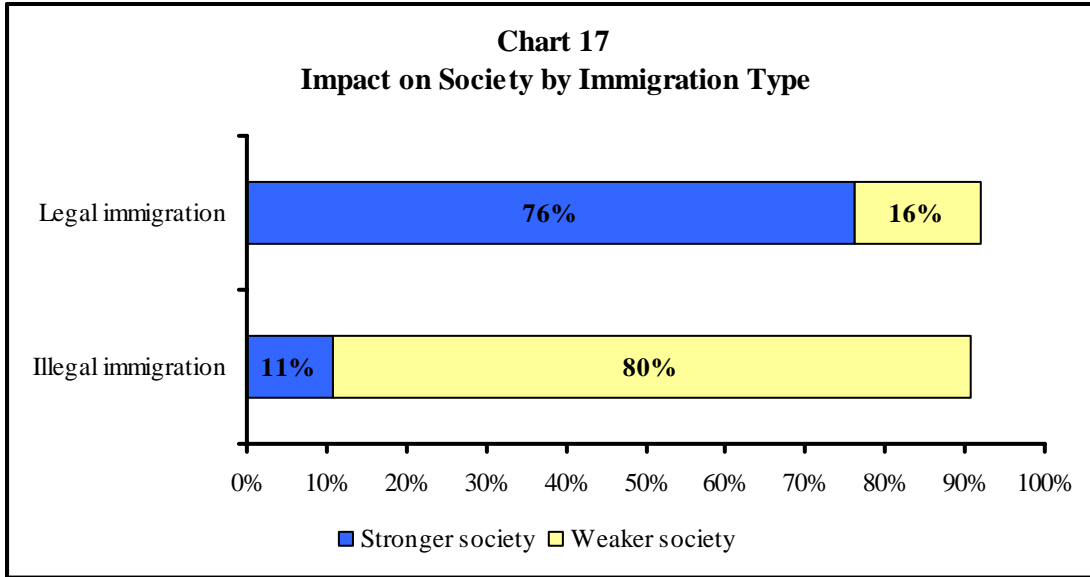
In order to gauge why respondents believed that illegal immigration is a problem, they were asked a follow-up question.



“People view problems with illegal immigration differently: some are concerned about jobs and the economy, some are concerned about terrorism and homeland security and some are concerned about its impacts on American Culture? Which of these comes closest to how you see the issue?”

Concerns about illegal immigration’s impact on jobs and the economy were cited most often (39%) as the reason why respondents saw illegal immigration as a problem. Twenty-seven percent (27%) thought that illegal immigration is a concern as far as terrorism and our national security is concerned, and 19% were of the belief that illegal immigration is a problem due to its impacts on American culture.

In an attempt to clarify respondent opinions on immigration to this country the respondents were asked two separate questions about immigration’s impact on society in the United States. A clear distinction was made between legal immigration and illegal immigration.



*“This question is about immigrants or visitors who are in this country **legally**. That is the U.S. Government is aware of, and has approved of their entry into the United States.*

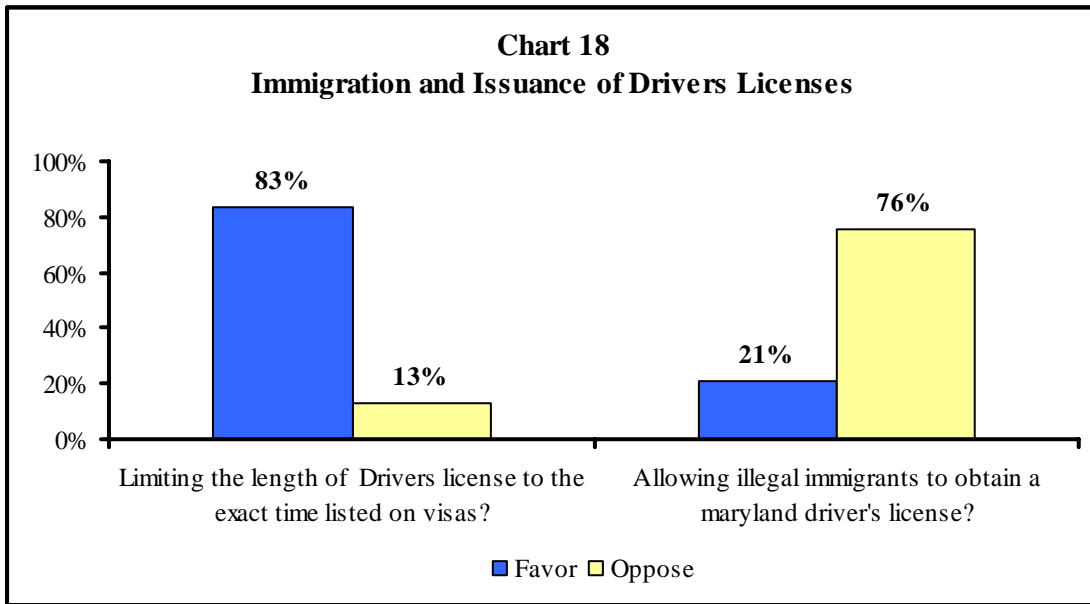
*In general do you think **legal** immigration to the United States leads to the United States having a stronger society or a weaker society?”*

*“This question is about immigrants or visitors who are in this country **illegally**. That is the U.S. Government is not aware of, and has not approved of their entry into the United States.*

*In general do you think **illegal** immigration to the United States leads to the United States having a stronger society or a weaker society?”*

Respondents overwhelmingly believe that legal immigration into the United States makes our society stronger. Only 16% of those surveyed were of the opinion that legal immigration makes our society weaker. Juxtaposed to these results are the findings that 80% of the respondents believe that illegal immigration makes our society weaker.

The next few questions asked respondents their opinions on immigrants obtaining Maryland State Drivers License.



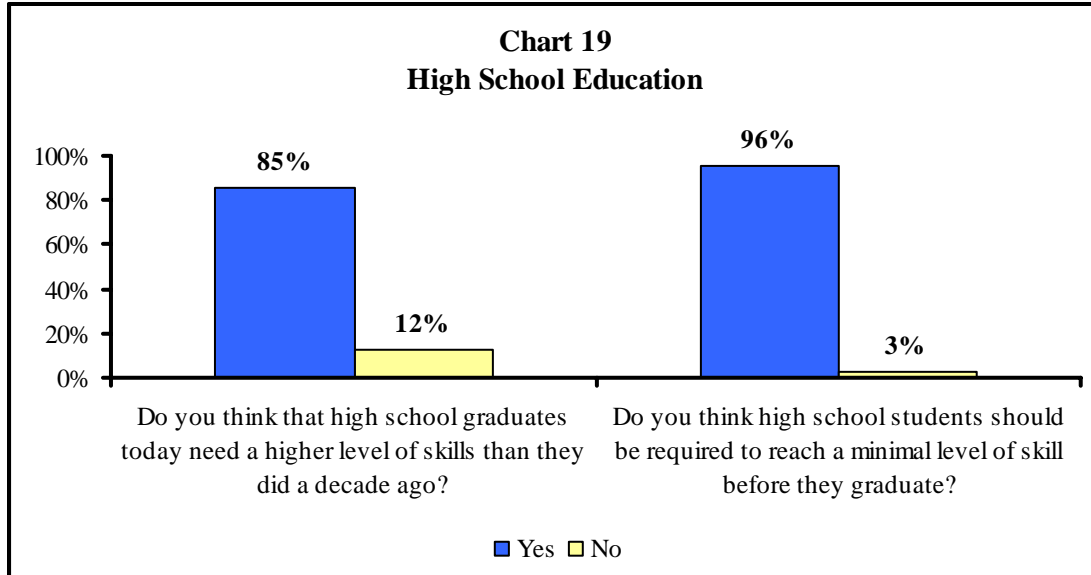
<p><i>“Currently driver's licenses for people who are in the United States legally are issued for five years regardless of the length of their legal visit. Would you favor or oppose limiting the length of Drivers license to the exact time listed on their visas?”</i></p>	<p><i>“Would you favor or oppose allowing illegal immigrants to obtain Maryland Driver's licenses?”</i></p>
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Survey respondents overwhelmingly favor (83%) limiting the length of a driver’s license to the duration of the visitors legal stay under their visa. By the same token, 76% of the respondents were opposed to issuing a driver’s license to illegal immigrants. Given these responses it comes as no surprise that when asked *“Should proof of U.S. Citizenship be required to obtain a Maryland Driver's License?”* 72% of the respondents said “yes”.

The issue of immigration for Marylanders appears to be of increasing concern. This concern may be further defined as an issue of illegal immigration, and not one of immigration in general. To the contrary Marylanders overwhelmingly believe that legal immigration is a positive for our society. At every opportunity the vast majority of survey respondents let their distaste for illegal immigration be known.

EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

The next part of the survey addressed a few issues about high school education in the state of Maryland.

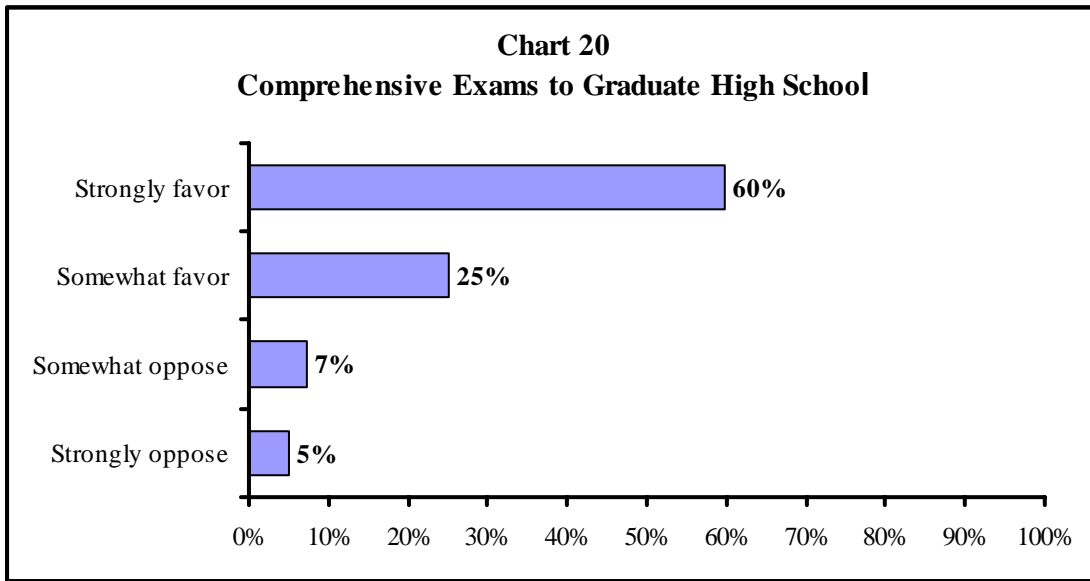


“Do you think high school graduates today need a higher level of skills either for college or a job than they did a decade ago?”

“Do you think high school students should be required to reach a minimum level of skill in English, math, and other academic subjects before they can graduate?”

There is a strong belief among survey respondents that high school students today need a higher level of skill for college or for employment than high school students of a decade ago. There was almost unanimous support (96%) that high school students be required to reach a minimal level of skill in subjects like English and math.

As a follow-up to the minimal requirement question, respondents were asked a more specific question about the enforcement of such a requirement.

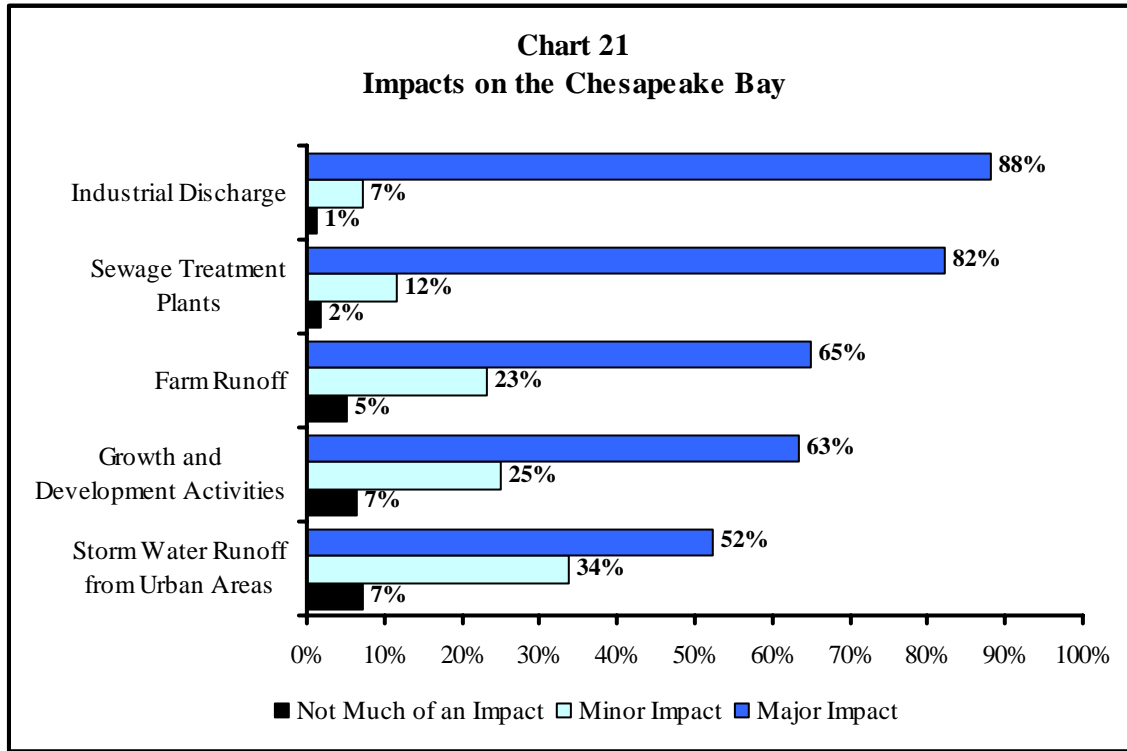


“Maryland and 24 other states do or soon will require high school students to take and pass a series of tests on material that they have been taught in key academic subjects in order to be eligible for a high school diploma. Please tell me how you feel about this requirement.”

When respondents were given the specific example of enforcing a minimal skill requirement through comprehensive exams support for the proposal appears to wane when compared to the idea of minimal requirement alone. Notwithstanding this fact, support for students taking and passing a series of tests is strongly favored by 60% of the survey respondents.

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

The Chesapeake Bay plays an important part in the economic and recreational vitality of our state. Surveyed participants were read a list of possible threats to the Chesapeake Bay and asked to classify their potential impact on the Bay.



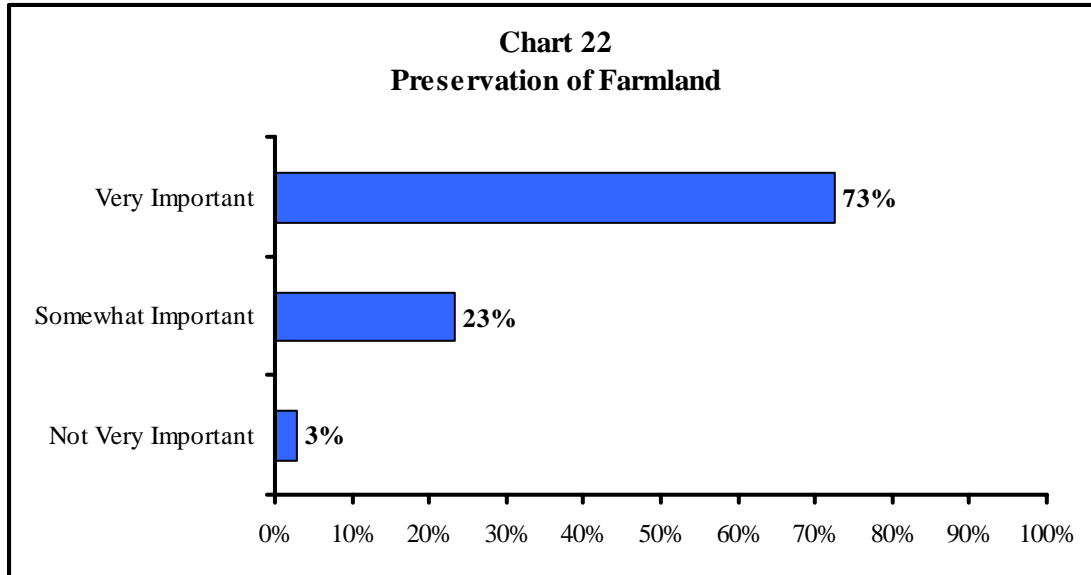
“Next, I’m going to read you a list of possible threats to the Chesapeake Bay. For each, please tell me if you think if it has a major impact, a minor impact, or not much of an impact at all on the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.”

A vast majority (88%) of the respondents identified industrial discharge and sewage treatment (88%) as posing the most serious threats to the health of the Bay. A large percentage of respondents also perceived farm run off (65%), growth and development (63%), and storm run off from urban areas (52%) as possible threats. These percentages, however, are still significantly lower than the percentages for industrial discharge and sewage treatment plants. These results have remained consistent over the past few years, with any changes within the margin of error of the survey.

The results of the survey demonstrate that Maryland residents are sensitive to the various ecological pressures that face the Chesapeake Bay. Whether or not Maryland citizens fully understand how these various aspects interact with one another and the environment is less clear.

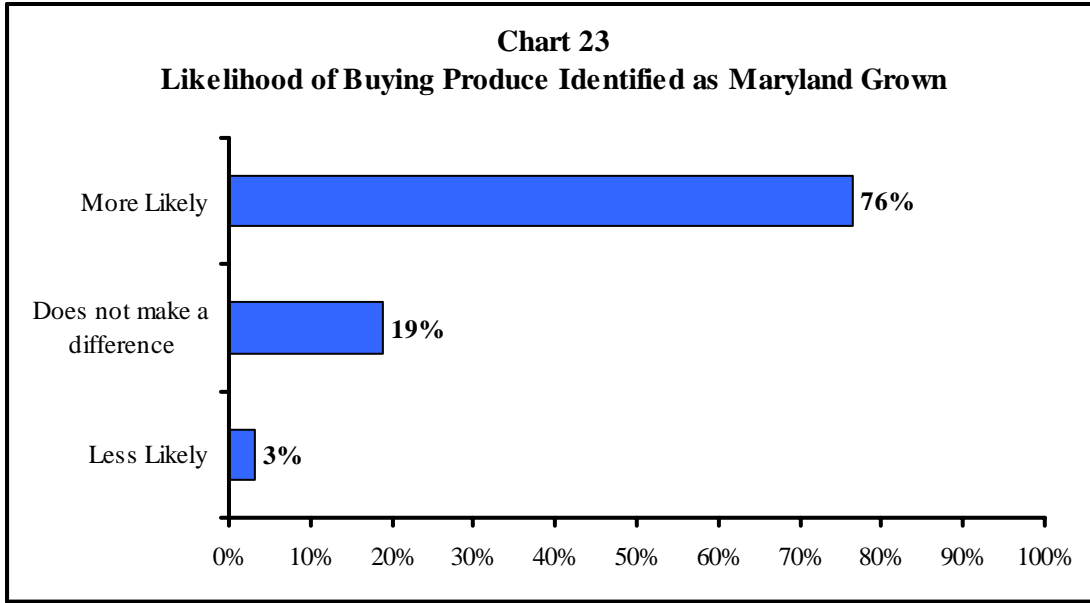
MARYLAND AGRICULTURE

The role of the Maryland farmer in our economy and the importance of farmland preservation are reflected in the behavior and attitudes of most Marylanders.



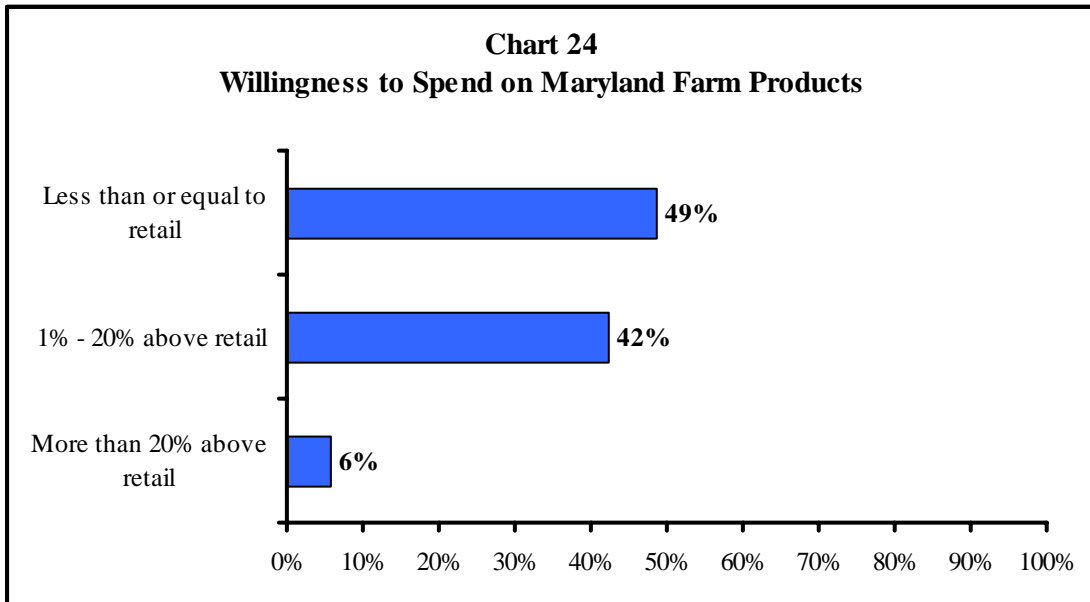
“How important do you think it is for the state to preserve land for farming?”

Ninety-six percent (96%) of those surveyed believed it is at least “somewhat important” that the state preserve land for farming. A full 73% believe it is “very important” that Maryland do so. This is an increase of 20% compared to the same question last year. The reasons behind these attitudes have not been measured. Whatever the reasons are, we do know that Marylanders increasingly believe that farms and the products they produce should remain part of our culture and economy.



“Are you more likely to or less likely to select fresh fruit, vegetables or other farm products to purchase in your local grocery store if they are identified as having been grown by a Maryland farmer?”

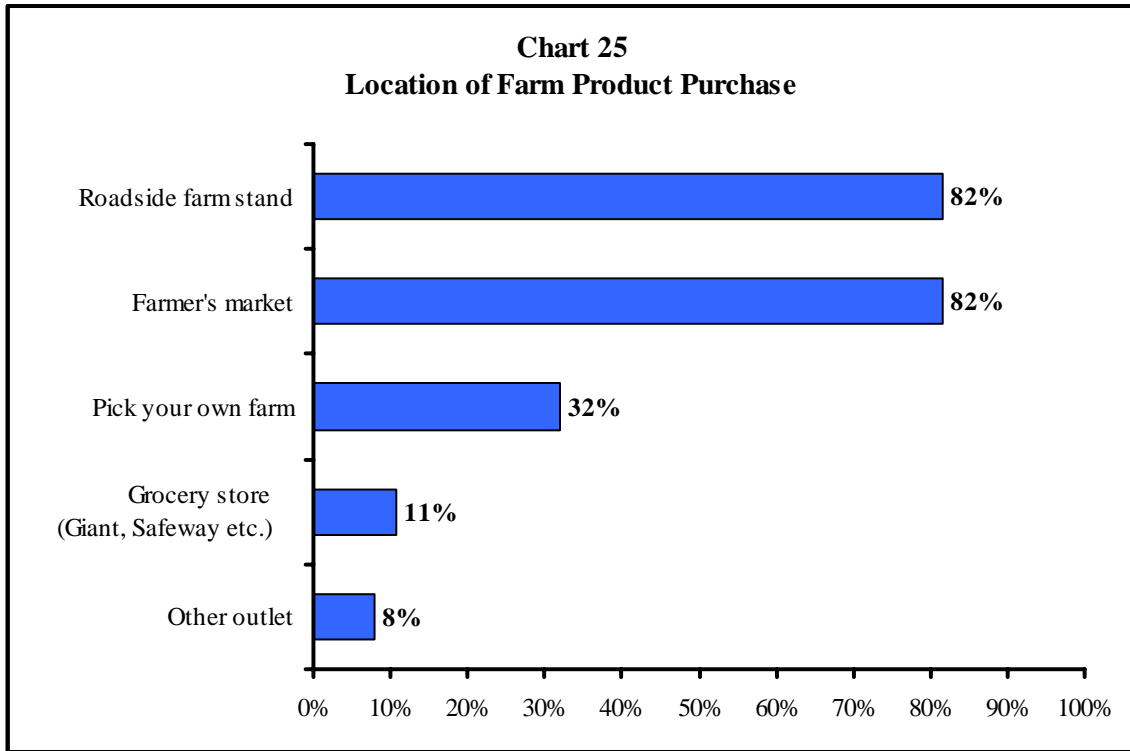
A large majority of Marylanders (76%) are more likely to buy produce that is identified as having been grown by a Maryland farmer.



“How much are you willing to spend on Maryland farm fresh products if you know the products are supporting Maryland farmers and working landscapes?”

Not quite half of the respondents (48%) were willing to pay a least some premium for farm products that would support Maryland farmers.

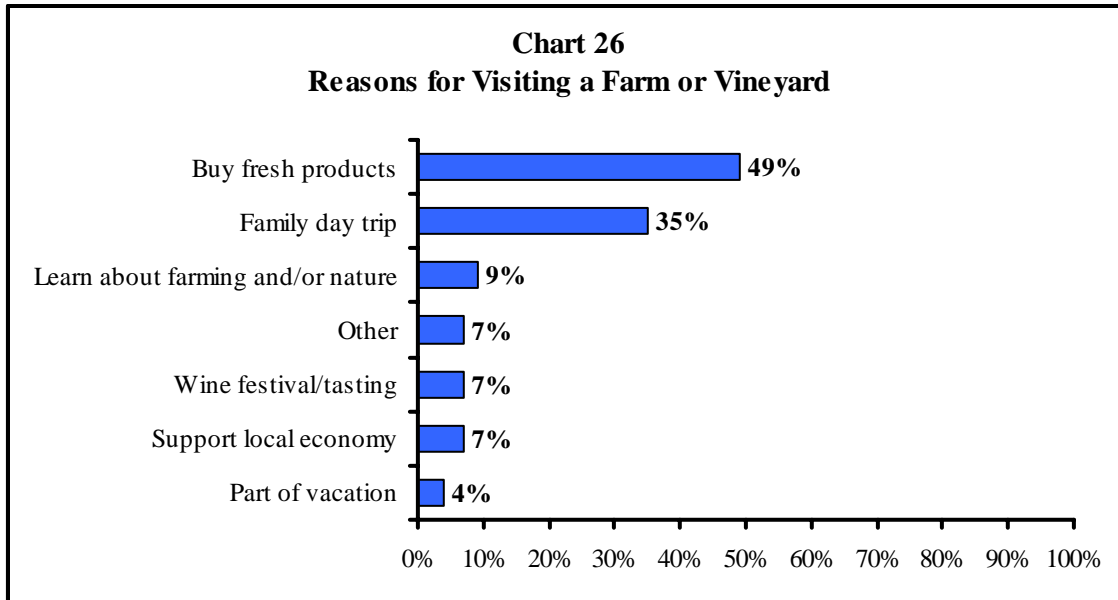
Respondents were next asked about the different places where they or someone in their household purchased a farm product from Maryland farmers. Respondents were able to select as many categories as applied.



“In the past year, have you or others in your household purchased a farm product directly from a Maryland farmer at a ...”

Roadside farm stands and farmer’s markets are by far the most popular venues for Marylanders with 82% of the respondents stating that they had visited each in the past year.

Respondents were asked if they had visited a Maryland farm or winery in the past year. The 46% who stated they had visited a farm or winery in the past year were asked the reason for their visit. Respondents were able to select more than one category, and as such totals will not equal 100%.



“What were your reasons for visiting a farm or vineyard?”

Not quite half of the respondents (49%) visited Maryland farms or vineyards to purchase fresh products. Family day trips were also relatively popular reasons people visited Maryland farms or vineyards.

TABLE 2.
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	Male	49%
	Female	51%
Race	White	73%
	Black	19%
	Hispanic	2%
	Other	4%
	Refused	2%
Education	< than High School	3%
	High School Grad/GED	22%
	Some College/Tech School	23%
	College Graduate	26%
	Graduate or Professional School	26%
Party	Democrat	48%
	Republican	27%
	Independent	16%
	Not Registered	5%
	Other	1%
Ideology	Liberal	17%
	Moderate	30%
	Conservative	19%
	Don't think in those terms	32%
Income	<\$25K annual	8%
	\$25K to \$50K	20%
	\$50K to \$100K	33%
	>\$100K	26%
Age	21 years to 30 years	8%
	31 years to 45 years	27%
	46 years to 54 years	21%
	55 years to 64 years	21%
	65 years and older	24%

ENDNOTES

1. 2005 Urban Mobility Report, Shrank & Lomax, Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A&M University
http://tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility_report_2005.
2. Census Transportation Planning Package (CTTP 2000)
Table 1: Profile of Selected 1990 and 2000 Characteristics
Profile: Maryland
<http://transportation.org/ctpp/home/md/MD>.



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