



INSTITUTE OF POLITICS UMBC Poll

Results embargoed until 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22, 2026

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Topics:

- Visitation to Maryland state parks, forests, and public lands
- Interest in types of activities
- Proximity to outdoor recreation opportunities when choosing a place to live
- Views on how to increase visitation to Maryland state parks, forests, and public lands

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 (Baltimore): As part of our mission to support community-engaged research for the betterment of Maryland, the UMBC Institute of Politics collaborated with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to develop survey questions to assess resident perceptions of state-managed parks, forests, and public lands. These questions were included in our statewide poll of **804** Maryland adults (**MOE=+/- 3.5%**) conducted **Tuesday, March 17 to Sunday, March 22, 2026**. Please refer to the methodology statement for information regarding data collection, sample demographics, and the topline results for the questions as worded in the order in which they were administered to respondents.

[Click here for results by demographics.](#)

For previous UMBC Poll results and information about the UMBC Institute of Politics, go to: <https://politics.umbc.edu/>

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Visitation and interest in activities at Maryland state parks, forests, and public lands

Most residents visit one of Maryland's state parks, forests, and public lands at least once a year, with **23 percent** reporting visiting once a month or more. **Seventeen percent** of residents “never” visit state-managed parks, forests, and public lands.

Annual resident visitation to Maryland's state parks, forests, and public lands:

- Several times a month or more: **12 percent**
- About once a month: **11 percent**
- A few times a year: **31 percent**
- Once or twice a year: **26 percent**
- Never: **17 percent**

Residents were asked to rate their level of interest in activities offered at some of Maryland's parks, forests, or other public lands on a scale of 1 to 5. The percentages below represent those rating 4 (very) or 5 (extremely) interested:

- Hiking or walking: **55 percent**
- Picnicking: **45 percent**
- Wildlife and nature viewing and photography: **43 percent**
- Fishing: **32 percent**
- Camping: **31 percent**
- Biking: **29 percent**
- Boating: **29 percent**
- Paddling: **28 percent**
- Target shooting: **25 percent**
- Off-road vehicle riding: **24 percent**
- Horseback riding: **21 percent**
- Hunting: **17 percent**

Proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities is a factor for many Marylanders when choosing a place to live:

- **35 percent** say “major” factor
- **42 percent** say “minor” factor
- **19 percent** say “not” a factor

Residents were asked, “What types of amenities, services, or activities would make you more likely to visit a state park or other state lands this year?” Their open-ended responses were categorized, and these four top themes emerged:

- Improve access or affordability: **12 percent**
- Improve or expand trails, outdoor recreation spaces, and camping sites: **11 percent**
- Expand family and group social activities and places: **11 percent**
- Improve facilities, maintenance, and safety: **10 percent**

The following are some verbatim responses:

“More events for children using their hands for environmental and scientific purposes.”

“Access to beaches, our state beaches are small and far away.”

“I’m a civil war buff...and revolutionary war...historical value.”

“Senior friendly! High benches for the hip/knees. Feeling safe.”

“Well-maintained hiking trails, more dog parks, more trails open to dogs/dog walking.”

“Cleaner restrooms. I am specifically going to say baby changing stations, that they are easily accessible, functioning, and clean.”

“Good places to eat. Good areas with shade. Clean and well taken care of.”

“More parks that are more accessible for disabled and autistic children.”

“I would love to see more activities that help people go into nature like free days.”

“Offer free programs, like yoga, movies. Anything to get people outside and moving and gather as a community.”

The UMBC Institute of Politics thanks the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for this collaborative opportunity. We hope this survey data proves useful in helping our state government better serve the people of Maryland.

Methodology Statement

The UMBC Poll is conducted under the auspices of the UMBC Institute of Politics (IoP) and is funded by the UMBC College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

The UMBC Poll surveyed **804** Maryland adults, including **731** registered voters, from **Tuesday, March 17 to Sunday, March 22, 2026**. The poll was conducted by live interviewers and text-to-web utilizing a dual-frame (landline and cell phone) random sample stratified by county.

- Text-to-web: **67 percent**
- Live-caller cell phone: **25 percent**
- Live-caller landline: **8 percent**

Interviews were conducted from 1 to 8 p.m., and interviewers attempted to reach respondents with working phone numbers up to 5 times. Braun Research provided the sample of telephone numbers and the data collection.

There is a 95 percent probability that the survey results have the following percentage point sampling error from the actual population distribution for any given survey question:

- MOE=**+/-3.5%** for the sample of **804** Maryland adults.
- MOE=**+/-3.6%** for the sample of **731** Maryland registered voters.

The margin of sampling error is higher for subgroups and is not adjusted for design effects. Like all public opinion polls, the UMBC Poll is also subject to non-sampling error, including non-response bias, question-order effects, and question-wording effects. The topline results include the questions as worded in the order in which they were administered to respondents.

Mileah Kromer, Director of the UMBC Institute of Politics, and Ian Anson, Associate Director, analyze the data collected by the UMBC Poll. Under their supervision, research assistants Trisha Sirsat, Audrey Grutzik, and Sofia Cabrera support all aspects of the IoP's work as part of UMBC's commitment to innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement.

The UMBC Poll is committed to methodological transparency. If you have questions about the poll's methodology, contact Mileah Kromer, Director, UMBC Institute of Politics, at mkromer@umbc.edu.

Sample Demographics (in percent) and Weighting

The UMBC Poll data are weighted by gender, age, race, geography, and educational attainment to represent the Maryland adult population targets established by the most recent 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates from the U.S. Census. Results are reported as column percentages and may not sum to exactly 100 due to weighting and rounding.

		Maryland population parameter	Maryland Adults n=804 (+/-3.5%)	Maryland Voters n=731 (+/-3.6%)
Gender	Male	48	48	49
	Female	52	52	51
Age	18-24	11	11	11
	25-34	17	17	16
	35-44	17	17	18
	45-54	16	16	16
	55-64	17	17	18
	65+	21	21	22
Race	White	50	51	50
	Black	29	30	29
	Hispanic/Latino	10	10	11
	Asian	7	6	6
	All other	4	3	3
Education	High school diploma or less	34	33	31
	Some college or associate's degree	26	26	27
	Bachelor's degree	22	20	21
	Graduate or professional degree	18	21	22
Geography	Montgomery County	17	17	17
	Prince George's County	15	15	15
	Baltimore County	14	14	14
	Anne Arundel County	10	10	10
	Baltimore City	9	9	9
	Central Region	13	13	13
	Western Region	9	9	8
	Eastern Shore Region	8	8	7
	Southern Region	6	6	6

Central region: Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties

Western region: Allegany, Garrett, Frederick, and Washington Counties

Eastern Shore region: Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties

Southern region: Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties

Other sample demographics (in percent)

The data is not weighted by these characteristics.

		Maryland population parameter	Maryland Adults n=804 (+/-3.5%)	Maryland Voters n=731 (+/-3.6%)
Party*	Democrat	51	–	50
	Republican	24	–	26
	Unaffiliated	23	–	22
	Other	2	–	2
Ideology	Conservative	–	28	28
	Moderate	–	49	49
	Progressive	–	22	23
Income	Under \$40,000	16	22	21
	\$40,000 to under \$75,000	18	25	25
	\$75,000 to under \$125,000	24	24	24
	\$125,000 or more	42	29	30

*The “party” population parameter established by the Maryland State Board of Elections Voter Registration Activity Report (February 2026).

Question design codes:

- **Bracketed items []**: Items in brackets in the questions are administered in a randomized order.
- **Probe (p)**: Response options that include a (p) indicate the use of a probe maneuver to determine a respondent’s intensity of expressed opinion. Example: Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of <item>? Would you say very favorable/unfavorable?
- **Open-ended**: Open-ended questions have no defined set of response options.
- **Volunteer (v)**: Response options that include a (v) indicate that the respondent offered a response not read to them in the question.

The UMBC Institute of Politics is a member of the [American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative](#) and provides the required elements of disclosure with every release.



Topline Results

The topline results below represent the sample of **804** Maryland adults (MOE=+/-3.5%). [Click here for results by demographics](#). Results are reported as column percentages and may not sum to exactly 100 due to weighting and rounding.

Label	Question	Maryland Adults n=804 (+/-3.5%)
Q: VISIT	Changing topics, in the past 12 months, how often have you visited any parks, forests, or other public lands managed and operated by the state of Maryland?	Percent
	Never	17
	Once or twice a year	26
	A few times a year	31
	About once a month	11
	Several times a month or more	12
	Don't know (v)	3
	Refused (v)	0
Q: ACTIVITY	I'm going to read you a list of activities offered at some of Maryland's parks, forests, or other public lands. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "not interested" and 5 means "extremely interested," how interested are you in each activity?	
Q: BIKE to Q: WILDLIFE were administered to respondents in a randomized order.		
Q: BIKE	<i>Biking</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	39
	Somewhat interested (3)	30
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	29
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	0
Q: BOAT	<i>Boating</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	42
	Somewhat interested (3)	27
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	29
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: CAMP	<i>Camping</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	46
	Somewhat interested (3)	21
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	31
	Don't know (v)	2
	Refused (v)	0
Q: FISH	<i>Fishing</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	47
	Somewhat interested (3)	19
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	32
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1
Q: HIKE	<i>Hiking or walking</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	18
	Somewhat interested (3)	25
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	55
	Don't know (v)	2
	Refused (v)	0
Q: HORSE	<i>Horseback riding</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	58
	Somewhat interested (3)	19
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	21
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	0
Q: HUNT	<i>Hunting</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	71
	Somewhat interested (3)	11
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	17
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	1

Q: TARGET	<i>Target shooting</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	58
	Somewhat interested (3)	15
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	25
	Don't know (v)	2
	Refused (v)	0
Q: OFFROAD	<i>Off-road vehicle riding</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	59
	Somewhat interested (3)	15
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	24
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	0
Q: WATER	<i>Paddling (canoe, kayak, stand-up paddleboard)</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	47
	Somewhat interested (3)	24
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	28
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	0
Q: PICNIC	<i>Picnicking</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	25
	Somewhat interested (3)	29
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	45
	Don't know (v)	0
	Refused (v)	0
Q: WILDLIFE	<i>Wildlife and nature viewing and photography</i>	Percent
	Not or slightly interested (1 or 2)	29
	Somewhat interested (3)	26
	Extremely or very interested (4 or 5)	43
	Don't know (v)	1
	Refused (v)	0

Q: OUTDOOR	How much of a factor is proximity to outdoor recreation opportunities when choosing a place to live: [not a factor, minor factor, or major factor] ?	Percent
	Not a factor	19
	Minor factor	42
	Major factor	35
	Don't know (v)	3
	Refused (v)	1
Q: AMENITY	In your own words, what types of amenities, services, or activities would make you more likely to visit a state park or other state lands this year? [open-ended]	Percent
Coded responses:	Trails, outdoor recreation, and camping	11
	Facilities, maintenance, and safety	10
	Water activities	6
	Events, programs, and educational activities	4
	Family and group social activities and places	11
	Access and affordability	12
	Other	16
	Nothing (v)	6
	Don't know (v)	21
	Refused (v)	3



Our Mission

UMBC is a dynamic public research university integrating teaching, research and service to benefit the citizens of Maryland. As an Honors University, the campus offers academically talented students a strong undergraduate liberal arts foundation that prepares them for graduate and professional study, entry into the workforce, and community service and leadership.

UMBC emphasizes science, engineering, information technology, human services and public policy at the graduate level. UMBC contributes to the economic development of the State and the region through entrepreneurial initiatives, workforce training, K- 16 partnerships, and technology commercialization in collaboration with public agencies and the corporate community. UMBC is dedicated to cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility and lifelong learning.

Our Vision

Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.