



# INSTITUTE OF POLITICS UMBC Poll

**Results embargoed until 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2026**

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## **Part 1 Topics:**

- Most important issue facing the state
- Affordability of household expenses
- Reactions to monthly household electricity bill
- Financial and quality-of-life concerns

**Tuesday, March 31, 2026 (Baltimore):** The UMBC Poll surveyed **804** Maryland adults from **Tuesday, March 17 to Sunday, March 22, 2026**. Of the **804** Maryland adults surveyed (**MOE=+/- 3.5%**), **731** indicated they were registered voters (**MOE=+/3.6%**). 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.](#)

The UMBC Institute of Politics will release **Part 2** of this survey on **Wednesday, April 1, at 12:01 am** and **Part 3** on **Thursday, April 2**.

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

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## **Most important issue facing the state**

Marylanders were asked to describe the most important issue facing the state in their own words. Responses were categorized by the UMBC Institute of Politics' student research assistants, and the top issues include:

- Cost of living, affordability, or prices: **33 percent**
- Taxes, spending, or state budget: **15 percent**
- Politicians, Trump, federal government, or state government: **15 percent**
- Economy or jobs: **8 percent**
- Energy or utility costs: **6 percent**
- Crime, public safety, or substance abuse: **6 percent**

Note: The "energy or utility costs" category includes responses that specifically mentioned their electric bill or overall cost of energy and utilities. Responses in this category could alternatively be classified under "cost of living, affordability, or prices."

## **Affordability and reactions to their monthly household electricity bill**

Marylanders were asked whether several household expenses have become less affordable, more affordable, or about the same as they were a year ago.

The percentages below show the share of respondents who said each expense has become "less affordable."

- Groceries: **72 percent**
- Gasoline: **71 percent**
- Electricity bills: **69 percent**
- Housing: **65 percent**
- Entertainment and recreation activities: **59 percent**
- Healthcare, including prescription drugs and medications: **57 percent**

Marylanders were also asked to describe, in their own words, their reaction to their household electricity bill over the past few months.

Their responses were categorized, and some representative, verbatim responses are provided below:

Describes their high or rising electricity costs: **35 percent**

- *"It's been going up consistently."*
- *"The electricity bill has skyrocketed over the last few months. A normally \$250 bill is \$700+. Super unaffordable."*
- *"It has been much higher than in previous years."*

Describes as manageable, okay, or not concerning: **17 percent**

- *"It has been fine. I have a super-efficient home."*
- *"It has increased somewhat, but it's manageable."*
- *"It's more or less in the same ballpark, but I have definitely gotten more conservative. I'll throw on a jacket in the house."*

Expresses anger, outrage, or other strong negative emotions: **13 percent**

- *"Angry and confused. I don't know why it's suddenly so much higher despite my usage being the same."*
- *"Disgusted. Even when I cut down on electricity, the bill still increases."*
- *"Absolutely insane, there is no reason utilities should be this high."*

Expresses worry, concern, frustration, or stress: **13 percent**

- *"I am afraid it is getting too expensive."*
- *"Concerned, it's challenging. I'm scared it's going to go up."*
- *"I'm pretty worried about being able to keep up with my electric bill along with other bills as well. It has been a struggle."*

## Financial and quality-of-life concerns of Marylanders

Marylanders were asked how worried they were about a series of personal financial concerns.

The percentages below show the share of respondents who said they are "very" or "extremely" worried about each:

- Healthcare and medical costs: **50 percent**
- Saving enough for retirement: **46 percent**
- Being able to afford a home: **40 percent**
- Affording groceries and food: **39 percent**
- Paying your utility bills each month: **39 percent**
- Paying off your debts: **35 percent**
- Losing your job or not being able to find a good job: **34 percent**

Additionally, respondents were asked how worried they were about quality-of-life issues beyond financial concerns.

The percentages below show the share of respondents who said they are "very" or "extremely" worried about each.

- The future of the country: **63 percent**
- The safety of your community: **30 percent**
- The well-being of your family: **29 percent**
- Your physical health: **23 percent**
- Your mental health: **21 percent**
- The quality of your personal relationships: **15 percent**

"Affordability is the defining concern for Marylanders right now and over the past year. Cost-of-living issues top the list of what residents say matters most, and roughly seven in ten say that groceries, gasoline, and electric bills are less affordable now than they were a year ago," said Mileah Kromer, Director of the UMBC Institute of Politics. "The reaction to opening their monthly electric bill is a mix of anger, concern, and frustration, along with a clear awareness that they are paying more for the same amount of energy."

## 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](mailto: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<br>population<br>parameter | Maryland<br>Adults<br>n=804<br>(+/-3.5%) | Maryland<br>Voters<br>n=731<br>(+/-3.6%) |
|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Gender</b>    | Male                               | 48                                  | 48                                       | 49                                       |
|                  | Female                             | 52                                  | 52                                       | 51                                       |
| <b>Age</b>       | 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                                       |
| <b>Race</b>      | White                              | 50                                  | 51                                       | 50                                       |
|                  | Black                              | 29                                  | 30                                       | 29                                       |
|                  | Hispanic/Latino                    | 10                                  | 10                                       | 11                                       |
|                  | Asian                              | 7                                   | 6  | 6  |
|                  | All other                          | 4                                   | 3  | 3  |
| <b>Education</b> | 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                                       |
| <b>Geography</b> | 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<br>population<br>parameter | Maryland<br>Adults<br>n=804<br>(+/-3.5%) | Maryland<br>Voters<br>n=731<br>(+/-3.6%) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Party*</b>   | Democrat                    | 51                                  | --                                       | 50                                       |
|                 | Republican                  | 24                                  | --                                       | 26                                       |
|                 | Unaffiliated                | 23                                  | --                                       | 22                                       |
|                 | Other                       | 2                                   | --                                       | 2  |
| <b>Ideology</b> | Conservative                | --                                  | 28                                       | 28                                       |
|                 | Moderate                    | --                                  | 49                                       | 49                                       |
|                 | Progressive                 | --                                  | 22                                       | 23                                       |
| <b>Income</b>   | 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<br>n=804<br>(+/-3.5%) |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Q: ISSUE</b>   | To get started, what is the biggest issue facing Maryland residents today? <i>[open-ended]</i>   | <b>Percent</b>                        |
| <i>Coded responses:</i>   | Cost of living, affordability, or prices   | 33                                    |
|   | Taxes, spending, or state budget   | 15                                    |
|   | Politicians, Trump, federal govt, or state govt  | 15                                    |
|   | Economy or jobs  | 8                                     |
|   | Energy or utility costs  | 6                                     |
|   | Crime, public safety, or substance abuse   | 6                                     |
|   | Healthcare   | 2                                     |
|   | Transportation or infrastructure   | 2                                     |
|   | Education  | 1                                     |
|   | Other  | 3                                     |
|   | Don't know (v)   | 8                                     |
|   | Refused (v)  | 1                                     |
| <b>Q: WORRY</b>   | Next, I'm going to read some personal financial issues. For each one, please tell me how worried you are about it: <b>[not at all, slightly, somewhat, very, or extremely]</b> |                                       |
| <b>Q: LOSE to Q: RETIREMENT were administered to respondents in a randomized order.</b> |  |                                       |
| <b>Q: LOSE</b>  | <i>Losing your job or not being able to find a good job</i>  | <b>Percent</b>                        |
|   | Not at all worried   | 32                                    |
|   | Slightly worried   | 13                                    |
|   | Moderately worried   | 14                                    |
|   | Very worried   | 14                                    |
|   | Extremely worried  | 20                                    |
|   | Don't know   | 3                                     |
|   | Refused  | 4                                     |

|                  |                                     |                |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Q: FOOD</b>   | <i>Affording groceries and food</i> | <b>Percent</b> |
|                  | Not at all worried                  | 21             |
|                  | Slightly worried                    | 16             |
|                  | Moderately worried                  | 22             |
|                  | Very worried                        | 17             |
|                  | Extremely worried                   | 22             |
|                  | Don't know                          | 1              |
|                  | Refused                             | 1              |
| <b>Q: AFFORD</b> | <i>Being able to afford a home</i>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|                  | Not at all worried                  | 28             |
|                  | Slightly worried                    | 11             |
|                  | Moderately worried                  | 15             |
|                  | Very worried                        | 14             |
|                  | Extremely worried                   | 26             |
|                  | Don't know                          | 3              |
|                  | Refused                             | 2              |
| <b>Q: MED</b>    | <i>Healthcare and medical costs</i> | <b>Percent</b> |
|                  | Not at all worried                  | 15             |
|                  | Slightly worried                    | 15             |
|                  | Moderately worried                  | 18             |
|                  | Very worried                        | 24             |
|                  | Extremely worried                   | 26             |
|                  | Don't know                          | 1              |
|                  | Refused                             | 1              |
| <b>Q: DEBTS</b>  | <i>Paying off your debts</i>        | <b>Percent</b> |
|                  | Not at all worried                  | 27             |
|                  | Slightly worried                    | 17             |
|                  | Moderately worried                  | 19             |
|                  | Very worried                        | 14             |
|                  | Extremely worried                   | 21             |
|                  | Don't know                          | 1              |
|                  | Refused                             | 2              |

|   |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| <b>Q: PAY</b>   | <i>Paying your utility bills each month</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Not at all worried  | 24             |
|   | Slightly worried  | 16             |
|   | Moderately worried  | 19             |
|   | Very worried  | 17             |
|   | Extremely worried   | 22             |
|   | Don't know  | 1              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: RETIREMENT</b>  | <i>Saving enough for retirement</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Not at all worried  | 19             |
|   | Slightly worried  | 12             |
|   | Moderately worried  | 18             |
|   | Very worried  | 17             |
|   | Extremely worried   | 29             |
|   | Don't know  | 3              |
|   | Refused   | 2              |
| <b>Q: LIFE</b>  | Moving on to other quality of life concerns. For each one, please tell me how worried you are about it: <b>[not at all, slightly, somewhat, very, or extremely]</b> : |                |
| <i>Q: PHYSICAL to Q: FUTURE were administered to respondents in a randomized order.</i> |   |                |
| <b>Q: PHYSICAL</b>  | <i>Your physical health</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Not at all worried  | 25             |
|   | Slightly worried  | 22             |
|   | Moderately worried  | 28             |
|   | Very worried  | 11             |
|   | Extremely worried   | 12             |
|   | Don't know  | 1              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: MENTAL</b>  | <i>Your mental health</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Not at all worried  | 36             |
|   | Slightly worried  | 20             |
|   | Moderately worried  | 21             |
|   | Very worried  | 11             |
|   | Extremely worried   | 10             |
|   | Don't know  | 1              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |

|                     |   |                |
|---------------------|---|----------------|
| <b>Q: PERSONAL</b>  | <i>The quality of your personal relationships</i> | <b>Percent</b> |
|                     | Not at all worried                                | 46             |
|                     | Slightly worried                                  | 16             |
|                     | Moderately worried                                | 19             |
|                     | Very worried                                      | 7              |
|                     | Extremely worried                                 | 8              |
|                     | Don't know  | 1              |
|                     | Refused   | 2              |
| <b>Q: WELLBEING</b> | <i>The well-being of your family</i>              | <b>Percent</b> |
|                     | Not at all worried                                | 19             |
|                     | Slightly worried                                  | 20             |
|                     | Moderately worried                                | 29             |
|                     | Very worried                                      | 13             |
|                     | Extremely worried                                 | 16             |
|                     | Don't know  | 1              |
|                     | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: SAFE</b>      | <i>The safety of your community</i>               | <b>Percent</b> |
|                     | Not at all worried                                | 19             |
|                     | Slightly worried                                  | 21             |
|                     | Moderately worried                                | 28             |
|                     | Very worried                                      | 15             |
|                     | Extremely worried                                 | 15             |
|                     | Don't know  | 1              |
|                     | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: FUTURE</b>    | <i>The future of the country</i>                  | <b>Percent</b> |
|                     | Not at all worried                                | 5              |
|                     | Slightly worried                                  | 10             |
|                     | Moderately worried                                | 20             |
|                     | Very worried                                      | 29             |
|                     | Extremely worried                                 | 34             |
|                     | Don't know  | 1              |
|                     | Refused   | 1              |

|   |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| <b>Q: AFFORD</b>  | Changing the topic to affordability, I'm going to read you a list of expenses. For each one, please tell me whether it's become [ <b>less affordable, more affordable</b> ], or whether it's about the same as it was a year ago. |                |
| <i>Q: GROCERY to Q: ENTERTAINMENT were administered to respondents in a randomized order.</i> |   |                |
| <b>Q: GROCERY</b>   | <i>Groceries</i>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Less affordable   | 72             |
|   | About the same  | 18             |
|   | More affordable   | 7              |
|   | Don't know / Not applicable   | 2              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: HOUSE</b>   | <i>Housing</i>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Less affordable   | 65             |
|   | About the same  | 23             |
|   | More affordable   | 6              |
|   | Don't know / Not applicable   | 4              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: HEALTH</b>  | <i>Healthcare, including prescription drugs and medications</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Less affordable   | 57             |
|   | About the same  | 30             |
|   | More affordable   | 8              |
|   | Don't know / Not applicable   | 3              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: ELECTRIC</b>  | <i>Electricity bills</i>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Less affordable   | 69             |
|   | About the same  | 22             |
|   | More affordable   | 6              |
|   | Don't know / Not applicable   | 2              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: GAS</b>   | <i>Gasoline</i>   | <b>Percent</b> |
|   | Less affordable   | 71             |
|   | About the same  | 17             |
|   | More affordable   | 7              |
|   | Don't know / Not applicable   | 4              |
|   | Refused   | 1              |

| <b>Q: ENTERTAIN</b>     | <i>Entertainment and recreation activities</i>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|
|                         | Less affordable   | 59             |
|                         | About the same  | 31             |
|                         | More affordable   | 5              |
|                         | Don't know / Not applicable   | 5              |
|                         | Refused   | 1              |
| <b>Q: BILL</b>          | In just a word or two, what has been your reaction to or feelings about your household electricity bill over the past few months? <b>[open-ended]</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| <i>Coded responses:</i> | Describes high or rising electricity costs  | 35             |
|                         | Describes as manageable, okay, or not concerning  | 17             |
|                         | Expresses anger, outrage, or other strong negative emotions   | 13             |
|                         | Expresses worry, concern, frustration, or stress  | 13             |
|                         | Expresses shock, disbelief, or surprise   | 5              |
|                         | Blames politicians, government, or utility company  | 4              |
|                         | Other   | 4              |
|                         | Don't know  | 6              |
|                         | Refused   | 2              |



## **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.