

# Maryland poll: Traditional media and internet more trusted than social media for research news

May 11 2011

---

Most Maryland residents trust the health and medical research information provided by traditional media—newspapers (77%), television (71%), magazines (68%), radio (66%)—and the Internet (also 66%), according to a new state poll commissioned by Research!America. Social media fared less well, with 51% saying social media is not trustworthy for health and medical research issues. Fewer than 20% use their cell phone or other mobile device to find health information.

The Maryland poll findings were released today at a forum on science journalism at the National Press Club convened by Research!America, Pfizer Inc and the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, School of [Public Health](#) and School of Public Policy.

"The modern media landscape has become very complex, which creates many more opportunities to communicate with many more people of all ages and backgrounds," said Kevin Klose, dean, Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland. "At the same time, this presents a challenge in communicating about complex issues such as medical and health research findings."

One such challenge is public trust in [news](#) sources and spokespeople. Marylanders largely trust journalists as spokespeople for science news (59% see them as trustworthy), but even more so the state's residents

trust science news coming from scientists (88%), health care professionals (86%) and nonprofit and voluntary health organizations (75%).

A majority (62%) trust the scientific community as much today as they did five years ago. Slightly fewer (54%) trust the media as much now as five years ago. Just 27% trust elected officials as much now as five years ago; 63% say less.

While 40% say they hear or read more about research in the news than five years ago, two-thirds say they would like to see more news coverage of science and research.

Strong public appetite for more science news presents an opportunity and a challenge for scientists as well as journalists.

"Science changes our lives, and yet that is rarely seen as news. How do we make exciting and groundbreaking science more newsworthy?" said Jack Watters, MD, VP for External Medical Affairs at Pfizer Inc and a Research!America board member. "Of course, some of the best science is done when no one is looking, but I'd like to encourage us, as a nation, to look more closely and talk about science."

Further findings from the Maryland poll include:

- 34% cited obesity as the single most important health issue facing Americans today, followed by the cost of health care (17%);
- 94% think education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is important to U.S. competitiveness and future economic prosperity;

- 93% think it is important that elected officials at all levels listen to advice from scientists and public health professionals to address potential health threats;
- 87% say it is important for Maryland to be a leader in science and [medical research](#); and
- 89% say it is important for Maryland to be a leader in public health, prevention and wellness research.

"Marylanders are right on target in identifying the key public health issues facing our state today, and they are well aware of the need for leadership in public health and prevention research," said Robert S. Gold, PhD, DrPH, dean, University of Maryland School of Public Health. "They also see as part of the solution that policy makers must be informed in order to address potential health threats and that we must provide training for Maryland residents and students in these critical areas."

The poll also indicates that Maryland residents see great economic value for their state from research: 83% say spending money on scientific research is important to Maryland's economy, in terms of jobs and incomes; and 90% think it is important for Maryland to create more opportunities for careers in [science](#) and research for its young people.

"In these findings, we see the very high priority Maryland residents place on medical and health research and news coverage of research—and the very high esteem in which they hold scientists as sources for research news," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "As public trust in research news coverage increases, public support for life-saving research will increase. Our health, our well-being, our economy and our global competitiveness depend on strong support for

research by the public, the news media and elected officials alike."

About the poll: Research!America commissioned Charlton Research Company to conduct an online and phone survey of 804 adults in Maryland in April 2011. The sample is proportionate to the state's demographics, including gender, age and ethnicity, with a theoretical error of  $\pm 3.5\%$ . Demographics and media habits include the following:

- 32% of respondents were age 18-34; 38%, age 35-54; 30%, age 55 or older; and
- News sources they use most frequently include television (69% cited), followed by the Internet/websites (61%), newspapers (40%), radio (27%), magazines (18%) and [social media](#) such as Facebook and Twitter (10%).

**More information:** The poll is available online:  
[www.researchamerica.org/upload ... Djournalismforum.pdf](http://www.researchamerica.org/upload...Djournalismforum.pdf)

Provided by Research!America

Citation: Maryland poll: Traditional media and internet more trusted than social media for research news (2011, May 11) retrieved 25 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2011-05-maryland-poll-traditional-media-internet.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.