

NEWS > POLITICS

# Why did Gov. Wes Moore's approval rating dip? 'Anxiety' and the economy, analysts say

Democrats dismissed the poll as 'silly'



Governor Wes Moore shakes hands with the 2024 Annapolis Pride Parade attendees on Main Street. The annual parade and festival was held last summer. (Paul W. Gillespie/Staff photo)



By **CARSON SWICK**

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A new poll shows **Democratic Gov. Wes Moore** losing ground on his approval ratings in deep-blue Maryland — a downward shift political analysts and elected officials blame on “anxiety” and the economy.

Democrats, meanwhile, are calling the poll “silly.”

Conducted jointly in late July by Blended Public Affairs and lobbying firm Perry Jacobson, the poll asked more than 1,250 Marylanders via text message about a variety of political and economic issues. Of those surveyed, 50% rated Moore's job performance as either “excellent” or “good,” 42% said he was “not so good” or “poor,” and 8% were not sure.

Donna Victoria, Blended's director of research, told The Baltimore Sun that other Democratic governors besides Moore, such as Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, have seen their approval ratings dip among party voters as they look for ways to fight back against Republican President Donald Trump. Moore's approval rating among Democratic poll respondents was just 68%, according to Victoria.

“It's people expressing their anxiety right now and saying, ‘Can't you do something?’” Victoria said of the poll. “It has to do with the economy. I don't think this slight drop has anything to do with Wes Moore's job performance.”

Moore's office declined to comment on the poll, but referred The Baltimore Sun to a statement from the Democratic Governors' Association, which called the poll "silly."

"Here's the numbers that actually matter: Governor Moore has created nearly 100,000 new jobs, unemployment is way down, and Baltimore has seen a 62 percent decrease in murders," the statement reads. "While Donald Trump and national Republicans gut health care and raise costs, Governor Moore is fighting every day for Maryland — and that's why his leadership and record are strongly popular with voters."

## Why the dip? Moore 'raised taxes'

Victoria said Blended's last Maryland poll, which was conducted six months ago, had Moore's approval rating at 54%. Two other polls conducted by Gonzales Research and Media in the past year — in September 2024 and January 2025 — measured the governor's approval at 64% and 61%, respectively.

Flavio Hickel, a political science professor at Washington College, said the decline in Moore's approval rating could be "an artifact of people feeling more negatively about the economy in general."

Only one quarter of poll respondents rated Maryland's economy positively, while two-thirds said they pay too much in state taxes. The state's final fiscal 2026 budget added several new taxes and fees, as Moore and state lawmakers worked to close a \$3 billion deficit.

Hickel noted that the poll featured a higher share of college-educated respondents than the Maryland population overall. He said people with degrees are more likely to pay attention to tax issues and the state's budget process, which proved politically challenging for Moore this year.

“I think it’s likely [higher-educated] folks would be more attentive to tax issues, so that might explain those numbers,” Hickel said.

“Perhaps that would have a trickle-down effect depressing Moore support, but I would also expect more educated folks to break Democratic and support Moore more than less educated.”

John Dedie, a political science professor at the Community College of Baltimore County, said he believes Moore’s true approval rating is a “little higher” than 50% because of the poll’s timing.

“Polling during the summer usually has flaws because people are enjoying summers, they’re not thinking [about] politics as much,” Dedie said.

State Senate Minority Whip Justin Ready, a Republican who represents Carroll and Frederick counties, told The Sun that Moore’s 50% rating could be because he “raised taxes and increased the size of state government” rather than “be serious about getting spending under control long-term.”

As for poll respondents blaming Trump, Ready said that’s likely to happen in a blue state like Maryland.

“Donald Trump didn’t raise their taxes,” he said. “Donald Trump isn’t the reason Maryland is unaffordable.”

## **Moore vs. predecessors**

Moore’s 50% approval rating puts him well behind former Gov. Larry Hogan and on par with former Gov. Martin O’Malley around the same point in their terms. Hogan had a 62% approval rating in September 2017 despite the unpopularity of Trump and national Republicans at the time, while O’Malley had a 48% approval rating in September 2009 during the Great Recession.

House Majority Whip Jazz Lewis, a Prince George's County Democrat, said he isn't concerned about Moore's slipping favorability numbers as Maryland heads toward the 2026 gubernatorial election.

"I think a lot of people are scared and concerned because of what's coming out of Washington, and Maryland's proximity affects us more than other states," said Lewis. "I think the governor is trying to do the best he can in responding to the chaos and [stabilizing] the ship, and I think voters see that."

With regard to Hogan's higher favorability during Trump's first term, Lewis said Republican advisors and courts helped to "contain this chaotic agenda" back then. He said there were no mass layoffs of federal employees or economic instability caused by tariffs in 2017.

"Much of that has been purged. By comparison, Hogan didn't have this experience at all," Lewis said, contrasting the two Trump terms. He added that Moore is "trying to grow our economy outside of the federal government."

Dedie credited the Moore administration's strategy of blaming Trump for the impact of federal workforce cuts on Maryland, but warned voters could lose patience with this approach by November 2026.

"I think they've done a good job of making the case that the things that have happened, at this moment, are out of their control," Dedie said. "But by Election Day next year, they want the problem solved."

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alex@blendedpublicaffairs.com

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*Hannah Gaskill contributed to this article. Have a news tip? Contact Carson Swick at [cswick@baltsun.com](mailto:cswick@baltsun.com).*

2025 > August > 12