Let Me Be Clear: Science Journalism in the Age of the Genome and Twitter

Mary Woolley, President, Research!America
National Press Club, Washington, DC

May 11, 2011
Public Opinion Polls

- April 2011
  - Online and by phone, Charlton Research Company
  - Sample size: 804 adult residents of Maryland
  - Theoretical sampling error: +/- 3.5%

- February 1992
  - Telephone survey, Survey Research Associates, University of Baltimore Schaefer Center for Public Policy
  - Sample size: 832 registered voters
  - Theoretical sampling error: +/- 4%

- For more information on Research!America polling, email programs@researchamerica.org
Very Important for Elected Officials to Listen to Scientists

In thinking about threats to our health, how important is it that elected officials at all levels listen to advice from scientists and public health professionals?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Then & Now: Opinions on America’s Most Important Health Issue

What would you say is the single most important health issue facing people in the U.S. today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issue</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability/cost/economy</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high blood pressure</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity/overweight</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care system/reform</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of insurance/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>availability of health care</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many Marylanders Say Research is in the News More Today

Compared to five years ago, would you say you hear or read more, less, or about the same amount about research in the news?

- More: 40%
- Same amount: 35%
- Less: 20%
- Don't know: 5%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Most Marylanders Want to See More Science & Research in Media

Would you like to see more, less or about the same amount of information about science and research in the media?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
# Marylanders Most Frequently Used News Sources

Which news sources do you use most frequently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/websites</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Traditional Media Considered Most Trustworthy About Research

There are many sources of information about health and medical research issues. For each of the following sources, please indicate how trustworthy you think the information they provide is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very trustworthy</th>
<th>Somewhat trustworthy</th>
<th>Not very trustworthy</th>
<th>Not at all trustworthy</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/websites</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Trust of Scientific Community

Compared to five years ago, would you say you trust the scientific community more, less, or about the same amount?

Why do you trust the scientific community less now?

- Inaccuracy/not all true: 23%
- They’re all in it for money: 17%
- Global warming debacle: 14%
- Doubtful/Corruption: 12%
- Inconsistent/
  Not enough data: 10%
- Other: 16%
- Don’t know/Nothing: 8%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Trust of Media

Compared to five years ago, would you say you trust the media more, less, or about the same amount?

Why do you trust the media less now?

- Lies/fabricated information: 29%
- Biased/unfair: 19%
- Politically driven/Dominated by government/groups: 13%
- Too much sensationalism: 11%
- Other: 26%
- Don’t know/Nothing: 2%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Trust of Elected Officials

Compared to five years ago, would you say you trust your elected officials more, less, or about the same amount?

Why do you trust elected officials less now?

- Too many lies/broken promises: 32%
- Only in it for money/personal agenda/re-election: 19%
- Corruption/scandals: 14%
- Other: 33%
- Don’t know/Nothing: 2%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Compared to five years ago, would you say you trust the following more, less, or about the same amount?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Same amount</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientific community</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected officials</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Scientific Research Important to Maryland’s Economy

In terms of jobs and incomes, how important do you think spending money on scientific research is to Maryland’s economy?

- Very important: 43%
- Somewhat important: 40%
- Not too important: 4%
- Not at all important: 1%
- Don't know: 12%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Then & Now: Scientific Research Important to Maryland’s Economy

In terms of jobs and incomes, how important do you think spending money on scientific research is to Maryland’s economy?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Very Important for Maryland to Be a Leader in Research

How important is it for Maryland to be a leader in science and medical research?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Very Important for Maryland to Be a Leader in Public Health Research

How important is it for Maryland to be a leader in public health, prevention and wellness research?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
How important do you think education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is to U.S. competitiveness and our future economic prosperity?

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
How important is it for Maryland to create more opportunities for careers in science and research for its young people?

- 61% Very important
- 29% Somewhat important
- 8% Not too important
- 1% Not at all important
- 1% Don't know

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Majority of Marylanders Can’t Name a Living Scientist

Can you name a living scientist? (first volunteered responses)

- Yes: 37%
- No: 63%

- Stephen Hawking: 10%
- Benjamin Carson: 2%
- James Watson: 2%
- Bill Nye: 1%
- Francis Collins: 1%
- Jane Goodall: 1%
- Michio Kaku: 1%
- Neil Degrasse Tyson: 1%
- Other: 18%

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America
Majority of Marylanders Can Name a Living Journalist

Can you name a living journalist? (first volunteered responses)

Source: Maryland Public Opinion Poll, April 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America