

VIRGINIA VOTERS HOLD ROSIER VIEWS OF STATE AND LOCAL CONDITIONS THAN THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Registered voters in Virginia have a more positive view of their local community and their state than the country overall across a range of issues including police violence and election security, according to a new Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll.

The survey also finds there could be a surge in voting by mail in Virginia for the upcoming presidential election, with 32% who plan to do so this year compared to just 5% who report typically doing so in the past.

Looking ahead to the election, more Virginia registered voters have confidence in how a Trump administration would handle the economy than a Biden administration, but more say a Biden administration would do well dealing with the coronavirus outbreak and health care.

All four candidates on the Democratic and Republican presidential tickets are seen more unfavorably than favorably among registered voters, but 47% see Joe Biden favorably compared to 37% who say the same about Donald Trump.

Only 27% of Virginia voters believe the country is headed in the right direction, and more than half see police violence as a problem nationwide.

Majorities of registered voters in Virginia support a variety of policies aimed at reducing police violence, but few favor reducing funding for law enforcement.

The poll also highlights varying levels of support on a range of prominent policy issues related to gun control measures, removing confederate statues and names from public places, and whether to reopen schools amidst the coronavirus pandemic.



© 2020 AP Photo/ Steve Helber

Three Things You Should Know About the Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll

Among registered voters in Virginia:

- 1) 65% feel things are going in the right direction in their community, and 48% say so for Virginia, but just 27% feel that way about the country overall.
- 2) 42% want major changes to the criminal justice system in the United States, and another 25% feel it needs a complete overhaul.
- 3) While just 5% usually vote by mail, 32% expect to do so for the election this November.

The statewide survey was conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia. Interviews were conducted online and via telephone. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.

Among the key findings from the poll:

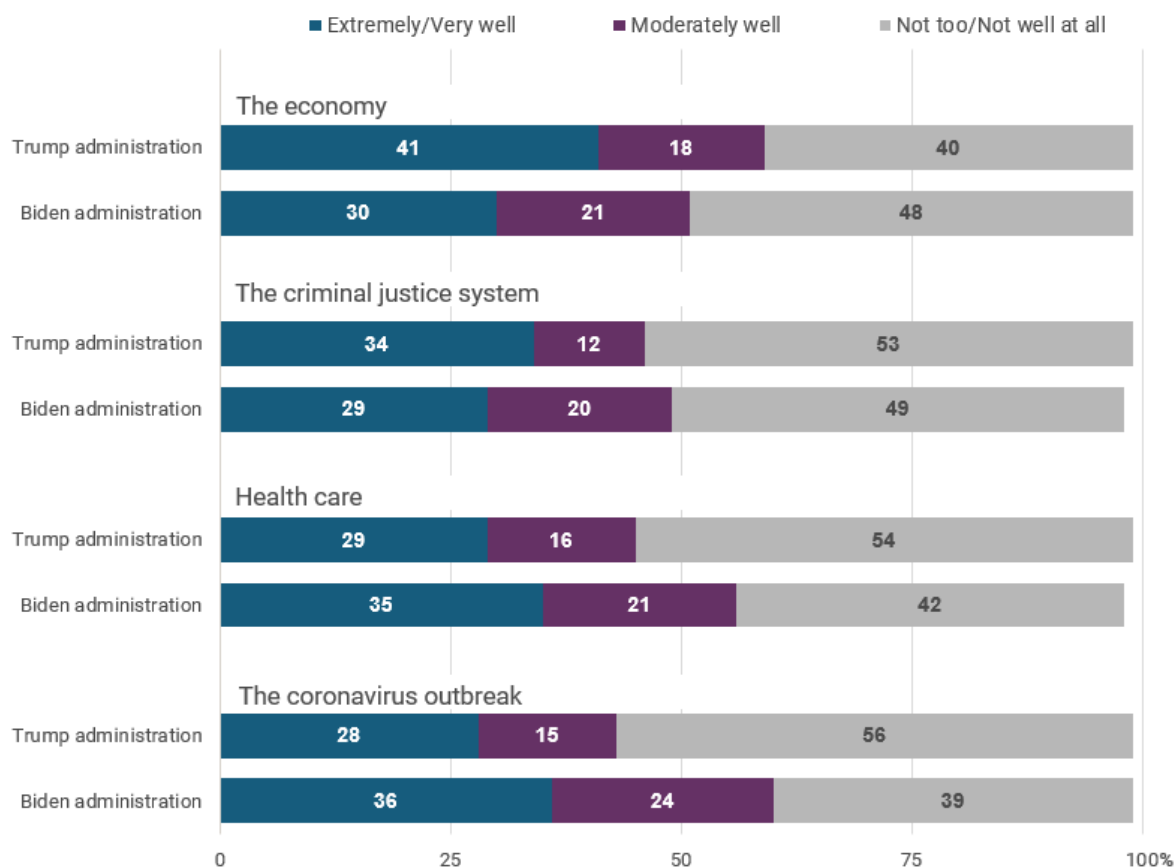
- 53% are very or extremely confident that the votes in their county will be counted accurately compared to 42% for the votes in Virginia and just 24% for the country overall.
- More feel strongly that Biden has good judgement compared to Trump (33% vs. 26%), while more say Trump stands up for what he believes (55% vs. 40%).
- The clear driving force among Biden supporters is opposition to Trump: 83% say that opposing Trump is very or extremely important to their vote choice.
- 54% say police violence against the public is a serious problem at the national level compared to 24% who say it is a problem in Virginia and just 15% who say it is a problem in their community. Democrats are more likely to say it is a serious problem at every level.
- 93% favor requiring body cameras for on-duty police officers, and 83% favor prosecuting police officers who use excessive force, but only 23% favor reducing funding for law enforcement agencies.
- Mandatory reporting for lost or stolen guns (82%), in-person classes to get a concealed carry permit (82%), and required background checks on all gun purchases (79%) enjoy high support, but fewer support a nationwide ban on AR-15s and similar automatic rifles (49%) or a law to support administrators and school teachers to be armed at schools (45%).
- While 60% support banning the Confederate flag on government property, Virginia voters are more evenly divided on removing Confederate statues (46% favor and 42% oppose) and renaming public places named after Confederate leaders (44% favor and 43% oppose).
- When thinking about whether or not to reopen K-12 schools for in-person instruction, parents of children in grades K-12 express the most concern about the effectiveness of virtual learning for K-8 students (61%), children falling behind academically (59%), and how working parents will handle child care (59%).
- 9% of Democrats say they typically vote by mail, but 45% say they plan on voting by mail in November. Just 3% of Republicans say they typically vote by mail, and 17% say they plan to in November.

VIRGINIA VOTERS HAVE MORE TRUST IN A BIDEN/HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO HANDLE THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK AND HEALTH CARE, BUT TRUST A TRUMP/PENCE ADMINISTRATION TO HANDLE THE ECONOMY.

Virginia registered voters see each potential administration as having different strengths when it comes to handling key policy issues. More think that a Biden administration would handle the coronavirus outbreak and health care at least moderately well, while more say Trump would handle the economy well.

Virginia voters trust a Biden/Harris administration to handle the coronavirus outbreak and health care, but trust a Trump/Pence administration on the economy.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: If Donald Trump and Mike Pence win the election this November, how well do you think their administration would handle each of the following issues? / If Joe Biden and Kamala Harris win the election this November, how well do you think their administration would handle each of the following issues?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

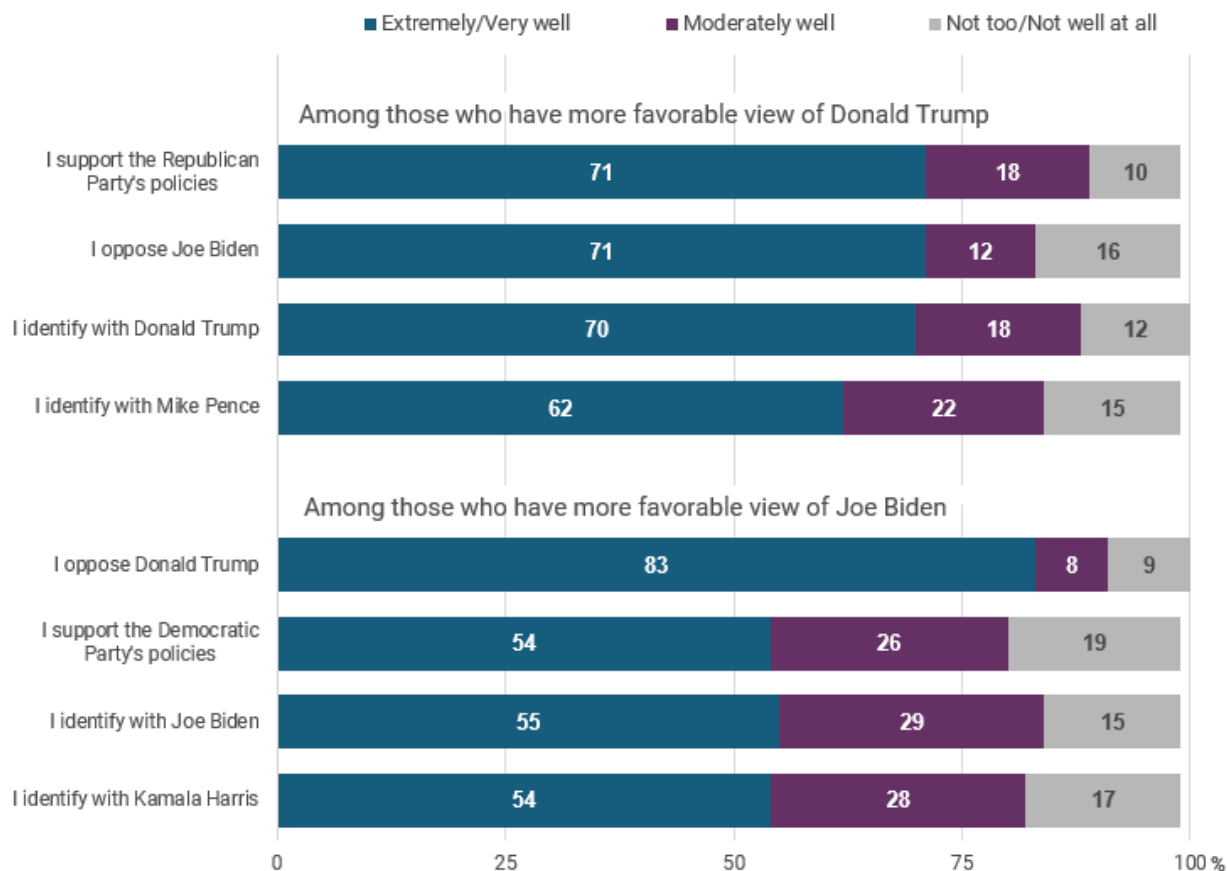
Overall, Biden is viewed more favorably by Virginia voters than either Trump or Pence, of whom a majority have unfavorable views. Forty-seven percent say they have favorable views of Biden, and 42% have favorable views of Harris, while 40% say the same of Pence and 37% of Trump.

Among those who favor Trump over Biden,¹ about 7 in 10 say that identifying with Trump, opposing Joe Biden, and support of Republican policies are important factors for their vote. Sixty-two percent also say it is important they identify with Pence.

The clear driving force among Biden supporters, on the other hand, is opposition to Trump; 83% say that opposing Trump is very or extremely important to their vote choice. Only about half say the same about identifying with Biden, identifying with Harris, and supporting Democratic policies.

How important is each of the following to your vote in the 2020 presidential election?

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: When you think about how to vote in the 2020 presidential election, how important is each of the following?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia



APNORC.org

¹ Respondents were first asked, about both Donald Trump and Joe Biden: "For each of the following, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion. If you don't know enough to have an opinion, you can say that, too." Those who answered as more favorable to Trump than Biden were considered to prefer Trump, while those who answered as more favorable to Biden than Trump were considered to prefer Biden. Those who gave the same answer for both candidates and those who said they "do not know enough to say" about either candidate were not included in either category.

VIRGINIA VOTERS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND STATE THAN THEY ARE ABOUT THE COUNTRY OVERALL.

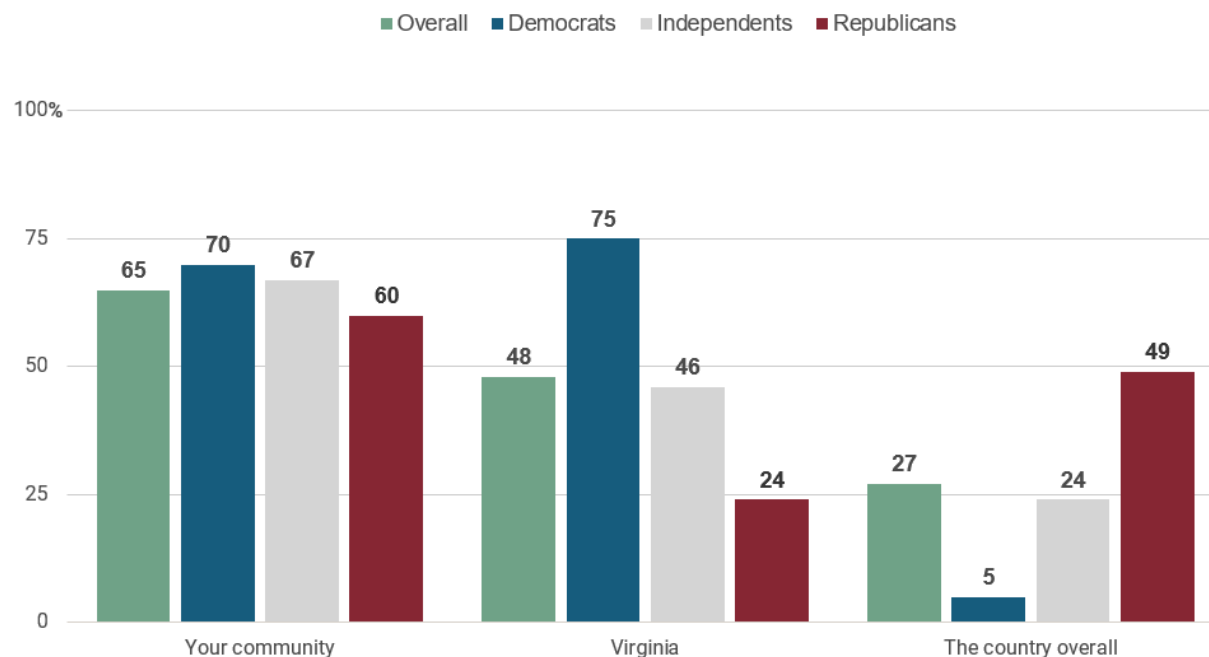
Although registered voters in Virginia are pessimistic about the state of the country across several measures, they feel far more positive about the state and local situation. In particular, Virginia voters have a more positive view of their community when it comes to the overall direction, confidence in accurately counting the vote, and police violence against the public.

Sixty-five percent say things are on the right track in their community, and 48% say the same about Virginia, but just 27% feel like things are going in the right direction in the country overall.

Sharp differences emerge along partisan lines, and the splits are largest at the state and national levels. Democrats are more likely to say things are going in the right direction in their community (70% vs. 60%), and the gap widens for Virginia (75% vs. 24%). At the national level, the difference is in the other direction, with Republicans 44 percentage points more favorable (49% vs. 5%).

Virginia voters are happier with the direction of their local community and state than the country overall, with differences by partisanship.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia who say on the right track



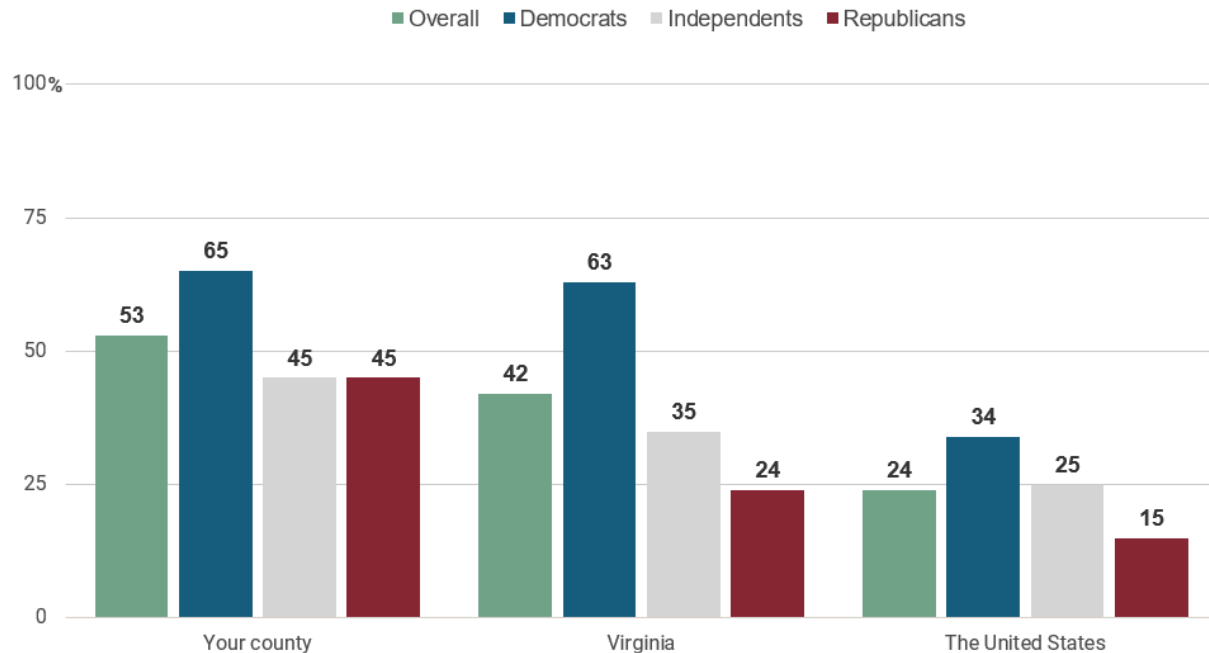
Question: Generally speaking, would you say that things in each of the following are heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?
Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

When it comes to confidence that the results of the 2020 presidential election will be counted accurately, Virginia voters are again most optimistic about their community: 53% are very or extremely confident that the votes in their county will be counted accurately compared to 42% for Virginia and just 24% for the country overall.

Democrats are more confident at all levels of government. But, neither party is particularly confident that the results will be accurate at the national level.

Virginia voters are more confident in the accuracy of election results in their county and in Virginia than at the national level.

Percent of registered voters who are very or extremely confident



Question: How confident are you that the results of the 2020 presidential election will be counted accurately in...

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

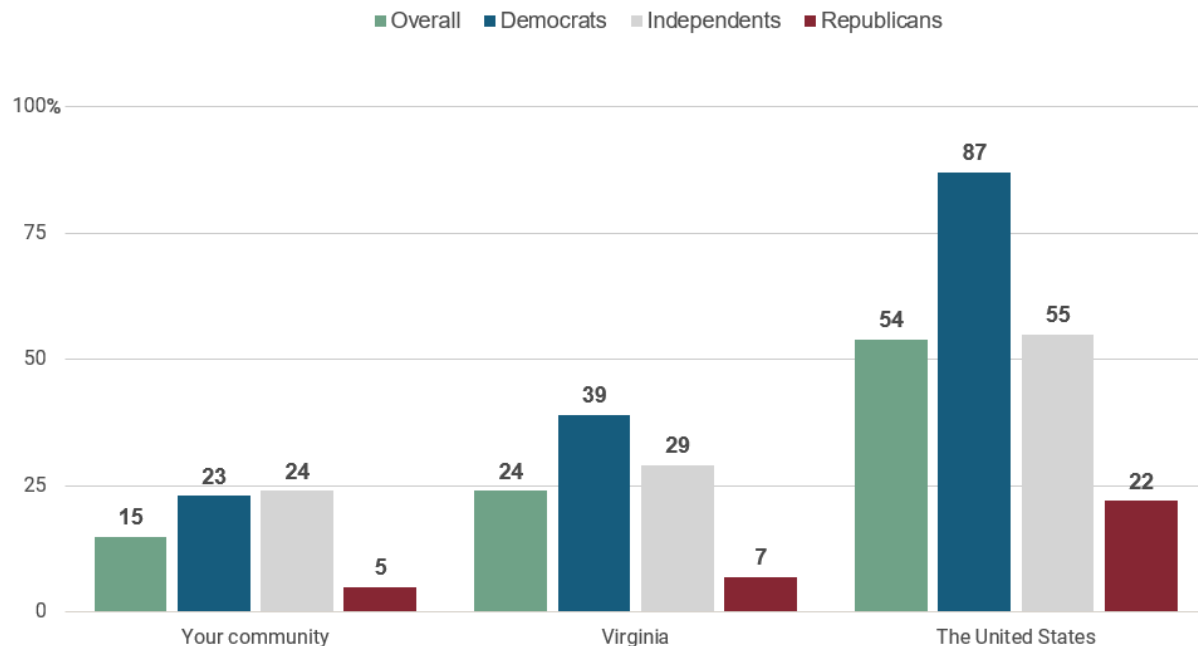


APNORC.org

Few view police violence against the public as a serious problem locally, but they are concerned at the national level. Democrats express more pessimism than Republicans about police violence against the public at every level, but the gap is largest when asked about the country overall.

Most Democrats say police violence is a serious problem at the national level, but few Democrats or Republicans say it is a problem in their community.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia who say very or extremely serious



Question: How serious a problem do you think police violence against the public is in...

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia



APNORC.org

REGISTERED VOTERS IN VIRGINIA SUPPORT A RANGE OF POLICIES TO ADDRESS ISSUES WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

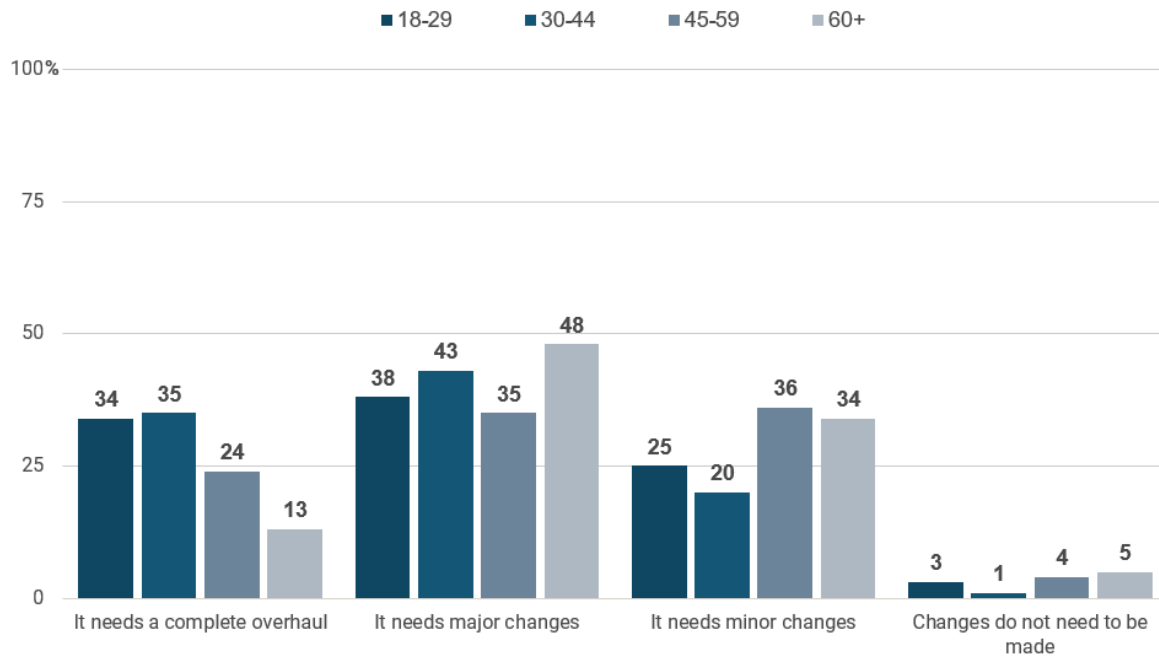
Virginia voters favor major changes to the criminal justice system in the state and nationwide. Asked about the system as a whole in the United States, 25% feel it needs a complete overhaul, and another 42% say it needs major changes. Thirty percent want minor changes, and just 4% say it does not need any changes.

Democrats are most supportive of large changes to the criminal justice system. Nearly all Democrats (95%) favor major change or complete overhaul compared to 69% of independents and 39% of Republicans. Republicans are more likely to say the system needs minor changes (54% vs. 5% of Democrats and 27% of independents). Few across the political spectrum think the criminal justice system needs no changes (less than 1% of Democrats, 4% of independents, and 7% of Republicans).

While a majority of Virginia voters of all ages believe the system is not working, younger Americans are especially likely to favor a complete overhaul.

One-third of those age 18 to 44 favor a complete overhaul of the criminal justice system.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia who say...



Question: Thinking about the criminal justice system in the United States, would you say:

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

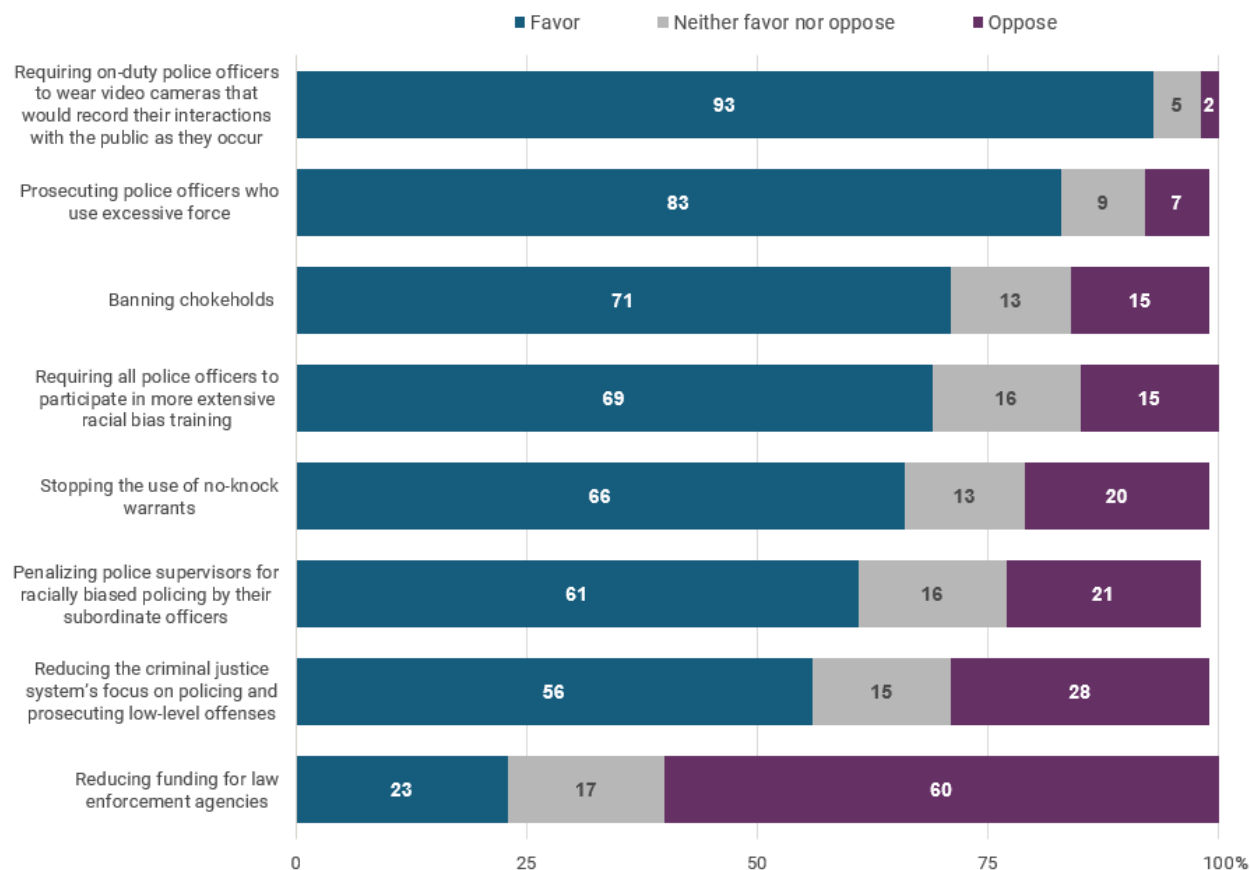


APNORC.org

There is also widespread support for a number of specific criminal justice reforms, including several that have been recently enacted or are under consideration by the Virginia legislature. An overwhelming majority—93%—support requiring on-duty police officers to wear body cameras. Virginia voters are also broadly supportive of prosecuting police officers who use excessive force, banning chokeholds, and requiring more extensive racial bias training for officers. A majority opposes reducing funding for law enforcement.

Virginians support many policies to increase police accountability and reduce misconduct, but do not support reducing police funding.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following policies intended to prevent police violence?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

APNORC.org

A MAJORITY SUPPORT BANNING THE CONFEDERATE FLAG ON GOVERNMENT PROPERTY, BUT VIRGINIA VOTERS ARE MORE DIVIDED ON REMOVING CONFEDERATE STATUES OR RENAMING PUBLIC PLACES NAMED AFTER CONFEDERATE LEADERS.

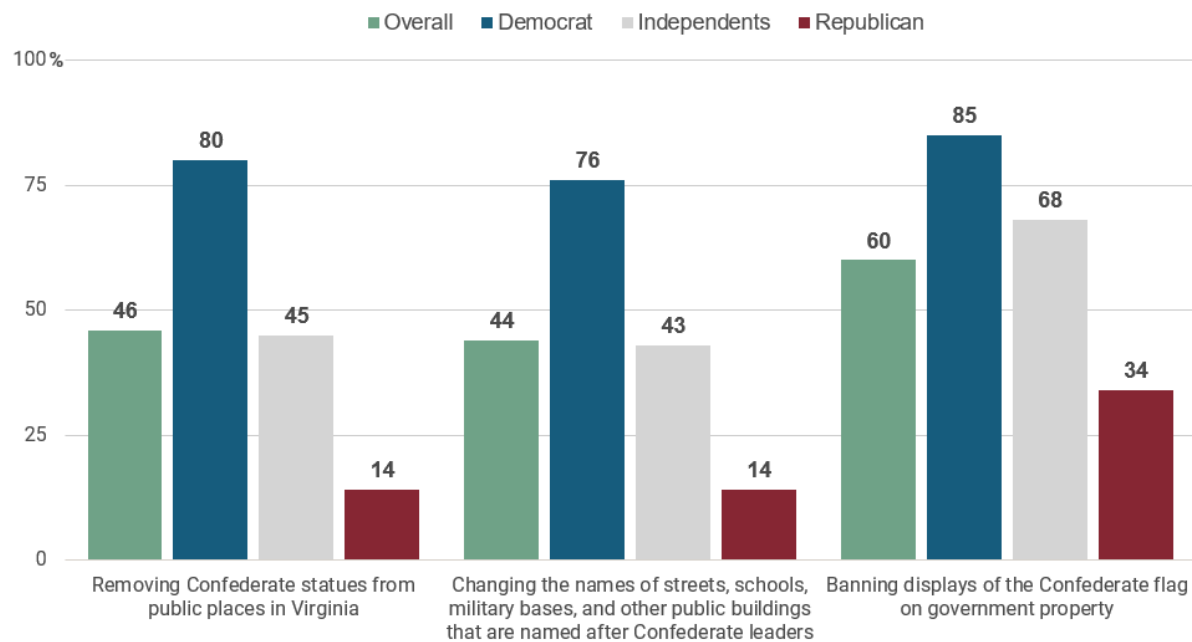
Registered voters in the commonwealth are split on support for policies to remove Confederate statues and efforts to change the names of streets, schools, military bases, and other public buildings named after Confederate leaders.

On the other hand, two times as many voters support restrictions on the Confederate flag in public places than oppose it.

Overall, few Republicans support policies to remove references to the Confederacy in any of these forms, while majorities of Democrats are supportive of doing so.

Large partisan differences of opinion on references to the Confederacy in Virginia.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia who favor...



Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

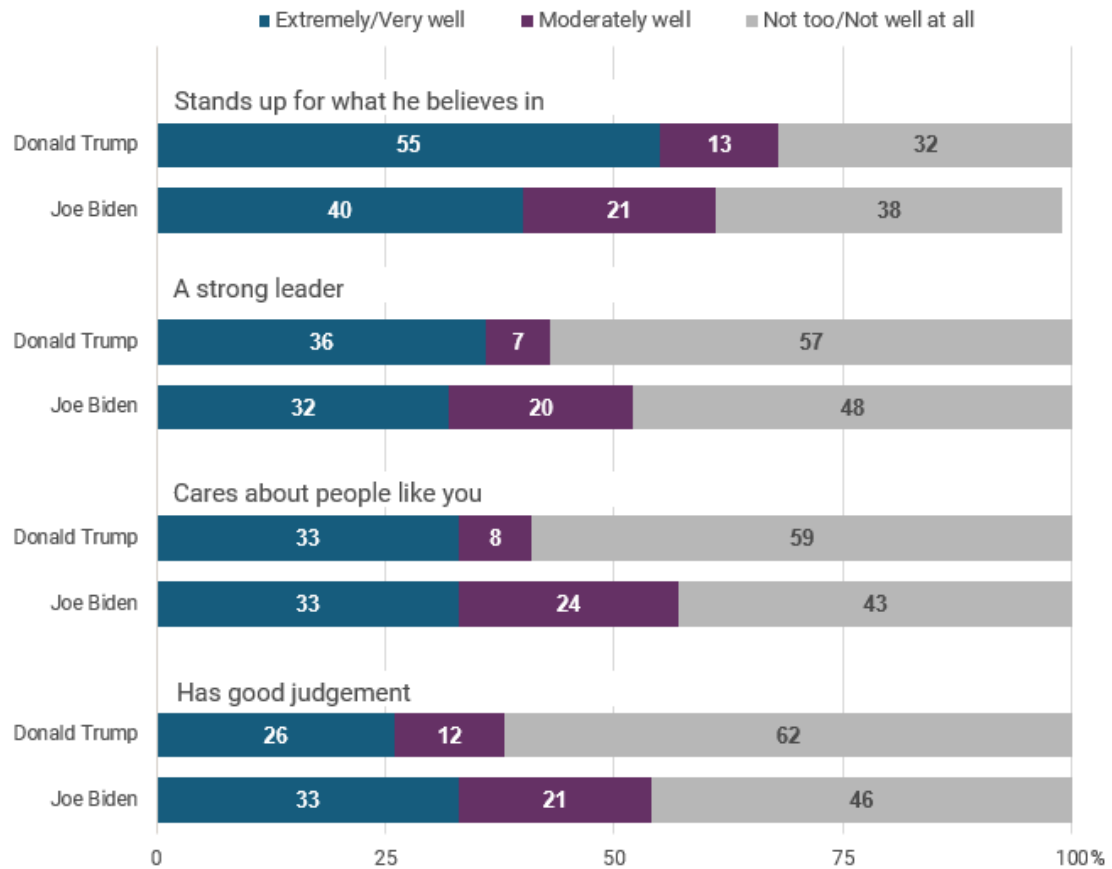
APNORC.org

MORE THAN HALF OF VIRGINIA VOTERS SAY JOE BIDEN IS A STRONG LEADER, HAS GOOD JUDGEMENT, AND CARES ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE THEM, WHILE TWO-THIRDS SAY DONALD TRUMP STANDS UP FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES IN.

More than half of Virginia voters say descriptions like “strong leader,” “good judgement,” and “cares about people like you” describe Joe Biden at least moderately well, and he has an advantage on these traits compared to Donald Trump. However, 68% say Trump stands up for what he believes, compared to 61% who say the same about Biden. Looking at just those who feel strongly, however, more still say Biden has good judgement (33% vs. 26%) and Trump stands up for what he believes (55% vs. 40%). But similar numbers rate Biden and Trump as strong leaders (32% vs. 36%) and feel that they care about people like them (33% each).

How well do each of the following describe Donald Trump and Joe Biden?

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Please indicate how well each of the following words or phrases describes Donald Trump... / Joe Biden...

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

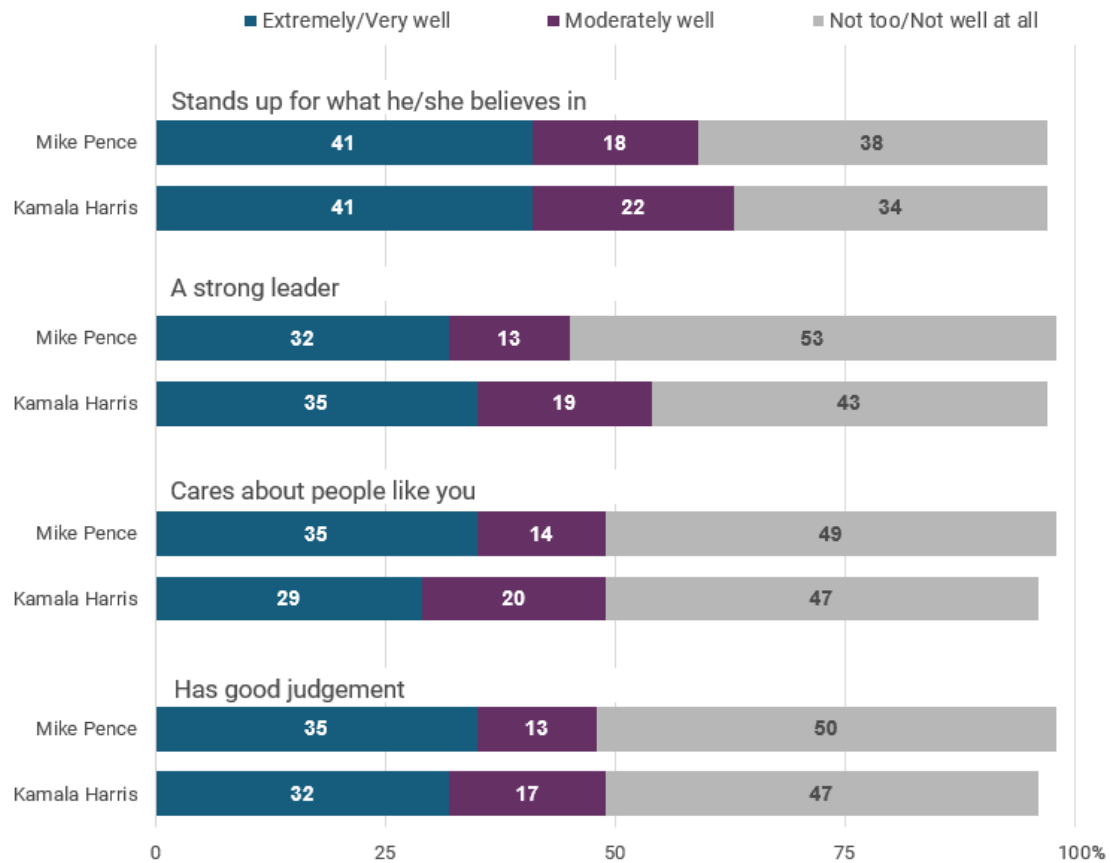


APNORC.org

Most Virginia voters do not differentiate strongly between Mike Pence's and Kamala Harris's qualities. They see them similarly when it comes to standing up for what they believe in, leadership, judgement, and caring about people like them.

How well do each of the following describe Mike Pence and Kamala Harris?

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Please indicate how well each of the following words or phrases describes Mike Pence... / Kamala Harris...

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

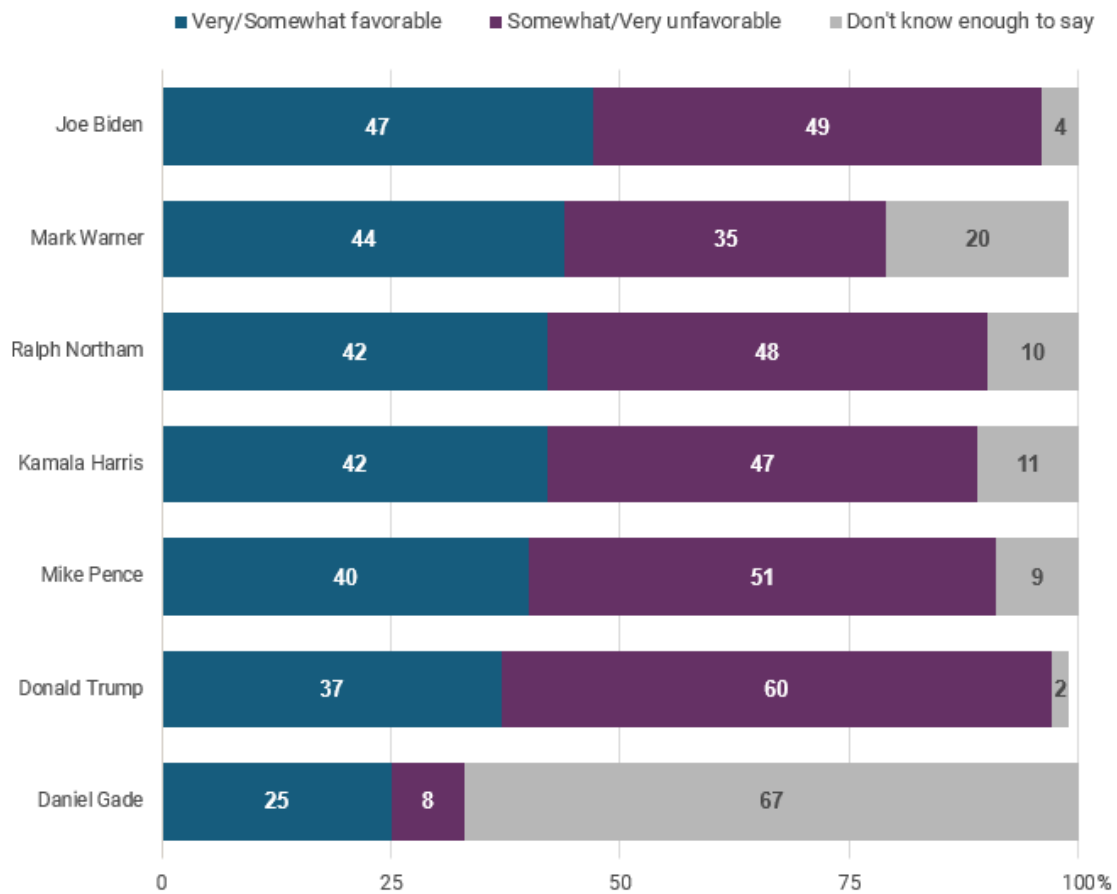
APNORC.org

Virginia voters have a somewhat negative view of Governor Ralph Northam, with 42% viewing him favorably and 48% unfavorably.

Incumbent Democratic Senator Mark Warner is seen more favorably than unfavorably. A majority of Virginia voters do not know enough about his challenger, Republican Daniel Gade, to have an opinion.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each of the following?

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: For each of the following, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion. If you don't know enough to have an opinion, you can say that too.

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia



APNORC.org

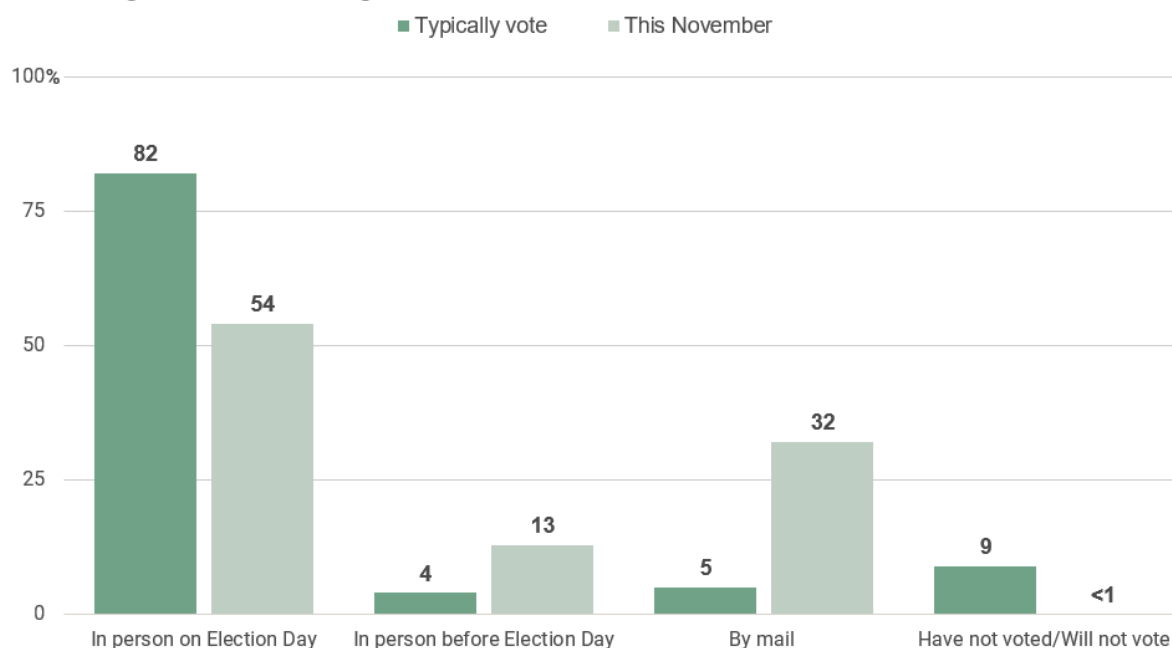
FEWER VIRGINIA VOTERS THAN USUAL PLAN TO VOTE IN PERSON ON ELECTION DAY THIS NOVEMBER, AND MORE PLAN TO VOTE BY MAIL.

Prior to this year, 82% of Virginia voters typically voted in person on Election Day, 4% voted in person before Election Day, and 5% by mail. Nine percent report never voting.

However, there is a shift in how people expect to vote this year. Just 54% say they plan to vote in person on Election Day, 13% will vote in person before Election Day, and 32% now plan to vote by mail. Less than 1% say they don't plan to vote. This shift mirrors national trends, with more Americans choosing to vote by mail and fewer planning to vote in person on Election Day.²

Many Virginians are changing how they plan to vote in 2020.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Before this year, which best describes how you have typically voted in elections?

Question: If you do vote this November, which best describes how you will vote?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

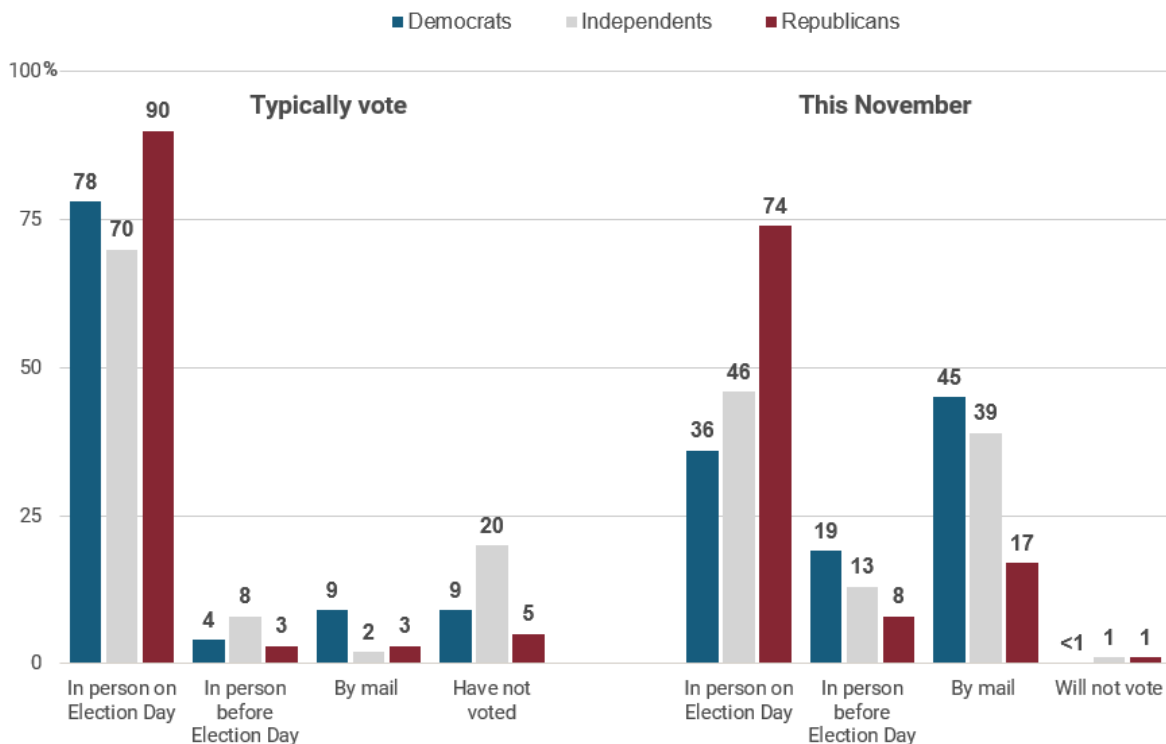
APNORC.org

While Democrats are slightly more likely than Republicans to report that they typically vote by mail, this disparity only widens when asked about their plans for the upcoming election. Nine percent of Democrats say they typically vote by mail, but 45% say they plan on voting by mail in November. Just 3% of Republicans say they typically vote by mail, and 17% say they plan to in November.

² <https://apnorc.org/projects/casting-a-ballot-in-2020/>

Democrats are more likely to vote by mail than Republicans, while Republicans are more likely to vote in person on Election Day.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Before this year, which best describes how you have typically voted in elections?

Question: If you do vote this November, which best describes how you will vote?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

APNORC.org

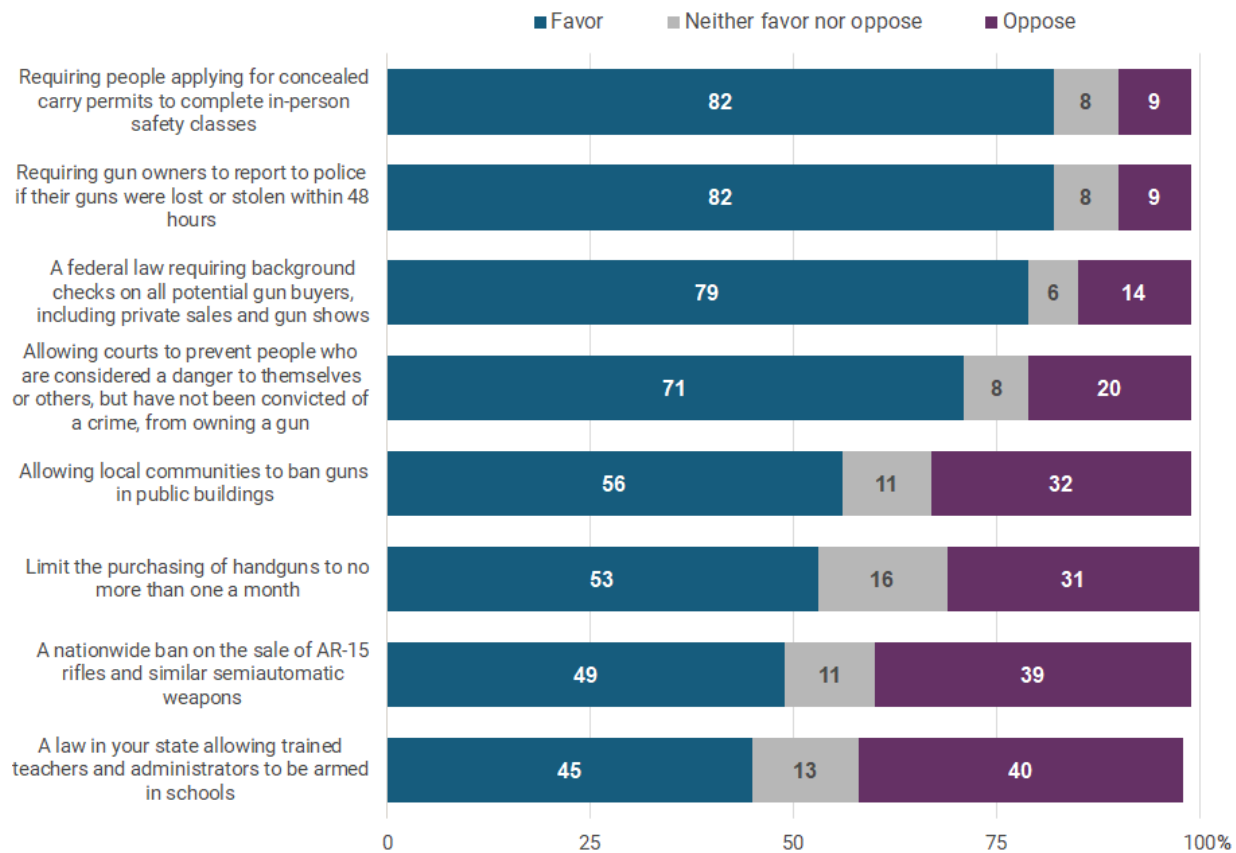
AMONG VIRGINIA REGISTERED VOTERS, THERE IS A 37 PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE IN SUPPORT BETWEEN THE MOST AND LEAST POPULAR GUN CONTROL POLICY PROPOSALS.

Large majorities of registered voters support policies like mandatory reporting of lost or stolen guns, in-person classes to get a concealed carry permit, and required background checks on all gun purchases. Majorities also support allowing courts to prevent dangerous people from owning guns, allowing communities to ban guns in public buildings, and limiting the purchasing of handguns to no more than one a month. Several of these policies—including mandatory reporting of stolen or lost guns, limiting the purchasing of handguns to one a month, communities allowing gun bans in public buildings, courts preventing people deemed dangerous from owning guns, and universal background checks—were enacted by the Virginia legislature in the past year.

However, less than half of registered voters support a nationwide ban of AR-15s and similar semiautomatic rifles or a law to support administrators and school teachers to be armed at schools.

Mandatory safety classes, background checks, and reporting of stolen weapons are popular in Virginia.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following policies?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

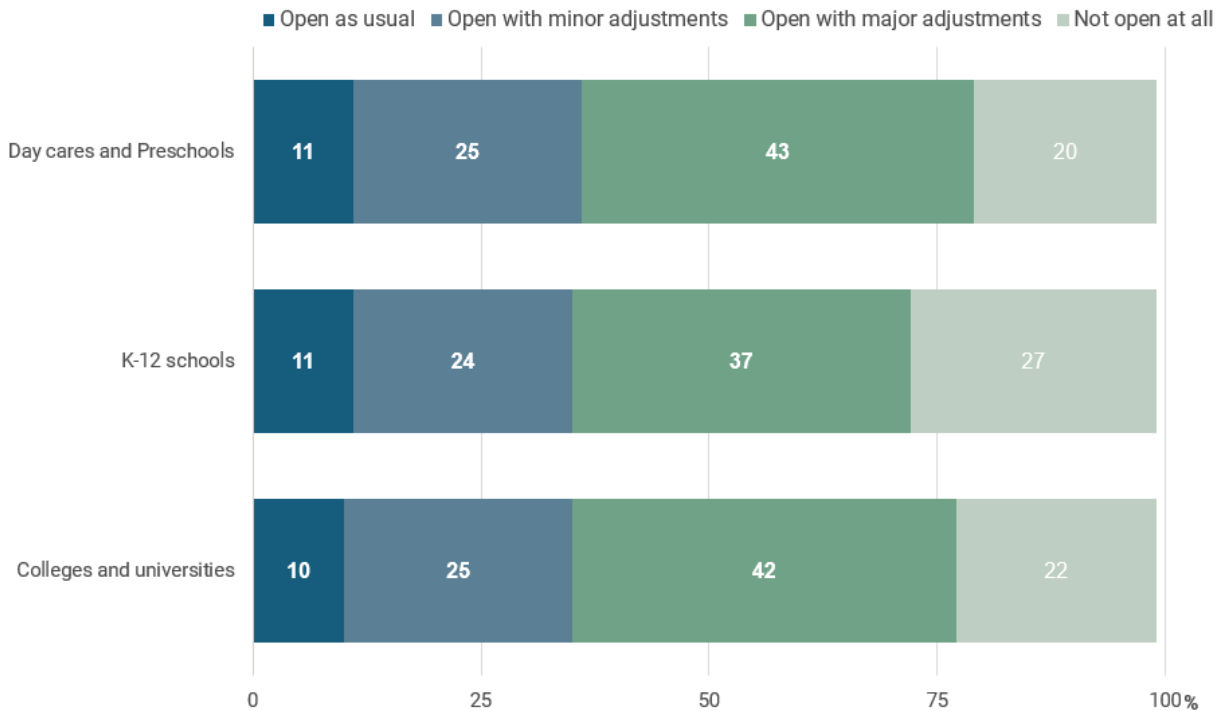
APNORC.org

FEW SUPPORT REOPENING ANY SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA WITHOUT MAJOR ADJUSTMENTS.

A majority of Virginia voters think that schools at all levels should either open for in-person instruction with major adjustments or not open at all for in-person instruction. Only about 1 in 10 say that day cares and preschools, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities where they live should open as usual, and about a quarter think each should open with only minor adjustments.

Majority of Virginia voters think schools should only open with major adjustments or not open at all for in-person learning.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia



Question: Do you think each of the following types of schools where you live should open for in-person instruction as usual, open with minor adjustments, open with major adjustments, or not open at all for in-person instruction?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia

HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY

AP

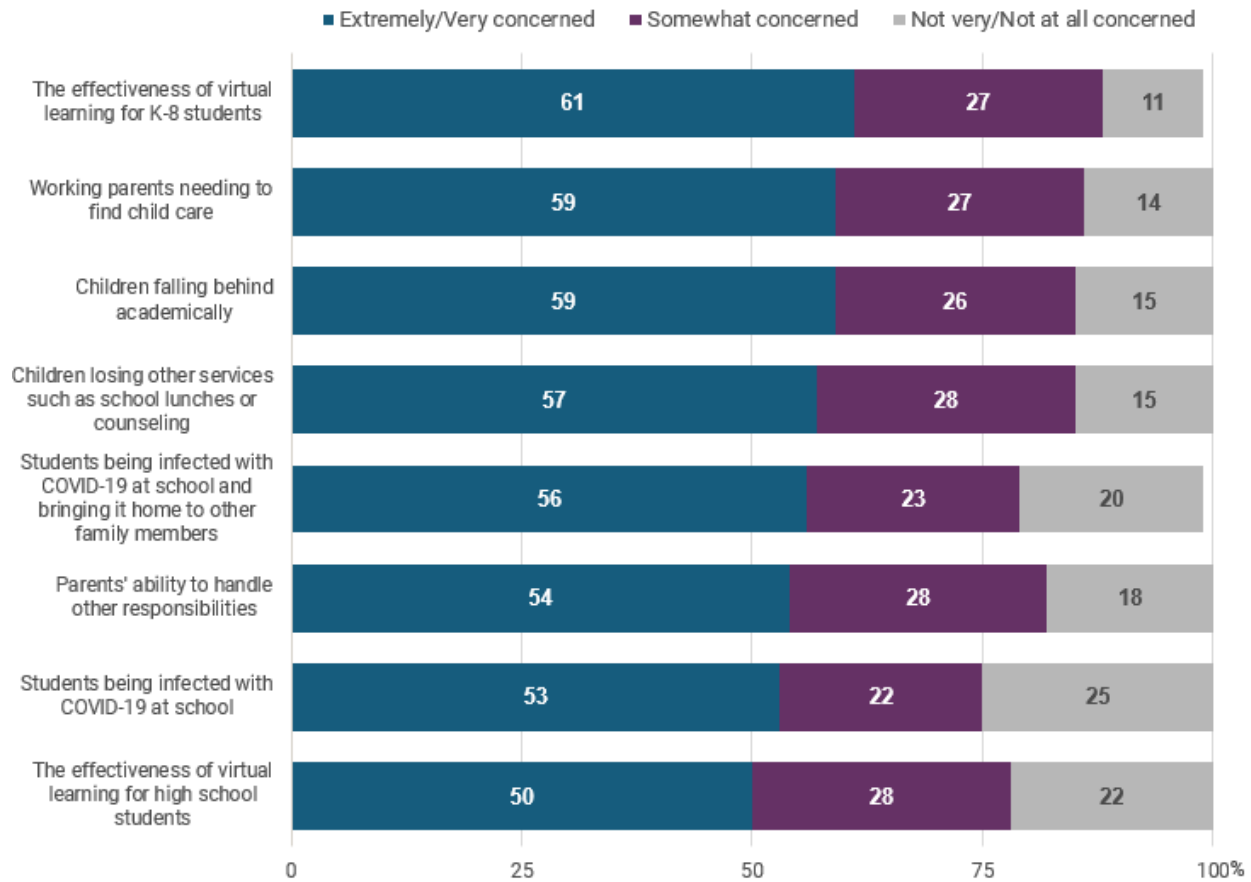
NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

APNORC.org

When thinking about whether or not to reopen K-12 schools for in-person instruction, parents of children in grades K-12 express the most concern about the effectiveness of virtual learning, children falling behind academically, and how working parents will handle child care. More than half are concerned about students and families being infected with COVID-19.

Parents of K-12 students have various concerns about reopening plans.

Percent of registered voters in Virginia with kids in K-12



Question: Thinking about the decision whether or not to reopen K-12 schools for in-person instruction, how concerned are you about each of the following?

Source: Hampton University/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 registered voters in Virginia



APNORC.org

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by Hampton University and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from Hampton University. Staff from Hampton and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

The survey is designed to provide estimates of Virginia registered voters. Interviews were conducted September 8-14, 2020 with 830 Virginia registered voters.

NORC obtained a sample of registered voters from Catalist LLC's registered voter database. This database includes demographic information, as well as addresses for registered voters, allowing potential respondents to be contacted via mail. All sample records are mailed a postcard inviting them to complete the survey either online using a unique PIN or via telephone by calling a toll-free number. Postcards are addressed by name to the sampled registered voter if that individual is under age 35; postcards are addressed to "Virginia registered voter" in all other cases.

Interviews were conducted online and over the phone, with 787 completing via the web and 43 completing via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English, and respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The screener completion rate is 3.0% and the final stage completion rate is 86.2% for a cumulative response rate of 2.5%.

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Sampled/Invited Households	No. Screening Interviews Completed	Base-Weighted Screener Completion Rate	No. Panelists Eligible for Interview	Incidence / Eligibility Rate	No. Survey Interviews Completed	Interview Completion Rate	Response Rate
39,656	973	3.0%	963	99.0%	830	86.2%	2.5%

Once the samples have been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, an iterative raking process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Raking variables include age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, and 2016 presidential vote. Demographic weighting variables were derived from a combination of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's November 2018 [Current Population Survey](#) Voting and Registration Supplement, Catalist's voter file, and the Census Bureau's 2018 [American Community Survey](#). Data about the 2016 election was obtained from The Associated Press. The weighted data reflect Virginia registered voters.

The overall margin of error for the combined sample is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

From NORC at the University of Chicago

David Sterrett
Dan Malato
Semilla Stripp
Will Bonnell
Jennifer Benz
Trevor Tompson

From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson
Hannah Fingerhut

From Hampton University

Kelly Harvey Viney
Bill Thomas

ABOUT THE HAMPTON UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The HU Center for Public Policy (CPP) is an objective, non-partisan source for information and solutions on a variety of topics. Along with HU's mission of education and service, the Center for Public Policy stands to serve as the pulse of the people of Virginia and is poised to meet the challenge by contributing publications, speakers, forums and new age social media engagement that advances the current and future ideas and trends in the public policy arena. Our polling is conducted using the highest quality methodological standards including innovative new formats for better accuracy in the industry.

Established in 2008 by visionary Hampton University President, Dr. William R. Harvey, the aim was to create the Center for Public Policy to help facilitate a connection for students between classroom theory and practical application in the real-world. Moving forward into the 21st century and beyond, the CPP is meeting the emerging needs of the global community by expanding into a research focused institution.

For Topline results, the executive summary and more information on the Hampton University Center for Public Policy call 757-727-5426 or visit <http://www.hamptonu.edu/cpp/polls/>.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.

Please visit <https://www.apnorc.org> for more information.