



COMMONWEALTH POLL

A survey of Virginians conducted by the Center for Public Policy

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MCCAIN LEADS OVER OBAMA, CLINTON AMONG VIRGINIA VOTERS

Likely Republican presidential nominee John McCain holds a clear lead over Barack Obama among registered voters in Virginia. The general election match-up finds 44% of registered voters prefer McCain compared with 36% for Obama, the Democratic front-runner. If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic nominee, the figures are similar; 47% prefer McCain while 38% prefer Clinton. These findings are part of a new state-wide survey conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University. The Commonwealth Poll was conducted by telephone with 1,003 adults and 852 registered voters from May 12-18, 2008. The margin of error for the poll is plus or minus 3 percentage points for all respondents and 4 percentage points for registered voters.

“Many political observers have been looking at Virginia as a potentially tight general election race,” said Cary Funk, Ph.D., director of the Commonwealth Poll and associate professor of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. “Despite the recent success of Democratic candidates such as Tim Kaine in 2005 and U.S. Senator Jim Webb in 2006, the presidential race in Virginia at present is looking mostly like years gone by,” Funk said.

McCain holds a strong lead in the more rural areas of the state including the northwest and western areas and a 9-point lead in the Tidewater area. In vote-rich Northern Virginia, Obama has a slight edge over McCain (41% to 36%). Obama also leads by 43% to 39% for McCain in the south central area, a region which includes Richmond. The figures for both regions are within the margin of sampling error for the difference between candidates.

McCain garners 44% to Obama’s 34% among independents who are registered to vote. Registered Republicans support McCain over Obama by a wide margin; 81% for McCain to just 6% for Obama. Older voters, ages 65 and older, also show strong support for McCain. Among registered voters under age 65, nearly equal portions side with each candidate.

Registered Democrats strongly support Obama (71%) over McCain (14%) in the general election. As expected, Obama has the support of nearly all African-Americans in the state. Obama does a bit better with highly educated voters, those with some post-graduate education; among this group, 41% prefer Obama while 36% prefer McCain.

Would Clinton Fare Better? Virginia voters prefer John McCain over Hillary Clinton by 47% to 38%. There's no evidence that the Democratic Party would fare better in Virginia this fall if their party nominee is Hillary Clinton. The patterns of support across demographic groups are similar for both Obama and Clinton.

Favorability ratings. Virginians tend to hold a favorable view of both likely party nominees for president. Nearly four-in-ten (39%) Virginians have a favorable view of McCain, 24% are unfavorable and about a quarter are undecided. Opinion of McCain divides strongly along partisan lines, as expected. Independents tend to hold a favorable opinion of McCain; 35% are favorable and 24% unfavorable. There is also a divide between whites and blacks but this largely corresponds with differences in party affiliation between the two racial groups.

Virginians views of Obama tilt positive, if a little less strongly positive than for McCain. Among all adults, 36% have a favorable opinion of Obama, 28% are unfavorable, while a quarter are undecided. As expected, there is a strong partisan slant in opinions about Obama. Among independents, 34% are favorable while a nearly equal portion of 30% are unfavorable, with the remainder undecided or not holding an opinion.

Hillary Clinton is a bit better known than either Obama or McCain and a bit less liked. About a third of Virginians (34%) have a favorable opinion of Clinton while 38% are unfavorable and two in ten are undecided.

The War in Iraq. Virginians are on par with the nation when it comes to views about the war in Iraq and opinion of George W. Bush. Fully 48% say it was the wrong decision to go to war in Iraq while 39% say it was the right decision. A 53% majority of Virginians holds an unfavorable opinion of President Bush while 29% are favorable.

About the Commonwealth Poll

- State-wide survey conducted by telephone with a representative sample of adults in Virginia
- Conducted May 12-18, 2008
- 1,003 adults interviewed; 852 registered voters
- Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for all respondents and 4 percentage points for registered voters
- Current and past survey reports at <http://www.CommonwealthPoll.vcu.edu/>

METHOD OF THE COMMONWEALTH POLL

The Commonwealth Poll is a public opinion survey of Virginian residents about politics and public policy issues in the state. The survey was conducted by telephone from May 12-18, 2008 with a randomly-selected sample of 1,003 adults living in Virginia. The interviewing was conducted through the facilities of Princeton Data Source (PDS), a research and polling company located in northern Virginia. They used a staff of professionally trained, paid interviewers and computer-assisted telephone interviewing software to conduct the survey.

The sample of telephone numbers was designed so that all residential telephones, including new and unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion. The data are weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple adults living in the household. In addition, the data are weighted on sex, race, age, education and region of residence to reflect the demographic composition of the adult population in Virginia. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents.

Questions answered by the full sample of adults are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 3 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 3 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all Virginian residents with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. Because of non-response (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research.

The margin of error due to sampling at the 95% confidence level for different groups in the survey are as follows:

	Sample size	Margin of error
All adults	1,003	+/- 3 percentage points
Registered voters	852	+/- 4 percentage points
Registered, Democrats	250	+/- 7 percentage points
Registered, Republicans	258	+/- 7 percentage points
Registered, independents	289	+/- 7 percentage points

Commonwealth Poll
State-wide survey of Virginians
May 12-18, 2008
Number of Respondents: 1,003¹

QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 16 HELD FOR LATER RELEASE; NO QUESTIONS 17 THROUGH 22

Q23. Next, I'm going to name some people in politics and ask what you think of them. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** ALWAYS READ FIRST TIME AND THEN IF NECESSARY: Is your opinion of **[INSERT ITEM]** favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about **[INSERT ITEM]** yet to have an opinion?

No item f. Items a through e held for later release

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Undecided	Haven't heard enough/DK/Ref	
	%	%	%	%	
g. Barack Obama	36	28	25	11	= 100
h. John McCain	39	24	24	12	= 100
i. Hillary Clinton	34	38	20	7	= 100
j. George W. Bush	29	53	12	6	= 100

REG1: Some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you registered to vote in Virginia at your current address?

	%
Yes	79
No	20
Unsure (Volunteered)	1
Don't know/Refused	0

ASK Q24 THROUGH Q25A ONLY IF REGISTERED
ROTATE ORDER OF Q24/Q24a AND Q25/Q25a

Q.24 Now, suppose the 2008 presidential election were being held TODAY. If you had to choose between **[READ AND ROTATE: John McCain/Barack Obama]**—who would you vote for?

	Registered voters	Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered independents
	%	%	%	%
John McCain	44	14	81	44
Barack Obama	36	71	6	34
Other (Volunteered)	1	1	0	1
Neither (Volunteered)	4	3	1	7
Don't know/Refused	15	11	12	14

	VOTE CHOICE WITH LEANERS ²			
	Registered voters	Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered independents
	%	%	%	%
John McCain/lean McCain	47	15	83	48
Barack Obama/lean Obama	39	74	7	37
Other/Neither/DK (Volunteered)	14	10	10	15
Number of respondents	852	250	258	289

¹ Percentages may add to 99 or 101 due to rounding.

² IF RESPONSE TO Q24 IS OTHER, NEITHER OR DON'T KNOW ASK: Q24a.As of TODAY, do you LEAN more to **[READ AND ROTATE IN SAME ORDER McCain/Obama]**?

Q.25 Now, suppose the 2008 presidential election were being held TODAY. If you had to choose between **[READ AND ROTATE: John McCain/Hilary Clinton]**—who would you vote for?

	Registered voters	Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered independents
	%	%	%	%
John McCain	47	14	88	47
Hillary Clinton	38	73	4	40
Other (Volunteered)	1	0	0	1
Neither (Volunteered)	3	6	1	3
Don't know/Refused	11	7	7	9

	VOTE CHOICE WITH LEANERS ³			
	Registered voters	Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered independents
	%	%	%	%
John McCain/lean McCain	47	15	83	48
Hillary Clinton/lean Clinton	39	74	7	37
Other/Neither/DK (Volunteered)	14	10	10	15
Number of respondents	852	250	258	289

ASK ALL:

Q26. Looking back, do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

	%
Right decision	39
Wrong decision	48
Don't know/Refused	13

Q27. How well is the U.S. military effort in Iraq going? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	%
Very well	10
Fairly well	35
Not too well	28
Not well at all	22
Don't know/Refused	6

PID1. Do you normally consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican or an independent?

	%
Democrat	31
Republican	28
Independent	33
Something else (Volunteered)	1
Don't know/Refused	6

³ IF RESPONSE TO Q25 IS OTHER, NEITHER OR DON'T KNOW ASK: Q25a. As of TODAY, do you LEAN more to **[READ AND ROTATE IN SAME ORDER McCain/Clinton]**?

IF RESPONSE IS INDEPENDENT, SOMETHING ELSE, DK/REF THEN ASK:

PID2. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic party or to the Republican party?

Among independents/other/ DK

	%
Democrat	32
Republican	31
Neither one (Volunteered)	21
Don't know/Refused	16

PARTY ID WITH LEANERS

	%
Democrat or lean Democrat	44
Republican or lean Republican	41
Independent--refused to lean	15

ASK ALL:

LIB1. How would you describe your views on most political matters? Do you consider yourself liberal, moderate, or conservative?

	%
Liberal	18
Moderate	44
Conservative	31
Don't know/Refused	7

Tables of Results by Selected Subgroups⁴

Q24. Now, suppose the 2008 presidential election were being held TODAY. If you had to choose between [ROTATE: John McCain/Barack Obama]—who would you vote for?⁵

		John McCain	Barack Obama	Other (VOL)	Neither (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	Number of cases
All registered voters		44%	36%	1%	4%	15%	852
Region	Northwest	52%	24%	1%	6%	17%	141
	Northern VA	36%	41%	1%	3%	20%	199
	West	51%	31%	1%	4%	13%	196
	South Central	39%	43%		2%	15%	134
	Tidewater	47%	38%	1%	5%	10%	182
Party identification	Democrat	14%	71%	1%	3%	11%	250
	Republican	81%	6%		1%	12%	258
	Independent	44%	34%	1%	7%	14%	289
Gender	Men	49%	33%	1%	4%	14%	357
	Women	40%	39%	1%	4%	16%	495
Race	White	55%	25%	1%	5%	15%	684
	Black	3%	86%		1%	10%	119
Race by Gender	White men	59%	24%	1%	4%	13%	306
	White women	52%	26%	1%	5%	17%	378
Age	18-44	43%	40%	1%	3%	13%	244
	45-64	43%	40%	1%	4%	13%	356
	65 and older	52%	24%		7%	17%	225
Education	H.S. or less	44%	39%	0%	5%	12%	261
	Some college	46%	35%	1%	2%	17%	215
	College grad	50%	30%	1%	4%	15%	194
	Post-college	36%	41%	1%	6%	16%	176
Family Income	Under \$50,000	45%	42%		3%	10%	256
	\$50K to under \$100K	44%	37%	1%	4%	13%	244
	\$100,000 or more	50%	34%	0%	3%	11%	185

⁴ In the following tables, cells that are blank contain no cases. Cells with a zero percent entry contain cases, but the percentage is less than 0.5%. Percentages may add to 99 or 101 due to rounding.

⁵ Question asked of registered voters only. All groups on this table are registered voters.

		Q25. Now, suppose the 2008 presidential election were being held TODAY. If you had to choose between [ROTATE: John McCain/Hillary Clinton]—who would you vote for? ⁶					
		John McCain	Hillary Clinton	Other (VOL)	Neither (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	Number of cases
All registered voters		47%	38%	1%	3%	11%	852
Region	Northwest	56%	26%	3%	5%	10%	141
	Northern VA	44%	41%	0%	2%	12%	199
	West	41%	47%	0%	2%	10%	196
	South Central	41%	39%	1%	4%	15%	134
	Tidewater	52%	35%	1%	3%	9%	182
Party identification	Democrat	14%	73%	0%	6%	7%	250
	Republican	88%	4%	0%	1%	7%	258
	Independent	47%	40%	1%	3%	9%	289
Gender	Men	52%	34%	1%	4%	10%	357
	Women	43%	42%	1%	3%	12%	495
Race	White	57%	30%	1%	2%	10%	684
	Black	10%	72%		8%	10%	119
Race by Gender	White men	61%	27%	1%	3%	9%	306
	White women	54%	33%	1%	1%	10%	378
Age	18-44	48%	38%	1%	3%	10%	244
	45-64	45%	41%	1%	4%	9%	356
	65 and older	46%	37%	0%	3%	14%	225
Education	H.S. or less	43%	45%	0%	3%	9%	261
	Some college	47%	36%	1%	3%	13%	215
	College grad	55%	32%	1%	4%	8%	194
	Post-college	46%	33%	2%	5%	16%	176
Family Income	Under \$50,000	44%	44%	0%	4%	7%	256
	\$50K to under \$100K	42%	43%	2%	3%	10%	244
	\$100,000 or more	64%	27%	0%	2%	7%	185

⁶ Question asked of registered voters only. All groups on this table are registered voters.

		Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?				
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Undecided	Haven't heard enough/DK	Number of cases
All adults		36%	28%	25%	11%	1003
Region	Northwest	30%	33%	25%	12%	163
	Northern VA	44%	19%	29%	9%	238
	West	25%	35%	26%	14%	235
	South Central	41%	25%	24%	10%	159
	Tidewater	36%	33%	21%	10%	208
Party identification	Democrat	65%	13%	16%	6%	292
	Republican	11%	45%	33%	10%	292
	Independent	34%	30%	24%	11%	343
Gender	Men	36%	32%	21%	10%	431
	Women	36%	24%	29%	11%	572
Race	White	27%	36%	25%	12%	799
	Black	72%	4%	18%	7%	138
Race by Gender	White men	30%	39%	19%	11%	362
	White women	25%	32%	31%	12%	437
Age	18-44	37%	27%	29%	7%	318
	45-64	41%	27%	22%	11%	413
	65 and older	25%	36%	20%	18%	242
Education	H.S. or less	32%	31%	25%	12%	339
	Some college	36%	26%	28%	10%	246
	College grad	37%	25%	28%	10%	214
	Post-college	47%	27%	18%	9%	197
Family Income	Under \$50,000	37%	26%	26%	11%	328
	\$50K to under \$100K	36%	32%	26%	6%	275
	\$100,000 or more	40%	28%	25%	6%	201
Registered to vote	Registered	37%	28%	24%	11%	852
	Not registered	31%	29%	29%	11%	151

		Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?				
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Undecided	Haven't heard enough/DK	Number of cases
All adults		39%	24%	24%	12%	1003
Region	Northwest	41%	18%	24%	18%	163
	Northern VA	42%	25%	22%	11%	238
	West	34%	22%	28%	16%	235
	South Central	36%	25%	32%	7%	159
	Tidewater	43%	26%	18%	13%	208
Party identification	Democrat	22%	43%	23%	11%	292
	Republican	67%	4%	21%	8%	292
	Independent	35%	24%	26%	15%	343
Gender	Men	41%	27%	23%	10%	431
	Women	38%	21%	26%	15%	572
Race	White	46%	20%	23%	11%	799
	Black	14%	42%	28%	16%	138
Race by Gender	White men	49%	22%	20%	9%	362
	White women	44%	17%	25%	13%	437
Age	18-44	38%	28%	26%	9%	318
	45-64	41%	21%	23%	14%	413
	65 and older	43%	18%	23%	16%	242
Education	H.S. or less	34%	26%	26%	14%	339
	Some college	43%	24%	23%	10%	246
	College grad	45%	19%	23%	13%	214
	Post-college	44%	23%	23%	10%	197
Family Income	Under \$50,000	32%	22%	28%	18%	328
	\$50K to under \$100K	45%	29%	20%	7%	275
	\$100,000 or more	51%	17%	26%	6%	201
Registered to vote	Registered	42%	24%	23%	11%	852
	Not registered	28%	23%	30%	18%	151

		Is your opinion of Hillary Clinton favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Hillary Clinton yet to have an opinion?				
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Undecided	Haven't heard enough/DK	Number of cases
All adults		34%	38%	20%	7%	1003
Region	Northwest	27%	42%	17%	14%	163
	Northern VA	37%	39%	17%	7%	238
	West	39%	29%	23%	9%	235
	South Central	35%	39%	23%	2%	159
	Tidewater	31%	43%	21%	6%	208
Party identification	Democrat	55%	22%	17%	6%	292
	Republican	16%	62%	15%	6%	292
	Independent	31%	37%	24%	8%	343
Gender	Men	30%	46%	18%	6%	431
	Women	38%	32%	21%	8%	572
Race	White	32%	43%	17%	7%	799
	Black	38%	27%	28%	7%	138
Race by Gender	White men	30%	51%	13%	6%	362
	White women	35%	36%	22%	8%	437
Age	18-44	33%	41%	21%	5%	318
	45-64	37%	35%	19%	8%	413
	65 and older	36%	36%	19%	8%	242
Education	H.S. or less	36%	32%	24%	8%	339
	Some college	34%	40%	20%	6%	246
	College grad	30%	46%	16%	7%	214
	Post-college	36%	46%	13%	5%	197
Family Income	Under \$50,000	38%	30%	24%	8%	328
	\$50K to under \$100K	39%	37%	19%	5%	275
	\$100,000 or more	24%	56%	18%	2%	201
Registered to vote	Registered	33%	41%	19%	8%	852
	Not registered	40%	28%	25%	6%	151

		Is your opinion of George W. Bush favorable, unfavorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about George W. Bush yet to have an opinion?				
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Undecided	Haven't heard enough/DK	Number of cases
All adults		29%	53%	12%	6%	1003
Region	Northwest	36%	42%	12%	10%	163
	Northern VA	21%	63%	11%	5%	238
	West	31%	51%	12%	5%	235
	South Central	28%	52%	15%	5%	159
	Tidewater	31%	51%	12%	5%	208
Party identification	Democrat	7%	83%	7%	3%	292
	Republican	64%	18%	12%	6%	292
	Independent	20%	61%	16%	3%	343
Gender	Men	32%	52%	11%	5%	431
	Women	26%	55%	13%	7%	572
Race	White	33%	48%	13%	6%	799
	Black	8%	79%	10%	3%	138
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	45-64	27%	55%	12%	5%	413
	65 and older	33%	46%	13%	8%	242
Education	H.S. or less	29%	52%	13%	7%	339
	Some college	30%	57%	8%	5%	246
	College grad	30%	49%	17%	3%	214
	Post-college	24%	60%	12%	4%	197
Family Income	Under \$50,000	30%	54%	11%	4%	328
	\$50K to under \$100K	29%	56%	11%	4%	275
	\$100,000 or more	30%	52%	17%	2%	201
Registered to vote	Registered	31%	53%	12%	5%	852
	Not registered	21%	57%	13%	9%	151

Q26. Looking back, do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

		Right decision	Wrong decision	Don't know/Refused	Number of cases
All adults		39%	48%	13%	1003
Region	Northwest	45%	41%	14%	163
	Northern VA	33%	56%	12%	238
	West	42%	43%	15%	235
	South Central	38%	46%	16%	159
	Tidewater	40%	49%	11%	208
Party identification	Democrat	14%	75%	11%	292
	Republican	70%	18%	13%	292
	Independent	38%	52%	10%	343
Gender	Men	43%	48%	9%	431
	Women	35%	48%	16%	572
Race	White	46%	42%	12%	799
	Black	15%	77%	9%	138
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	65 and older	31%	55%	14%	242
Education	H.S. or less	38%	49%	13%	339
	Some college	45%	44%	11%	246
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	Post-college	30%	57%	13%	197
Family Income	Under \$50,000	34%	52%	14%	328
	\$50K to under \$100K	41%	50%	10%	275
	\$100,000 or more	49%	43%	8%	201
Registered to vote	Registered	40%	47%	12%	852
	Not registered	32%	51%	17%	151

		Q.27 How well is the US military effort in Iraq going?			
		Very/fairly well	Not too/Not at all well	Don't Know/Refused	Number of cases
All adults		45%	50%	6%	1003
Region	Northwest	51%	39%	10%	163
	Northern VA	45%	50%	5%	238
	West	42%	52%	6%	235
	South Central	42%	52%	6%	159
	Tidewater	45%	51%	4%	208
Party identification	Democrat	26%	71%	3%	292
	Republican	70%	25%	6%	292
	Independent	43%	54%	3%	343
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