

Virginia Commonwealth University

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Biden and Warner have double-digit leads in Virginia, VCU poll finds

RICHMOND, Va. (Sept. 15, 2020) — Democrats Joe Biden and Mark Warner are ahead of their opponents by double-digit margins, according to a new statewide poll conducted by the Center for Public Policy at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Biden is ahead of Donald Trump by 14 percentage points (53% to 39%) and Warner is ahead of Daniel Gade by 17 points (55% to 38). Gender and region were significant to the vote choice for both races. In the presidential race, women were more likely to prefer Biden over Trump by 22 percentage points (58%-36%) and men prefer Biden over Trump by a smaller margin of 5 points (47%-42%). This represents a shift for men, who were more likely to say they would vote for Trump in a [poll released by the Wilder School in July](#).

Regionally, Biden has large leads in South Central Virginia (65%-22%), Northern Virginia (59%-32%) and Tidewater (56%-33%) and Trump has large leads over Biden in the West (63%-36%) and Northwest (58%-36%). Independents are breaking toward Biden by 8 percentage points (46%-38%), with 14% remaining undecided. In the U.S. Senate race, gender and region followed the same trend as the presidential race. And Warner enjoys a greater level of support from independents, with a 16 percentage point lead over Gade (54%-38%).

The poll also provides additional insight into Virginians' opinions on the Kamala Harris nomination and mail-in voting.

"The VP choice by Biden doesn't appear to have significant influence on any group. I think the Biden camp need do more connecting, particularly with the minority communities," said former governor L. Douglas Wilder. "The anti-Trump vote will always be there. That's why the Biden vote needs to be whetted."

The telephone survey of 804 adults living in Virginia was conducted between Aug. 28 and Sept. 7. It has an estimated margin of error of 5.17 percentage points for all adults sampled, and 6.22 percentage points for likely voters.

Among the poll's key findings:

- **Seven in 10 Virginians (70%) say the selection of Harris for vice president will have no impact on their decision to vote for Biden.** While a majority of Virginians (58%) say they have heard a lot about Biden selecting Harris as his running mate, 70% say it will have no impact on whether they vote for him. Sixteen percent said it would make them more likely to vote for him, while 13% say it will make them less likely. Independent voters reflected the same trend, with only 12% saying it makes them more likely to vote for the Democrat and 70% saying it will have no impact. Sixteen percent said it would make them less likely.
- **Virginians are split on whether mail-in votes will be accurately cast and counted.** Half of respondents (50%) said they are very or somewhat confident that, across the country, mail-in votes for president will be accurately cast and counted, while 48% said they are not too or not at all confident. Republicans were most likely to be skeptical with 67% saying they are not too or not at all confident, and 46% saying they are not at all confident in the process. Independents are evenly split with 48% saying they are very or somewhat confident and 48% saying they are not too or not at all confident. Democrats were more likely to trust the process with 68% being very or somewhat confident. Regionally, the West and Northwest were most skeptical with 62% and 59% saying they are not too or not at all confident.

Methodology

The Commonwealth Poll September 2020, sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University, obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 804 adults, age 18 or older, living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (402) and cellphone (402, including 241 without a landline). The data collection was conducted by Responsive Management from Aug. 28- Sept. 7.

Statistical results are weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample by the demographic characteristics of sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region using the geographic and demographic weighting parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey data. The margin of error for the complete set of weighted data is 5.17 percentage points. The estimated margin of error for likely voters (n=693) is 6.22 percentage points.

The sample consisted of a combination of listed landline and cellular random digit dial samples. The overall sample was representative of the adult general population of Virginia who have access to either a listed landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group, a leader in providing research-based statistical samples. The cellular sample was prescreened for disconnected numbers.

As many as seven attempts were made to contact each landline telephone number, and as many as five attempts were made to contact each cellphone number. Calls were made at different times of the day and on different days of the week to maximize the chance of contacting potential respondents. Response rates are computed according to American Association for Public Opinion Research standards.¹ The response rate for the landline sample was 8.0%. The response rate for the cellular sample was 8.1%.

¹ The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2016. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys, 9th Edition*. AAPOR.

Wilder School Commonwealth Poll September 2020

State-wide survey of Virginians¹

August 28- September 7, 2020

Number of Respondents: 804

Q1. If the election for president were being held today, and the candidates were [READ AND RANDOMIZE] Joe Biden the Democrat and Donald Trump the Republican, for whom would you vote?

Likely voters only	2020	N	July 2020 ²	Apr 2020 ³	Dec 2019 ⁴	Oct 2019 ⁵
	%			%	%	%
Trump	39	267	39	41	46	46
Biden	53	370	50	51	49	51
Third party candidate (VOLUNTEERED)	1	4	1	-	-	-
Don't Know/Refused	8	52	10	8	6	3

Q2. If the election for US senator were being held today, and the candidates were [READ AND RANDOMIZE] Mark Warner the Democrat and Daniel Gade the Republican, for whom would you vote?

Likely voters only	2020	N
	%	
Warner	55	397
Gade	38	248
Don't know/Refused	6	48

Q3. How much have you seen, read, or heard about Joe Biden selecting Kamala Harris as his vice presidential running mate?

	2020
	%
A lot	58
Some	25
Not too much	11
Nothing at all	6
Don't Know/Refused	-

Q4. Does Joe Biden's selection of Kamala Harris as his vice presidential running mate make you more or less likely to vote for Joe Biden, or will it have no impact either way?

	2020
	%
More likely	16
No impact	70
Less likely	13
Don't Know/Refused	2

¹ Percentages may add to 99 or 101 due to rounding. Cells that are blank contain no cases. Cells with a zero percent entry contain cases, but the percentage is less than 0.5%.

² Wilder School Commonwealth Poll July 2020, n=725 likely voters.

³ Wilder School Commonwealth Poll April 2020, n=663 likely voters.

⁴ Wilder School Commonwealth Poll Winter 2020, n=728 likely voters.

⁵ Wilder School Commonwealth Poll September 2020, n=728 likely voters.

Q5. How confident are you that, across the country, the votes for president that are mailed in will be accurately cast and counted in this year's election?

	2020
	%
Very confident	19
Somewhat confident	31
Not too confident	21
Not at all confident	27
Don't Know/Refused	3

QUESTIONS 6 THROUGH 8 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

Tables for subgroup analysis²

Q1: If the election for president were being held today, and the candidates were Joe Biden the Democrat and Donald Trump the Republican, for whom would you vote?

		Biden	Trump	Third Party	Don't know/Refused	Number of Cases
Likely voters		53%	39%	1%	8%	693
VA Region	Northwest	36%	58%	0%	6%	99
	NOVA	59%	32%	2%	7%	211
	West	36%	63%	0%	1%	119
	South Central	65%	22%	1%	11%	129
	Tidewater	56%	33%	0%	11%	135
Gender	Male	47%	42%	1%	10%	315
	Female	58%	36%	1%	5%	378
Age	18-34	71%	18%	3%	8%	35
	35-44	51%	44%	0%	4%	74
	45-64	45%	45%	0%	9%	277
	65 and over	50%	43%	0%	6%	307
Education	High school grad or less	33%	60%	0%	7%	113
	Some college	64%	27%	0%	8%	180
	College graduate or more	59%	30%	2%	8%	400
Family Income	Under \$50,000	51%	39%	0%	10%	117
	50K to under \$100,000	54%	39%	2%	5%	175
	\$100,000 or more	58%	33%	0%	9%	263
Race	White	43%	50%	1%	6%	538
	Minority	76%	13%	0%	11%	155
Party ID	Democrat	94%	3%	0%	3%	237
	Republican	16%	82%	0%	1%	179
	Independent	46%	38%	2%	14%	266

² Cells with 0% may have observations but are less than 1%. Cells may add to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

Q2: If the election for US senator were being held today, and the candidates were Mark Warner the Democrat and Daniel Gade the Republican, for whom would you vote?

		Warner	Gade	Don't know/Refused	Number of Cases
Likely voters		55%	38%	6%	693
VA Region	Northwest	37%	55%	8%	99
	NOVA	57%	34%	8%	211
	West	39%	56%	5%	119
	South Central	69%	27%	4%	129
	Tidewater	67%	28%	5%	135
Gender	Male	53%	42%	5%	315
	Female	58%	35%	8%	378
Age	18-34	73%	25%	2%	35
	35-44	48%	44%	8%	74
	45-64	50%	43%	7%	277
	65 and over	55%	38%	7%	307
Education	High school grad or less	37%	54%	9%	113
	Some college	61%	33%	6%	180
	College graduate or more	63%	31%	5%	400
Family Income	Under \$50,000	60%	32%	8%	117
	50K to under \$100,000	56%	41%	3%	175
	\$100,000 or more	58%	37%	5%	263
Race	White	46%	47%	7%	538
	Minority	77%	18%	5%	155
Party ID	Democrat	92%	4%	4%	237
	Republican	18%	76%	6%	179
	Independent	54%	38%	7%	266

Q3: . How much have you seen, read, or heard about Joe Biden selecting Kamala Harris as his vice presidential running mate?

		A lot	Some	Not too much	Nothing at all	Don't know/ Refused	Number of Cases
All Adults		58%	25%	11%	6%	0%	804
VA Region	Northwest	59%	19%	9%	14%	0%	115
	NOVA	66%	25%	7%	2%	0%	237
	West	51%	29%	11%	8%	0%	148
	South Central	61%	23%	6%	9%	1%	143
	Tidewater	50%	27%	20%	4%	0%	161
Gender	Male	61%	21%	13%	5%	0%	370
	Female	55%	28%	9%	8%	0%	434
Age	18-34	50%	26%	15%	9%	0%	57
	35-44	67%	24%	5%	4%	0%	88
	45-64	55%	26%	12%	7%	0%	314
	65 and over	65%	23%	7%	4%	0%	345
Education	High school grad or less	54%	23%	14%	9%	0%	161
	Some college	53%	26%	14%	7%	0%	212
	College graduate or more	65%	26%	6%	3%	0%	431
Family Income	Under \$50,000	46%	20%	20%	15%	0%	169
	50K to under \$100,000	58%	31%	9%	2%	0%	192
	\$100,000 or more	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%	281
Race	White	57%	27%	9%	6%	0%	621
	Minority	59%	21%	14%	6%	0%	183
Party ID	Democrat	69%	22%	8%	2%	0%	250
	Republican	58%	26%	10%	6%	0%	201
	Independent	53%	26%	12%	9%	0%	337

Q4: Does Joe Biden's selection of Kamala Harris as his vice presidential running mate make you more or less likely to vote for Joe Biden, or will it have no impact either way?

		More likely	Less likely	No impact	Don't know/ Refused	Number of Cases
All Adults		16%	13%	70%	2%	804
VA Region	Northwest	13%	22%	61%	3%	115
	NOVA	17%	16%	67%	1%	237
	West	15%	16%	68%	1%	148
	South Central	19%	7%	68%	5%	143
	Tidewater	12%	4%	83%	0%	161
Gender	Male	11%	13%	75%	1%	370
	Female	19%	13%	66%	3%	434
Age	18-34	12%	9%	78%	1%	57
	35-44	15%	15%	70%	0%	88
	45-64	17%	15%	67%	1%	314
	65 and over	18%	12%	66%	4%	345
Education	High school grad or less	9%	13%	76%	3%	161
	Some college	13%	11%	74%	2%	212
	College graduate or more	23%	13%	62%	1%	431
Family Income	Under \$50,000	13%	12%	73%	2%	169
	50K to under \$100,000	20%	15%	63%	2%	192
	\$100,000 or more	14%	10%	76%	0%	281
Race	White	14%	13%	72%	1%	621
	Minority	19%	11%	66%	4%	183
Party ID	Democrat	34%	2%	62%	2%	250
	Republican	4%	17%	78%	1%	201
	Independent	12%	16%	70%	2%	337

Q5: How confident are you that, across the country, the votes for president that are mailed in will be accurately cast and counted in this year's election?

		Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	Don't know/ Refused	Number of Cases
All Adults		19%	31%	21%	27%	3%	804
VA Region	Northwest	11%	25%	22%	37%	5%	115
	NOVA	28%	30%	22%	18%	2%	237
	West	11%	24%	22%	40%	2%	148
	South Central	23%	40%	15%	20%	2%	143
	Tidewater	15%	35%	21%	27%	3%	161
Gender	Male	16%	36%	18%	29%	1%	370
	Female	22%	27%	23%	24%	4%	434
Age	18-34	17%	45%	21%	16%	2%	57
	35-44	16%	24%	23%	34%	3%	88
	45-64	20%	23%	21%	32%	3%	314
	65 and over	21%	31%	19%	27%	3%	345
Education	High school grad or less	12%	33%	16%	36%	3%	161
	Some college	20%	25%	22%	30%	3%	212
	College graduate or more	24%	33%	25%	17%	2%	431
Family Income	Under \$50,000	19%	30%	14%	33%	4%	169
	50K to under \$100,000	17%	32%	30%	20%	1%	192
	\$100,000 or more	22%	30%	21%	26%	1%	281
Race	White	19%	27%	21%	31%	3%	621
	Minority	19%	39%	21%	18%	3%	183
Party ID	Democrat	24%	44%	21%	9%	2%	250
	Republican	10%	22%	21%	46%	1%	201
	Independent	22%	26%	21%	27%	4%	337