

SCHOOL CHOICE

SURVEY

IN THE STATE



Public Opinion in Virginia:

Many agree with the concept of school choice. Some disagree. But everyone needs more information. As the public debate continues to grow louder about how best to provide a quality education to all Virginia children, it is critical to know the facts and to have a good understanding of public opinion.

This statistically representative sample of 1,203 likely Virginia voters illustrates public opinion on a range of K-12 education issues including school choice.

Virginia's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

By:

Paul DiPerna

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

November 2009

This public report jointly released by:

Agudath Israel of America—Mid-Atlantic Region

The Alderson Family Foundation

Americans for Prosperity—Virginia

Association of Christian Schools International

Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)

The Chase Foundation of Virginia

The Family Foundation

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Virginia Catholic Conference

Virginia Council for Private Education

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If research adheres to scientific standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results.

We are committed to sound research and to provide quality information in a transparent and efficient manner. We welcome any and all questions related to our methodology and work.

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By:

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Poll conducted by:

Braun Research, Inc.

November 2009

About the Author

Paul DiPerna (paul@friedmanfoundation.org) is Research Director for the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, an organization dedicated to educating the public on the issue of school choice. He joined the Friedman Foundation in September 2006, and he directs the organization's state polling series and other survey research. DiPerna previously served as assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, working there for more than six years. He was a research analyst for the first five issues of the *Brown Center Report on American Education* (2000-2004), and managed the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005). DiPerna has presented research at the American Sociological Association annual conference, and has published articles in *Education Next*, *First Monday*, and the *Washington Examiner*. In 2008, he authored a textbook chapter in the *Handbook of Research on Web Log Analysis*.

About Braun Research, Inc.

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 50 full time and over 500 part time employees. The organization engages in data collection via telephone and Internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, foundations, universities, and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In over eleven years, Braun Research has conducted over 6,000 survey projects by telephone, Internet, and mail worldwide.

Nationally-known research firms that have hired Braun Research include the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center, and the Eagleton Poll. Braun Research is the field house responsible for collecting the data for the Newsweek Poll. The organization has also worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the United States Departments of the Treasury and Defense.

Braun Research is a well respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research academic organizations and other affiliations, including those with whom Braun is active member, including the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), Council on Marketing and Opinion Research (CMOR), and the Council on American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO).

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Executive Summary

This statistically representative survey of 1,203 likely Virginia voters illustrates public opinion on a wide range of K-12 education issues. The underlying purpose of the Friedman Foundation's state surveys is to measure voter knowledge and attitudes toward public institutions and policies, innovative ideas, and the state's K-12 education system.

The survey results shed light on the major disconnect between parental schooling preferences and actual school enrollments.¹

- 40% of parents said they would prefer a regular public school for their child. Approximately 90% of Virginia's enrolled K-12 students attend regular public schools.²
- 39% of K-12 parents say they would like to send their child to a private school. In reality, however, approximately 9% of Virginia's K-12 students attend private schools.³
- 11% of parents in our survey would prefer to homeschool their child. According to data collected by the Virginia Department of Education, just under 2% of the state's children are homeschooled.⁴
- 8% of parents say they would like to send their child to a charter school. Currently there are only three charter schools in operation in Virginia, serving approximately 190 students.⁵

A total of 1,203 live phone interviews were conducted by Braun Research, Inc., October 1 – 4, 2009. The margin of error for the full sample of likely voters is ± 2.8 percentage points; the margin of error is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup.

Findings Include:

The state's Democrats (D), Republicans (R), and Independents (I) share common ground on tax-credit scholarships and school vouchers.

- Support levels are substantial:

Tax-credit scholarships	D: 64% R: 68% I: 66%
School vouchers	D: 53% R: 67% I: 58%
- Favor-oppose gaps are large:

Tax-credit scholarships	D: +43 R: +46 I: +44
School vouchers	D: +15 R: +39 I: +22

¹ The subgroup "K-12 Parents" makes up 31% of the total survey sample (n=367).

² Regular public school enrollment (2007-2008) obtained from the Virginia Department of Education (VDE). http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dbpubs/Fall_Membership/2007/readme.htm.

³ Private school enrollment estimate obtained from Stephen Broughman, Nancy Swaim, and Patrick Keaton, *Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results From the 2007-08 Private School Universe Survey* (NCES 2009-313). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), Table 15.

⁴ Homeschooling data from the document posted on the Virginia Department of Education website: <http://www.heav.org/assets/files/law/Homeschool-Numbers-2008-2009.pdf>

⁵ Virginia's charter school information obtained on the Virginia Department of Education website: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/OCP/charterschools.html>.

More Virginians say the state's public school system is either "good" or "excellent" (62%) rather than "fair" or "poor" (31%).

- Virginia is the first state in our series to register a combined "good"-and-"excellent" rating above 50%.
- Those who identify themselves as being "Suburban" (67%) are more likely to be positive about the state's public schools than those who say they are either "Urban" (58%) or "Small Town" (57%).
- Voters in Northern Virginia (70%) are more likely to share positive views than those who live in the Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News area (53%).

Virginia voters do not know the per-pupil costs within the public school system.

- Nearly two out of three voters interviewed (65%) substantially underestimated per-student funding in Virginia's public schools.

When asked, "If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?", likely voters in the state responded:

Regular Public Schools.....	42%
Private Schools.....	35%
Charter Schools.....	10%
Homeschooling.....	9%
Virtual Schools.....	1%

Virginians are much more likely to favor (65%) a tax-credit scholarship system, rather than oppose (23%) such a system.

- Support is nearly equally strong across the state with favorability staying at or above 60% for any one particular region including Northern Virginia, Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News, Richmond-Petersburg, and Roanoke-Lynchburg.
- The favor-oppose gap is wide among African Americans (67% favor-21% oppose) and those ages 55 and younger (68% favor-21% oppose).

When asked about school vouchers, 57% of likely voters say they favor them, compared to 35% who oppose.

- 59% of voters with household incomes below \$75,000 favor school vouchers.
- 68% of voters in the 36-45 age group say they favor school vouchers, versus 28% who say they oppose school vouchers; older voters, over the age of 55, are relatively less supportive of vouchers (49% favor, 39% oppose).
- 69% of Catholics and 56% of Protestants support school vouchers.

A large majority of Virginians (79%) favor a recent proposal to allow school vouchers for special needs students.

- Special needs vouchers receive favorable responses from all parts of the state with support not falling below 78% for any particular region.
- Democrats and Republicans similarly favor a special needs voucher policy, rather than oppose. The favor-oppose gaps are +67 and +64 percentage points, respectively.
- Among age groups, a special needs voucher policy is favored most heavily by those in the 36-45 age group (83%), least supported by those over the age of 65 (74%).

Virginia voters clearly favor performance pay for teachers. They are much more likely to favor (62%), rather than oppose (28%), such a policy.

- Although performance pay garners support from both males and females, the favorability levels differ between the two subgroups (67% among Males versus 58% among Females).
- 57% of respondents with “union ties” favor performance pay (compared with 34% who oppose); 37% in this subgroup say they “strongly favor” the compensation policy.

Respondents were presented a series of statements, and we asked whether a given scenario was *likely* or *unlikely* to occur “if a tax-credit scholarship system is implemented in Virginia.” The following are respondent forecasts:

79% say it is *unlikely* “Public schools will close.”

79% say it is *likely* “Parents will need better information for decisions.”

72% say it is *likely* “Parents will have more options.”

72% say it is *likely* “Public schools and private schools will have incentives to improve.”

61% say it is *likely* “Public schools and private schools will compete for students.”

59% say it is *unlikely* “Private schools will not be accountable.”

50% say it is *likely* “Parents will have more power.”

Methodology

We obtained a total of 1,203 completed interviews with “likely voters” in the State of Virginia, providing ample statistical representation for this specific population. The sample’s statistical significance and probability are sufficient for assessment.

The margin of sampling error (MSE) at the conventional 95 percent confidence level is ± 2.82 percentage points for the total sample. It is critical to note that the MSE is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup. For example, the MSE for a subgroup of 150 respondents is ± 8.0 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

Braun Research, Inc.(BRI) conducted landline interviews using their call centers to screen for likely voters. Random Digit Dial (RDD) samples were produced by Survey Sampling International (SSI) using a sampling frame that includes all active telephone area codes and exchanges in the United States. This process randomly generates phone numbers for calls.

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks—contiguous groups of 100 phone numbers for which more than one residential number is listed—are added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

BRI’s live callers conducted all phone interviews from October 1 to October 4, 2009. A total of 7,456 calls were made in the State of Virginia. Of these calls... 2,427 were disconnected, busy, non-residential, or non-answers; 3,452 were usable phone numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals); 360 did not currently qualify as likely voters; 14 did not complete the survey. The response rate of the landline interviews was 26.42%.

No weights were applied to the survey data described in this report. After conducting the survey, BRI checked the survey results to see how they compared to U.S. Census Bureau and Direct Marketing Association (DMA) data benchmarks for age, race, gender, and geography. The age variable showed some differences. BRI applied weights accordingly to produce a comparison “weighted dataset.” The weighted responses were not statistically significantly different from unweighted responses. Therefore, this report’s author used the unweighted dataset for analysis.

Screening questions were used to determine past voting behavior and likely voting in 2010. Respondents were asked whether they had voted in the 2008 election and were planning to vote in the next election in 2010. Respondents who satisfied both these criteria were classified as “likely voters” and were included in the survey. Respondents who either did not vote in 2008 or were not planning to vote in the 2010 election were not included.

The author takes full responsibility for question wording and ordering, overall polling design, and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

Part 1 Selected Survey Snapshots & Crosstabs

Q1. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Virginia? Just the one word that best describes Virginia.



TOP 15 IMPRESSIONS (by frequency)

BEAUTIFUL.....	99	WONDERFUL.....	33	DIVERSE.....	13
GOOD.....	91	LOVELY.....	26	COMMONWEALTH.....	11
GREAT.....	89	NICE.....	24	GREEN.....	10
HOME.....	63	PROGRESSIVE.....	17	CONFUSED.....	9
CONSERVATIVE.....	49	OK.....	15	FINE.....	9

FIGURE SHOWS NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO OFFERED EACH IMPRESSION; THESE NUMBERS ARE NOT PERCENTAGES.

For Question #1, Braun Research supplied likely voters’ verbatim responses. Each respondent was asked to provide one descriptive word about the state of Virginia. Phrases were accepted. The total sample produced 285 distinct responses.

We illustrate responses by entering them as text into Wordle, which is a Web tool that generates “word clouds” from text provided by the user. The clouds give greater visibility to responses that appear more frequently in the supplied source text.

For this Wordle, the response cut-off is frequency = 3, allowing us to display 64 of the most common responses. Non-responses (frequency = 154), such as “don’t know” or “refuse,” are not included in the illustration in order to emphasize clear messages from voters.

Q3. How would you rate Virginia's public school system?

	"Good" or "Excellent" %	"Fair" or "Poor" %	Good/Excellent-Fair/Poor Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	62	31	+31	1,203
K-12 Parent	64	33	+31	367
<i>City or Region</i>				
Northern Virginia	70	23	+47	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	53	39	+14	267
Richmond-Petersburg	58	36	+22	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	60	32	+28	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>				
Urban	58	33	+25	215
Suburban	67	27	+40	504
Small Town	57	36	+21	188
Rural	61	33	+28	281
<i>Political Affiliation</i>				
Democrat	64	30	+33	450
Republican	61	32	+28	317
Independent	63	31	+32	309
<i>Age Group</i>				
18 – 25	57	32	+25	88
26 – 35	63	32	+30	307
36 – 45	55	40	+15	233
46 – 55	66	27	+39	273
56 – 65	65	26	+39	157
Over 65	64	27	+37	139
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	57	35	+22	537
Female	66	28	+38	666
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
African American	55	42	+13	205
Asian	70	26	+43	23
Hispanic	65	23	+42	26
White	64	29	+35	896
<i>Religion</i>				
Catholic	69	23	+47	216
Protestant	62	33	+29	732
None	56	36	+20	161
<i>Household Income</i>				
Under \$25,000	60	31	+29	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	61	32	+30	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	58	35	+22	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	65	30	+35	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	67	24	+43	95
Over \$200,000	77	20	+57	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>				
Yes / Union Ties	63	30	+34	134
No / No Union Ties	62	31	+30	1,059

Q4. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Virginia's public school system? Just the one word that best describes Virginia's education system.



TOP 15 IMPRESSIONS (by frequency)

GOOD.....	293	OK.....	32	MEDIocre.....	13
FAIR.....	96	ADEQUATE.....	26	VERY GOOD.....	12
EXCELLENT.....	62	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT.....	16	AVERAGE.....	10
POOR.....	40	LACKING.....	15	STRUGGLING.....	9
IMPROVING.....	34	GREAT.....	14	UNDER-FUNDED.....	9

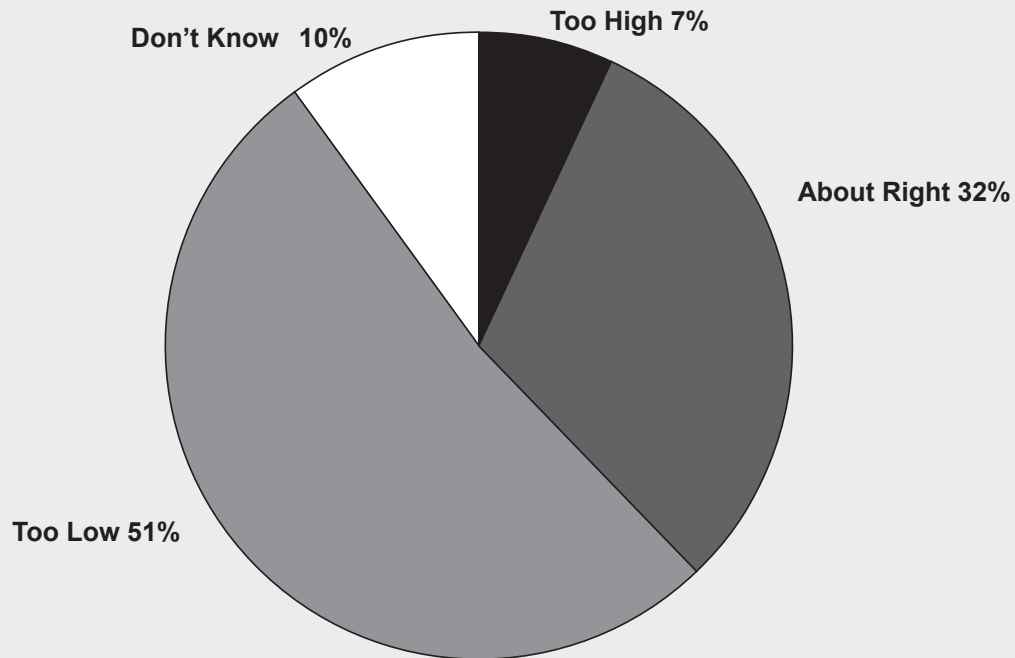
FIGURE SHOWS NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO OFFERED EACH IMPRESSION; THESE NUMBERS ARE NOT PERCENTAGES.

For Question #4, Braun Research supplied likely voters' verbatim responses. Each respondent was asked to provide one descriptive word about Virginia's public school system. Phrases were accepted. The total sample produced 243 distinct responses.

We illustrate responses by entering them as text into Wordle, which is a Web tool that generates "word clouds" from text provided by the user. The clouds give greater visibility to responses that appear more frequently in the supplied source text.

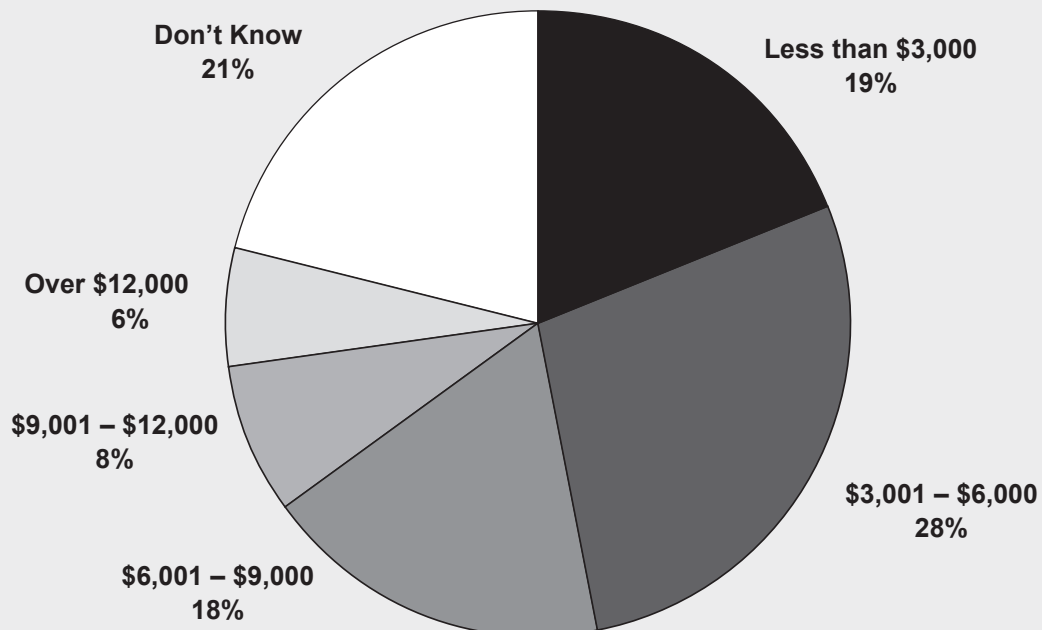
For this Wordle, the response cut-off is frequency = 3, allowing us to display 55 of the most common responses. Non-responses (frequency = 130), such as "don't know" or "refuse," are not included in the illustration in order to emphasize clear messages from voters.

Q5. Do you believe that public school funding in Virginia is at a level that is:



Q6. Approximately how much do you think is currently spent on each student in Virginia's public schools? Your estimate will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

Actual 2007 school year figure: \$11,663*



* National Center for Education Statistics, "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2006-07," published March 2009. Calculated by dividing Virginia's total expenditures (Table 8) by Virginia's fall 2006 student membership (Table 3).

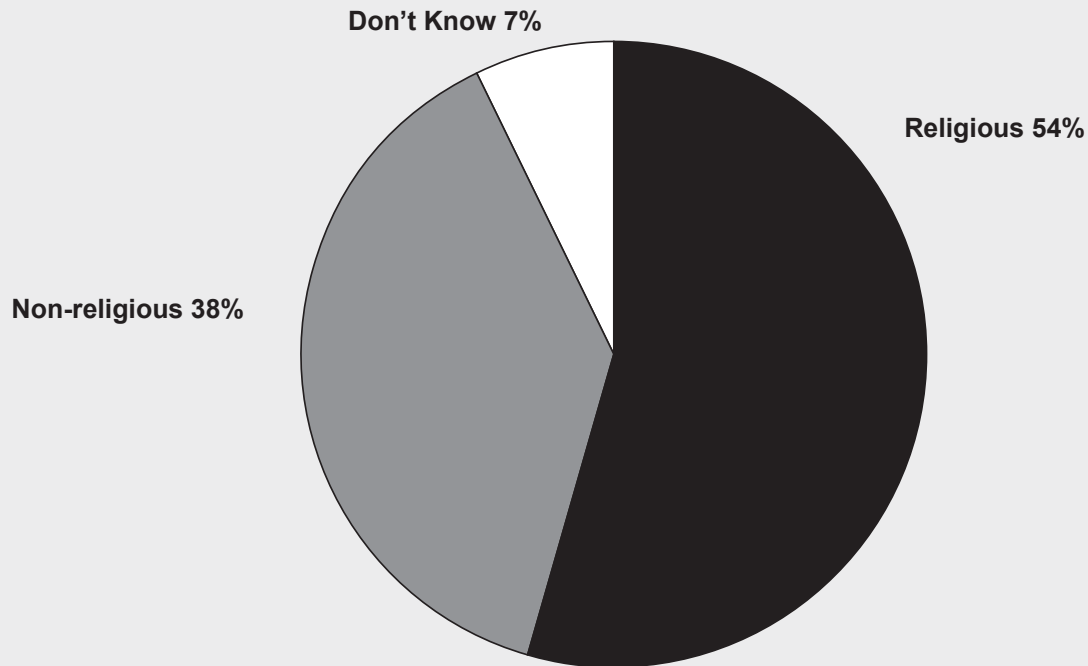
Q10. What do you see as the biggest challenge confronting Virginia's public school system?

	Discipline/ Self-control %	Funding %	Bureaucracy %	Accountability %	Engagement %	Overcrowded Classrooms, Schools %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	21	17	15	12	12	12	1,203
K-12 Parent	17	18	16	14	14	14	367
<i>City or Region</i>							
Northern Virginia	17	18	17	11	11	15	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	24	17	13	11	12	14	267
Richmond-Petersburg	23	15	14	15	13	12	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	23	19	11	15	14	6	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>							
Urban	20	21	12	14	11	10	215
Suburban	20	17	14	14	13	13	504
Small Town	18	17	17	8	14	16	188
Rural	27	15	17	10	10	10	281
<i>Political Affiliation</i>							
Democrat	17	26	10	10	11	14	450
Republican	22	13	17	15	12	10	317
Independent	25	10	19	12	14	11	309
<i>Age Group</i>							
18 – 25	14	21	18	8	22	10	88
26 – 35	17	21	14	11	10	14	307
36 – 45	22	12	14	14	17	12	233
46 – 55	19	18	13	14	13	14	273
56 – 65	22	17	24	12	7	8	157
Over 65	36	14	9	7	9	12	139
<i>Gender</i>							
Male	21	16	17	13	14	9	537
Female	21	18	13	11	11	15	666
<i>Race</i>							
African American	17	23	7	13	13	14	205
Asian	30	4	9	9	9	26	23
Hispanic	15	19	8	12	15	27	26
White	22	16	16	12	12	11	896
<i>Religion</i>							
Catholic	17	19	18	14	10	13	216
Protestant	23	18	13	12	12	12	732
None	17	14	14	10	17	15	161
<i>Household Income</i>							
Under \$25,000	29	19	12	7	11	11	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	21	18	13	14	13	10	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	17	16	17	12	14	15	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	20	21	14	13	13	10	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	22	17	17	13	6	14	95
Over \$200,000	16	5	27	16	14	18	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>							
Yes / Union Ties	22	16	18	8	15	13	134
No / No Union Ties	21	17	15	12	12	12	1,059

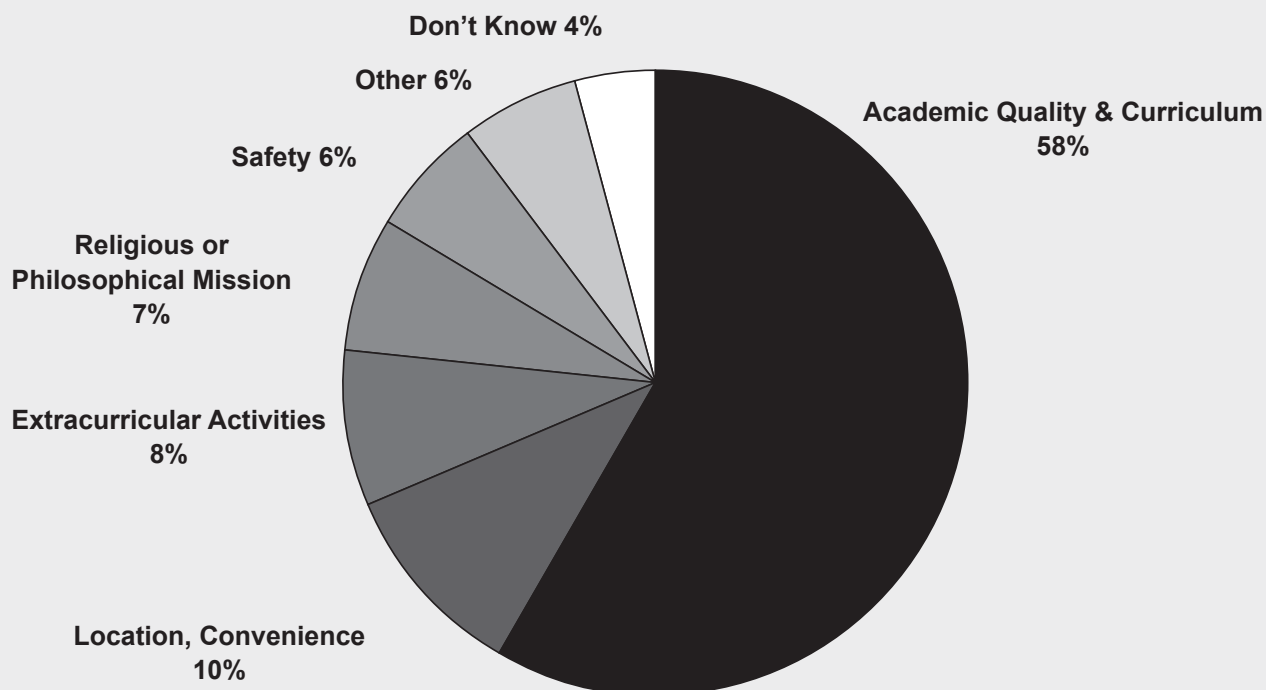
Q11. If it was your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

	Regular Public School %	Private School %	Charter School %	Homeschooling %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	42	35	10	9	1,203
K-12 Parent	40	39	8	11	367
<i>City or Region</i>					
Northern Virginia	41	39	9	8	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	40	39	10	8	267
Richmond-Petersburg	40	34	12	10	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	50	21	11	14	164
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Small Town	43	32	9	12	188
Rural	46	35	8	10	281
<i>Political Affiliation</i>					
Democrat	49	30	10	8	450
Republican	37	45	6	10	317
Independent	39	35	13	8	309
<i>Age Group</i>					
18 – 25	31	48	14	8	88
26 – 35	41	36	8	12	307
36 – 45	40	39	10	8	233
46 – 55	43	34	11	9	273
56 – 65	50	27	10	8	157
Over 65	48	32	9	7	139
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	40	37	12	9	537
Female	45	34	8	9	666
<i>Race</i>					
African American	50	26	14	9	205
Asian	57	22	9	13	23
Hispanic	27	39	4	12	26
White	42	37	9	9	896
<i>Religion</i>					
Catholic	38	45	7	8	216
Protestant	46	32	10	10	732
None	37	36	12	8	161
<i>Household Income</i>					
Under \$25,000	47	31	6	11	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	45	30	10	10	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	44	33	10	12	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	38	40	12	9	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	40	41	11	4	95
Over \$200,000	39	43	16	0	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>					
Yes / Union Ties	49	32	12	5	134
No / No Union Ties	42	36	10	10	1,059

Q12. [If "Private School" from Question 11] Please specify the type of Private School.



Q13. Why would you select [answer from question 11] for your child?



Q14. How familiar are you with charter schools in K-12 education?

Q16. How familiar are you with 'virtual schools' in K-12 education? These schools are sometimes called 'cyber schools' and 'online schools.'

Q29. How familiar are you with 'school vouchers' in K-12 education?

	Charter School Familiar* %	Virtual School Familiar* %	School Voucher Familiar* %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	43	31	48	1,203
K-12 Parent	50	40	55	367
<i>City or Region</i>				
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	41	32	47	267
Richmond-Petersburg	47	29	47	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	40	34	46	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>				
Urban	47	33	50	215
Suburban	49	31	56	504
Small Town	43	36	43	188
Rural	29	26	40	281
<i>Political Affiliation</i>				
Democrat	45	32	48	450
Republican	40	32	52	317
Independent	40	27	47	309
<i>Age Group</i>				
18 – 25	39	36	45	88
26 – 35	44	34	51	307
36 – 45	46	34	56	233
46 – 55	48	32	48	273
56 – 65	38	25	48	157
Over 65	31	19	34	139
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	46	30	52	537
Female	40	31	45	666
<i>Race</i>				
African American	44	29	45	205
Asian	35	35	61	23
Hispanic	42	35	42	26
White	42	30	49	896
<i>Religion</i>				
Catholic	48	33	63	216
Protestant	40	30	45	732
None	46	27	47	161
<i>Household Income</i>				
Under \$25,000	16	17	22	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	35	32	40	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	45	30	51	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	54	38	59	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	57	36	63	95
Over \$200,000	64	39	71	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>				
Yes / Union Ties	47	33	52	134
No / No Union Ties	42	30	48	1,059

* Familiarity combines the responses including "Very Familiar" and "Somewhat Familiar."

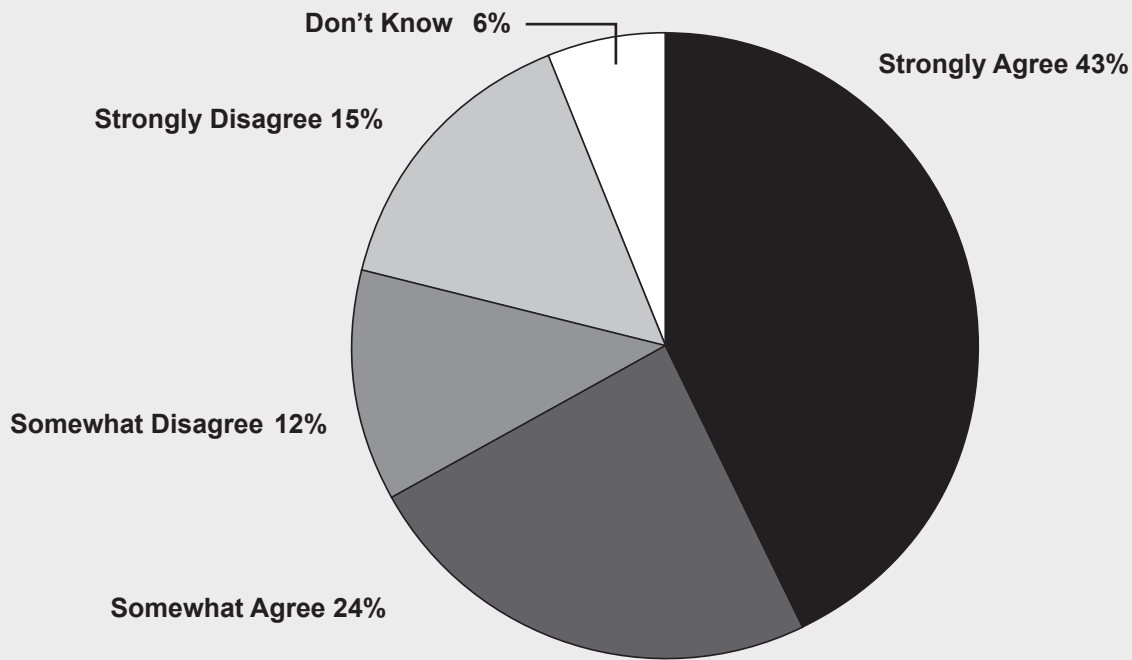
Q15. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	58	+33	1,203
K-12 Parent	63	+40	367
<i>City or Region</i>			
Northern Virginia	61	+34	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	58	+33	267
Richmond-Petersburg	58	+34	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	46	+23	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>			
Urban	61	+35	215
Suburban	61	+36	504
Small Town	55	+32	188
Rural	54	+26	281
<i>Party</i>			
Democrat	59	+33	450
Republican	57	+30	317
Independent	59	+36	309
<i>Age Group</i>			
18 – 25	65	+44	88
26 – 35	59	+34	307
36 – 45	62	+36	233
46 – 55	61	+36	273
56 – 65	51	+22	157
Over 65	52	+24	139
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	59	+32	537
Female	58	+33	666
<i>Race</i>			
African American	60	+32	205
Asian	48	+20	23
Hispanic	65	+41	26
White	58	+33	896
<i>Religion</i>			
Catholic	65	+41	216
Protestant	58	+31	732
None	56	+35	161
<i>Household Income</i>			
Under \$25,000	59	+37	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	51	+22	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	62	+39	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	59	+31	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	73	+55	95
Over \$200,000	71	+50	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>			
Yes / Union Ties	49	+14	134
No / No Union Ties	60	+35	1,059

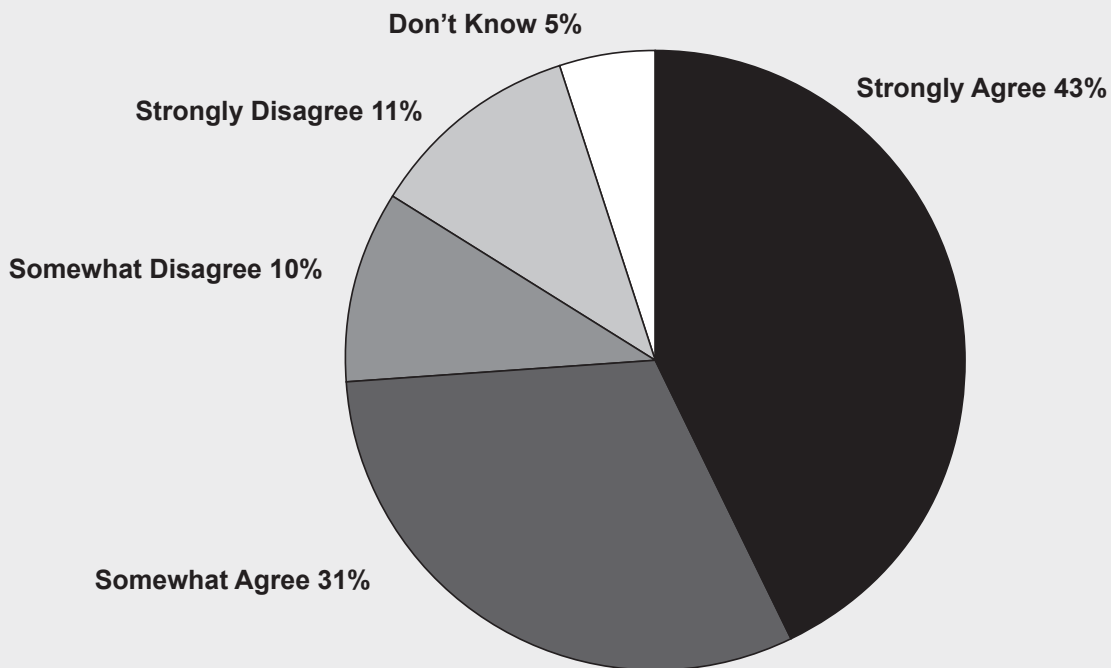
Q19. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a “tax-credit scholarship system.” If a proposal were made in Virginia to create such a system, would you favor or oppose such plan?

	“Somewhat” or “Strongly” Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	65	+42	1,203
K-12 Parent	71	+49	367
<i>City or Region</i>			
Northern Virginia	66	+45	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	66	+45	267
Richmond-Petersburg	64	+38	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	60	+40	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>			
Urban	70	+49	215
Suburban	68	+48	504
Small Town	56	+32	188
Rural	62	+37	281
<i>Party Affiliation</i>			
Democrat	64	+43	450
Republican	68	+46	317
Independent	65	+43	309
<i>Age Group</i>			
18 – 25	69	+52	88
26 – 35	69	+50	307
36 – 45	67	+44	233
46 – 55	68	+44	273
56 – 65	58	+33	157
Over 65	51	+26	139
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	63	+39	537
Female	67	+46	666
<i>Race</i>			
African American	67	+46	205
Asian	87	+83	23
Hispanic	85	+81	26
White	63	+40	896
<i>Religion</i>			
Catholic	65	+41	216
Protestant	64	+42	732
None	56	+35	161
<i>Household Income</i>			
Under \$25,000	56	+36	95
\$25,000 - \$49,999	66	+45	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	68	+47	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	71	+49	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	66	+41	44
Over \$200,000	79	+62	95
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>			
Yes / Union Ties	61	+37	134
No / No Union Ties	65	+43	1,059

Q 20. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?



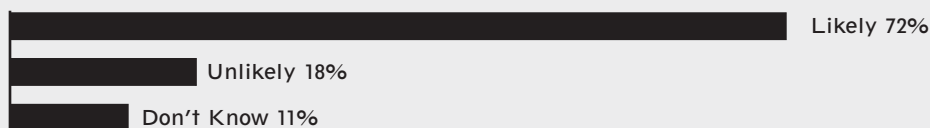
Q 21. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to students based on financial need. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?



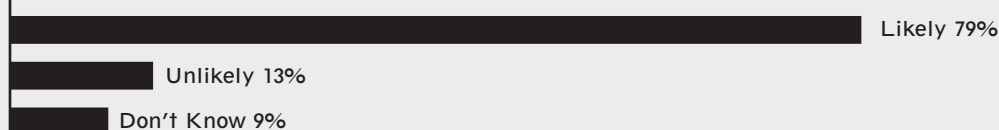
Q 22.-28. In this section, I would like to know if you think the following statements are likely or unlikely to happen if a tax-credit scholarship system is implemented in Virginia. If you are unsure, feel free to say 'I Don't Know.'

(questions 22 – 28 rotated to avoid bias)

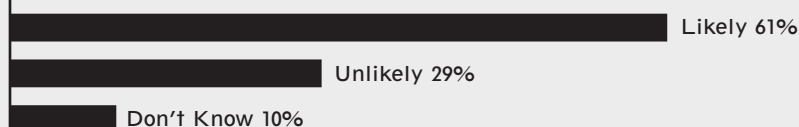
22. Parents will have more options.



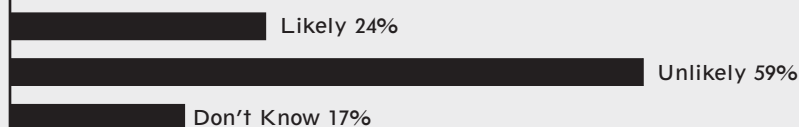
23. Parents will need better information for decisions.



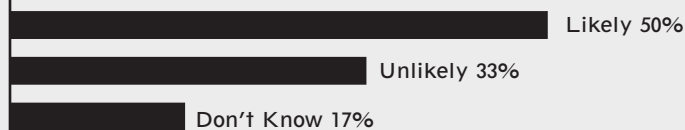
24. Public schools and private schools will compete for students.



25. Private schools will not be accountable.



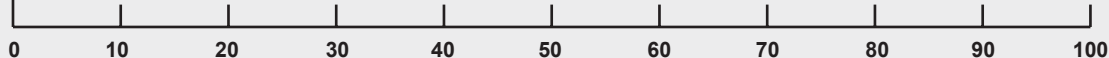
26. Parents will have more power.



27. Public schools will close.



28. Public schools and private schools will have incentives to improve.



Q30. School vouchers allow parents the option of sending their children to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a "school voucher" to help pay tuition for the school where they choose to send their child. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	57	+22	1,203
K-12 Parent	66	+37	367
<i>City or Region</i>			
Northern Virginia	59	+27	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	58	+22	267
Richmond-Petersburg	56	+20	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	56	+20	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>			
Urban	59	+24	215
Suburban	59	+26	504
Small Town	54	+18	188
Rural	55	+17	281
<i>Party</i>			
Democrat	53	+15	450
Republican	67	+39	317
Independent	58	+22	309
<i>Age Group</i>			
18 – 25	65	+35	88
26 – 35	56	+22	307
36 – 45	68	+40	233
46 – 55	57	+18	273
56 – 65	53	+15	157
Over 65	45	+4	139
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	63	+30	537
Female	53	+17	666
<i>Race</i>			
African American	56	+18	205
Asian	57	+30	23
Hispanic	73	+54	26
White	57	+22	896
<i>Religion</i>			
Catholic	69	+44	216
Protestant	56	+20	732
None	50	+9	161
<i>Household Income</i>			
Under \$25,000	59	+27	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	57	+24	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	61	+29	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	60	+26	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	55	+17	95
Over \$200,000	64	+34	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>			
Yes / Union Ties	47	+2	134
No / No Union Ties	59	+25	1,059

Q31. The Virginia General Assembly recently debated a bill that would allow parents of a child with disabilities to use a voucher to send their child to a private school or public school of their choice. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal?

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	79	+65	1,203
K-12 Parent	82	+69	367
<i>City or Region</i>			
Northern Virginia	79	+64	430
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	78	+61	267
Richmond-Petersburg	80	+69	256
Roanoke-Lynchburg	82	+71	164
<i>Urban/Rural</i>			
Urban	81	+67	215
Suburban	78	+62	504
Small Town	76	+63	188
Rural	80	+68	281
<i>Party</i>			
Democrat	81	+67	450
Republican	79	+64	317
Independent	76	+62	309
<i>Age Group</i>			
18 – 25	76	+59	88
26 – 35	78	+63	307
36 – 45	83	+70	233
46 – 55	79	+64	273
56 – 65	79	+68	157
Over 65	74	+62	139
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	80	+66	537
Female	77	+63	666
<i>Race</i>			
African American	81	+69	205
Asian	65	+39	23
Hispanic	92	+89	26
White	77	+63	896
<i>Religion</i>			
Catholic	86	+77	216
Protestant	79	+65	732
None	69	+48	161
<i>Household Income</i>			
Under \$25,000	78	+65	90
\$25,000 - \$49,999	80	+68	241
\$50,000 - \$74,999	83	+70	285
\$75,000 - \$124,999	73	+58	248
\$125,000 - \$200,000	81	+67	95
Over \$200,000	80	+62	44
<i>Self or Family in Union?</i>			
Yes / Union Ties	71	+51	134
No / No Union Ties	80	+66	1,059

Part 2 Topline Results & Questionnaire

October 1 – 4, 2009
 N = 1,203 Likely Voters
 Response Rate = 26.4%

Due to rounding, percentage totals for a given question may be slightly greater or less than 100%.

“For this brief interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, you can say ‘I Don’t Know’.” [ENTER AS “DK”]

1. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Virginia? Just the one word that best describes Virginia. **[OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”. ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR SECOND RESPONSE]**

Displaying impression counts ≥ 10 responses.

Don't Know/Refused	154
Beautiful	99
Good	91
Great	89
Home	63
Conservative	49
Wonderful	33
Love or Lovely	26
Nice	24
Progressive	17
OK	15
Diverse	13
Commonwealth	11
Green	10

2. I am going to name several issues facing the State of Virginia, and I would like you to select the one that is most important to you... **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]**

Jobs and Economic Growth	38%
K-12 Education	23%
Taxes	15%
Transportation	10%
Crime	8%
Undecided/Other	3%
Housing	4%

3. How would you rate Virginia's public school system?

Excellent	14%
Good	48%
Fair	25%
Poor	6%
Undecided	7%

4. What **ONE WORD** best describes your impression of Virginia's public school system? Just the one word that best describes Virginia's education system. **[OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK". ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR SECOND RESPONSE]**

Displaying impression counts ≥ 10 responses.

Good	293
Don't Know/Refused	130
Fair	96
Excellent	62
Poor	40
Improving	34
Ok	32
Adequate	26
Needs Improvement	16
Lacking	15
Great	14
Mediocre	13
Very Good	12
Average	10

5. Do you believe that public school funding in Virginia is at a level that is:

Too High	7%
About Right	32%
Too Low	51%
Don't Know	10%

6. Approximately how much do you think is currently spent on each student in Virginia's public schools? Your estimate will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

Less than \$3,000	19%
\$3,001 – \$6,000	28%
\$6,001 – \$9,000	18%
\$9,001 – \$12,000	8%
Over \$12,000	6%
Don't Know	21%

7. Do you believe that the typical salary for Virginia public school teachers is:

Too High	4%
About Right	26%
Too Low	62%
Don't Know	8%

8. Approximately how much do you think is the typical salary for Virginia's public school teachers?

Less than \$30,000	13%
\$30,000 – \$40,000	44%
\$40,001 – \$50,000	25%
\$50,001 – \$60,000	7%
Over \$60,000	3%
Don't Know	8%

9. How much would you favor or oppose financially rewarding teachers whose students make more academic progress-in terms of measurable outcomes-when compared to similar students taught by other teachers?

Strongly Favor	32%
Somewhat Favor	30%
Somewhat Oppose	14%
Strongly Oppose	14%
Don't Know	11%

10. What do you see as the biggest challenge confronting Virginia's public school system?
[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Poor Student Discipline & Self-control	21%
Lack of Funding	17%
Too Much Bureaucracy	15%
Lack of Accountability	12%
Poor Engagement with Parents	12%
Overcrowded Classrooms, Schools	12%
Undecided/Other	11%

11. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]**

Regular Public School	42%
Private School	35%
Charter School	10%
Homeschooling	9%
Don't Know	3%
Virtual School	1%

12. **[If "Private School" from Question 11]** Please specify the type of Private School.

Religious	54%
Non-religious	38%
Don't Know	7%

13. What is the most important reason you would select **[ANSWER FROM QUESTION 11]** for your child? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]**

Academic Quality & Curriculum	58%
Location, Convenience	10%
Extracurricular Activities	8%
Religious or Philosophical Mission	7%
Safety	6%
Other	6%
Don't Know	4%

“For the remainder of this interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, feel free to say ‘I Don’t Know’.” [ENTER AS “DK”]

14. How familiar are you with “charter schools” in K-12 education? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Very Familiar	11%
Somewhat Familiar	32%
Not That Familiar	39%
I Have Never Heard of “Charter Schools”	13%
Don’t Know	5%

15. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Strongly Favor	25%
Somewhat Favor	34%
Somewhat Oppose	15%
Strongly Oppose	11%
Don’t Know	16%

16. How familiar are you with “virtual schools” in K-12 education? These schools are sometimes called “cyber schools” and “online schools”. [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Very Familiar	8%
Somewhat Familiar	22%
Not That Familiar	38%
I Have Never Heard of “Virtual, Cyber, or Online Schools”	29%
Don’t Know	3%

17. Virtual schools can be public or private schools that allow elementary, middle, and high school students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the Internet, rather than a traditional classroom. In general, do you favor or oppose this kind of idea? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Strongly Favor	9%
Somewhat Favor	19%
Somewhat Oppose	20%
Strongly Oppose	44%
Don’t Know	8%

18. In some states, parents receive a tax credit or tax deduction from state income taxes for approved educational expenses. This may include private school tuition as well as books, supplies, computers, tutors, and transportation. In general, do you favor or oppose this plan to be a part of the Virginia tax code? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Strongly Favor	30%
Somewhat Favor	29%
Somewhat Oppose	13%
Strongly Oppose	19%
Don’t Know	10%

Virginia's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

19. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a "tax-credit scholarship system". If a proposal were made in Virginia to create such a system, would you favor or oppose such plan? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Strongly Favor	30%
Somewhat Favor	35%
Somewhat Oppose	11%
Strongly Oppose	12%
Don't Know	13%

20. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Strongly Agree	43%
Somewhat Agree	24%
Somewhat Disagree	12%
Strongly Disagree	15%
Don't Know	6%

21. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to students based on financial need. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Strongly Agree	43%
Somewhat Agree	31%
Somewhat Disagree	10%
Strongly Disagree	11%
Don't Know	5%

"In this section, I would like to know if you think the following statements are 'likely' or 'unlikely' to happen if a tax-credit scholarship system is implemented in Virginia. If you are unsure, feel free to say 'I Don't Know.' " [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"; QUESTIONS 22 – 28 ROTATED TO AVOID BIAS]

22. Parents will have more options.

Likely	72%
Unlikely	18%
Don't Know	11%

23. Parents will need better information for decisions.

Likely	79%
Unlikely	13%
Don't Know	9%

24. Public schools and private schools will compete for students.

Likely	61%
Unlikely	29%
Don't Know	10%

Virginia's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

25. Private schools will not be accountable.

Likely	24%
Unlikely	59%
Don't Know	17%

26. Parents will have more power.

Likely	50%
Unlikely	33%
Don't Know	17%

27. Public schools will close.

Likely	12%
Unlikely	79%
Don't Know	9%

28. Public schools and private schools will have incentives to improve.

Likely	72%
Unlikely	18%
Don't Know	11%

29. How familiar are you with "school vouchers" in K-12 education? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Very Familiar	12%
Somewhat Familiar	36%
Not That Familiar	34%
I Have Never Heard of "School Vouchers"	15%
Don't Know	3%

30. School vouchers allow parents the option of sending their children to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a "school voucher" to help pay tuition for the school where they choose to send their child. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Strongly Favor	30%
Somewhat Favor	27%
Somewhat Oppose	12%
Strongly Oppose	23%
Don't Know	8%

31. The Virginia General Assembly recently debated a bill that would allow parents of a child with disabilities to use a voucher to send their child to a private school or public school of their choice. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal? **[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]**

Strongly Favor	48%
Somewhat Favor	31%
Somewhat Oppose	7%
Strongly Oppose	7%
Don't Know	7%

DEMOGRAPHICS

"Now we have a few questions to make sure that we have an accurate sampling of respondents..."

32. Are you currently the parent or guardian of any school-age children in grades Kindergarten through 12?

Yes	31%
No	69%
Don't Know/Refused	-

[IF QUESTION 32 ANSWER IS "YES", GO TO QUESTION 33, OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 38]

33. Do you have a child (or children) attending a Charter School?

Yes	6%
No	94%
Don't Know/Refused	-

34. Do you have a child (or children) attending a Homeschool?

Yes	6%
No	94%
Don't Know/Refused	-

35. Do you have a child (or children) attending a Private School?

Yes	14%
No	86%
Don't Know/Refused	-

36. Do you have a child (or children) attending a Regular Public School?

Yes	83%
No	17%
Don't Know/Refused	-

37. Do you have a child (or children) attending a Virtual School? (sometimes called an "Online School" or "Cyber School")

Yes	2%
No	98%
Don't Know/Refused	-

38. Do your political views most closely reflect those of a:

Democrat	37%
Libertarian	4%
Republican	26%
Other Party Affiliation	1%
Independent/No Party Affiliation	26%
Don't Know/Refused	6%

39. What is your zip code? [code location based on Direct Marketing Association (DMA) definitions]

Northern Virginia	36%
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	22%
Richmond-Petersburg	21%
Roanoke-Lynchburg	14%
Tri-Cities	3%
Charlottesville	2%
Harrisonburg	2%
Other	1%

40. How would you best describe where you live?

Urban	18%
Suburban	42%
Small Town	16%
Rural	23%
Don't Know/Refused	1%

41. Which of the following age categories do you fall in?

18 – 25	7%
26 – 35	26%
36 – 45	19%
46 – 55	23%
56 – 65	13%
Over 65	12%
Don't Know/Refused	1%

42. Are you:

African American	17%
Asian	2%
Hispanic	2%
Native American	2%
White	75%
Other	1%
Don't Know/Refused	2%

43. What is your religion, if any?

Catholic	18%
Jewish	1%
Muslim	1%
Baptist	33%
Lutheran	2%
Methodist	9%
Presbyterian	5%
Other Protestant	7%
Other Religion	7%
None	13%
Don't Know/Refused	4%

44. Would you tell me into which of the following categories your total family income falls?

Under \$25,000	8%
\$25,000-\$49,999	20%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	24%
\$75,000 - \$124,999	21%
\$125,000 - \$200,000	8%
Over \$200,000	4%
Don't Know/Refused	17%

45. Are you or anyone in your family a union (teacher or labor) member?

Yes	11%
No	88%
Don't Know/Refused	1%

46. Are you:

Male	45%
Female	55%
Don't Know/Refused	-

THE FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR Educational *Choice*

Milton and Rose D. Friedman established the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice in 1996. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization addressing the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the urgent challenges facing America's elementary and secondary education systems. The foundation's philosophy asserts that the best way to improve the quality of education is to enable all parents to have unfettered free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation conducts research and outreach projects to educate the general public and to amplify the call for systemic reform through school choice.



Dr. Milton Friedman, Founder
Nobel Laureate and Founder of the Friedman Foundation



Dr. Rose D. Friedman, Founder
Noted Economist and Founder of the Friedman Foundation

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As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, we rely solely on the generous support of our donors to continue promoting the Friedman's vision for school choice throughout the country. Please send your tax-deductible gift today and help interject liberty and choice into our education system. Giving parents the freedom to choose the school that works best for their children is our goal, and with your help we can make it happen.

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