

## Virginia Commonwealth University

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## McAuliffe leads in race for governor

*As the margin widens in the governor's race, the races for lieutenant governor and attorney general draw closer.*

RICHMOND, Va. (Sept. 20, 2021) – In the race to become the next governor of Virginia, 43% of likely voters would vote for Terry McAuliffe while 34% would vote for Glenn Youngkin, according to a new statewide poll conducted by the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. This widens McAuliffe's lead over Youngkin from August when he led by a much slimmer margin (40% to 37%).

The poll featured landline and mobile telephone interviews from Sept. 7-15 with a representative sample of 811 adults living in Virginia. It had a margin of error of 5.35%. When considering the likely voters only, the poll had a margin of error of 6.93%.

With Election Day only six weeks out, a significant number of Virginia's voters remain undecided or unwilling to vote for either candidate in each race. In the governor's race, 23% of voters remain undecided or unwilling to vote for either candidate - the same percentage as August.

Ayala lost some ground to Sears in the race for lieutenant governor in the past month, and her lead is now within the margin of error (33% to 30%). However, 20% of voters said that they would not vote for either candidate if the election were held today while 16% remain undecided.

Likewise, Herring lost ground to Miyares since the August poll. Herring lead by 11 points in August, while the current poll shows that his lead has dropped to 6 points (39% to 33%).

"Our recent poll relative to the governor's race and statewide elections showed interesting results," said Gov. L. Douglas Wilder. "Neither McAuliffe nor Youngkin had 50% support. The increase in the undecided and those unable to commit for either is noteworthy. The poll was taken prior to any debates. How the candidates show the people what they propose dealing with the pandemic and its effects are obvious concerns. The narrowing of the lead by the Democratic candidates in the Lt. Governor

and Attorney General races and increased “undecided” shows “the jury” may be out a while longer.”

Poll respondents were also asked which party they would rather see in control of the Virginia General Assembly. All 100 House of Delegates seats are up for election in November, with Democrats currently holding a 55-45 advantage. Voters remained split on which party they preferred to control the chamber. Democrats had a slight edge over Republicans (43% vs. 39%, respectively), with 5% of voters undecided.

In the gubernatorial race, Northern Virginia continued to favor McAuliffe (56% to 23%) as did the Tidewater region (41% to 31%). However, Youngkin leads in the west (49% to 23%). South central Virginia showed a small preference for McAuliffe (41% to 37%), and the candidates were perfectly tied in the northwest region at 42%. The largest percentage of undecided voters was in the west (17%).

The lieutenant governor’s race has experienced some regional changes since August. Ayala maintained a sizeable lead in Northern Virginia (44% to 20%), but lost his lead in south central Virginia where results were within the margin of error (36% for Sears and 32% for Ayala). Similarly, Sears widened his large lead in the western region of the state (41% to 21%), and lost his lead in the northwest, where voters were evenly split between Ayala and Sears (39% to 38%). Voters in the Tidewater region of the state also remained evenly split, with 27% for Ayala and 26% for Sears.

In the attorney general race, Herring maintained his sizable lead in Northern Virginia (44% to 26%), and picked up the lead in Tidewater (45% to 30%), where voters were split last month. Herring lost his lead in the south central region (36% for Herring and 35% for Miyares), while Miyares led in the west (43% to 26%). Voters remained split in northwest Virginia (40% to 36%).

President Joe Biden’s approval numbers have declined slightly since August, with 49% of Virginians saying they disapprove of how he is handling his job as President (up from 47% in August) and 46% saying that they do approve (down from 51%). Uncertainty may play a role in this change, as 6% of respondents reported not knowing whether or not they approve, or choosing not share their opinion (up from 2%).

For the full poll results and analysis, visit <https://rampages.us/commonwealthpoll/>

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### **About the VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs**

*Ranked No. 45 among 275 graduate schools of public affairs by U.S. News and World Report and No. 39 in Public Management & Leadership, the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University advances excellence in governance and promotes evidence-based public policy in Virginia and beyond. The school offers an array of graduate, post baccalaureate and doctoral programs in virtually every policy area including criminal justice, homeland security and emergency preparedness, public administration, public policy and administration, and urban and regional studies and planning. Additionally, the Wilder School is home to a robust Center for Public Policy that provides applied research in the areas*

*of state and local government, social equity, and leadership and a range of services to clients in state and local government, nonprofit organizations, businesses and the general public. Learn more at [wilder.vcu.edu](http://wilder.vcu.edu).*

## ABOUT THE L. DOUGLAS WILDER SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Ranked in the top 15 percent nationally among schools of public affairs, the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University advances excellence in governance and promotes evidence-based public policy in Virginia and beyond. The Wilder School offers an array of graduate and undergraduate programs in virtually every policy area including criminal justice, homeland security and emergency preparedness, public administration, public policy and administration, and urban and regional studies and planning. Additionally, the Wilder School is home to a robust Center for Public Policy that provides applied research in the areas of state and local government, social equity, and leadership and a range of services to clients in state and local government, nonprofit organizations, businesses and the general public. Learn more at [wilder.vcu.edu](http://wilder.vcu.edu).

## ABOUT THE VCU WILDER SCHOOL COMMONWEALTH POLL

For nearly three decades, the VCU Wilder School Commonwealth Poll has been an important bellwether for policymakers in Virginia and beyond on a range of topics, including voting intentions, economic and workforce development, education, housing, public health, public safety and racial equity. The Commonwealth Poll is a featured 2020 Presidential Election Poll by CNN, approved based on a rigorous review of methodologies and assumptions that ensure that CNN-cited polling entities are employing the gold standard in public opinion research.

### Methodology

The Commonwealth Poll September 2021, sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 811 adults, ages 18 or older, living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (404) and cell phone (407, including 254 without a landline telephone). The survey was conducted by Responsive Management. Interviews were conducted in English from September 7 to September 15, 2021.

Statistical results were weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies in the sample. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 5.35$  percentage points.

A combination sample was used consisting of a listed landline sample and a cellular random digit dial (RDD) sample to represent all adults in 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 RDD sample was prescreened for disconnected numbers.

As many as seven attempts were made to contact every landline telephone number, and as many as five attempts were made to contact each cell phone number. Calls were made at different times of day and different days of the week to maximize the chance of contacting potential respondents.

Response rates were computed according to American Association for Public Opinion Research standards.<sup>1</sup> Thus the response rate for the landline sample is 7.7 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample is 8.0 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2016. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*. 9th edition. AAPOR.

**DEMOCRATS LEAD IN VIRGINIA AS  
ELECTION DAY DRAWS NEAR**



**GOVERNOR**

**43% - MCAULIFFE (D)  
34% - YOUNGKIN (R)**

**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

**33% - AYALA (D)  
30% - SEARS (R)**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**39% - HERRING (D)  
33% - MIYARES (R)**

**IN ALL RACES, NEARLY 25% DID NOT COMMIT TO ONE OF THE CANDIDATES.**

**COMMONWEALTH POLL - SEPTEMBER 2021**

**CONDUCTED BY  
THE VCU WILDER SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### Wilder School Commonwealth Poll August 2021

State-wide survey of Virginians<sup>2</sup>

September 7-15, 2021

Number of Respondents: 811

Q1 Are you registered to vote in Virginia at your current address?

	August 2021	September 2021
Yes	89%	92%
No	10%	8%
Don't Know/Refused	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Q2 Now thinking about the election this November... As of today, would you say you will definitely vote, probably vote, probably will NOT vote, or definitely will NOT vote this November?

	August 2021	September 2021
Definitely will	82%	77%
Probably will	15%	16%
Probably will not	2%	2%
Definitely will not	0%	1%
Don't Know/Refused	1%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Q3 If the election for **Governor** were being held today, would you vote for...?

	August 2021 LIKELY VOTERS	September 2021 LIKELY VOTERS
Terry McAuliffe	40%	43%
Glenn Youngkin	37%	34%
Neither of these	14%	10%
Don't Know/Refused	9%	13%
Total	100%	100%

Q4 If the election for **Lieutenant Governor** were being held today, would you vote for...?

**ALL REGISTERED VOTERS**

	August 2021 LIKELY VOTERS	September 2021 LIKELY VOTERS
Hala Ayala	39%	33%
Winsome Sears	31%	30%
Neither of these	17%	20%
Don't Know/Refused	12%	16%
Total	100%	100%

<sup>2</sup> 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%.

Q5 If the election for Attorney General were being held today, would you vote for...?

**ALL REGISTERED VOTERS**

	<b>August 2021 LIKELY VOTERS</b>	<b>September 2021 LIKELY VOTERS</b>
Mark Herring	41%	39%
Jason Miyares	30%	33%
Neither of these	19%	14%
Don't Know/Refused	10%	14%
Total	100%	100%

Q6 All 100 members of the Virginia House of Delegates are up for election this year, which party would you rather see win control of the Virginia House of Delegates?

	<b>August 2021 LIKELY VOTERS</b>	<b>September 2021 LIKELY VOTERS</b>
Democratic party	44%	43%
Republican party	40%	39%
A third party	8%	12%
None of these	1%	1%
Don't Know/Refused	6%	5%
Total	100%	100%

Q15 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as President of the United States?

	<b>August 2021</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
Strongly approve	29%	21%
Somewhat approve	22%	25%
Somewhat disapprove	7%	10%
Strongly disapprove	40%	39%
Don't Know/Refused	2%	6%
Total	100%	100%

## LIKELY VOTERS DEMOGRAPHICS

Now thinking about the election this November...  
As of today, would you say you will definitely vote,  
probably vote, probably will NOT vote, or definitely  
will NOT vote this November?

		Definitely will Row Valid N %	Probably will Row Valid N %	Total Unweighted Count
Region	Northwest	89%	11%	109
	NOVA	80%	20%	222
	West	81%	19%	125
	South Central	84%	16%	132
	Tidewater	83%	17%	143
Gender	Male	80%	20%	330
	Female	85%	15%	397
Age	18-34	66%	34%	75
	35-44	88%	12%	59
	45-64	86%	14%	249
	65 and over	91%	9%	348
Education	High school grad or less	78%	22%	131
	Some college	84%	16%	203
	College graduate or more	86%	14%	397
Family Income	Under \$50,000	62%	38%	142
	50K to under \$100,000	86%	14%	180
	\$100,000 or more	93%	7%	253
Race	White, non-Hispanic	84%	16%	533
	Minority and/or Hispanic	81%	19%	198
Party ID	Democrat	86%	14%	360
	Republican	87%	13%	304
	Independent	48%	52%	59



## LIKELY VOTERS DEMOGRAPHICS

If the election for Governor were being held today, would you vote for...?

		Terry McAuliffe, the Democrat Row Valid N %	Glenn Youngkin, the Republican Row Valid N %	Neither of these Row Valid N %	Don't Know/Refuse d Row Valid N %	Total Unweighted Count
Region	Northwest	42%	42%	13%	2%	109
	NOVA	56%	23%	6%	15%	222
	West	23%	49%	11%	17%	125
	South Central	41%	37%	11%	11%	132
	Tidewater	41%	31%	12%	15%	143
Gender	Male	43%	31%	13%	12%	330
	Female	42%	37%	8%	13%	397
Age	18-34	39%	16%	21%	24%	75
	35-44	55%	33%	8%	3%	59
	45-64	40%	37%	8%	14%	249
	65 and over	43%	47%	4%	6%	348
Education	High school grad or less	26%	45%	16%	13%	131
	Some college	44%	31%	10%	15%	203
	College graduate or more	55%	28%	5%	12%	397
Family Income	Under \$50,000	37%	31%	18%	14%	142
	50K to under \$100,000	47%	38%	9%	6%	180
	\$100,000 or more	46%	36%	9%	8%	253
Race	White, non-Hispanic	36%	42%	10%	12%	533
	Minority and/or Hispanic	55%	19%	10%	16%	198
Party ID	Democrat	83%	2%	6%	9%	360
	Republican	4%	74%	13%	10%	304
	Independent	21%	23%	23%	33%	59

## LIKELY VOTERS DEMOGRAPHICS

If the election for Lieutenant Governor were being held today, would you vote for...?

		Hala Ayala, the Democrat Row Valid N %	Winsome Sears, the Republican Row Valid N %	Neither of these Row Valid N %	Don't Know/Refuse d Row Valid N %	Total Unweighted Count
Region	Northwest	38%	39%	19%	5%	109
	NOVA	44%	20%	20%	16%	222
	West	21%	41%	15%	22%	125
	South Central	32%	36%	14%	18%	132
	Tidewater	27%	26%	29%	18%	143
Gender	Male	33%	27%	28%	13%	330
	Female	34%	34%	13%	19%	397
Age	18-34	26%	20%	28%	27%	75
	35-44	34%	20%	34%	11%	59
	45-64	34%	33%	18%	15%	249
	65 and over	39%	41%	10%	10%	348
Education	High school grad or less	22%	43%	25%	10%	131
	Some college	33%	27%	19%	22%	203
	College graduate or more	43%	23%	17%	17%	397
Family Income	Under \$50,000	34%	32%	20%	15%	142
	50K to under \$100,000	31%	35%	21%	12%	180
	\$100,000 or more	36%	29%	23%	12%	253
Race	White, non-Hispanic	25%	39%	21%	15%	533
	Minority and/or Hispanic	49%	14%	19%	18%	198
Party ID	Democrat	68%	2%	17%	13%	360
	Republican	0%	65%	20%	15%	304
	Independent	10%	22%	41%	28%	59

## LIKELY VOTERS DEMOGRAPHICS

If the election for Attorney General were being held today, would you vote for...?

		Mark Herring, the Democrat Row Valid N %	Jason Miyares, the Republican Row Valid N %	Neither of these Row Valid N %	Don't Know/Refuse d Row Valid N %	Total Unweighted Count
Region	Northwest	40%	36%	19%	6%	109
	NOVA	44%	26%	16%	13%	222
	West	26%	43%	8%	23%	125
	South Central	36%	35%	15%	14%	132
	Tidewater	45%	30%	12%	14%	143
Gender	Male	39%	30%	19%	12%	330
	Female	40%	35%	10%	16%	397
Age	18-34	32%	21%	22%	25%	75
	35-44	49%	16%	31%	4%	59
	45-64	39%	39%	7%	14%	249
	65 and over	42%	41%	8%	9%	348
Education	High school grad or less	26%	46%	20%	9%	131
	Some college	42%	27%	12%	19%	203
	College graduate or more	48%	27%	11%	14%	397
Family Income	Under \$50,000	37%	30%	19%	14%	142
	50K to under \$100,000	37%	41%	13%	9%	180
	\$100,000 or more	43%	32%	14%	11%	253
Race	White, non-Hispanic	32%	40%	13%	15%	533
	Minority and/or Hispanic	54%	18%	15%	13%	198
Party ID	Democrat	78%	3%	10%	9%	360
	Republican	3%	69%	14%	14%	304
	Independent	13%	27%	36%	25%	59

## ALL RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as President of the United States?

		Strongly approve Row Valid N %	Somewhat approve Row Valid N %	Somewhat disapprove Row Valid N %	Strongly disapprove Row Valid N %	Don't Know/Refused Row Valid N %	Total Unweighted Count
Region	Northwest	20%	24%	7%	45%	4%	120
	NOVA	22%	35%	12%	24%	7%	247
	West	14%	12%	9%	60%	5%	142
	South Central	25%	18%	9%	40%	8%	144
	Tidewater	22%	25%	9%	37%	6%	158
Gender	Male	19%	22%	13%	38%	8%	371
	Female	23%	26%	7%	39%	5%	436
Age	18-34	7%	33%	18%	34%	9%	92
	35-44	14%	34%	7%	35%	11%	75
	45-64	26%	21%	8%	40%	6%	273
	65 and over	34%	15%	5%	45%	2%	371
Education	High school grad or less	16%	14%	10%	55%	5%	159
	Some college	22%	23%	10%	36%	9%	222
	College graduate or more	24%	35%	10%	27%	5%	430
Family Income	Under \$50,000	21%	12%	15%	41%	11%	164
	50K to under \$100,000	21%	24%	5%	42%	7%	199
	\$100,000 or more	23%	27%	9%	39%	2%	267
Race	White, non-Hispanic	16%	22%	7%	48%	7%	579
	Minority and/or Hispanic	28%	29%	14%	23%	5%	232
Party ID	Democrat	43%	40%	9%	5%	3%	384
	Republican	1%	9%	8%	78%	5%	333
	Independent	5%	25%	22%	29%	19%	78