



VCU Office of Public Policy Outreach

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Summer 2017 Public Policy Poll

A survey of Virginians conducted by the Office of Public Policy Outreach

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Va. poll: Majority say localities should use taxpayer resources to enforce federal immigration laws

RICHMOND, Va. (Aug. 15, 2017) — A slim majority of Virginians — 55 percent — say local governments should be required to use their resources to enforce federal immigration laws, [according to a poll released today](#) by the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

However, 40 percent of respondents in the statewide poll thought localities should not be required to spend their own resources and 5 percent didn't know or declined to answer. The results varied significantly along regional and partisan lines.

The finding, part of the Wilder School's Summer 2017 Public Policy Poll, comes amid a growing debate about the role of local governments in immigration enforcement and indicates that most Virginians are likely to be supportive of local governments being required to use taxpayer resources to help enforce federal immigration laws.

"We welcome objective and nonpartisan polls of Virginians like this important one from VCU's Wilder School," said Brian Moran, Virginia secretary of public safety and homeland security. "The poll insights will help inform the debate around such a controversial issue that is relevant and important to all Virginians. Informing policy makers as much as possible around such an important issue is imperative, including a window into what the public thinks."

The poll, a representative random sample of 806 adults in Virginia contacted by landline and cell telephone from July 17-25, has an overall margin of error of 4.2 percentage points.

Some local governments have argued that using local resources to enforce immigration laws erodes public safety because immigrants may be less willing to contact local police if they are victims of or witness a crime. The city of Chicago filed suit in federal court last week, arguing that a Trump administration policy seeking to deny broad categories of federal funding to so-called “sanctuary cities” — cities that refuse to use local resources for immigration enforcement — is in violation of the Constitution.

Stark differences along partisan lines were found in support of such a requirement for localities, a factor that will likely see Virginia’s gubernatorial candidates come down on opposite sides of the issue. Seventy-three percent of Republicans and 57 percent of independents thought localities should be required to spend their own resources to enforce immigration laws. Only 40 percent of Democrats thought the same.

“This is a complex public safety issue at the forefront of the current national debate,” said Robyn McDougle, Ph.D., faculty director of the Wilder School’s Office of Public Policy Outreach, which conducted the poll. “But it’s also very relevant in Virginia. This past General Assembly session, we saw the governor veto legislation that would have banned localities from restricting the enforcement of federal immigration laws. This gives policy makers a sense of what the public thinks about this issue, as well as the differences along regional and partisan lines.”

In addition to differences along partisan lines, the poll also found significant regional differences on the question with respondents in the west — at 64 percent — most likely to think localities should be required to enforce federal laws. Northern Virginia respondents were the least likely at 48 percent. Fifty-seven percent of Tidewater residents and 56 percent of those in the northwest and south central regions said localities should be required to use local resources to help enforce federal immigration laws.



Figure 1: Geographic regions referenced: Northern Virginia (light blue); Northwest (purple); West (green); South Central (yellow); Tidewater (pink)

Virginians were split in their opinion of when deportation should be used, with a plurality (39 percent) saying undocumented immigrants should only be deported if they have committed a serious crime. However, 31 percent said all undocumented immigrants should be deported and 22 percent thought those who had committed any crime should be deported. Only 6 percent felt that undocumented immigrants should never be deported.

These opinions were significantly different than a national poll by Quinnipiac University in February that indicated a majority of respondents (53 percent) thought undocumented immigrants should be deported only if they had committed a serious crime and only 19 percent thought that all undocumented immigrants should be deported.

On the question of deportation, the poll found party identification again played an important role with a slight majority of Republicans (51 percent) responding that all undocumented immigrants should be deported and 57 percent of Democrats saying only those who committed serious crimes should be deported. Independents were slightly more likely to say only those who committed serious crimes should be deported (41 percent) compared to deporting all undocumented immigrants (36 percent.)

“Such findings provide potential insight into the near success of Corey Stewart’s Republican primary campaign for governor in which he staked out more expansive positions on deportation than did the eventual Republican nominee, Ed Gillespie,” McDougle said. “Given the narrow plurality among independents for deporting only those undocumented immigrants who have committed serious crimes, the candidates in the general election may feel pulled in one direction by independents and the opposite direction by their partisan base.”

Minority respondents were more likely to say that deportation should be reserved only for those who committed serious crimes (51 percent) while white respondents were more evenly split. Thirty-seven percent of white respondents said all undocumented immigrants should be deported while 33 percent said only serious criminals should be deported. Regionally, those in Northern Virginia and the northwest were more likely to say only undocumented immigrants who are serious criminals should be deported (47 percent and 46 percent, respectively) while those in the west were more likely to say all undocumented immigrants should be deported (44 percent).

The Wilder School poll also found a solid majority (60 percent) of Virginians said they support taking in refugees from majority-Muslim countries after screening for security risks, while 35 percent were opposed. But a smaller percentage (50 percent) thought that such refugees would be welcomed by most residents in their community. Thirty-nine percent of respondents said they thought refugees wouldn't be welcomed by most residents in their own community.

“These findings indicate two different layers of public opinion regarding refugees settling in the commonwealth,” said McDougle. “Even in the midst of the controversy this spring about the Trump administration’s proposed restrictions on travel for refugees from Muslim-majority countries, most Virginians support taking in refugees from those countries. But a smaller percentage think such refugees would be welcomed by most people in their own local community.”

The support for taking in refugees varied by region and by educational experience. Northern Virginia respondents were most likely to be supportive (71 percent), followed by the south central region (66 percent), the northwest (60 percent) and Tidewater (58 percent). The west was the least likely (49 percent). Those with more educational experience were also more likely to be supportive. Seventy-six percent of those with a college degree or more said they supporting taking in refugees, while only 59 percent of those with some college experience and 51 percent of those with a high school diploma or less were supportive.

In the weeks ahead, the Wilder School’s Office of Public Policy will be releasing further poll results measuring Virginians’ views on economic development (Aug. 22) and K-12 and higher education (Aug. 29).

For a PDF of the 13-page report including complete question wording and detailed tables of results see <http://www.wilder.vcu.edu/office-of-public-policy-outreach/>

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Local Role in Federal Immigration Enforcement

In the same time period that the city of Chicago filed suit against the federal government for efforts to withhold funding from so-called sanctuary cities, a majority of Virginians (55 percent) said that local government should be required to use their resources

to enforce federal immigration laws.

Forty percent of respondents thought localities should not be required to

spend their own resources and 5 percent didn't know or declined to answer.

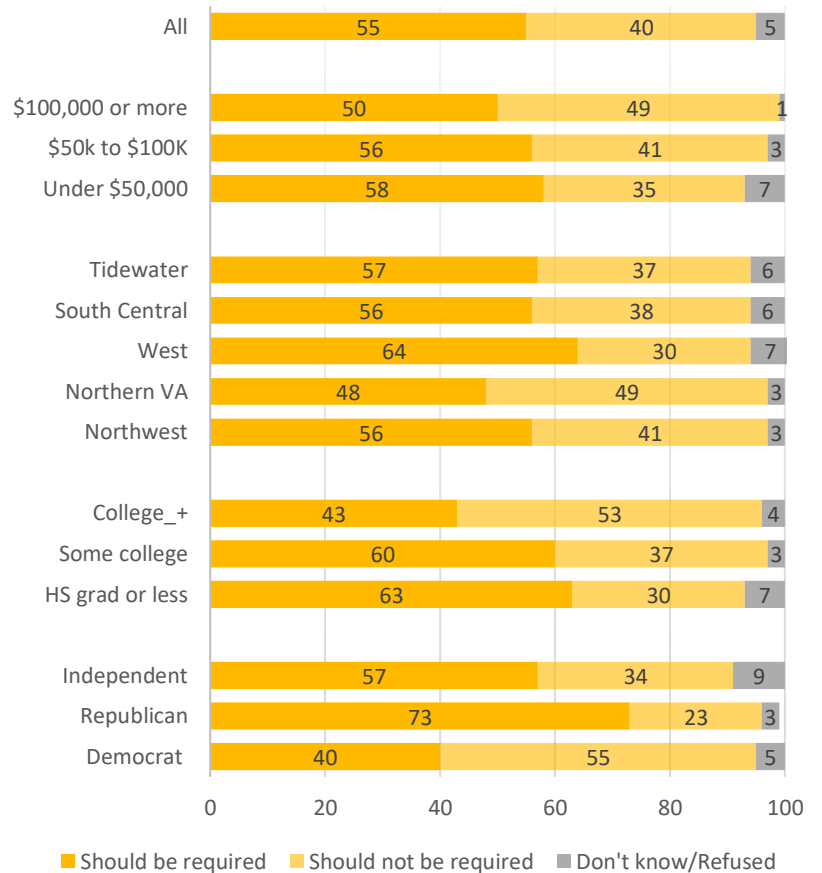
There were significant regional differences, with the West being most likely to think localities should be required to enforce federal laws at 64 percent and Northern Virginia being the least likely at 48 percent. Fifty-seven percent of Tidewater residents and 56 percent of those in the Northwest and South Central regions thought localities should be required.

Education also played a significant role, with 63 percent of those with a high school diploma or less and 60 percent of those with some college experience responding that localities should be required to enforce federal immigration laws. However, only 43

percent of those with a college degree or more thought the same. The starkest differences were along partisan lines. More than seven-in-ten Republicans (73 percent) and 57 percent of Independents thought localities should be required to spend local resources to enforce immigration laws. Only 40 percent of Democrats thought the same.

Federal Immigration Law and Sanctuary Cities

Do you think local governments should or should not be required to use local resources to enforce federal immigration laws?



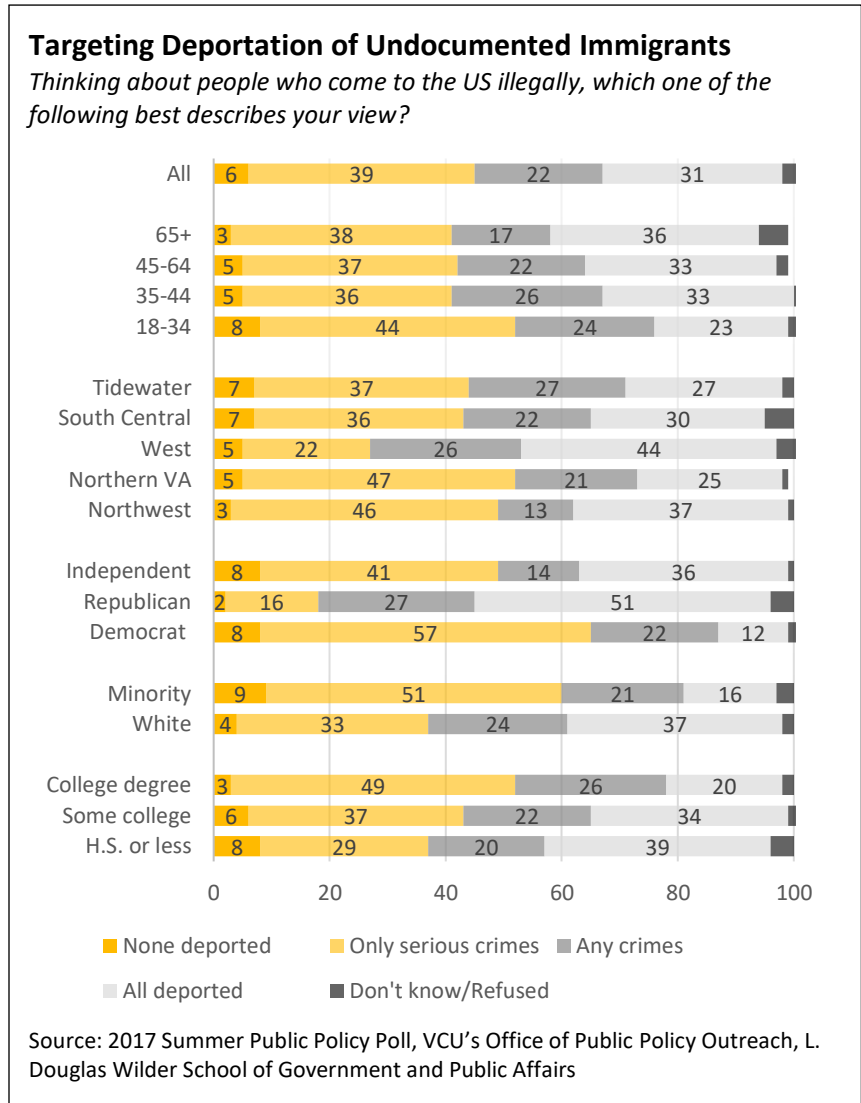
Source: 2017 Summer Public Policy Poll, VCU's Office of Public Policy Outreach, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Targeting Deportation of Undocumented Immigrants

We asked respondents about when it is appropriate for the government to deport undocumented immigrants. Virginians were split in their opinion of when deportation should be used, with a plurality (39 percent) saying that undocumented immigrants should only be deported if they have committed a serious crime. However, 31 percent said that all undocumented immigrants should be deported and 22 percent thought those who had committed any crime should. Only 6 percent felt that undocumented immigrants should never be deported. These opinions were significantly different than a recent national poll that indicated a majority of respondents (53 percent) thought that undocumented immigrants should be deported only if they had committed a serious crime and only 19 percent thought that all undocumented immigrants should be deported¹.

Party identification played an important role with a slight majority of Republicans (51 percent) responding that all undocumented immigrants should be deported and 57 percent of Democrats saying only those who committed serious crimes should. Independents were slightly more likely to say only those who committed serious crimes should be deported (41 percent) compared to deporting all undocumented immigrants (36 percent).

Minorities were more likely to say that deportation should be reserved only for those who committed serious crimes (51 percent) while white respondents were more evenly split, with 37 percent saying all should be deported and 33 percent saying only serious criminals should be. Regionally, those in Northern Virginia and



¹ Quinnipiac University Poll, conducted February 2017 with 1323 US voters, margin of error= +/- 2.7%

the Northwest were more likely to say only undocumented immigrants who are serious criminals should be deported (47 percent and 46 percent, respectively) while those in the West were more likely to say all undocumented immigrants should (44 percent).

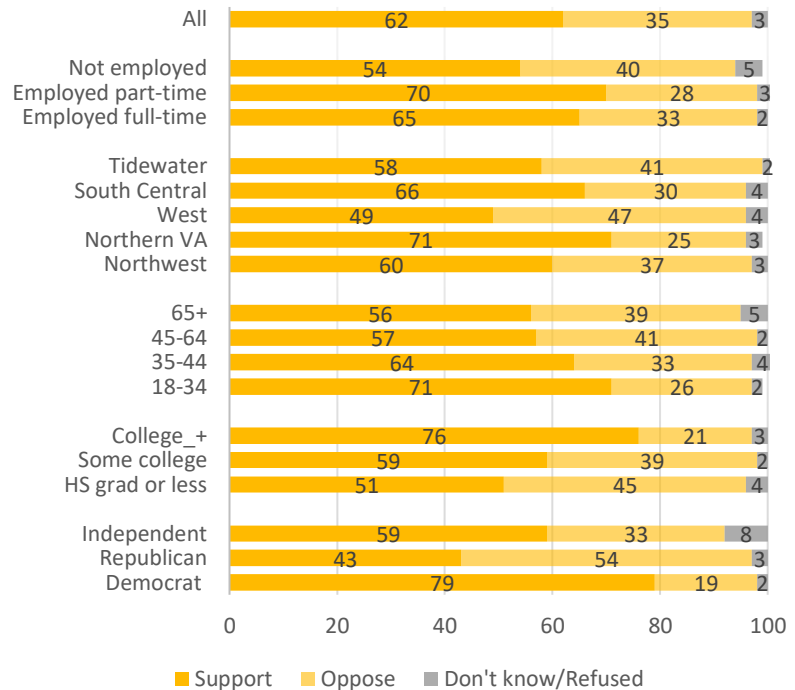
Acceptance of Refugees

Respondents were also asked whether Virginia should be taking in refugees and how respondents expected refugees would be received in their own community. A solid majority (60 percent) said they support taking in refugees from majority-Muslim countries after screening for security risks. Thirty-five percent were opposed. Respondents were also asked whether they thought those refugees would be welcomed by most residents in their own community. Half of respondents (50 percent) said they thought refugees would be welcomed by most residents, while 39 percent said they wouldn't.

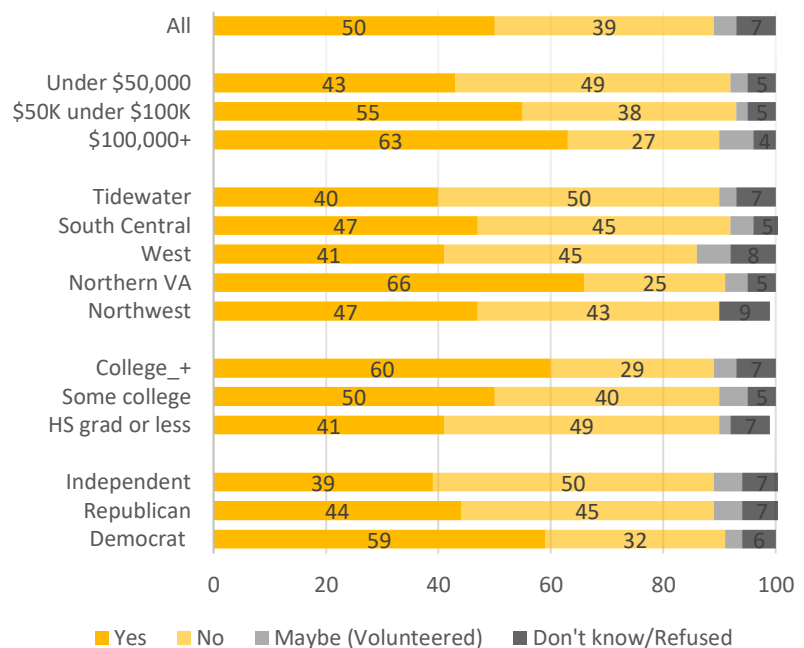
Support for taking in refugees varied by region. Northern Virginia was most likely with 71 percent, followed by the South Central region (66 percent), the Northwest (60 percent) and Tidewater (58 percent). The West

Acceptance of Refugees

In general, do you support or oppose Virginia taking in refugees from Syria and other majority-Muslim countries after screening them for security risks?



If some of these refugees came to live in your community, do you think they would be welcomed by most residents, or not?



Source: 2017 Summer Public Policy Poll, VCU's Office of Public Policy Outreach, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

was the least likely with 49 percent. Those with more educational experience were also more likely to be supportive. Seventy-six percent of those with a college degree or more said they support taking in refugees, while only 59 percent of those with some college experience and 51 percent of those with a high school diploma or less were supportive. Partisan differences existed with almost eight-in-ten Democrats (79 percent) being supportive, while only 59 percent of independents and 43 percent of Republicans were.

With regard to acceptance by their community, only 43 percent of those who made less than \$50,000 last year thought refugees would be welcomed by most of their community's residents while 63 percent of those who made more than \$100,000 thought most in their community would welcome refugees. Fifty-five percent of those who make between \$50,000 and \$100,000 thought the same.

Again, respondents from Northern Virginia (66 percent) were more likely to think that refugees would be welcomed by their community, while less than half of respondents in the other regions thought the same (Northwest, 47 percent; South Central, 47 percent; West, 41 percent; Tidewater, 40 percent). Education also played a role with respondents with more educational experience being more likely to think their communities would welcome refugees. Sixty percent of those with a college degree or more thought most of their community would welcome them, while 50 percent of those with some college experience and 41 percent of those with a high school diploma or less thought the same.

Methodology of the VCU Wilder School Public Policy Poll

The 2017 Summer Public Policy Poll, sponsored by the Office of Public Policy at VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 806 adults, age 18 or older, living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (396) and cell phone (410, including 235 without a landline phone). The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). Interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source from July 17-25, 2017. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 4.2 percentage points.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in Virginia who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

The data are weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple adults living in landline households and for frame size of the landline and cell phone sampling frames. In addition, the data are weighted on sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region of residence and population density 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 4.2 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 4.2 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.

Topline

2017 Summer Public Policy Poll, Office of Public Policy Outreach,
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

Statewide survey of Virginians²

July 17-25, 2017

Number of Respondents: 806

QUESTIONS 1-12 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

Next...

[RANDOMIZE Q13 AND Q14]

Q13. Thinking about people who come to the U.S. illegally, which one of the following best describes your view? **[READ; HALF IN ORDER, HALF IN REVERSE ORDER]**

	Aug 17	Quinnipiac 17 ³
	%	%
1, No undocumented immigrants should be deported	6	3
2, Only undocumented immigrants who have been convicted of a SERIOUS crime while in this country should be deported	39	53
3, Only undocumented immigrants who have been convicted of ANY crime while in this country should be deported	22	22
4, All undocumented immigrants should be deported	31	19
Don't know/Refused	3	3

Q14. As you may know, the federal government has primary responsibility for enforcing federal immigration laws but relies on cooperation from local governments. Do you think local governments should or should not be required to use local resources to enforce federal immigration laws?

	Aug 17
	%
Should be required	55
Should not be required	40
Don't Know/Refused	5

Q15. In general, do you support or oppose Virginia taking in refugees from Syria and other majority-Muslim countries after screening them for security risks?

	Aug 17
	%
Support	62
Oppose	35
Don't Know/Refused	3

Q16. If some of these refugees came to live in your community, do you think they would be welcomed by most residents, or not?

	Aug 17
	%
Yes	50
No	39
Maybe (Volunteered)	4
Don't Know/Refused	7

QUESTIONS 17-20 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

² 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%.

³ Quinnipiac University Poll, conducted February 2017 with 1323 US voters, margin of error= +/- 2.7%.

Tables for Subgroup Analysis

		Q13.Thinking about people who come to the US illegally, which one of the following best describes your view...					
		None deported	Only serious crime	All crimes	All deported	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		6	39	22	31	3	806
VA Region	Northwest	3	46	13	37	1	102
	Northern VA	5	47	21	25	1	199
	West	5	22	26	44	4	114
	South Central	7	36	22	30	5	134
	Tidewater	7	37	27	27	2	158
Gender	Men	5	39	20	33	3	331
	Women	6	38	25	29	2	376
Age	18-34	8	44	24	23	2	96
	35-44	5	36	26	33	1	78
	45-64	5	37	22	33	2	277
	65 and older	3	38	17	36	5	237
Education	H.S. or less	8	29	20	39	4	181
	Some college	6	37	22	34	2	165
	College grad or more	3	49	26	20	2	358
Family Income	Under \$50,000	7	34	23	32	3	196
	50K to under \$100,000	6	42	23	27	2	193
	\$100,000 or more	4	44	21	30	1	208
Race	White	4	33	24	37	2	507
	Minority	9	51	21	16	3	175
Employment status	Employed full-time	5	42	20	31	2	329
	Employed part-time	9	36	37	16	2	72
	Not employed	5	35	21	36	4	305
Party identification	Democrat	8	57	22	12	2	338
	Republican	2	16	27	51	4	301
	Independent	8	41	14	36	1	47

		Q14. Do you think local governments should or should not be required to use local resources to enforce federal immigration laws?			
		Should be required	Should not be required	Don't Know	Number of cases
All adults		55	40	5	806
VA Region	Northwest	56	41	3	102
	Northern VA	48	49	3	199
	West	64	30	7	114
	South Central	56	38	6	134
	Tidewater	57	37	6	158
Gender	Men	59	39	2	331
	Women	52	41	7	376
Age	18-34	51	43	7	96
	35-44	64	34	2	78
	45-64	55	42	3	277
	65 and older	55	39	5	237
Education	H.S. or less	63	30	7	181
	Some college	60	37	3	165
	College grad or more	43	53	4	358
Family Income	Under \$50,000	58	35	7	196
	50K to under \$100,000	56	41	3	193
	\$100,000 or more	50	49	1	208
Race	White	56	40	4	507
	Minority	53	41	6	175
Employment status	Employed full-time	55	42	4	329
	Employed part-time	47	43	10	72
	Not employed	59	37	4	305
Party identification	Democrat	40	55	5	338
	Republican	73	23	3	301
	Independent	57	34	9	47

Q15. In general, do you support or oppose Virginia taking
in refugees from Syria and other majority-Muslim
countries after screening them for security risks?

		Support	Oppose	Don't Know	Number of cases
All adults		62	35	3	806
VA Region	Northwest	60	37	3	102
	Northern VA	71	25	3	199
	West	49	47	4	114
	South Central	66	30	4	134
	Tidewater	58	41	2	158
Gender	Men	62	36	2	331
	Women	62	34	4	376
Age	18-34	71	26	2	96
	35-44	64	33	4	78
	45-64	57	41	2	277
	65 and older	56	39	5	237
Education	H.S. or less	51	45	4	181
	Some college	59	39	2	165
	College grad or more	76	21	3	358
Family Income	Under \$50,000	58	40	2	196
	50K to under \$100,000	63	34	3	193
	\$100,000 or more	67	31	2	208
Race	White	62	35	3	507
	Minority	63	34	4	175
Employment status	Employed full-time	65	33	2	329
	Employed part-time	70	28	3	72
	Not employed	54	40	5	305
Party identification	Democrat	79	19	2	338
	Republican	43	54	3	301
	Independent	59	33	8	47

Q16. If some of these refugees came to live in your community, do you think they would be welcomed by most residents, or not?

		Yes	No	Maybe (Volunteered)	Don't Know	Number of cases
All adults		50	39	4	7	806
VA Region	Northwest	47	43	0	9	102
	Northern VA	66	25	4	5	199
	West	41	45	6	8	114
	South Central	47	45	4	5	134
	Tidewater	40	50	3	7	158
Gender	Men	51	41	3	5	331
	Women	50	38	4	8	376
Age	18-34	53	42	3	1	96
	35-44	52	38	3	6	78
	45-64	48	40	4	8	277
	65 and older	51	34	4	11	237
Education	H.S. or less	41	49	2	7	181
	Some college	50	40	5	5	165
	College grad or more	60	29	4	7	358
Family Income	Under \$50,000	43	49	3	5	196
	50K to under \$100,000	55	38	2	5	193
	\$100,000 or more	63	27	6	4	208
Race	White	50	40	4	6	507
	Minority	52	39	3	7	175
Employment status	Employed full-time	51	40	4	5	329
	Employed part-time	51	36	7	5	72
	Not employed	49	39	3	9	305
Party identification	Democrat	59	32	3	6	338
	Republican	44	45	5	7	301
	Independent	39	50	5	7	47