Center for Public Policy

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VCU poll: Police should have ability to restrict weapons at protests, other public demonstrations

The Wilder School poll also shows Virginians support allowing police to remove a person's personal firearms if a court finds them to be dangerous.

RICHMOND, Va. (Aug. 10, 2018) — On the eve of the one-year anniversary of the violent white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginians favor giving law enforcement the ability to restrict weapons at public protests and other assemblies, according to a new statewide poll by the <u>L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs</u> at Virginia Commonwealth University.

When asked to weigh the importance of two goals for local authorities managing public assemblies — maintaining public safety by restricting demonstrators from bringing weapons or maintaining the

freedoms of those assembled — 75 percent said maintaining public safety was more important, while 21 percent said maintaining the freedoms of those assembled is the most important concern.

The largest gap found among different demographic groups was by age. Those ages 18 to 34 (at 37 percent) were most likely to favor maintaining the freedom of those assembled, while those 65 and older (at 9 percent)

Maintaining Public Safety or Freedoms of Those Assembling?



For localities providing security for public assemblies Center for Public Politic Poli

- Maintaining public safety, even if doing so requires restricting those assembling from bringing objects that could be used as weapons,
- maintaining the freedoms of those assembling, including bringing objects that could be used as weapons, even if doing so creates a risk to public safety?

	Maintaining public safety	Maintaining the freedoms of those assembling	Don't Know
All adults	75	21	4

Source: 2018 Summer Public Policy Poll, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

were least likely to favor prioritizing the freedoms of those assembled.

The poll, a random sample of 802 adults in Virginia conducted by landline and cell telephone from July 10-30, has a margin of error of 3.49 percentage points.

The poll also found that Virginians favor giving local authorities the ability to remove a person's personal

firearms if a court finds they exhibit dangerous behavior.

Eighty-five percent of Virginians strongly or somewhat agree that local authorities should be able to remove a person's personal firearms for up to one year if a court hearing finds that they have exhibited dangerous

Removal of Firearms to Protect Public Safety

dangerous behaviors to self or others?

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Law enforcement be able to remove a person's personal firearms for up to one year if a court hearing finds they have exhibited

	Strongly	Somewhat	Somewhat	Strongly	Don't
	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Know
All adults	60	25	5	8	2

Source: 2018 Summer Public Policy Poll, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

behaviors to themselves or others. Thirteen percent of respondents either somewhat or strongly disagreed, while only 2 percent were undecided.

Analyzing the demographic breakdown of opinion on the firearms removal question shows that all but one demographic group have a majority that strongly agree with authorities having such an ability. The one exception is self-identified Republicans, of whom 45 percent strongly agreed with the policy. This compared to 61 percent of independents and 69 percent of Democrats who strongly agreed.

"Local authorities, including those in Charlottesville a year ago, and again this weekend on the anniversary of the violent demonstrations, face continual challenges to find the right balance between public safety and maintaining constitutional freedoms to assemble, protest and bear arms," said Robyn McDougle, Ph.D., director of the Wilder School's Center for Public Policy and an associate professor of criminal justice. "These findings indicate that most of the public want authorities to prioritize safety. How to do that while not violating legal freedoms upheld by our courts is a tough challenge as policymakers look to develop effective best practices."

In addition to questions of public safety and local government, the poll also examined areas of local social equity policy, including access to healthy food and fair rent practices.

Efforts to reduce or eliminate food deserts were increasingly visible in recent years as former Virginia first lady Dorothy McAuliffe promoted awareness of improved nutrition. When asked the biggest problem they faced in accessing healthy food in their neighborhood, 70 percent of respondents reported they had no problem accessing healthy food. Of the 30 percent who did have a problem with healthy food access, the reasons selected split among the cost of food (19 percent), transportation issues (8 percent) and not knowing where to go to find healthy food (1 percent).

A policy issue raised in the 2018 General Assembly session was whether a landlord should be able to reject potential tenants based solely on the source of their rent payments — such as housing assistance vouchers — or whether this creates opportunities for discrimination. Among Virginians, 38 percent felt that considering the source should not be permitted, and 37 percent felt that the source should be allowed as a reason for refusing to rent if it was one factor in the decision. Twenty percent believed that a landlord should be able to reject a tenant based solely on the source of income.

For a PDF of the 17-page report including complete question wording and detailed tables of results, go to oppo.vcu.edu.

On Tuesday, Aug. 14, six months after the Parkland, Florida school shooting, the Wilder School's <u>Center for Public Policy</u> will release further poll results measuring Virginians' views on several policies related to school and campus safety.

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About the Wilder School and the Center for Public Policy

The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, named for the nation's first African-American elected governor, is a top 50 nationally ranked public affairs school. Located blocks from the state Capitol in Richmond, Virginia, the school enrolls about 1,000 undergraduates and 400 graduate students in eight programs. More than 10,000 alumni of the Wilder School work in Fortune 500 companies, local governments, advocacy groups and public interest firms. Drawing on the wide-ranging expertise of Wilder School faculty, the Center for Public Policy's programs provide diverse public-facing services including leadership development and training, economic and policy impact analysis, survey insights and program evaluation to clients in state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses and the general public, across Virginia and beyond. For more, please visit https://wilder.vcu.edu/center-for-public-policy/.

About VCU and VCU Health

Virginia Commonwealth University is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 217 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Thirty-eight of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU's 11 schools and three colleges. The VCU Health brand represents the VCU health sciences academic programs, the VCU Massey Cancer Center and the VCU Health System, which comprises VCU Medical Center (the only academic medical center and Level I trauma center in the region), Community Memorial Hospital, Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU, MCV Physicians and Virginia Premier Health Plan. For more, please visit www.vcu.edu and ycuhealth.org.

At public assemblies, Virginians favor maintaining the safety of those assembled over maintaining the freedoms of those assembled

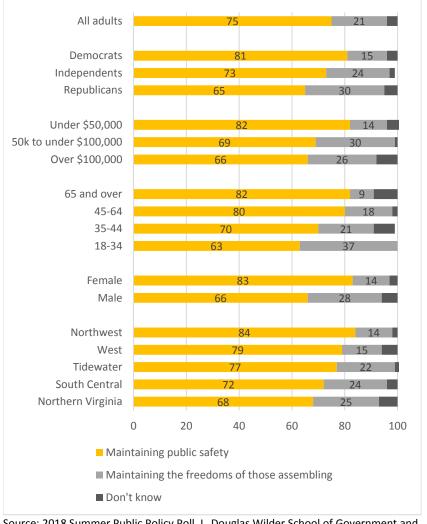
When asked if local authorities should be more concerned with maintaining public safety at public assemblies, or maintaining the freedom of those assembling, three-quarters (75 percent) of respondents felt that maintaining public safety was more important, while 21 percent were in favor of maintaining the freedom of those assembling and 4 percent were undecided.

Eighty-three percent of women and 63 percent of men favored maintaining public safety at public assemblies over maintaining the freedom of those assembled. Analyzing political affiliation, 81 percent of Democrats, 65 percent of Republicans, and 71 percent of independents said maintaining public safety should be more important. Republicans were the most likely to choose maintaining the freedom of those assembled, with 30 percent saying that this should be more important than maintaining public safety.

Those in the Northwestern part of the state (84 percent) were most likely to say that maintaining public safety is more important, and those

Maintaining Public Safety or Freedom of Those Assembling?

For localities providing security for public assemblies like protests or fairs or festivals, which should be more important: Maintaining public safety, even if doing so requires restricting those assembling from bringing objects that could be used as weapons, OR maintaining the freedoms of those assembling, including bringing objects that could be used as weapons, even if doing so creates a risk to public safety?



Source: 2018 Summer Public Policy Poll, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

living in Northern Virginia (68 percent) were least likely.

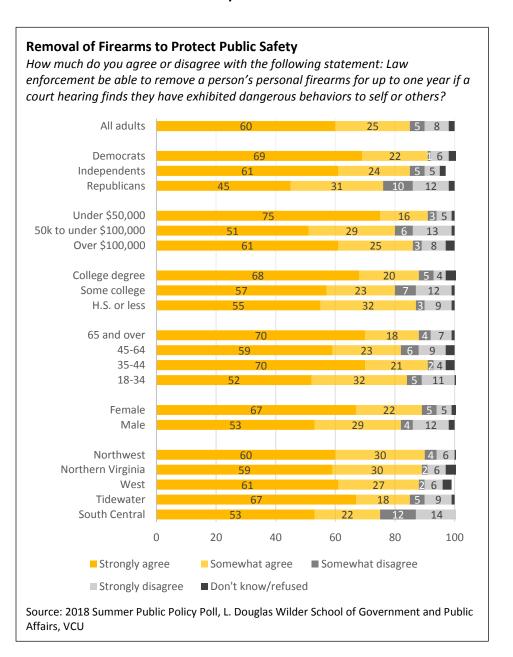
Older participants were more likely to favor maintaining the safety of those assembled, with 82 percent of those ages 65 and older, 80 percent of those ages 45 to 64, 70 percent of those ages 35 to 44, and 63 percent of those ages 18 to 34 favoring a priority of public safety.

Those with a household income under \$50,000 (at 82 percent) were most likely to say that maintaining public safety was more important than was the case for those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and above \$100,000 (69 percent and 66 percent, respectively.) Those with an income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 were more likely (at 30 percent) to say that maintaining the freedoms of those assembled was more important (compared to 26 percent for the highest income category and 14 percent for the lowest.)

Virginians favor firearm removal when safety is at risk

As mass shootings in the United States regularly create headlines and heartache for those affected, one of the policy innovations put forward by some policymakers is giving local authorities the ability to remove a person's personal firearms for up to a year if a court hearing finds that the person is exhibiting dangerous behaviors to themselves or others.

Eighty-five percent of Virginians are in favor of local law enforcement having such an ability, with 60 percent strongly agreeing and 25 percent agreeing somewhat. Thirteen percent of respondents either somewhat or strongly disagreed, while only 2 percent were undecided.



Women (at 67 percent) were more likely than men (53 percent) to strongly agree with the proposal. Likewise, those with a college degree (at 68 percent) were more likely to strongly agree than were those with some college or those with a high school diploma or less (57 percent and 55 percent respectively).

In contrast, those with an income of under \$50,000 were most likely to strongly agree (75 percent) that local authorities should have the ability to remove firearms, compared to 51 percent among those with household income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and 61 percent for



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

income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and 61 percent for those with incomes above \$100,000 who said the same.

Participants ages 35 to 44 and those who were 65 and older were the most likely to strongly agree with firearm removal (in both instances, 70 percent), while 52 percent of those ages 18 to 34 were likely to strongly agree.

Regionally, those living in the Tidewater region (67 percent) were most likely to say that they strongly agreed, while those living in the South Central region (53 percent) were less likely to strongly agree. The majority of those living in the West region (61 percent), Northern Virginia (59 percent), and the Northwest region (60 percent) also strongly agreed.

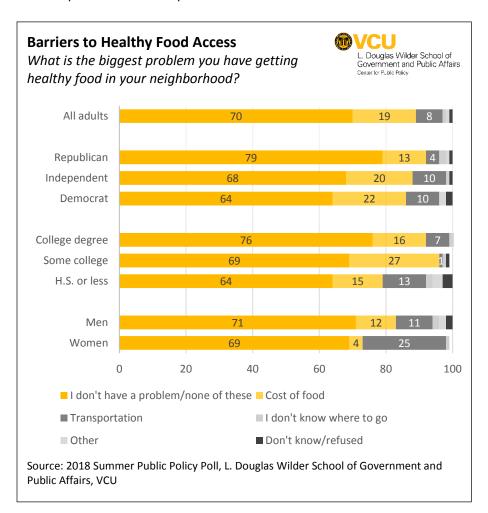
The only group surveyed with a strong agreement rate of less than 50 percent regarding firearm removal was Republicans (45 percent), while 69 percent of Democrats and 61 percent of independents strongly agreed.

For those seeking access healthy food, cost is the most frequent barrier

Efforts to reduce or eliminate food deserts, or areas where healthy food is hard to access, were increasingly visible in recent years as former Virginia first lady Dorothy McAuliffe promoted awareness of the need for improved nutrition options.

When asked what the biggest problem was in accessing healthy food in their neighborhood, 70 percent of respondents reported that they had no problem accessing healthy food. Of those who did have a problem with healthy food access, the cost of food was the most frequently mentioned problem (19 percent), followed by transportation issues (8 percent).

Women (25 percent) and those with some college education (27 percent) were more likely to report that cost was a problem compared to men (12 percent) and those with a high school diploma or less, or a college degree (15 percent and 16 percent, respectively).



Democrats were more likely to report cost as a problem (at 22 percent) compared to 20 percent of independents and 13 percent of Republicans. By contrast, Republicans were the most likely to report that they had no problems accessing healthy food (79 percent).

Virginians disagree with current law that landlords may reject potential tenants based solely on their source of income

A policy issue raised in the 2018 General Assembly session (HB 1408 – Del. Jeff Bourne (D-71st) patron) is whether a landlord should be able to reject potential tenants based solely on the source of their rent payment (e.g. a housing assistance voucher) or whether this creates opportunities for discrimination.

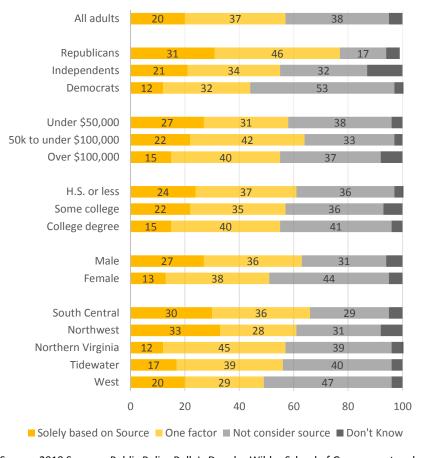
When asked if a landlord should be able to reject a potential tenant based solely on the source of their rent payment, 38 percent of respondents felt that considering the source should not be permitted, while 37 percent felt that the source should be allowed as one factor in the decision. Twenty percent believed that a landlord should be able to reject a tenant based solely on the source of income.

Democrats (at 53 percent) were most likely to say that the source of the rent payment should not be considered, compared to 32 percent of independents and 17 percent of Republicans.

Conversely, Republicans (at 31 percent) were most likely to say that source of income should be able to serve as the sole factor in the decision to reject a potential tenant. Only 21 percent of independents and 12 percent of Democrats said the same.

What Factors Should Landlords Be Able to Consider?

Under current state law, a landlord can refuse to rent to someone if some or all of that person's rent payment will be a housing assistance voucher. When it comes to a landlord deciding on whether to rent to a potential tenant, which of the following comes closest to your view: A landlord should be able to reject a potential tenant solely based on the source of their rent payment, a landlord should be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment as one of the factors in a decision not to rent to someone, OR a landlord should not be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment because it could lead to unfair practices.



Source: 2018 Summer Public Policy Poll, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

Women (44 percent) were more likely to say that source of income should not be able to be considered compared to 31 percent of men who said the same. Meanwhile men were more evenly split among the three options, with 27 percent saying that it should be possible for income source to be the only factor considered (compared to only 13 percent of women).

Those with an income of less than \$50,000 (at 27 percent) were more likely to say that source should be able to be the sole factor considered, compared with 22 percent of those with an income of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and 15 percent of those with an income higher than \$100,000 who said the same. Similarly, those with an education level of a high school diploma or less (at 24 percent) and some college (at 22 percent) were more likely to support landlords being able to use income source as their sole reason for rejecting a tenant, compared to 15 percent of those with a college degree or higher.

Those living in the West (47 percent) and Tidewater (40 percent) regions were most likely to say that source should not be considered, while those in Northern Virginia (45 percent) were most likely to say that it should be one factor to consider. Those in the Northwest and South Central regions of the commonwealth were most likely to say that source should be able to be the sole factor considered, at 33 percent and 30 percent, respectively.

Methodology and Sample Information VCU Wilder School 2018 Summer Public Policy Poll

SUMMARY

The Summer 2018 Public Policy Poll, conducted by the Office of Public Policy Outreach at Virginia Commonwealth University's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, obtained telephone interviews among 802 respondents. The telephone surveys were conducted with respondents 18+ years old, living across five areas/regions in Virginia. Issues and Answers Network, Inc. conducted the surveys between July 10 and July 30, 2018. Interviews were conducted with 400 landline (49.9%) and 402 cell (50.1%) phone with soft quotas implemented by region and gender. The average interview length was 15 minutes and conducted in English.

As with the previous wave, the same contact procedures were used for the landline and cell samples. For the landline sample, the program was set up to ask for the youngest adult male/female currently at home. If the specific gender was not available at the time of the call, the interviewer would ask to speak with the youngest male/female currently at home. For the cell phone sample, interviews were conducted with the person answering the phone. The program was set up to verify the respondent was an adult and in a safe place to take the survey. Both sample sources verified they were residents of Virginia.

The data was weighted using an iterative raking technique in WinCross that uses iterative proportional fitting techniques. This method avoids negative weights. Respondents were weighted on several demographics to match a previous wave of this study data and to maintain levels of non-response for each question. The previous study was weighted to 2010 U.S. Census data. The demographics weighted on were:

- 1. Age
- 2. Gender
- 3. Race/Hispanic identity
- 4. Education
- 5. Region
- 6. Population Density
- 7. HH Telephone Use

The survey's margin of error is +/- 3.49 percentage points, meaning that we are 95 percent confident that the actual result lies within 3.49 percentage points (in either direction) of the result our sample produced.

Topline

2018 Summer Wilder School Public Policy Poll Conducted by the Center for Public Policy, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, VCU

State-wide survey of Virginians¹ July 10-30, 2018 Number of Respondents: 802

QUESTIONS 1 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

Q2. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement [READ]

Law enforcement should be able to remove a person's personal firearms for up to one year if a court hearing finds they have exhibited dangerous behaviors to self or others.

	July 2018
	%
Strongly agree	60
Somewhat agree	25
Somewhat disagree	5
Strongly disagree	8
Don't know/Refused	2

- Q3. For localities providing security for public assemblies like protests or fairs and festivals, which should be more important: [READ AND RANDOMIZE]
 - Maintaining public safety, even if doing so requires restricting those assembling from bringing objects that could be used as weapons OR
 - Maintaining the freedoms of those assembling, including bringing objects that could be used as weapons, even if doing so creates a risk to public safety?

	July 2018
	%
Maintaining public safety	75
Maintaining the freedoms of those assembling	21
Don't Know/Refused	4

Q4. What is the biggest problem you have getting healthy food in your neighborhood? [READ]

	July 2018
	%
Transportation	8
Cost of food	19
I don't know where to go	1
I don't have a problem/None of these	70
Other [SPECIFY)	1
Don't know/Refused	1

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%.

- Q5. Under current state law, a landlord can refuse to rent to someone if some or all of that person's rent payment will be a housing assistance voucher. When it comes to a landlord deciding on whether to rent to a potential tenant, which of the following comes closest to your view (even if none is perfect): [READ AND RANDOMIZE]
 - A landlord should be able to reject a potential tenant solely based on the source of their rent payment.
 - A landlord should be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment as one of the factors in a decision not to rent to someone. OR
 - A landlord should not be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment because it could lead to unfair practices.

	July 2018
	%
Solely based on source of income	20
One factor in decision	37
Not consider source	38
Don't know/Refused	5

QUESTIONS 6 THROUGH 16 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

NO QUESTION 17-19

QUESTIONS 20 THROUGH 22 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

Tables for Subgroup Analysis

Based on All Respondents

Q2. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement [READ] - Law enforcement should be able to remove a person's personal firearms for up to one year if a court hearing finds they have exhibited dangerous behaviors to self or others.

		exhibited dangerous behaviors to sell of others.					
		Strongly		Somewhat	Strongly	Don't	Number
		agree	agree	disagree	disagree	know	of cases
All adults		60%	25%	5%	8%	2%	802
VA Region	Northwest	60%	30%	4%	6%	1%	111
	Northern VA	59%	30%	2%	6%	4%	237
	West	61%	27%	2%	6%	3%	136
	South Central	53%	22%	12%	14%	0%	137
	Tidewater	67%	18%	5%	9%	1%	181
Gender	Men	53%	29%	4%	12%	2%	388
	Women	67%	22%	5%	5%	2%	414
Age	18-34	52%	32%	5%	11%	1%	61
<u> </u>	35-44	70%	21%	2%	4%	3%	71
	45-64	59%	23%	6%	9%	3%	338
	65 and older	70%	18%	4%	7%	1%	284
Education	H.S. or less	55%	32%	3%	9%	1%	135
	Some college	57%	23%	7%	12%	1%	184
	College grad or more	68%	20%	5%	4%	4%	470
Family	Under \$50,000	75%	16%	3%	5%	1%	180
Income	50K to under \$100,000	51%	29%	6%	13%	1%	213
	\$100,000 or more	61%	25%	3%	8%	3%	250
Race	White	59%	24%	5%	10%	2%	598
	Minority	61%	27%	4%	4%	3%	149
Party	Democrat	69%	22%	1%	6%	2%	370
identification	Republican	45%	31%	10%	12%	2%	324
	Independent	61%	24%	5%	5%	6%	81

- Q3. For localities providing security for public assemblies like protests or fairs and festivals, which should be more important:
 - Maintaining public safety, even if doing so requires restricting those assembling from bringing objects that could be used as weapons OR
 - Maintaining the freedoms of those assembling, including bringing objects that could be used as weapons, even if doing so creates a risk to public safety?

			Maintaining the		
		Maintaining public	freedoms of those		Number
		safety	assembling	Don't Know	of cases
All adults		75%	21%	4%	802
VA Region	Northwest	84%	14%	2%	111
	Northern VA	68%	25%	7%	237
	West	79%	15%	6%	136
	South Central	72%	24%	4%	137
	Tidewater	77%	22%	2%	181
Gender	Men	66%	28%	6%	388
	Women	83%	14%	3%	414
Age	18-34	63%	37%	0%	61
	35-44	70%	21%	8%	71
	45-64	80%	18%	2%	338
	65 and older	82%	9%	9%	284
Education	H.S. or less	73%	23%	4%	135
	Some college	71%	27%	2%	184
	College grad or more	79%	16%	6%	470
Family Income	Under \$50,000	82%	14%	5%	180
	50K to under \$100,000	69%	30%	1%	213
	\$100,000 or more	66%	26%	8%	250
Race	White	72%	23%	5%	598
	Minority	77%	19%	4%	149
Party	Democrat	81%	15%	4%	370
identification	Republican	65%	30%	5%	324
	Independent	73%	24%	2%	81

		Q4. What is the biggest problem you have getting healthy food in your neighborhood? [READ]					d in your	
		Transpor tation	Cost of food	Don't know where to go	I don't have a problem/None of these	Other	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		8%	19%	1%	70%	1%	1%	802
VA Region	Northwest	7%	16%	3%	74%	0%		111
	Northern VA	11%	17%	0%	71%	0%	0%	237
	West	5%	23%	1%	58%	6%	7%	136
	South Central	5%	15%	2%	79%	0%	0%	137
	Tidewater	8%	22%	2%	67%	0%	0%	181
Gender	Men	11%	12%	2%	71%	2%	2%	388
	Women	4%	25%	1%	69%	0%	0%	414
Age	18-34	11%	22%	0%	60%	3%	4%	61
	35-44	3%	30%	3%	65%	0%	0%	71
	45-64	6%	19%	2%	72%	1%	0%	338
	65 and older	10%	8%	1%	80%	0%	1%	284
Education	H.S. or less	13%	15%	2%	64%	3%	3%	135
	Some college	1%	27%	1%	69%	0%	1%	184
	College grad or more	7%	16%	1%	76%	1%	0%	470
Family	Under \$50,000	8%	24%	1%	63%	4%	0%	180
Income	50K to under \$100,000	10%	17%		70%	1%	0%	213
	\$100,000 \$100,000 or more	4%	17%	0%	78%	0%	0%	250
Race	White	4%	18%	2%	73%	2%	2%	598
	Minority	16%	16%	1%	68%	0%	0%	149
Party	Democrat	10%	22%	0%	64%	2%	2%	370
identification	Republican	4%	13%		79%	1%		324
	Independent	10%	20%	1%	68%	0%		81

Q5. Under current state law, a landlord can refuse to rent to someone if some or all of that person's rent payment will be a housing assistance voucher. When it comes to a landlord deciding on whether to rent to a potential tenant, which of the following comes closest to your view (even if none is perfect): [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

- A landlord should be able to reject a potential tenant solely based on the source of their rent payment.
- A landlord should be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment as one of the factors in a decision not to rent to someone. OR
- A landlord should not be able to consider a tenant's source of rent payment because it could lead to unfair practices.

		Solely based on		Not consider	Don't	Number of
		source	in decision	source	Know/Refused	cases
All adults		20%	37%	38%	5%	806
VA Region	Northwest	33%	28%	31%	8%	111
	Northern VA	12%	45%	39%	5%	237
	West	20%	29%	47%	4%	136
	South Central	30%	36%	29%	5%	137
	Tidewater	17%	39%	40%	4%	181
Gender	Men	27%	36%	31%	6%	388
	Women	13%	38%	44%	5%	414
Age	18-34	28%	26%	46%	1%	61
	35-44	21%	35%	40%	3%	71
	45-64	15%	45%	34%	6%	338
	65 and older	17%	39%	38%	6%	284
Education	H.S. or less	24%	37%	36%	4%	135
	Some college	22%	35%	36%	7%	184
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Family	Under \$50,000	27%	31%	38%	4%	180
Income	50K to under \$100,000	22%	42%	33%	3%	213
	\$100,000 or more	15%	40%	37%	8%	250
Race	White	22%	37%	37%	4%	598
	Minority	17%	38%	39%	6%	149
Party	Democrat	12%	32%	53%	4%	370
identification	Republican	31%	46%	17%	5%	324
	Independent	21%	34%	32%	13%	81