

2017 School Budget Facts and Insights

Compiled by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

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Introduction

In March, most K-12 school systems in the commonwealth and the school boards that oversee them reach a key point in their annual efforts to improve educational outcomes for students — working with their local board of supervisors or city council to create and fund a budget for the coming fiscal year. We know many journalists, as well as community members, will be writing a range of stories, blogs and letters to the editor related to this budget season. We hope this information will provide a convenient reference for facts and figures that may be helpful.

In the following pages, we highlight recent CEPI polling data (mostly from our 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll¹) on the relevant topics of funding sufficiency, willingness of taxpayers to pay more for education, what types of taxes the public prefers and where the public thinks additional funds should go. We also provide links to graphics and charts that our team has compiled on trends in enrollment and per pupil spending by school system.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

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¹ The Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-2017, sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 806 adults, age 18 or older, living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (400) and cell phone (406, including 197 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 November 8-17, 2016. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 4.3 percentage points. (For a full statement of the poll's methodology, please consult the methodology section (pg. 35) of the [2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll](#) on our website.)

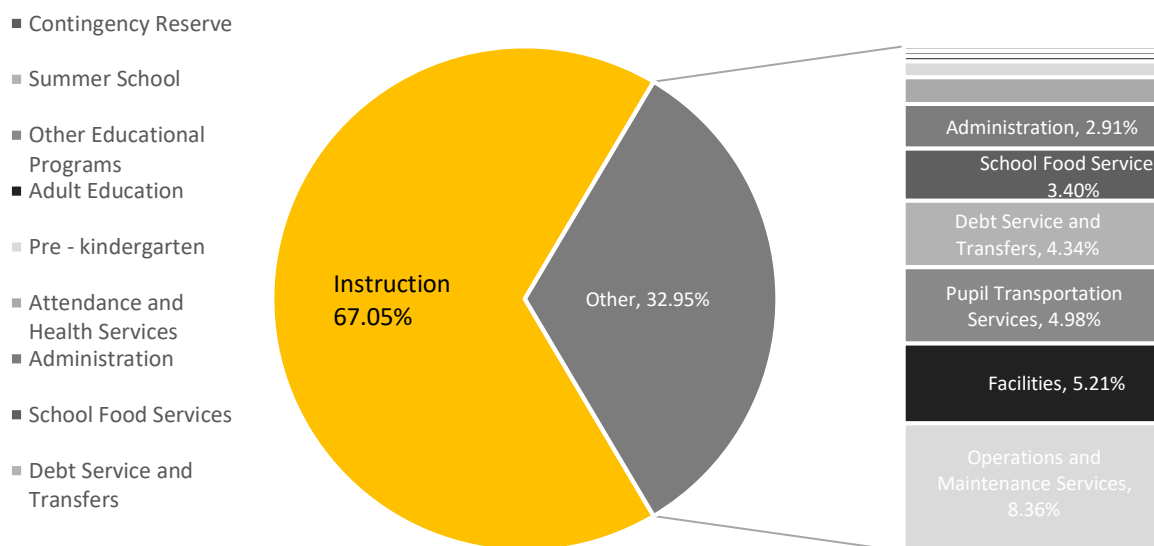
K-12 Education Spending: Facts and Insights

Compiled here are answers to some baseline questions about school budgets in Virginia.

How much gets spent on K-12 education across the commonwealth?

Based on 2014-15 school year figures, total disbursements statewide were more than \$16.4 billion. More than two-thirds of that amount (\$11.02 billion) goes to instructional expenses while the remainder goes to essential support programs such as maintenance services, pupil transportation services, school food services and administration.

Percent of Total Disbursements



Disbursements (2014-15); Data from Virginia Department of Education, available at:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/supts_annual_report/2014_15/index.shtml

2014-15 School Year - Allotment of total spending by category

School Division/Regional Program	Percent of Total Disbursements	STATE TOTAL
Contingency Reserve	0.00%	273,831
Summer School	0.31%	50,915,902
Other Educational Programs	0.33%	55,036,641
Adult Education	0.34%	56,132,227
Pre - kindergarten	1.04%	170,174,181
Attendance and Health Services	1.74%	286,493,520
Administration	2.91%	478,266,128
School Food Services	3.40%	559,262,758
Debt Service and Transfers	4.34%	712,923,894
Pupil Transportation Services	4.98%	818,415,780
Facilities	5.21%	856,063,136
Operations and Maintenance Services	8.36%	1,373,662,873
Instruction	67.05%	11,022,763,070
Total Disbursements		16,440,383,942

What is the breakdown of federal, state and local funding?

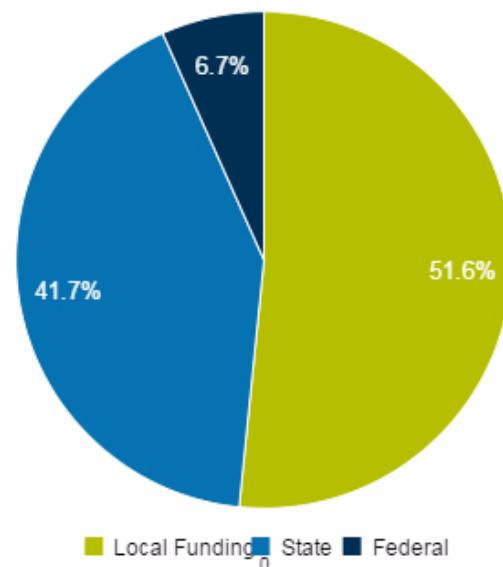
Pulling figures from VDOE's School Quality Profiles website, the largest portion of funding comes from local sources (51.6 percent) followed by state funding (41.7 percent). Only 6.7 percent of funding comes from the federal government.

Source URL: <http://schoolquality.virginia.gov>
2/22/2017, 4:58:43 PM

Virginia State Quality PROFILE

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND TOTAL PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES FOR OPERATIONS

2014 - 2015 Statewide Per-Pupil Spending

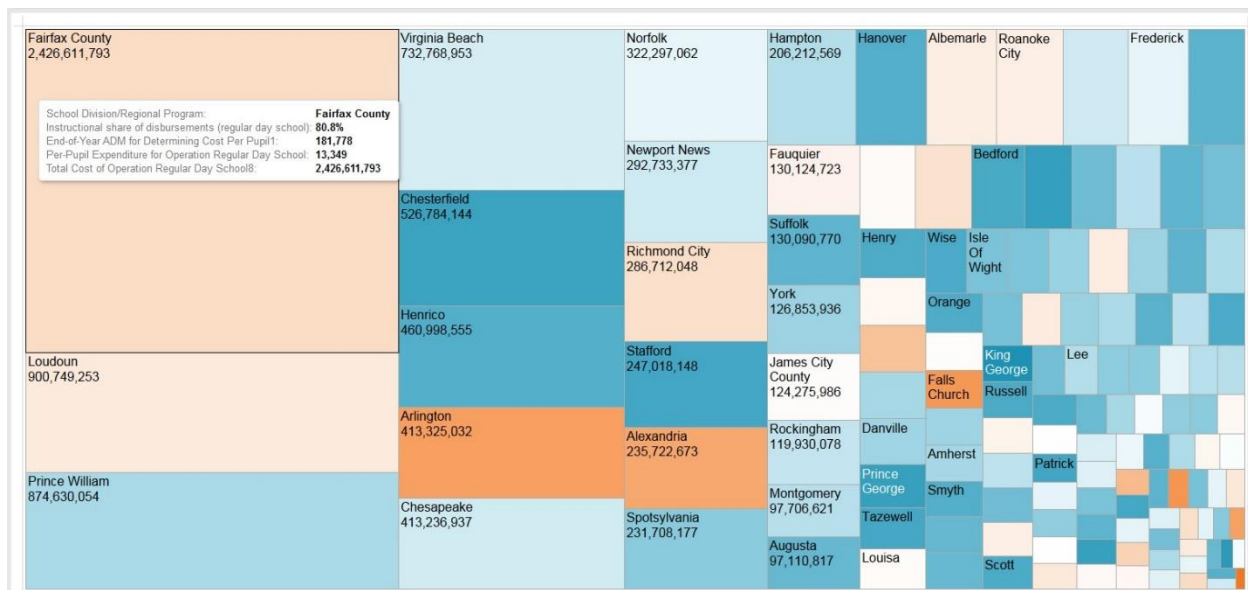


Which school systems have the largest budget?

Virginia school systems vary widely in the number of students they serve and so the amount spent varies widely as well. The box chart below shows this variation.

Insights from visualized data (Interactive map and downloadable data with Tableau Public):

- Highland County (with 183 students in grades K-12 and a budget of about \$3.7 million) had the smallest budget in the commonwealth. Fairfax County Public Schools (which administers schools on behalf of Fairfax City as well) is by far the largest system, with annual disbursements for total day school operations in 2014-15 of \$2.4 billion. Fairfax serves more than 181,000 students.
- Just over 30 percent of K-12 education spending in the commonwealth is in three school systems (Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William County). The 89 smallest school systems together equal the disbursements of Fairfax schools alone.
- Check out the online visualization to see where specific localities end up in comparison to the state average.



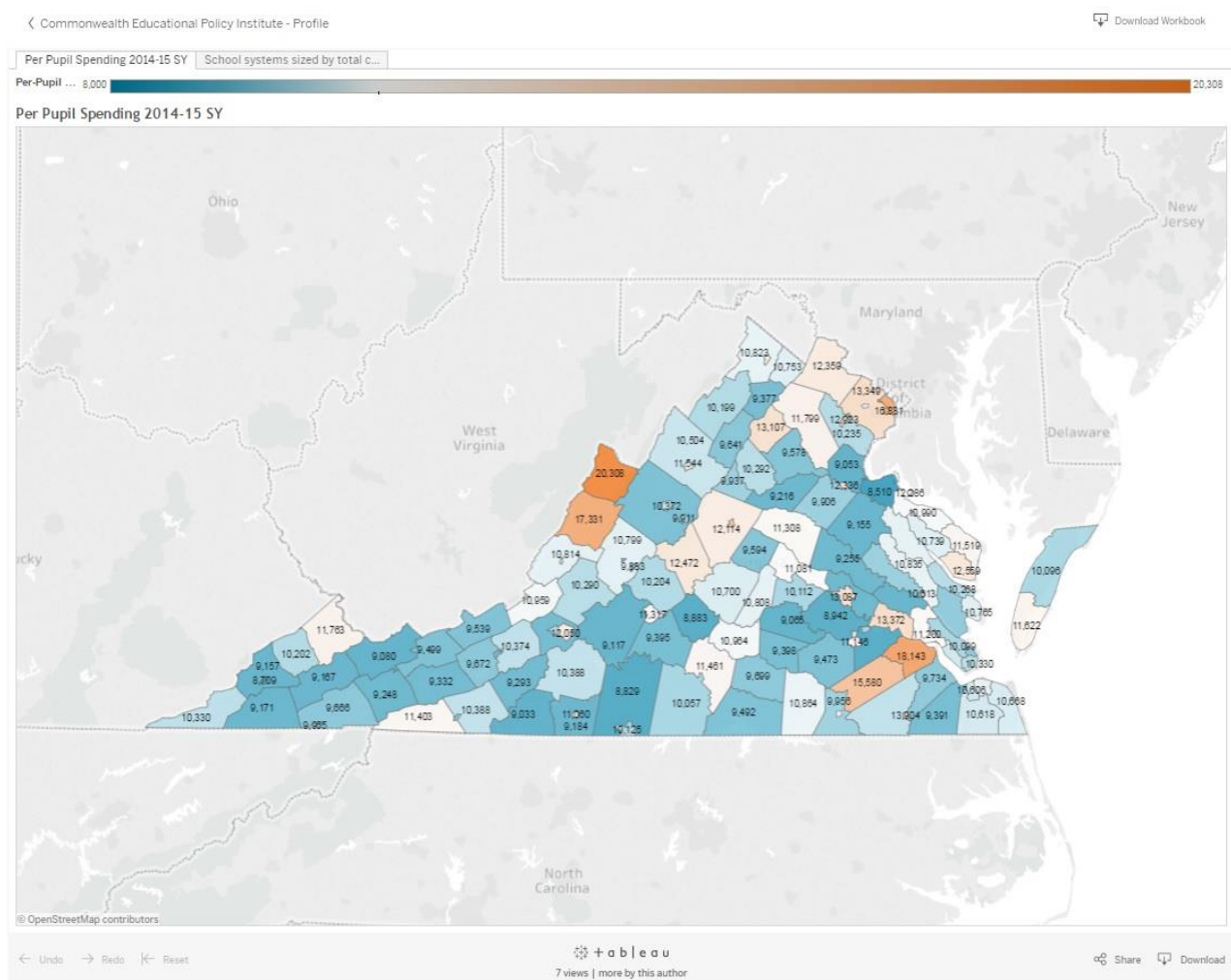
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/2014-15SYPerPupilSpending/PerPupilSpending2014-15SY>

How much is spent per pupil in Virginia?

The statewide average spent per pupil on regular day school operations is \$11,051. However, the amount varies widely based on locality. The map below shows this variation.

Insights from visualized data (Interactive map and downloadable data with Tableau Public):

- Highland County (with 183 students in grades K-12) had the highest per pupil spending at \$20,308. King George County Schools had the lowest at \$8,510 per pupil.
- Northern Virginia localities tend to have higher than average per pupil spending, potentially due to a higher cost of living for employees (and resulting increases in pay).
- Check out the online map to see where specific localities end up in comparison to the state average.



<https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/2014-15SYPerPupilSpending/PerPupilSpending2014-15SY>

Does the public think funding for schools is enough?

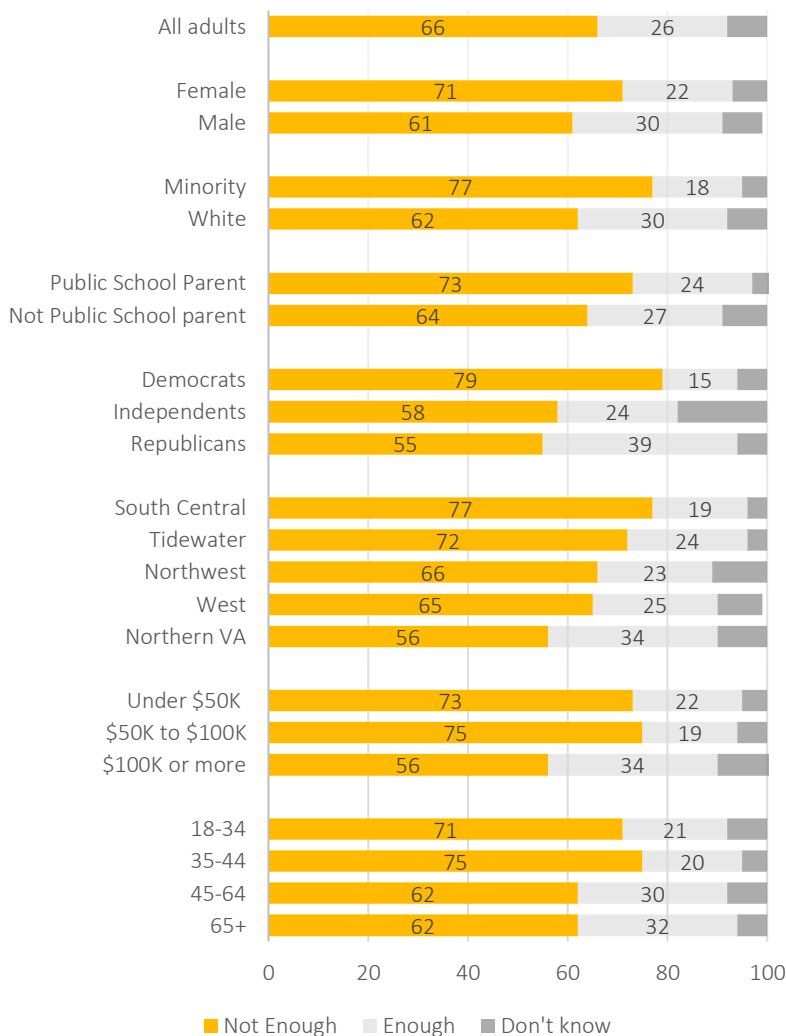
Poll insights: Two-thirds of Virginians (66 percent) say that public schools do not have enough funds to meet their needs, while only 26 percent say schools have enough funding. These levels are virtually unchanged from the previous year, despite the significant increase in funding approved for K-12 education by last year's General Assembly.

Certain demographic categories were more likely to think that schools don't currently have enough funding. Parents of public school students (73 percent) were significantly more likely than respondents without a child in the public school system (64 percent) to think schools were operating below needed funding levels. Minority respondents (77 percent) were more likely to think funding for schools was not enough when compared to white respondents (62 percent). Minority respondents (77 percent) were more likely to think funding for schools was not enough when compared to white respondents (62 percent). Also, Democrats (79 percent) more often said schools did not have enough compared to their Independent (58 percent) or Republican (55 percent) counterparts.

Likewise there was a difference between women (71 percent) and men (61 percent) and among the different geographic regions. Northern Virginia had the smallest portion of respondents (56 percent) who thought schools did not have enough funding, compared to 77 percent in South Central Virginia and 72 percent in the Tidewater area.

Do Schools Have Enough?

Overall, do you think the funding for public schools in Virginia is enough to meet their needs, or not enough to meet their needs?

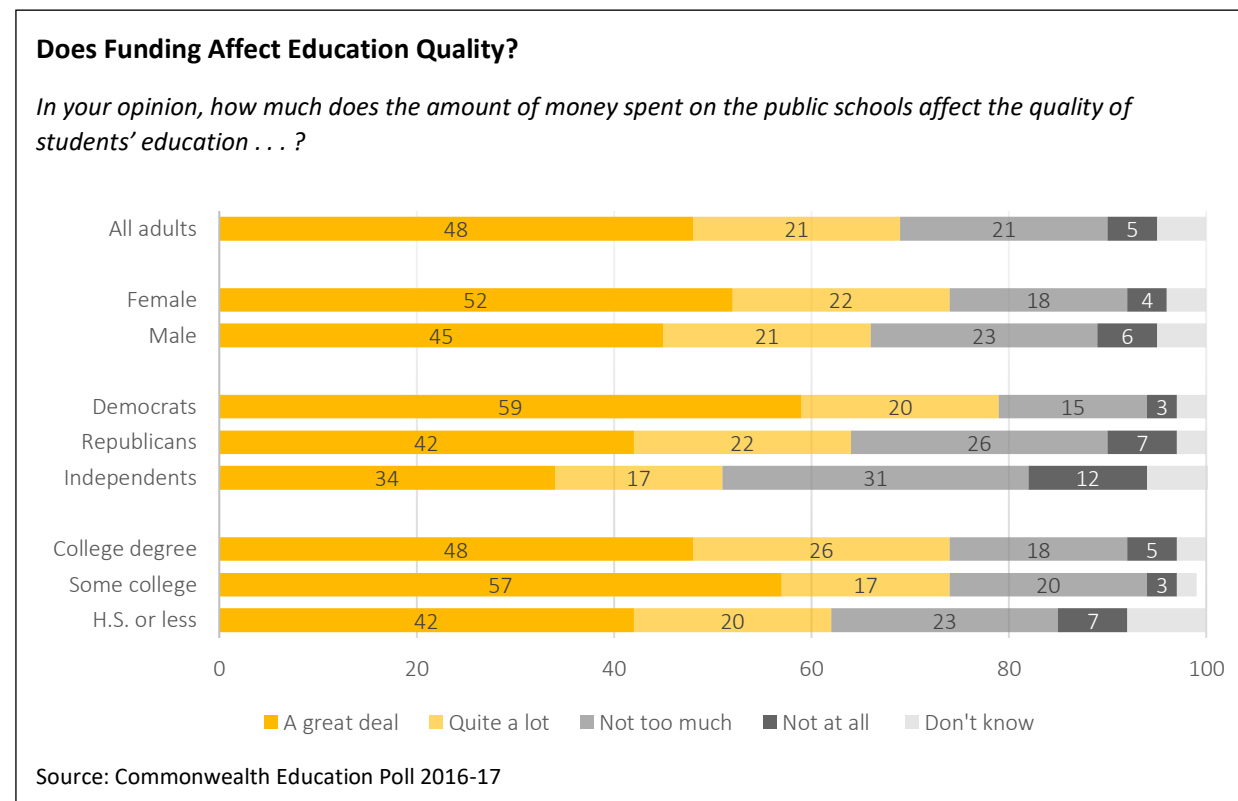


Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-17

A copy of the full results of the 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll is available at <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.

Does the public think funding affects the quality of students' education?

Poll insights: Perceptions about whether schools have enough funding matter because Virginians also see the amount of funding dedicated to public schools as affecting their quality. Similar to the responses in 2015-16, close to seven in 10 respondents (69 percent) said that the amount of funding affects quality “a great deal” or “quite a lot.”



There are demographic differences with regard to whether schools are perceived as having enough funding to meet needs. Women (74 percent chose either “a great deal” or “quite a lot”) were more likely to see a causal connection between funding and educational quality than were men (66 percent). Democrats (at 79 percent combined) and Republicans (at 64 percent combined) more often said that the amount of money spent on schools affects quality a great deal or quite a lot than did Independents (only 51 percent combined).

Though differences in formal education were not significantly different on the question of whether funding was enough, it was in the case of whether people believe funding impacts quality. Seventy-four percent of both respondents with college degrees and those with some college selected “a great deal” or “quite a lot” compared to only 62 percent of those with a high school degree or less who chose the same.

A copy of the full results of the 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll is available at <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.

Is the public willing to pay higher taxes to increase school funding?

Poll insights: The Commonwealth Education Poll shows a majority of the public would be willing to have their own taxes increased in order to see more funding directed to schools. Fifty-four percent of Virginians indicate a personal willingness to pay higher taxes in order to increase school funding, while 42 percent say they are not willing to do so. The proportion willing to pay higher taxes for this purpose is 2 percentage points lower than last year, but the difference is statistically insignificant.

Women, younger respondents, respondents with college education or respondents from higher annual income households were all more likely to be willing to pay more in taxes than comparison categories. (See chart at right.)

Elected officials know that their own constituents may be very different than the average perspective of Virginians as a whole. Regional differences are significant with 61 percent of Tidewater respondents and 59 percent of South Central respondents saying they would be willing to pay more in taxes. By comparison, support for the same is lower in the West (49 percent) and Northwest (47 percent).

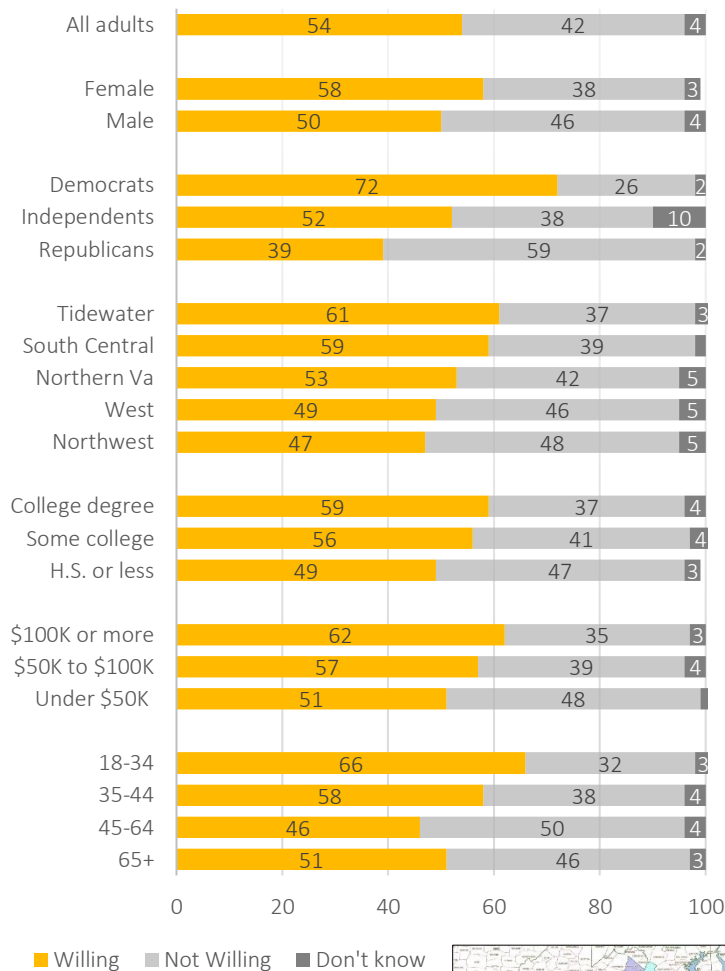
Political party also matters. Democrats (72 percent) are more likely to be willing to pay higher taxes than are Republicans (39 percent) while Independents (52 percent) fall between the two.

A copy of the full results of the 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll is available at <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.

Higher Taxes for Increased School Funding?

Would you be willing or not willing to pay higher taxes so that school funding could be increased?

Demographic Differences



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-17; map shows geographic definition of regions listed above.



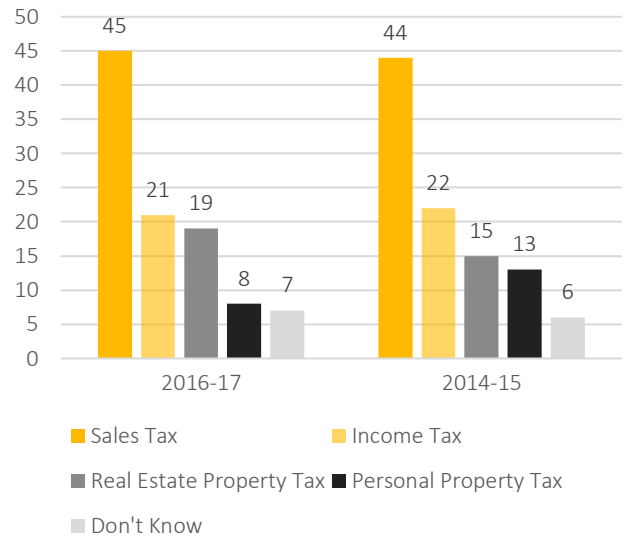
What type of tax increase does the public think would be best?

Poll insights: Those who were willing to pay more in taxes were also asked what type of tax they thought would be best. A clear plurality (45 percent) selected an increase in the sales tax, while 21 percent favored income taxes and 19 percent real estate taxes. These levels were consistent with findings the last time the question was asked in 2014-15.

A copy of the full results of the 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll is available at <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.

Preferred Type of Tax

[If willing to pay higher taxes] What kind of tax increase do you think would be best – sales tax, income tax, real estate property tax, or personal property tax?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-17

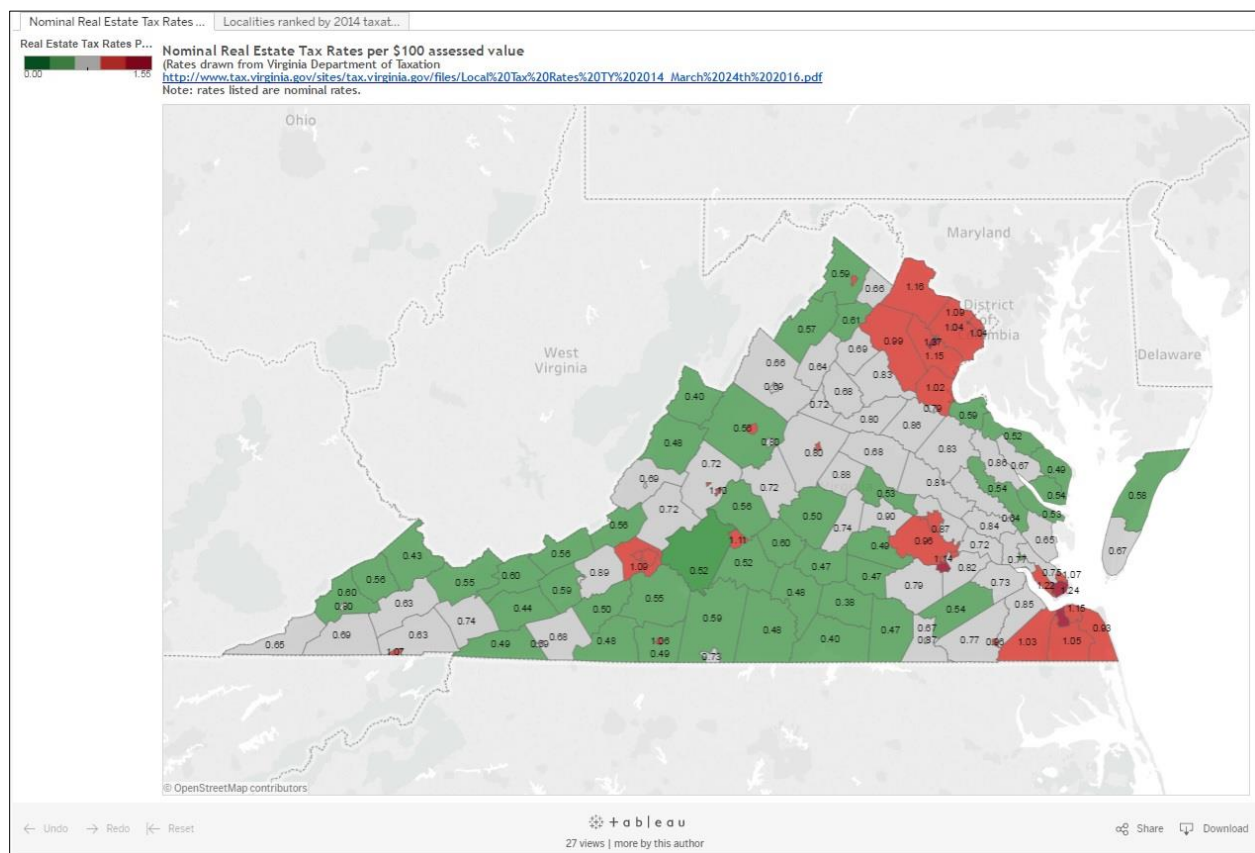
What are nominal real estate tax rates in Virginia?

Most funding for education comes from local sources (the [statewide average is 51.6 percent](#)). Most localities depend on their local real estate taxes to raise revenue for schools and other local government functions. Raising tax rates is a weighty decision where localities need to look not only at their own rate, but the rate of localities around them (to which residents might easily move). The map below provides a link to an online interactive visualization of local real estate tax rates as of 2014.

Insights from visualized data (Interactive map and downloadable data with Tableau Public):

- Manassas City had the highest nominal real estate tax rate in Virginia in 2014 at \$1.37 per \$100 assessed value. Lunenburg County had the lowest at \$0.38 per \$100 assessed value.
- Urban areas and rapidly growing suburban areas have the highest rates. The 10 highest localities, ranked by nominal real estate tax rates, are all cities. (Loudoun County ranks 11th at \$1.15 per \$100 assessed value.)

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/2014RealEstateTaxRatesbyVirginiaLocality/NominalRealEstateTaxRatesper100assessedvalue>



(Rates drawn from [Virginia Department of Taxation](#). Note: rates listed are nominal rates.)

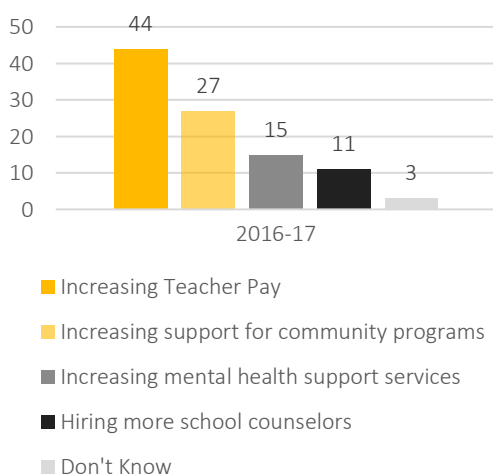
Is the public willing to pay more to help high-poverty, low-performing schools; for those willing to pay more, what is seen as best use?

Poll insights: Some school systems have high-poverty, low-performing schools that are working to increase student performance. Often, finding additional funding for these schools is a critical issue for local budget drafters. Poll responses show that a strong majority (67 percent) of respondents would be willing to pay more in taxes if the additional funds could be channeled to helping such schools improve.

Among those willing to pay more in taxes for this purpose, 44 percent believe the best use of increased resources in low-performing schools in high-poverty areas would be increasing teacher pay. A smaller share (27 percent) thought the best use would be “increasing support for community programs that share strategies with parents about improving student achievement” and 15 percent “increasing mental health support services for students” was the best use. Only 11 percent thought that “hiring more school counselors to provide support to students” was the best use for added funds.

Preferred Use of Additional Resources

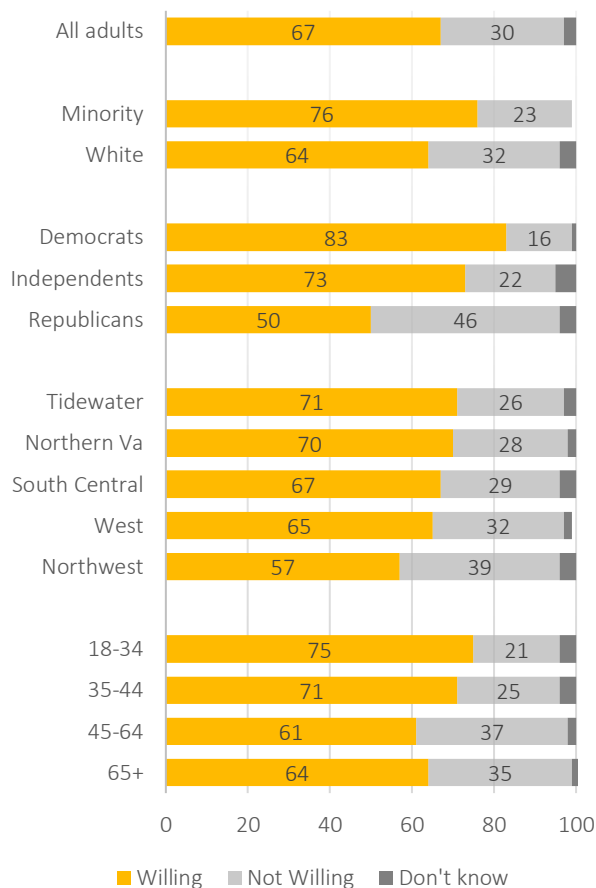
[Of those willing to pay more – N=513] Which of the following would be the best use of the increased resources?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-17

Willing to Pay Extra to Help Low-Performing Schools?

Would you be willing or not willing to pay more in taxes in order to provide additional resources to high-poverty, low-performing schools that are working to increase student performance?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2016-17

A copy of the full results of the 2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll is available at <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.

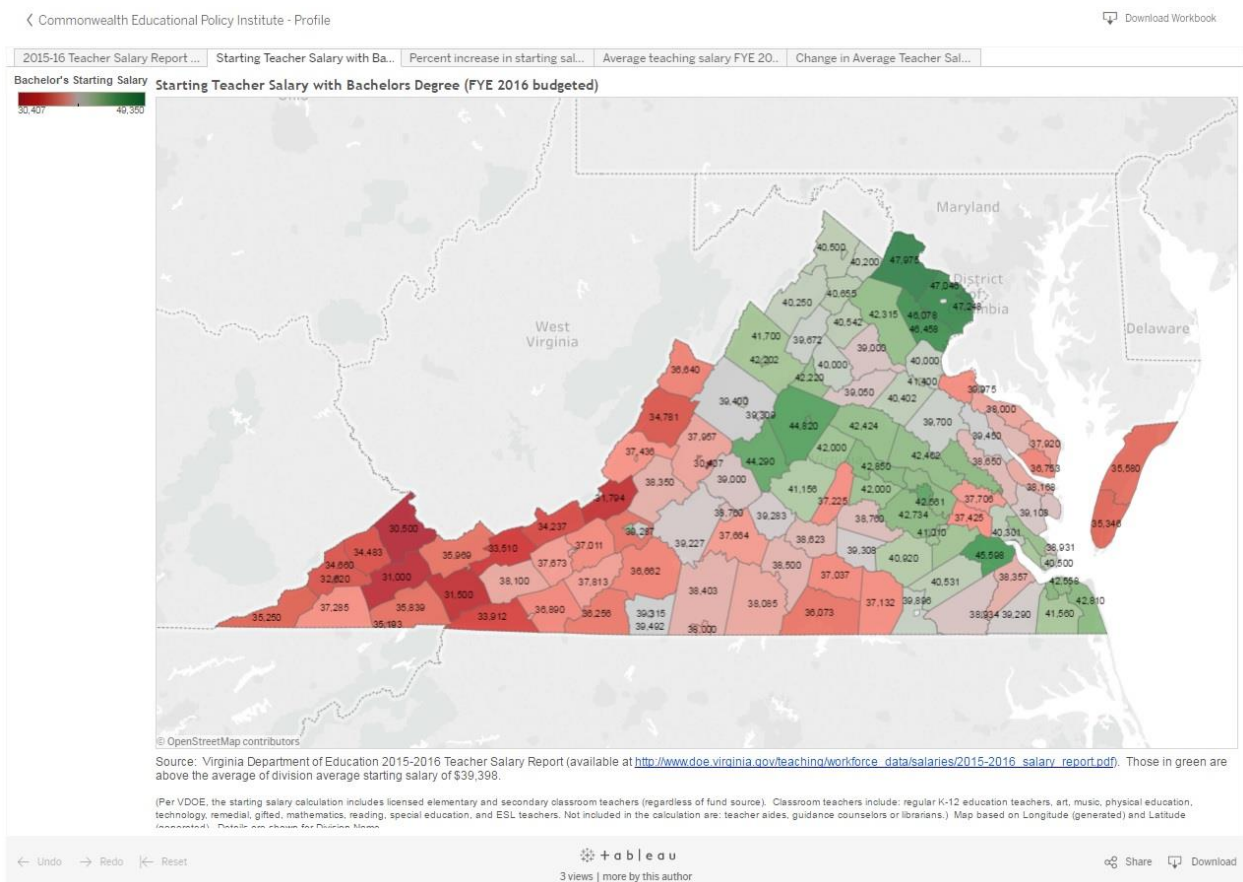
What do starting teachers get paid in Virginia?

If a plurality of the public thinks additional funds would best be spent increasing teacher pay, what do teachers make in various places in the commonwealth? The map below shows the range of starting salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree. Those in green are above the average of the starting salaries across all divisions (\$39,398). Note: the individual average starting salary is likely higher because larger schools systems tend to have higher starting salaries.

Insights from visualized data (Interactive map and downloadable data with Tableau Public):

- Arlington County, at \$48,228, had the highest nominal starting teacher salary in the commonwealth. Buchanan County, at \$30,500, had the lowest.
- Systems with starting salaries above the statewide division average are primarily located in Northern Virginia, the Richmond and Charlottesville metro areas, and the Tidewater region.

Check out the online map to see where specific localities end up in comparison. The online visualizations also provide data on average teacher salaries, and changes in average teacher salaries from FY 2015 to FY 2016.



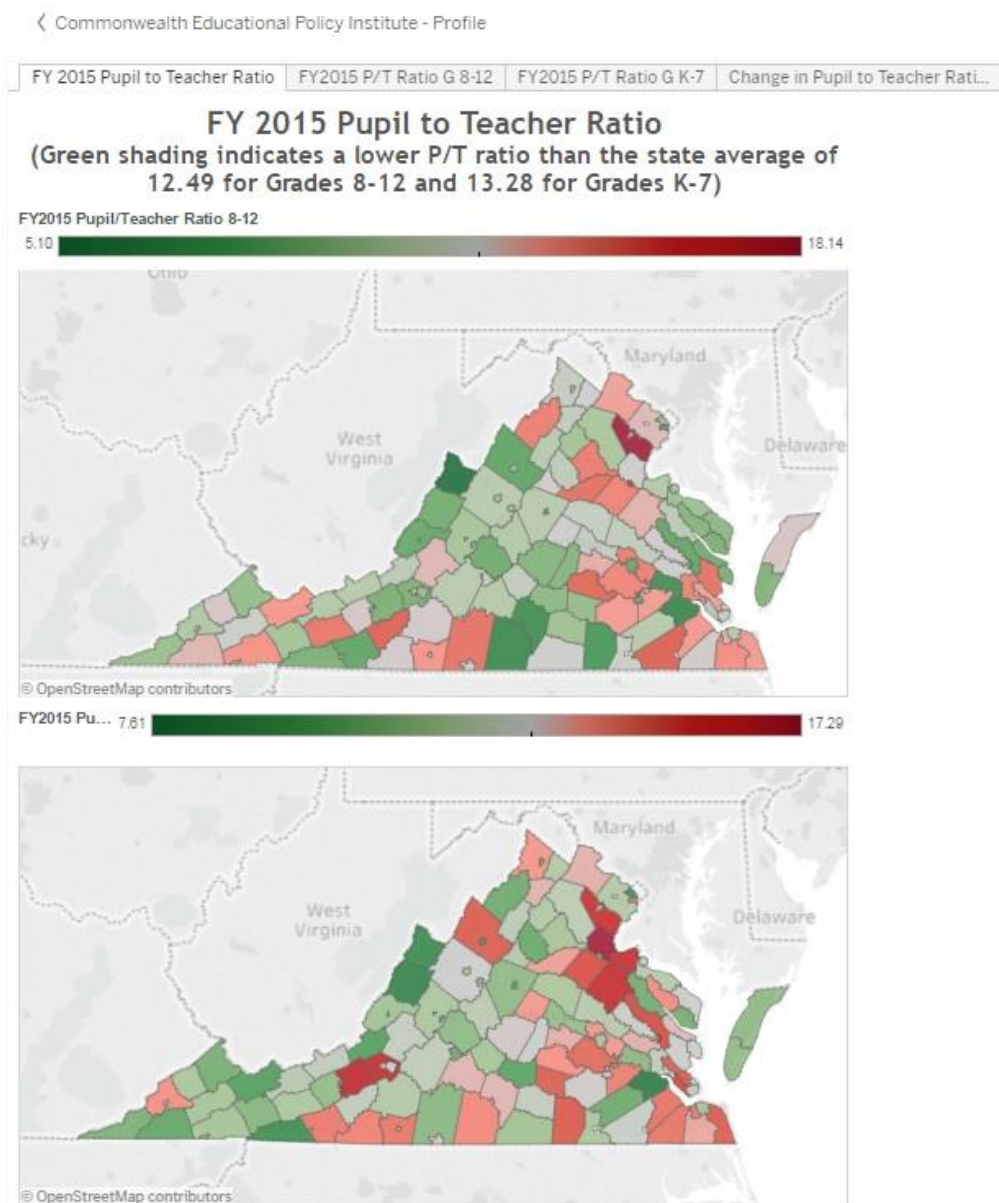
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/2015-16VDOETeacherSalaryReportVisualizations/2015-16TeacherSalaryReportVisualizations>

What is the average pupil to teacher ratio in Virginia?

The statewide average pupil to teacher ratio was 12.49 for grades 8-12 and 13.28 for grades K-7 based on FY 2015 figures. However the amount varies widely based on locality. The maps below show this variation (grade 8-12 on top and K-7 on bottom).

Insights from visualized data (Interactive map and downloadable data with Tableau Public):

- Prince William County (18.14 pupil to teacher ratio for grades 8-12) and Stafford County (17.29 pupil to teacher ratio for grades K-7) had the highest ratios in the commonwealth.
- Check out the online map to see where specific localities end up in comparison.



<https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/Pupil-TeacherRatioFY2015/ChangeinPupiltoTeacherRatioFY14toFY15>



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For release: Tuesday, March 7, 2017

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Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute Releases 2017 “School Budget Facts and Insights” Summarizing Highlights from Recent Poll

Today the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, part of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, released a summary of school budget facts and insights that provides answers to key questions about public education in Virginia.

This month, as school boards across the commonwealth make funding requests to boards of supervisors and city councils, local budgeting for primary and secondary education will be a regular feature in media outlets.

“We hope this information provides a convenient reference for educators, journalists, policymakers and community members as key budgeting decisions are made across the commonwealth,” said Robyn McDougale, Ph.D., the institute’s interim executive director and associate professor at the Wilder School.

The facts and insights summary is organized around topic questions such as, “Does the public think funding for schools is enough?”

Based on findings of the [2016-17 Commonwealth Education Poll](#), the summary highlights that **66 percent of the public feels schools do not have enough funding to meet their needs.**

In addition to highlighting poll findings, the facts and insights summary provides links to data mapping developed by CEPI that shows the county by county variation on such key topics as:

- Average per-pupil spending
- Student-teacher ratios
- Starting teacher salaries

VCU’s Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute is part of the Center for Public Policy at the Wilder School. For a PDF of the summary, go to <http://cepi.vcu.edu/publications/polls/>.