2016 Back-to-School Facts and Insights

Compiled by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

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2016 BACK-TO-SCHOOL FACTS AND INSIGHTS

Compiled from existing research by the
Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI)
www.cepi.vcu.edu

L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

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Introduction

This month, as more than 1.2 million pupils prepare for their first day of a new K-12 school year and more than half a million college students enroll for the fall semester here in Virginia, we know many journalists will be writing a range of stories related to this "back-to-school" season. We hope this information will provide a convenient reference for facts and figures that may be helpful in covering such stories.

In the following pages, we highlight recent CEPI polling data (mostly from our 2016 Commonwealth Education Poll[1]) on the relevant topics of school and campus safety, as well as provide links to graphics and charts that our team has compiled.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Robyn McDougle, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Director
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[1] The Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016, sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 801 adults, age 18 or older, living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (400) and cell phone (401, including 176 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 December 15-20, 2015. 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. (For a full statement of the Poll's methodology, please consult the methodology section (pg. 27) of the 2016 Commonwealth Education Poll on our website.)

Back-to-School: Higher Education Facts and Insights

Compiled here are answers to some baseline questions about higher education in Virginia.

How many students attend college in Virginia?

Assuming that enrollment this fall semester is similar to the most recent year (528,666 students in Fall 2015), Virginia will have more than half a million students earning college credits from Virginia institutions. Enrollment in 2015-16 was down about 5,000 students from 2014-15, when 534,280 students enrolled that fall semester.

- 208,952 students enrolled part-time (or 39.5%); 319,143 full-time.
- 230,090 students reported their gender as male (or 43.5%); 297,879 as female (56.3%); and 697 students did not report a gender.
- 386,600 students registered as in-state (73.1%) while 142,066 were from outside Virginia.

All Institutions 2015-16 Fall Enrollment
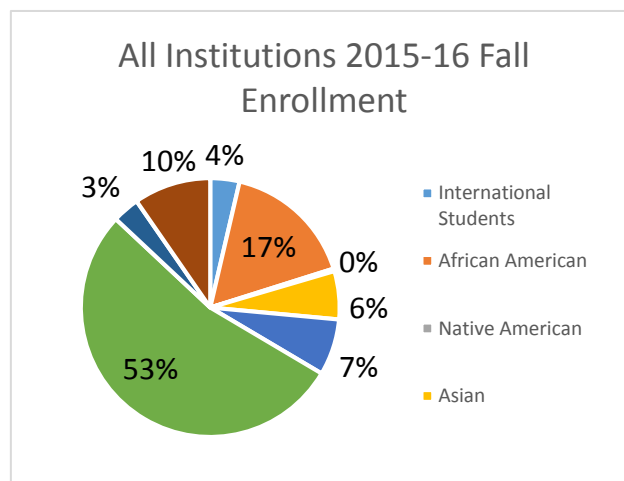
Fall Headcount Enrollment (2015-16); Data from SCHEV, available at:
http://research.schev.edu/enrollment/E2_Report.asp

Fall Headcount Enrollments						
Institution	Fall Term	Description	Undergraduates	Graduate Students	First Professionals	Total
Four-Year Public Institutions						
	2015	All Students	170,590	38,979	4,911	214,480
Two-Year Public Institutions						
	2015	All Students	179,065	0	0	179,065
Total Public						
	2015	All Students	349,655	38,979	4,911	393,545
Four-Year Private, Nonprofit Institutions						
	2015	All Students	88,529	39,406	7,186	135,121
Grand Total, All Institutions						
	2015	All Students	438,184	78,385	12,097	528,666

What schools are the largest (by enrollment) in Virginia?

The largest four-year public institution last year was George Mason University at 34,112 students, about 1,500 students more than the second largest, Virginia Tech (32,663).

Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) dwarfs both of the largest four-year public institutions with an enrollment last fall of 52,078. This made NVCC the largest, by more than 25,000 students, among the two-year public schools.

Liberty University, with its relatively recent significant expansion into online degrees, led private four-year schools (and all schools) with 80,494 students last fall. The next largest is Regent University, with 7,492 students enrolled.

Topic: As parents drop their children off at college campuses in Virginia, are they worried about their safety?

Poll Insights: The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found that 64% of parents who had a child at college felt that college and university campuses in the commonwealth were safe or very safe. A slightly higher portion (67%) of all adults in Virginia felt the same. (The margin of error for the poll is ± 4.2 percentage points.)

A larger portion of respondents from Northern Virginia said campuses were safe or very safe (75%) than did respondents in South Central, Tidewater and Northwest. In those three regions between 61% and 66% said campuses were safe or very safe.

How Safe are College Campuses? (Regional breakdown)

Based on what you know, how safe are college and university campuses in Virginia? (Percentage saying each)

Region	Very Safe	Safe	Not Very Safe	Not at All Safe	Don't Know
All adults	14	53	27	3	
Northern Va.	17	58	18	3	
West	11	57	29	1	
Northwest	15	51	26	5	
South Central	11	51	35	3	
Tidewater	14	47	29	5	

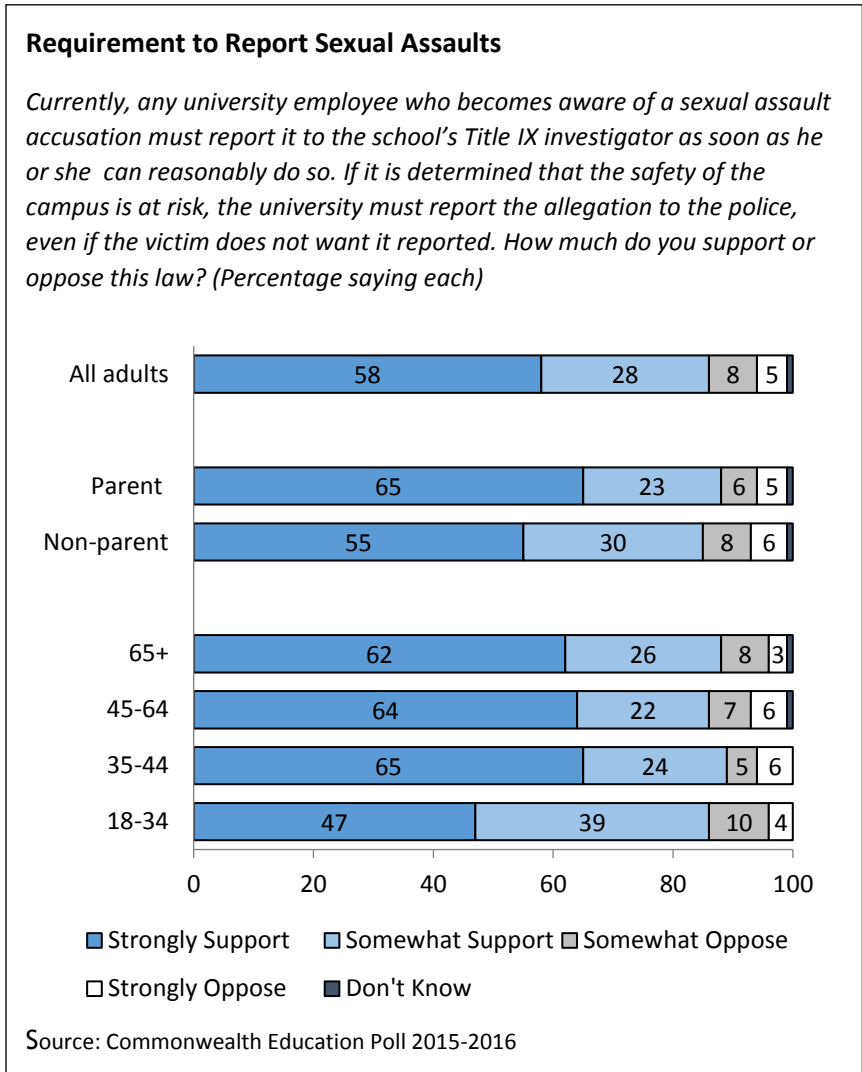Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016
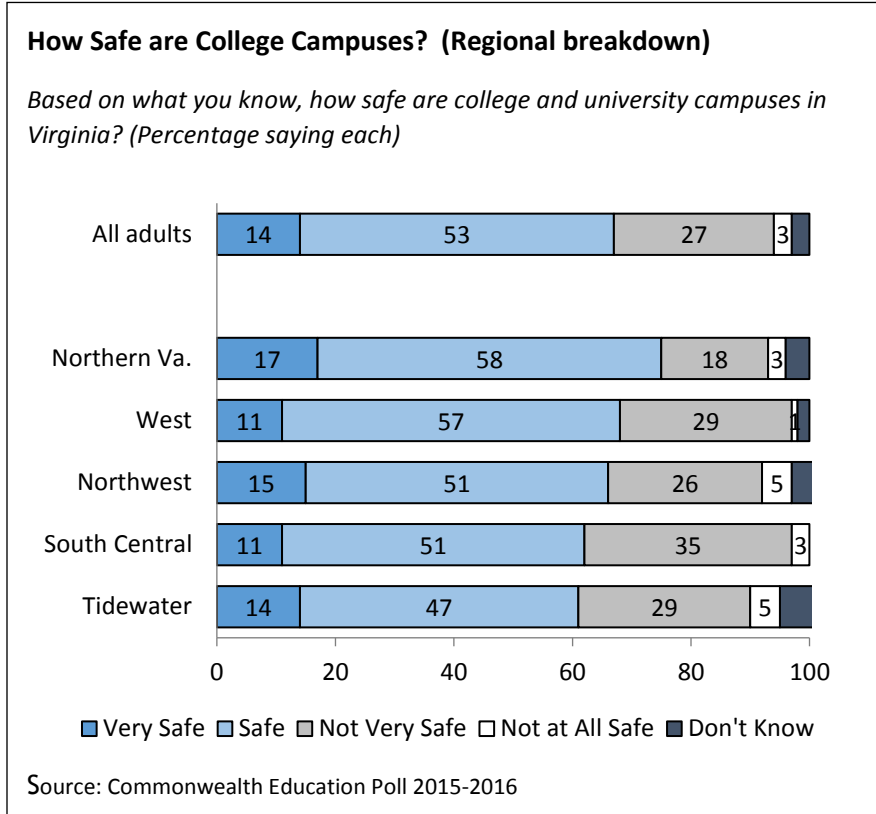
Expertise on Campus Safety at VCU's Wilder School

- **Christina Mancini, Ph.D.,** associate professor of Criminal Justice; phone: (804) 828-4223; email: cnmancini@vcu.edu. Mancini's current research focuses on policies for reducing campus crime and sexual assault.

Topic: Does the public agree with current policy on reporting campus sexual assaults?

Poll Insights: In the 2015 session of the General Assembly, policymakers invested significant time in crafting new legislation regarding the reporting of sexual assaults on college campuses. The policy adopted required any university employee who becomes aware of a sexual assault accusation to report it to the school's Title IX investigator as soon as he or she can reasonably do so and also required the university, if it was determined that the safety of the campus is at risk, to report the allegation to the police, even if the victim did not want it reported. **This year's Commonwealth Education Poll found that a strong majority (86%) supported the current policy either strongly (58%) or somewhat (28%).**

Parents of a Virginia college student were more likely to strongly support the current policy (65%) than were non-parents (55%). However, the age group most represented on college campuses—those 18 to 34—was the least likely to strongly support the current policy as only 47% provided that response. For comparison, 65% of those 35 to 44, 64% of those 45 to 64 and 62% of those 65 and older strongly supported the current policy.

Requirement to Report Sexual Assaults

Currently, any university employee who becomes aware of a sexual assault accusation must report it to the school's Title IX investigator as soon as he or she can reasonably do so. If it is determined that the safety of the campus is at risk, the university must report the allegation to the police, even if the victim does not want it reported. How much do you support or oppose this law? (Percentage saying each)

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016

Expertise on Sexual Assault at VCU's Wilder School

- **Christina Mancini, Ph.D.,** associate professor of Criminal Justice; phone: (804) 828-4223; email: cnmancini@vcu.edu. Mancini's current research focuses on policies for reducing campus crime and sexual assault.

Topic: As parents drop their children off at college campuses in Virginia, do they think their students are gaining the skills that are useful in obtaining a job?

Poll Insights: The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found that 72% of parents who had a child at college think that college and university campuses in the commonwealth were doing a good job in providing the skills useful in obtaining a job. A slightly lower portion (68%) of all adults in Virginia think the same. (The margin of error for the poll is ± 4.2 percentage points.)

How are Virginia's Colleges and Universities Doing?

Overall, do you think the colleges and universities in Virginia are doing a good job or a bad job in following areas?（*Percent saying Good Job*)
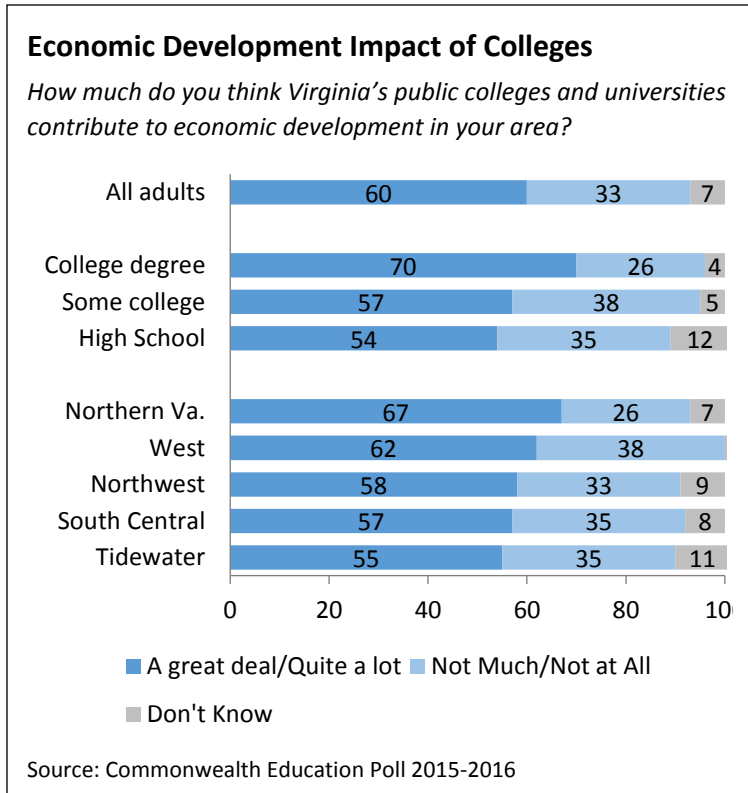
	Group	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Providing the skills useful in obtaining a job	All Adults	68	69	72	65	68
	Parents of VA College Student	72	68	68	65	71

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016

Topic: Many businesses near campuses welcome the return of college students to school. What does the general public think about the economic impact of colleges?

Poll Insights: The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found a clear majority (60%) of respondents think that colleges and universities impacted their local economy "a great deal" or "quite a lot." Only 33% said "not much" or "not at all."

Factors of education level and geographic region both showed significant differences in responses. Though a majority in all regions placed the level of impact at a great deal or quite a lot, respondents living in Northern Virginia (at 67%) were more likely to think there was a significant impact, compared to respondents from the West (62%), the Northwest (58%), South Central (57%) and the Tidewater region (55%).

Economic Development Impact of Colleges

How much do you think Virginia's public colleges and universities contribute to economic development in your area?

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016

Expertise on Educational Policy at VCU's Wilder School

- Robyn McDougle**, Ph.D**., Interim Executive Director, Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute; phone: (804) 827 3290; email: rdmcdougle@vcu.edu

Back-to-School: K-12 Education

Compiled here are answers to some baseline questions about higher education in Virginia.
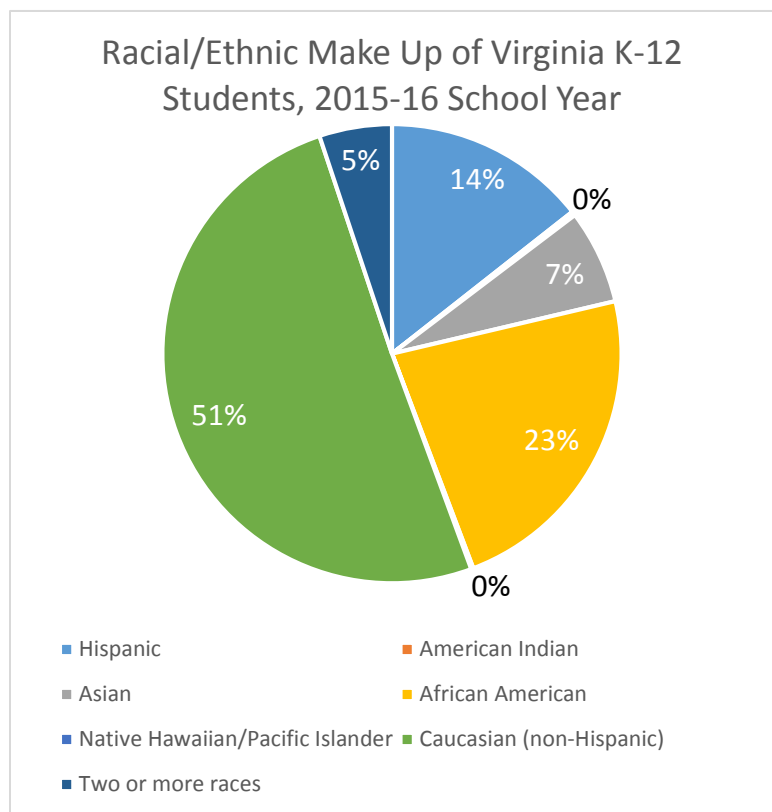
<u>How many students go to public schools in Virginia?</u>

In the 2015-16 school year, more than 1.2 million students attended public schools in Virginia (1,284,679 to be exact).

- 661,067 students were reported as male (51.5%), while 622,979 (or 48.5%) were reported as female.

- 499,473 (or 38.9%) of students in public schools were classified as economically disadvantaged.

- 129,365 (or 10.1%) of students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP).

- 160,069 (or 12.5%) of students had an identified disability.

The racial/ethnic breakdown of the student population is reported in the chart at the right.

- **Caucasian** (non-Hispanic): 648,311 or 51%

- **African American**: 294,218 or 23%

- **Hispanic**: 184,780 or 14%

- **American Indian**: 3,703 or 0.3%

- **Asian**: 85,326 or 7%

- **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:** 1,983 or 0.2%

- **Two or more races:** 65,726 or 5%

Racial/Ethnic Make Up of Virginia K-12 Students, 2015-16 School Year

Legend:
- Hispanic
- American Indian
- Asian
- African American
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Caucasian (non-Hispanic)
- Two or more races

Fall Membership 2015-16 School Year – data accessed from:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/enrollment/fall_membership/report_data.shtml
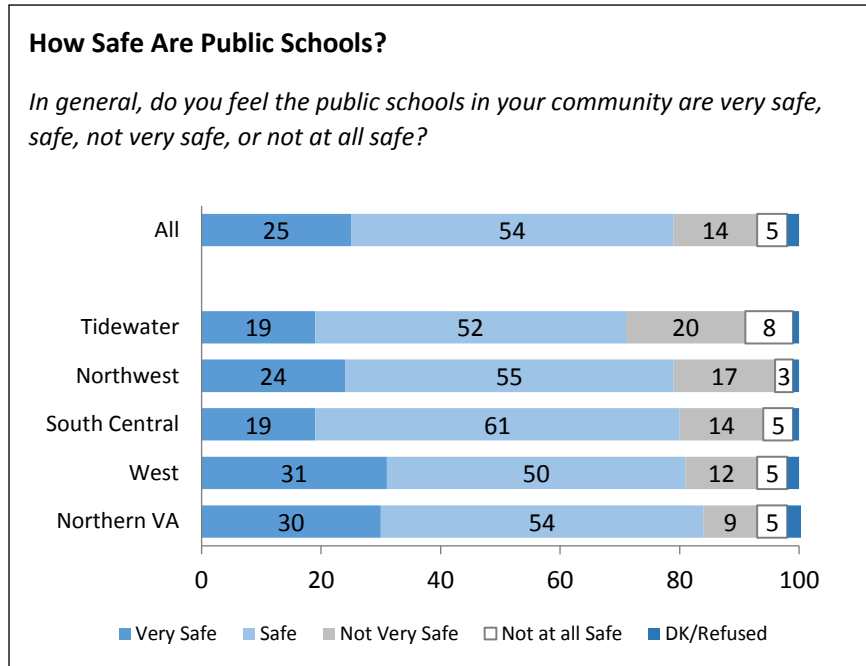
Topic: As parents drop off their children for the first day of school in Virginia, are they worried about their safety?

Poll Insights: The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found that 84% of parents who had a child in public schools felt that schools in their community were safe or very safe. A slightly lower portion (79%) of all adults in Virginia felt the same. (The margin of error for the poll is ± 4.2 percentage points.)

There were regional differences for those who felt their schools were safe or very safe. Respondents from Northern Virginia (30%) and the West region (31%) were more likely to say their schools were very safe. In contrast, respondents from Tidewater (28%) were more likely to say schools were not very safe or not at all safe.

Family income and age also played a role in the safety perceptions of respondents. Those with annual household income above $100,000 (37%) were more likely to say their schools are very safe, compared to 23% for those earning $50,000 to $100,000 and 20% for those earning less than $50,000. Likewise, those ages 35 to 44 (35%) were more likely to say their schools are very safe, compared to 18- to 34-year-olds (21%), 45- to 64-year-olds (25%) and 65 or older (26%).

How Safe Are Public Schools?

In general, do you feel the public schools in your community are very safe, safe, not very safe, or not at all safe?

Region	Very Safe	Safe	Not Very Safe	Not at all Safe
All	25	54	14	5
Tidewater	19	52	20	8
Northwest	24	55	17	3
South Central	19	61	14	5
West	31	50	12	5
Northern VA	30	54	9	5

Expertise on School Safety at VCU's Wilder School

- **Trisha Rhodes,Ph.D.,** assistant professor of Criminal Justice; phone: (804) 828-9922; email: tnrhodes@vcu.edu. Rhodes' work explores school resource officer experiences and SRO roles, identities and relationships with citizens in schools

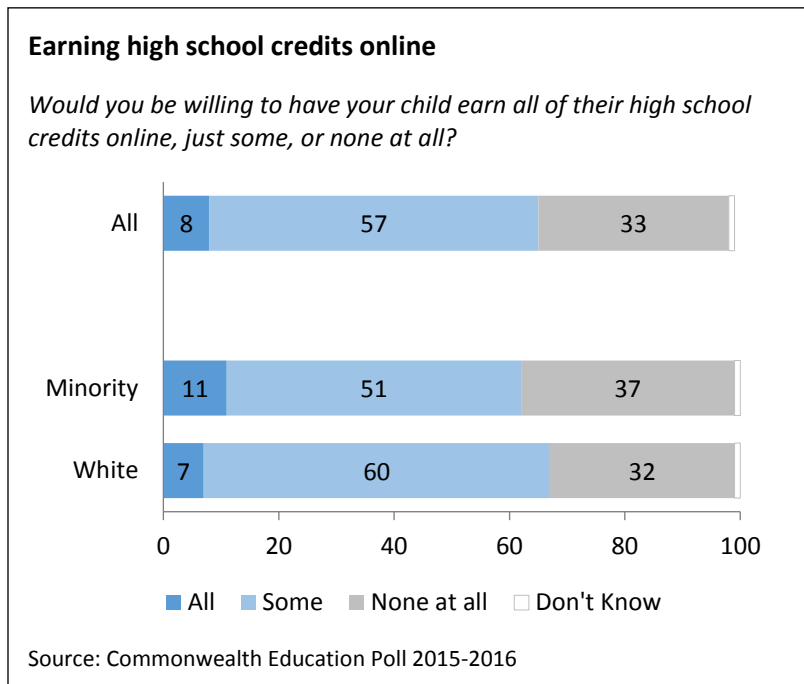## Topic: Are students today under too much pressure to perform?

Poll Insights: Going back to school can be stressful for students, as schools increasingly depend on student performance on standardized tests as a metric for the quality of education. The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found that 70% of public school parents and 67% of the general public in Virginia either strongly or somewhat agreed that SOL tests are putting too much pressure on students. (The margin of error for the poll is ± 4.2 percentage points.)

The SOL tests are putting too much pressure on students	Strongly agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Don't know/Refused (%)
General public	44	23	17	13	**4**
Parents of public school student	**47**	**23**	**16**	**12**	**1**

Topic: How do parents and the broader public feel about their children earning credits online?

Poll Insights: As students enter another year of school, technology makes it increasingly easy to take a class for credit online over the Internet. The 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll found that 56% of parents who had a child in public schools would be willing to have their child earn some of their high school credits online, while only 9% would be willing to have their child earn all credits online and 34% would prefer that none of their child's classes be online. The breakdown of opinion on this was essentially the same for the broader public (57% some, 8% all, 33% none.)

White respondents (at 60%) were more likely to be willing to have their children earn some of their high school degree online when compared to nonwhite respondents (51%).
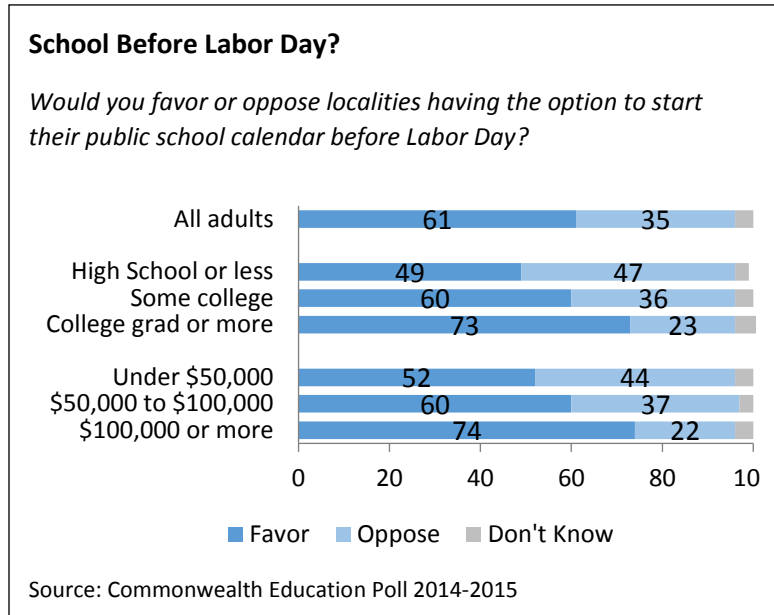

Earning high school credits online

Would you be willing to have your child earn all of their high school credits online, just some, or none at all?

	All	Some	None at all
All	8	57	33
Minority	11	51	37
White	7	60	32

Legend: ■ All ■ Some ■ None at all □ Don't Know

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2015-2016

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Topic: Would the public like local schools to have the option to start before Labor Day?
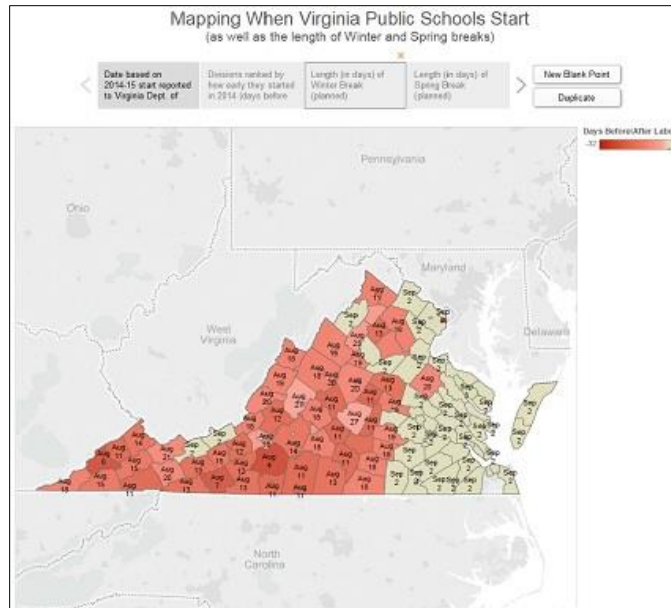
Poll Insights: The [2014-15 Commonwealth Education Poll](#) found that 61% of all adults in Virginia would favor giving localities the option of starting their school year before Labor Day. Favoring such an option was particularly strong among persons with a college degree or higher in education (73% favor) and persons from households earning $100,000 or more per year (74%). (The margin of error for the 2014-15 poll results is ± 4.1 percentage points.)

School Before Labor Day?

Would you favor or oppose localities having the option to start their public school calendar before Labor Day?

	Favor	Oppose
All adults	61	35
High School or less	49	47
Some college	60	36
College grad or more	73	23
Under $50,000	52	44
$50,000 to $100,000	60	37
$100,000 or more	74	22

■ Favor ■ Oppose ■ Don't Know

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2014-2015

Topic: When have school systems across Virginia started their school year?

While state law still mandates that schools start after Labor Day, many school systems apply for and receive a waiver of the requirement based on such factors as number of days missed in previous years for snow or other inclement weather. A mapping analysis of start dates for the 2014-15 school year shows that starting after Labor Day is largely still practiced in localities along and east of I-95.

The data mapping at right is based on information from the Virginia Department of Education on when schools start as well as the length of their winter and spring breaks in 2014-15. The maps and underlying data can be accessed by visiting CEPI's Tableau Public profile at:

https://public.tableau.com/profile/commonwealth.educational.policy.institute#!/vizhome/VirginiaPublicSchoolStartDates/Startdatesandbreaks

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Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute Release 2016 "Back-to-School Facts and Insights" Summarizing Highlights from Recent Polls

This month, as more than 1.2 million pupils prepare for their first day of a new school year and more than half a million college students enroll for the fall semester here in Virginia, many across the state are focused on "back-to-school" season.

"We hope this information will provide a convenient reference for facts and figures that may be helpful to educators, journalists and policymakers," said Robyn McDougle, Ph.D., interim executive director of the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute and associate professor at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The facts and insights summary is organized around topic questions such as, "As parents drop off their children for the first day of school in Virginia, are they worried about their safety?"

Based on findings of the 2015-16 Commonwealth Education Poll, the summary highlights that **84 percent of parents who had a child in public schools felt that schools in their community were safe or very safe**. A slightly lower portion (79%) of all adults in Virginia felt the same.

Other insights highlighted included:

- Seventy percent of public school parents and 67 percent of the public in Virginia either strongly or somewhat agreed that SOL tests are putting too much pressure on students.

- Sixty-four percent of parents who had a child at college felt that college and university campuses in the commonwealth were safe or very safe. A slightly higher portion (67%) of all adults in Virginia felt the same.

In addition to highlighting poll and research findings, the facts and insights summary identifies faculty experts from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

VCU's Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) 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/.

END