

*Feb. 16, 2016*

## ***Trump leads GOP field, with Rubio and Cruz next; Clinton leads Sanders among Virginia Democrats***

### Summary of Key Findings

- 1.** Almost two-thirds of Virginia voters have an unfavorable view of Donald Trump, but he holds a solid lead in the Republican primary at 28%.
- 2.** Hillary Clinton holds a majority among likely Democratic primary voters, leading Bernie Sanders, 52% to 40%.
- 3.** Marco Rubio has the highest favorable rating among all candidates (44%), and seems within range of Trump in the primary at 22%.
- 4.** Ted Cruz may be in striking distance at 19%, but the other Republican candidates drop off sharply. With 39% undecided about him, John Kasich has upside potential but not much time to grow from 7%.
- 5.** The candidate label “Democratic-Socialist” drives Republicans away (90%) but most Democrats (68%) and Independents (57%) are unconcerned by it.

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## Analysis

Two weeks before votes are cast on Super Tuesday, Donald Trump leads the field of contenders in the Virginia Republican primary, while Hillary Clinton holds a solid lead over Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary, according to a poll of Virginia voters by the Wason Center for Public Policy. None of the candidates in either party has a majority favorable rating from voters.

More broadly, voters surveyed say they are more interested in supporting a candidate who agrees with them on the issues than supporting one who can win. A majority of all voters is put off by the label Democratic-Socialist, but a majority of likely Democratic voters and a majority of Independents are unconcerned by the label. And most voters say they are less likely to vote for a candidate who has called for a ban on non-citizen Muslims entering the United States.

“Almost all the voters have an opinion about Donald Trump, and twice as many see him in an unfavorable light as view him favorably,” said Dr. Quentin Kidd, director of the Wason Center. “Even so, among likely Republican voters, he still wins the horse race.”

“On the other side, Hillary Clinton has a majority among likely Democratic primary voters, even though Bernie Sanders has a higher favorability rating overall,” said Kidd.

**Virginia voters engaged and intend to vote.** Two weeks before the first 2016 votes in the state – the March 1 Super Tuesday primary – a strong majority of registered voters are thinking about the elections and say they intend to vote. Just under two-thirds (63%) say they’ve given quite a lot of thought to the upcoming primary elections, and 86% have given at least some thought.

Additionally, 76% of voters say they are very likely to vote in the upcoming presidential primaries, while 91% say they are at least somewhat likely to vote in them.

The Republican primary appears to be attracting more potential voters than the Democratic primary: 50% say they plan to vote in the Republican primary, while 39% say they plan to vote in the Democratic primary. With two weeks to go, 2% have yet to decide and 9% are either not planning to vote or not willing to say.

THOUGHT: As you know, on March 1 Virginia will hold primary elections for president. How much thought have you given to these upcoming presidential primary elections...	Quite a lot	63
	Some	23
	Only a little	11
	None (vol)	3
	Dk/ref (vol)	-

VOTEINT: How likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming primary election?	Very likely	76
	Somewhat likely	15
	Not too likely	5
	Not likely at all	4
	Dk/ref (vol)	-

Q5: On Election Day will you be voting in the Republican primary or in the Democratic primary [includes Q5a follow-up question to undecided].	Republican	50
	Democratic	39
	Have not decided	2
	Not planning to vote	5
	Dk/ref (vol)	4

**Rubio has the highest favorable rank; Trump the highest unfavorable.** As the field narrows leading up to March 1, Florida Senator Marco Rubio emerges with the highest approval rating among all Virginia voters at 44%, with 38% saying they have an unfavorable view. Rubio is the only candidate whose favorable rating among all voters is higher than his unfavorable rating. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders follows Rubio, with a 39% favorable rating and an unfavorable rating of 50%. Retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson has a 38% favorable rating and an unfavorable rating of 45%.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has a 33% favorability rating and a 59% unfavorable rating, followed by Texas Senator Ted Cruz with a 32% favorable and 52% unfavorable rating. The candidate leading the Republican field in national polls, Donald Trump, has a 30% favorable rating and a 64% unfavorable rating in Virginia – the highest unfavorable rating of all the candidates of either party. Ohio Governor John Kasich and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush trail the field with 28% and 25% favorability, respectively. Bush has a 58% unfavorable rating. Kasich is the least known of the remaining Republican field, with 39% saying they don’t know enough to rate him.

“Governor Kasich has a lot of undecided voters, but not much time left to make an impression on them,” Kidd said.

Q3. I’m going to read the names of some people running for president in 2016. For each one, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable view of them, or if you don’t know enough about them to have an opinion either way. <b>[NAMES ROTATED] Listed in order, highest favorable to lowest favorable</b>				
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Don’t know	Refused (vol)
Marco Rubio	44	38	17	1
Bernie Sanders	39	50	10	1
Ben Carson	38	45	17	1
Hillary Clinton	33	59	7	1
Ted Cruz	32	52	16	1
Donald Trump	30	64	5	1
John Kasich	28	32	39	1
Jeb Bush	25	58	16	1

**Trump leads Republicans, with Rubio close behind.** The Republican field is divided into two groups: contenders and everyone else. Donald Trump leads the group of contenders among likely Republican primary voters with 28%, followed by Marco Rubio at 22% and Ted Cruz at 19%. After those top three there is a big dropoff with Ben Carson and John Kasich each picking up 7% and Jeb Bush trailing the field at 4%. Chris Christie, Carly Fiorina, and Jim Gilmore dropped out of the race while this survey was in the field.

“While Trump is leading in Virginia, Rubio and Cruz are within striking distance,” said Kidd. “Carson, Kasich, and Bush are very long shots at this point, two weeks out.”

<b>LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS; n=368 (MoE = +/- 5.6%)</b>	
Q6: Let’s say the 2016 Republican presidential primary in Virginia were being held today. I’m going to read a list of names of people running in the Republican primary and I’d like you to tell me for whom you would vote...the candidates are: <b>[ROTATE NAMES]</b>	
Donald Trump	28
Marco Rubio	22
Ted Cruz	19
Ben Carson	7
John Kasich	7
Jeb Bush	4
Chris Christie*	4
Carly Fiorina*	2
Jim Gilmore*	<1
Someone else (vol)	1
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	6
* Candidate dropped out of race while survey was in the field	

**Clinton leads Sanders by 12% among Virginia Democratic primary voters.** Hillary Clinton has a simple majority among likely Democratic primary voters, at 52%, with Bernie Sanders at 40%. While her Virginia numbers have waxed and waned, Clinton has never trailed another Democrat in Wason Center polling of the 2016 Democratic primary. She led the field with 65% of the vote in January 2015, but her share dropped to a 40% plurality in October 2015, near the height of speculation about whether Vice President Joe Biden was set to enter the race. Since then, she has moved into a 12% lead against her only remaining opponent, Sanders.

“Virginia Democrats continue to be hesitant on Clinton,” said Kidd. “However, she maintains a solid lead over Sanders in the primary, with only a small percentage of undecided voters left.”

<b>LIKELY DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS; n=286 (MoE = +/- 7.3%)</b>	
Q7: Let’s say the 2016 Democratic presidential primary in Virginia were being held today. I’m going to read a list of names of people running in the Democratic primary and I’d like you to tell me for whom you would vote...the candidates are: <b>[ROTATE NAMES]</b>	
Hillary Clinton	52
Bernie Sanders	40
Someone else (vol)	<1
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	8

**Winnability, Democratic-Socialists, banning Muslims.** Voters say they are more interested in candidates who agree with them on issues, rather than winning. A very sharp partisan divide shows in reactions to the label “Democratic-Socialist” and to the call for a ban on non-citizen Muslims from entering the country.

Virginia voters – Democrats, Republicans, and Independents – say they are more interested in issues than in “winnability.” Just over two-thirds (68%) say it is more important that the candidate agree with them on the issues, while only 27% say it is more important for the candidate to have a higher likelihood of winning.

A slight majority (52%) of all Virginia voters say they are less likely to vote for a candidate who is a Democratic-Socialist, but the label is far more off-putting to Republicans than to Democrats or Independents. Fully 90% of Republicans say they are less likely to support a Democratic-Socialist, while only 15% of Democrats say that and 67% of Democrats say it would make no difference. Independent voters are mostly indifferent to the label, with 58% saying it would make no difference and 35% saying they are less likely to support a candidate under that label. Among younger voters, 48% say it would make no difference, while a majority of older voters say they are less likely to vote for a candidate who is a Democratic-Socialist.

A similar slim majority (52%) of Virginia voters say they are less likely to vote for a candidate who has called for a ban on non-citizen Muslims entering the country, but a partisan divide is also clear on this question. Just over a third (38%) of Republican voters say they are more likely to vote for such a candidate, while a third (36%) say it would make no difference. Nearly a quarter of Republican voters (24%) say they are less likely to vote for such a candidate. A very strong majority of Democrats (83%) say they are less likely to vote for such a candidate, while 13% say it would make no difference. Half (50%) of Independents say they are less likely to vote for such a candidate, while 26% say it would make no difference. Men and women are similarly minded, with a slight majority (51% and 52%) saying they are less likely to vote for such a candidate. Younger voters are far less likely to vote for such a candidate (73%), while the opinion of older voters is more divided.

Q8: In determining your vote in the presidential primary what would you say is more important, that the candidate agrees with you on the issues or that the candidate has a high likelihood of being able to win in the general election?				
	<b>All</b>	Rep	Dem	Ind
Agrees on issues	<b>68</b>	65	69	68
Likely to win	<b>27</b>	31	26	26
Dk/ref (vol)	<b>6</b>	5	5	6

**Q9: If you knew that one of the candidates for president was a Democratic-Socialist, would that make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or would it not make any difference to your vote?**

	<b>All</b>	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<
More	<b>5</b>	1	12	4	7	4	8	4
Less	<b>52</b>	90	15	35	52	51	42	54
No difference	<b>40</b>	9	67	58	39	42	48	39
Undecided (vol)	<b>3</b>		6	3	2	3	2	3

**Q10: If you knew that one of the candidates for president proposed a plan that would bar all non-citizen Muslims from entering the country, would that make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or would it not make any difference to your vote?**

	<b>All</b>	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<
More	<b>19</b>	38	1	19	20	18	11	21
Less	<b>52</b>	24	83	50	51	52	73	47
No difference	<b>26</b>	36	13	26	28	24	16	29
Undecided (vol)	<b>3</b>	2	3	5	1	5		3

**Q4 Held for later release**

## Demographic Toplines

EDUC:		PARTYID:	
High school or less	14	Republican	27
Some college	20	Independent lean Republican	17
Vocational or technical training	2	Independent	15
College graduate	41	Independent lean Democrat	14
Graduate study or more	22	Democrat	23
Dk/ref (vol)	1	No preference/other party (vol)	3
		Dk/ref (vol)	1
HISPANIC:		TEAPARTY:	
Yes	3	Support	19
No	97	Oppose	42
		No view either way	37
RACE:		Dk/ref (vol)	2
Black or African American	19	SEX:	
White	72	Male	49
Other	9	Female	51
RELIG:		INCOME:	
Protestant	30	Under \$25,000	5
Christian (non-specific) (vol)	19	\$25-\$49,999	11
Catholic	17	\$50-\$74,999	20
Jewish	2	\$75-\$99,999	17
Other	16	\$100,000-\$149,999	19
None	14	Over \$150,000	19
Dk/ref (vol)	2	DK/ref (vol)	10
EVANGELICAL OR BORN AGAIN?		AGE:	
Yes	33	18-24	9
No	96	25-34	11
Dk/ref (vol)	4	35-44	14
ATTEND SERVICES		45-54	23
Weekly	34	55 & older	43
Sometimes	18	REGION:	
Rarely	28	Northern Virginia	33
Never	18	Richmond/Central	21
Dk/ref (vol)	2	Hampton Roads	24
IDEOL:		South/Southwest	22
Strong liberal	6		
Liberal	9		
Moderate, leaning liberal	21		
Moderate, leaning conservative	20		
Conservative	23		
Strong Conservative	12		
Dk/ref (vol)	8		

**How the survey was conducted:**

The results of this poll are based on 735 interviews of registered Virginia voters, including 408 on landline and 327 on cell phone, conducted Feb. 3 - 14, 2016. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/- 4.3% at the 95% level of confidence. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.4 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample, and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. Sub samples have a higher margin of error. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 25%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on sex, age, race and region of residence to reflect as closely as possible the demographic composition of registered voters in Virginia. The survey was designed by Dr. Quentin Kidd of the Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University.