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Clinton has significant lead among likely Virginia voters; 53% say Trump is racist, but 54% wouldn't trust Clinton

Summary of Key Findings

1. Clinton leads Trump, 48-38 percent, in head-to-head ballot test.
2. Among all 5 candidates on Virginia ballot, Clinton leads Trump, 39-33 percent, with Libertarian Gary Johnson taking 15 percent of the vote.
3. Clinton's lead is built upon strong support from women and college-educated voters in Northern Virginia.
4. A majority of voters say they think Trump is racist; a majority say Clinton cannot be trusted with classified information.
5. Asked which candidate would be a better Commander-in-Chief, voters prefer Clinton, 50-40 percent, but among military voters Trump leads, 48-39 percent

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Analysis

As the candidates are poised to face each other in the first presidential debate, a new Wason Center survey of likely Virginia voters shows Democrat Hillary Clinton leading Republican Donald Trump by 10 points, 48-38 percent, in a two-way race. The survey was conducted Sept. 15-23 among 1,003 likely Virginia voters, with a margin of error of +/- 3.9% at the 95% level of confidence.

Clinton's lead is built on a strong gender gap: Women voters prefer her by a 28-point margin, 57-29 percent, while men prefer Trump by a 12-point margin, 49-37 percent. Clinton also has stronger support among Democrats (93 percent) than Trump does among Republicans (87 percent). Clinton also benefits from more crossovers, with 5 percent of Republicans saying they will vote for her, while 1 percent of Democrats favor Trump. However, Trump has nearly closed the "loyalty gap" shown in a Wason Center survey during the divisive primary season, when 29 percent of Virginia Republican primary voters said they would defect if he became their party's nominee.

Clinton leads among college-educated white voters, 45-40 percent, a group the Republican Party nominee has carried in every presidential election since 1956. However, Trump has a commanding lead among non-college educated white voters, 64-24 percent.

In a state with a large military presence, Trump leads Clinton among voters surveyed in military households, 46-41 percent, but Clinton leads among voters surveyed in non-military households, 50-36 percent.

Clinton leads in all regions of the state except Southwest/Southside, where she trails Trump, 52-36 percent. She leads in far more populous Northern Virginia, 52-30.

In a full ballot test, Clinton's lead over Trump drops to 39-33 percent, with Libertarian Gary Johnson picking up 15 percent of the vote. Green candidate Jill Stein and Independent candidate Evan McMullin each pick up 3 percent.

Voters 18-34 years old prefer Clinton over Trump in a two-way choice by a wide margin, 52-30 percent. But when the full ballot is considered, many of those Millennial voters flock to the Libertarian. Clinton leads Johnson among Millennials, 34-27 percent, with Trump placing third at 23 percent.

"Clinton's lead over Trump in Virginia is very strong," said Dr. Quentin Kidd, Director of the Wason Center. "It is not only built upon her own partisan identifiers, but also on a very strong showing from vote-rich Northern Virginia, a large gender gap, and stronger support than Democrats usually get from college-educated white voters and white women."

Virginia voters have concerns about two issues that have bedeviled Trump and Clinton since the start of the campaign. A majority of voters (53%) say they think Trump is

racist. This view is most strongly expressed by women (65%), Millennials (71%), and African Americans (84%).

“To find that more than half of all likely voters surveyed think that Donald Trump is a racist is astounding,” said Dr. Rachel Bitecofer, Assistant Director of the Wason Center. “We were extremely cautious about the placement and wording of this question in the survey. Other studies have touched on whether his policy positions are racist or bigoted, but this statement asked voters if they would assign the attribute to the candidate himself. That so many are willing to do so tells you everything you need to know about why a diverse state like Virginia is beginning to fall out of reach of the Trump campaign.”

As for the second issue, a majority of voters say they think Hillary Clinton cannot be trusted with classified information. This view is strongly held by military voters (64%), white men (67%), white voters without a college education (74%), Millennials (60%), and Independents (68%).

The survey also shows a significant “enthusiasm gap.” Only 46% of Virginia voters say they are very or somewhat excited about the coming presidential election. One potential concern for Clinton is the lower-than-average enthusiasm among women (41%), a surprising finding given that Clinton is the first female major-party nominee and would be the first woman president. Millennial voters are even less enthusiastic about this election, with only 32% indicating they were either very or somewhat enthusiastic. This mirrors findings from other recent surveys and could indicate problems for the Clinton campaign, which hopes to harness the voting power of the Obama Coalition. Republicans have a slight edge over Democrats in terms of enthusiasm.

In military-heavy Virginia, more voters think Clinton would make a better Commander-in-Chief than Trump, 50-40 percent. Women think Clinton would be a better Commander-in-Chief than Trump by 2-1, 60-30 percent. However, among military voters Trump leads in the Commander-in-Chief test, 48-39 percent.

Q3: If the election for president were held TODAY and the candidates were **RANDOMIZE:** “Hillary Clinton the Democrat” or “Donald Trump the Republican”], for whom would you vote?

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	Nova	Rich	HR	S'west
Clinton	48	5	93	37	37	57	52	46	52	54	47	36
Trump	38	87	1	40	49	29	30	41	30	36	40	52
Undecided	7	4	2	12	7	6	7	6	11	5	4	3
Neither	6	4	3	8	6	6	7	5	5	3	5	8
Dk/Ref	2			3	2	2	3	2	2	1	4	1

	White college degree		White		Mil	Non-mil	White	Black
	Yes	No	Male	Female				
Clinton	45	24	31	45	41	50	38	85
Trump	40	64	56	40	46	36	48	6
Undecided	9	7	7	9	7	6	8	
Neither	6	5	5	6	5	6	5	4
Dk/Ref	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	5

Q4: If the election for president were held TODAY and the candidates were [RANDOMIZE: “Hillary Clinton the Democrat”, “Donald Trump the Republican”, “Gary Johnson the Libertarian”, “Jill Stein the Green”, or “Evan McMullin the Independent”], for whom would you vote?

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	Nova	Rich	HR	S'west
Clinton	39	3	87	21	32	46	34	41	45	42	38	29
Trump	33	78	1	32	42	26	23	37	27	31	31	47
Johnson	15	9	4	31	15	15	27	10	16	12	17	13
Stein	3	2	2	4	4	2	4	3	3	4	3	3
McMullin	3	3		5	2	3	4	2	3	2	2	4
Undecided	1	1		1	2			1	1	2		
Neither	5	4	5	6	4	7	7	5	5	6	8	3
Dk/Ref	1		1			2		1	1	1	1	1

	White college degree		White		Mil	Non-mil	White	Black
	Yes	No	Male	Female				
Clinton	37	18	27	34	32	42	30	74
Trump	33	57	48	34	39	31	41	4
Johnson	17	17	15	20	19	13	17	4
Stein	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	1
McMullin	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	4
Undecided	1		1		1	1	1	1
Neither	5	2	3	5	4	6	4	11
Dk/Ref	1	1		2	1	1	1	1

Q17: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Hillary Clinton cannot be trusted with classified information.

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	Nova	Rich	HR	S'west
Agree	54	91	13	68	60	50	60	53	50	57	52	64
Disagree	43	7	85	31	38	47	36	45	49	41	44	35
Not sure	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	3	1
Dk/ref	1				1	1	1	1		1	1	

	White college degree		White		Mil	Non-mil	White	Black
	Yes	No	Male	Female				
Agree	56	74	67	59	64	50	63	25
Disagree	41	23	30	39	33	47	35	73
Not sure	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2
Dk/ref	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	

Q18: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Donald Trump is racist.

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	Nova	Rich	HR	S'west
Agree	53	14	86	50	38	65	71	46	58	57	48	46
Disagree	44	83	11	46	59	30	27	50	38	41	48	51
Not sure	3	2	3	3	1	4	2	3	3	2	4	2
Dk/ref		1		1	1	1		1	1			1

	White college degree		White		Mil	Non-mil	White	Black
	Yes	No	Male	Female				
Agree	49	34	32	55	47	55	44	84
Disagree	47	62	65	40	49	42	52	13
Not sure	3	3	2	5	4	2	3	3
Dk/ref	1		1	1		1	1	

ELECENTH: As you know, the presidential election is coming up. How excited are you about the upcoming presidential election, would you say...

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	Nova	Rich	HR	S'west
Very	21	28	22	15	24	19	11	25	19	23	23	22
Somewhat	25	28	31	18	29	22	21	27	29	22	21	28
Not too	26	21	27	31	24	29	35	23	26	27	30	24
Not at all	26	23	19	35	22	30	34	24	27	25	25	26
Dk/Ref	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1

	White college degree		White		Mil	Non-mil	White	Black
	Yes	No	Male	Female				
Very	22	21	23	21	21	21	22	17
Somewhat	27	22	30	21	25	26	25	27
Not too	23	31	25	26	25	27	25	32
Not at all	27	25	21	32	29	25	27	23
Dk/Ref	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Q13: The President of the United States serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In this capacity they have full operational command of our nation's military including our Special Forces such as the Navy Seals. Which candidate [RANDOMIZE: "Donald Trump" or "Hillary Clinton"] do you think will make the better Commander in Chief?

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind	Male	Female	18-34	35-<	White	Black	Mil	Non-mil
Clinton	50	8	97	38	40	60	53	49	40	89	39	56
Trump	40	86	2	40	50	30	31	43	48	7	48	36
Neither	9	5		21	9	10	17	6	11	4	13	8
Dk/ref	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	1

Demographic Toplines

EDUC:		
High school or less		15
Some college		19
Vocational or technical training		3
College graduate		36
Graduate study or more		27

HISPANIC:		
Yes	5	
No	95	

RACE:		
White		70
Black or African American		20
Other		10

AGE: (Recorded as exact year of birth)		
18-24	11	
25-34	16	
35-44	16	
45-54	21	
55 & older	36	

MILITARY HOUSEHOLD:		
Yes	33	
No	66	

PARTYID:		
Republican	28	
Democrat	34	
Independent	34	
No preference (vol)	2	
Other party (vol)	1	
Dk/ref (vol)	1	

[IF OTHER THAN REP OR DEM ABOVE]

PARTLEAN:		
Republican	43	
Democratic	37	
Independent	17	
Dk/ref (vol)	3	

RELIG:		
Protestant		28
Christian (non-specific) (vol)		17
Catholic		17
Jewish		1
Other		14
None		21
Dk/ref (vol)		3

IDEOL:		
Strong liberal		7
Liberal		12
Moderate, leaning liberal		26
Moderate, leaning conservative		21
Conservative		17
Strong Conservative		10
Dk/ref (vol)		7

REGION:		
Northern Virginia		33
Richmond/Central		21
Hampton Roads		24
South/Southwest		22

INCOME:		
Under \$25,000		8
\$25-\$49,999		11
\$50-\$74,999		19
\$75-\$99,999		15
\$100,000-\$149,999		18
Over \$150,000		22
Dk/ref (vol)		7

SEX: [INTERVIEWER CODE]

Male	47
Female	53

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 1,003 interviews of likely Virginia voters, including 527 on landline and 476 on cell phone, conducted Sept 15-23, 2016. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/- 3.9 % at the 95% level of confidence. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.6 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 19%. 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 likely 2016 voters in Virginia.