

Exploring Virginia Voters' Views toward Women's Equality and Economic Security

July 7, 2015 - The National Institute for Reproductive Health commissioned PerryUndem Research/Communication to explore Virginia voters' views related to the connections among reproductive decisions, including abortion rights, women's equality, and financial stability. The poll found that most Virginia voters feel there is more work to be done to achieve gender equality. Close to half of voters feel women have less financial security than men. Majorities favor a number of proposals related to reproductive health and rights, equality, and financial stability that are being discussed as part of the Virginia Women's Equality Agenda.

The survey was conducted among n = 801 registered voters statewide from June 10 through 15, 2015. The survey was administered by telephone including landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points.

Key findings include:

- Three in four registered voters in Virginia (75 percent) say there is still work to be done to achieve full equality for women.
- Large majorities of Virginia voters support economic proposals being discussed as part of the Women's Equality Agenda, such as having stronger laws to ensure equal pay for equal work (88 percent), making sure all workers get a minimum number of paid sick days (85 percent), and increasing the minimum wage (74 percent).
- Many voters also connect reproductive decisions and abortion access to financial stability for women:

- 64 percent say a woman’s ability to control whether and when she has children is related to her financial stability;
 - 68 percent say laws that make it harder to access abortion can have a negative impact on a woman’s financial stability.
- Two thirds of Virginia voters (67 percent) support new legislation to protect a woman’s right to access safe and legal abortion care.
- Six in ten voters (59 percent) are unaware of a trend to curtail access to abortion. When informed of recent laws that passed, 63 percent say they oppose them.
- Data suggest seven in ten voters (70 percent) may be more likely to vote for an elected official who supports a number of laws that improve women’s financial security and equality.
- Data suggest that six in ten voters (62 percent) may be less likely to vote for an elected official who favors more restrictions on abortion.

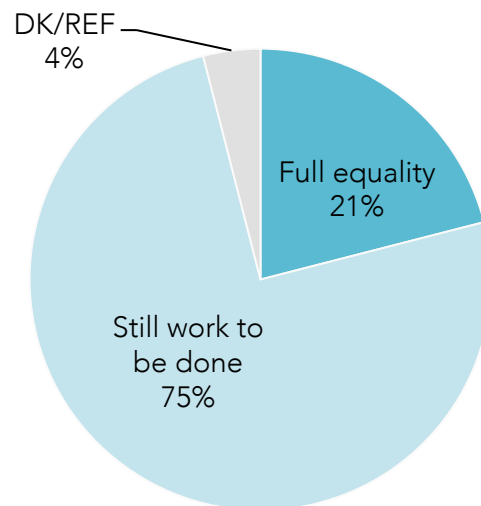
Virginia is the third state in which the National Institute for Reproductive Health has commissioned a survey to explore voters’ support for broad-based agendas that promote women’s equality, financial security, and access to reproductive health care, including abortion. The Virginia findings – that there is widespread support for these proposals as well as recognition by voters of the connections between financial stability and equality and access to reproductive health care, including abortion – track with the results from New York and Pennsylvania (which are available at <http://nirhealth.org/documents/researchmemoexploringlinks.pdf>).

Following are the detailed findings from Virginia.

Detailed Findings

Voters see more work to be done to achieve gender equality. Three in four registered voters in Virginia say there is still more work to be done when it comes to equality for women in work, life, and politics. (See Figure 1.)

Fig. 1: Majority Believe More Work Needs to be Done for Gender Equality



Q Do you think there is full equality for women in work, life, and politics or is there still work to be done?

Majorities of voters across all demographic groups and geographic regions say more work needs to be done on equality. Women are more likely than men to see more work needing to be done (84 percent vs. 66 percent), and Democrats are more likely to feel this way than Republicans (91 percent vs. 62 percent). (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Reactions to Status of Gender Equality

	% Full Equality Now	% More Work To Be Done
Total	21%	75%
Men	29%	66%
Women	14%	84%
White	23%	73%
African American	10%	89%
18 to 29 year olds	26%	70%
30 to 39 year olds	19%	77%
40 to 49 year olds ¹	25%	73%
50-64 year olds	20%	77%
65+ year olds	17%	79%
High school or less	20%	72%
Some college	20%	77%
College educated	20%	77%
Democrats	8%	91%
Independents	20%	74%
Republicans	34%	62%
Hampton Roads	17%	81%
Northern VA	21%	78%
Richmond area	24%	74%
South	23%	67%

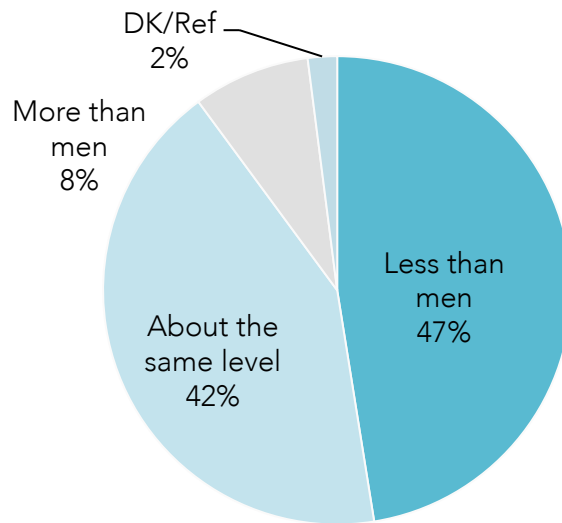
¹ Note: 40-49 year olds throughout the report have a small n size, n=91

Close to half of respondents say women have less financial stability than men. Respondents were given the following definition of “financial stability:”

I want to ask you about financial stability. By financial stability, I mean having a stable income and enough resources to have a decent standard of living now and in the future.

Nearly half (47 percent) of respondents say, overall, women have less financial stability than men; 42 percent say they have the same level of financial stability as men. Eight percent say women have more financial stability than men. (See Figure 2.)

Fig. 2: Nearly 1 in 2 Say Women Have Less Financial Stability than Men



Q I want to ask you about financial stability. By financial stability, I mean having a stable income and enough resources to have a decent standard of living now and in the future. Overall, do you think women have less financial stability than men, about the same level of financial stability, or more financial stability than men?

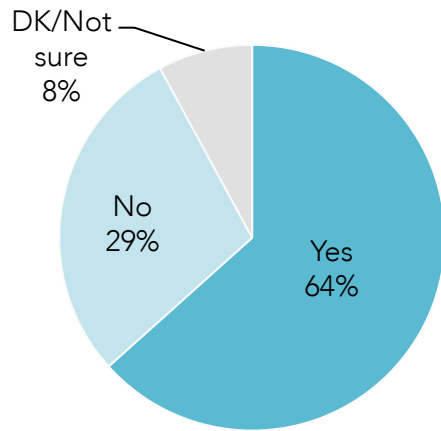
Women and Democrats are much more likely to say that women have less financial stability than men. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Financial Stability of Women Compared to Men

	% Less than men	% More than men	% About the same
Total	47%	8%	42%
Men	33%	8%	55%
Women	60%	7%	32%
White	49%	6%	42%
African American	46%	13%	40%
18 to 29 year olds	47%	9%	43%
30 to 39 year olds	37%	8%	51%
40 to 49 year olds	42%	10%	45%
50-64 year olds	54%	5%	40%
65+ year olds	52%	7%	36%
High school or less	47%	7%	43%
Some college	49%	9%	39%
College educated	48%	6%	44%
Democrats	62%	6%	31%
Independents	45%	10%	40%
Republicans	32%	6%	61%
Hampton Roads	51%	5%	42%
Northern VA	50%	7%	40%
Richmond area	40%	7%	52%
South	45%	15%	40%

A majority of voters see a link between a woman’s financial stability and her ability to control when and whether she has children. Almost two thirds of respondents (64 percent) say a woman’s ability to control whether and when she has children is related to her financial stability. (See Figure 3.)

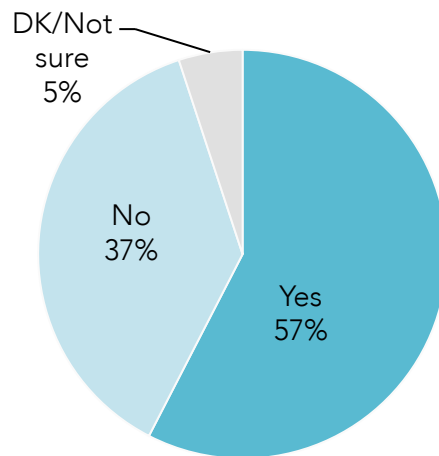
Fig. 3: Control over Reproductive Decisions Related to Financial Stability



Q Do you think a woman’s ability to control *whether or when* she has children is related to her financial stability? N=400

Slightly more than half (57 percent) say a woman's ability to control whether and when she has children is related to equality for women. (See Figure 4.)

Fig. 4: Control over Reproductive Decisions Related to Equality



Q Do you think a woman's ability to control whether or when she has children is related to equality for women? N=401

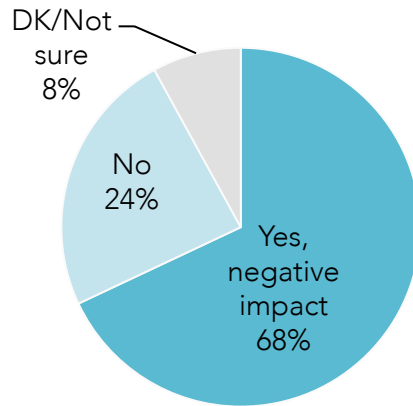
A majority of Republicans say that a woman’s control over her reproductive decisions can affect her financial stability (60 percent), but most Republicans do not see a link to women’s equality (38 percent see a link). Majorities of independents and Democrats see a link to both issues. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: A Woman’s Ability to Control Reproductive Decisions Related to Financial Stability, Equality

	% Yes, Financial Stability	% No, Financial Stability	% Yes, Equality	% No, Equality
Total	64%	29%	57%	37%
Men	61%	32%	54%	39%
Women	65%	26%	60%	36%
High school or less	60%	31%	53%	40%
Some college	57%	33%	62%	32%
College educated	69%	25%	56%	39%
Democrats	69%	22%	76%	18%
Independents	63%	30%	56%	37%
Republicans	60%	34%	38%	58%

A majority of voters see a link between abortion restrictions and financial stability for women. Two thirds of respondents (68 percent) say laws that make it harder to access abortion can have a negative impact on a woman’s financial stability. (See Figure 5.)

Fig. 5: Abortion Restrictions Negatively Impact Financial Stability



Q Do you think laws that make it harder to access abortion can have a negative impact on a woman’s financial stability? N=400

Higher-educated voters and Democrats are particularly likely to see links between restrictions and financial stability for women. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Impact of Restrictions on Financial Stability

	% Yes - negative impact	% No
Total	68%	24%
Men	65%	29%
Women	70%	21%
High school or less	55%	35%
Some college	65%	24%
College educated	74%	20%
Democrats	81%	16%
Independents	59%	21%
Republicans	57%	36%

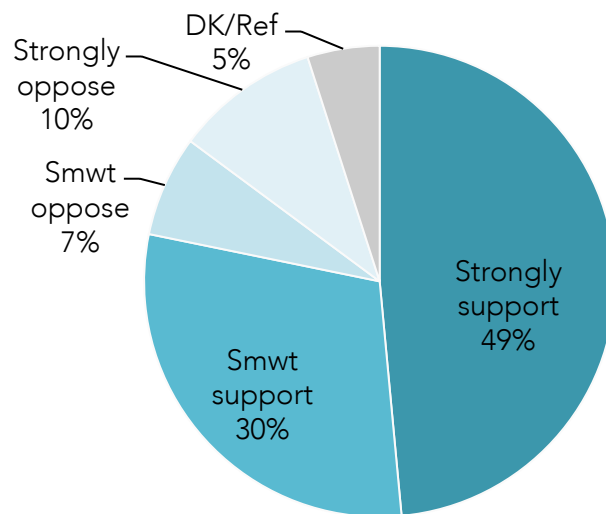
Voters support a number of key proposals being discussed as part of the Virginia Women’s Equality Agenda. The survey gauged reactions to a number of ideas being considered as part of the Women’s Equality Agenda. A majority of voters express support for each of these ideas, with half or more expressing strong support. (See Table 5.)

Table 5: Reactions to Proposals in the Women’s Equality Agenda

	Total Supp	Strngly Supp	Smwt Supp	Smwt Opp	Strngly Opp	DK/ REF
Using federal funds to expand Medicaid so that very low-income women and men in Virginia can get health insurance	72	51	22	9	14	4
Protecting women’s access to birth control, even if her boss disagrees	82	69	12	4	9	5
Making sure all workers in the state get a minimum number of paid sick days	85	64	21	6	7	2
Having stronger laws to ensure equal pay for equal work	88	74	14	4	6	2
Increasing the minimum wage, which affects more women than men	74	55	20	9	14	2
Having non-partisan redistricting so that the election maps are not slanted by either political party	81	54	26	4	6	10
Protecting a woman’s right to access safe and legal abortion care	67	51	16	6	22	5

A majority of voters support the Virginia Women's Equality Agenda, based on the individual proposals they heard. Seventy-nine percent support a package of laws they heard, with 49 percent expressing strong support. Seventeen percent of voters oppose the package of proposals. (See Figure 6.)

Fig. 6: Strong Support for the Women's Equality Agenda



Q Based on the ideas you just heard, would you support or oppose this package of laws, also called the Women's Equality Agenda?

Large majorities across all demographic and geographic segments support the ideas they heard in the Women’s Equality Agenda. Support is strongest among women, African-American voters, and Democrats. Two thirds of Republicans (65 percent) also support what they heard in the Women’s Equality Agenda. (See Table 6.)

Table 6: Support or Oppose the Women’s Equality Act

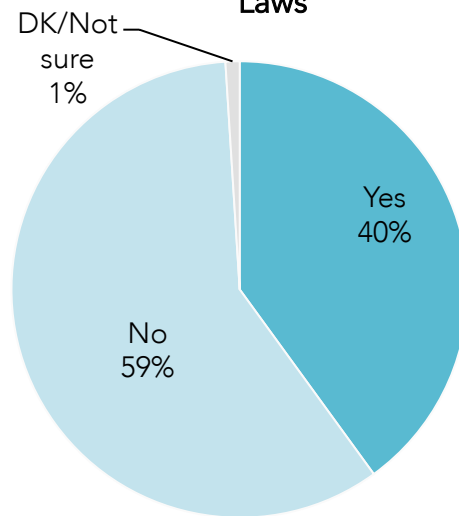
	% Support	% Oppose
Total	79%	16%
Men	73%	20%
Women	84%	13%
White	75%	20%
African American	92%	4%
18 to 29 year olds	83%	14%
30 to 39 year olds	80%	17%
40 to 49 year olds	78%	18%
50-64 year olds	79%	16%
65+ year olds	76%	16%
High school or less	84%	12%
Some college	83%	10%
College educated	76%	21%
Democrats	95%	3%
Independents	75%	17%
Republicans	65%	32%
Hampton Roads	86%	11%
Northern VA	81%	14%
Richmond area	72%	23%
South	79%	16%

Many voters are unaware of recent laws passed in Virginia to restrict abortion. Respondents were read the following information about recent laws passed on abortion:

Several proposals in Virginia recently became law. One law requires women to undergo an ultrasound even if it is not medically necessary. Another law makes it illegal for Medicaid to cover abortion care even when the woman's health is at risk. Another new law says clinics must close down if they do not rebuild according to new rules that only apply to abortion providers. Another new law makes it illegal for private health insurance companies to sell Marketplace plans that include coverage for abortion care.

Six in ten voters (59 percent) have not heard about these new laws. (See Figure 7.)

Fig. 7: Majority Have Not Heard About These Laws



Q Did you know about this trend in Virginia to restrict access to abortion?

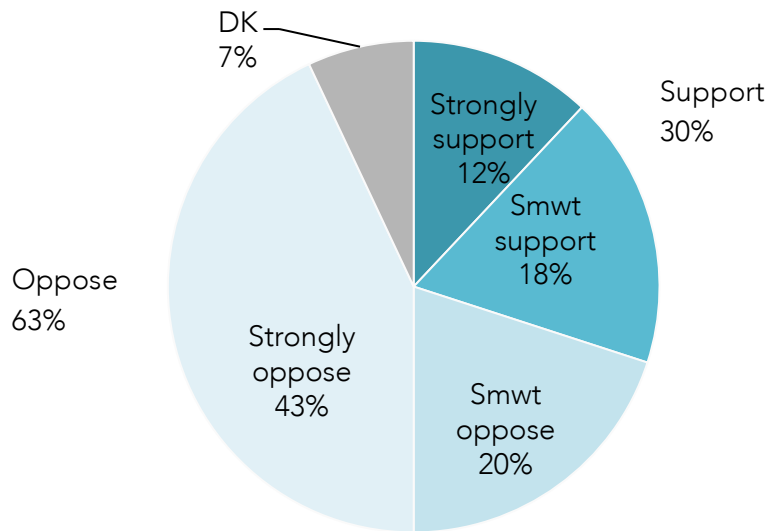
Majorities across most demographic groups have not heard about the trend to restriction access to abortion in Virginia. Those least likely to know about these restrictions include African-American voters, voters in Southern parts of Virginia, and those with a high school degree or less. (See Table 7.)

Table 7: Heard of Trend to Restrict Abortion

	% Yes	% No
Total	40%	59%
Men	41%	59%
Women	40%	59%
White	44%	55%
African American	30%	69%
18 to 29 year olds	34%	66%
30 to 39 year olds	37%	63%
40 to 49 year olds	48%	51%
50-64 year olds	44%	55%
65+ year olds	36%	60%
High school or less	24%	76%
Some college	35%	64%
College educated	51%	48%
Democrats	45%	54%
Independents	37%	61%
Republicans	37%	63%
Hampton Roads	39%	59%
Northern VA	44%	56%
Richmond area	47%	52%
South	29%	71%

Six in ten voters say they oppose recent laws passed on abortion. After hearing about the recent laws passed related to abortion, 63 percent say they oppose the new laws and 30 percent support the new laws. Voters are more likely to strongly oppose than strongly support these new laws. (See Figure 8.)

Fig. 8: Majority Opposes Recent Abortion Laws



Q In general, do you support or oppose these new laws?

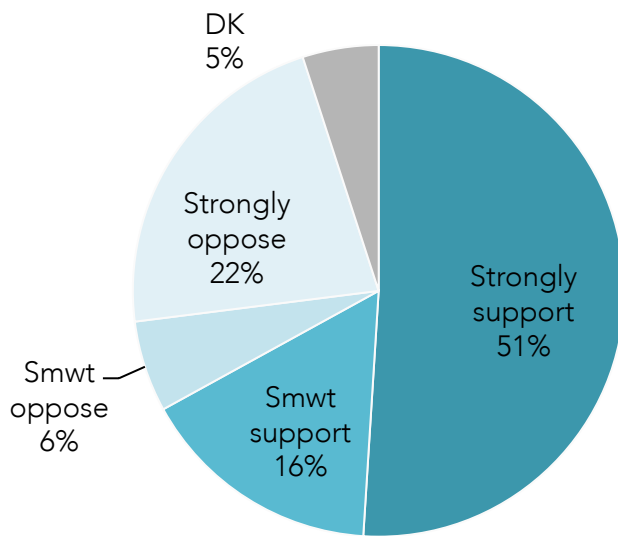
Republicans are also more likely to oppose than support the recent laws (52 percent vs. 40 percent). (See Table 8.)

Table 8: Support and Opposition for Recent Abortion Laws

	% Support	% Oppose
Total	30%	62%
Men	34%	61%
Women	26%	63%
White	28%	64%
African American	33%	57%
18 to 29 year olds	39%	53%
30 to 39 year olds	27%	61%
40 to 49 year olds	33%	60%
50-64 year olds	26%	69%
65+ year olds	27%	64%
High school or less	35%	57%
Some college	32%	61%
College educated	26%	65%
Democrats	25%	72%
Independents	25%	63%
Republicans	40%	52%
Hampton Roads	30%	61%
Northern VA	30%	62%
Richmond area	26%	67%
South	34%	59%

Two-thirds of Virginia voters support the idea of legislation to protect a woman’s right to access safe and legal abortion. As part of the ideas in the Women’s Equality Agenda, 67 percent of respondents say they would support protecting a woman’s right to access safe and legal abortion care. Fifty-one percent strongly support this idea. Twenty-eight percent oppose this idea. (See Figure 9.)

Fig. 9: Majority Supports Protecting Access to Abortion Care



Q Would you support or oppose protecting a women’s right to access safe and legal abortion care? (Is that strongly or somewhat support/oppose?)

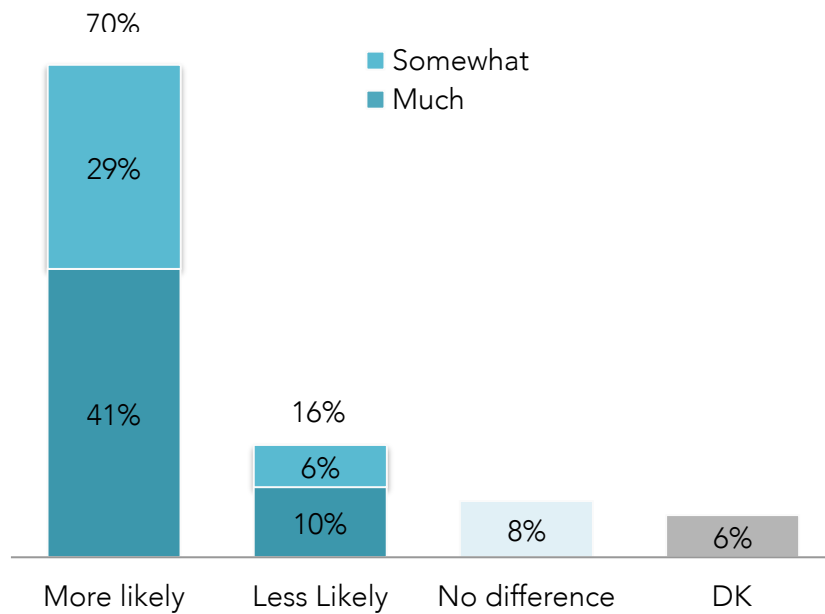
Majorities across demographic and geographic areas support protecting abortion access, with the exception of Republicans who are more evenly split (50 percent support and 42 percent oppose). (See Table 9.)

Table 9: Support or Oppose Protecting Woman’s Right to Abortion Care

	% Support	% Oppose
Total	67%	28%
Men	65%	30%
Women	70%	25%
White	65%	30%
African American	78%	17%
18 to 29 year olds	74%	18%
30 to 39 year olds	67%	30%
40 to 49 year olds	67%	29%
50-64 year olds	66%	31%
65+ year olds	63%	28%
High school or less	59%	34%
Some college	68%	26%
College educated	72%	24%
Democrats	85%	10%
Independents	64%	30%
Republicans	50%	46%
Hampton Roads	71%	21%
Northern VA	75%	21%
Richmond area	68%	28%
South	61%	35%

Voters say they are more likely to vote to re-elect an elected official who supports the package of ideas they heard. Data suggest seven in ten voters (70 percent) may be more likely to vote for an elected official who supports a package of laws they heard in the survey (see Table 4). One in seven (16 percent) says they would be less likely to re-elect their official if he or she supported the package. (See Figure 10.)

Figure 10: Likelihood to Re-elect Official Who Supports Package of Laws



Q If your elected official supported this package of laws, would you be more or less likely to vote to re-elect him or her? (Would you be much more/less or just somewhat more/less likely?)

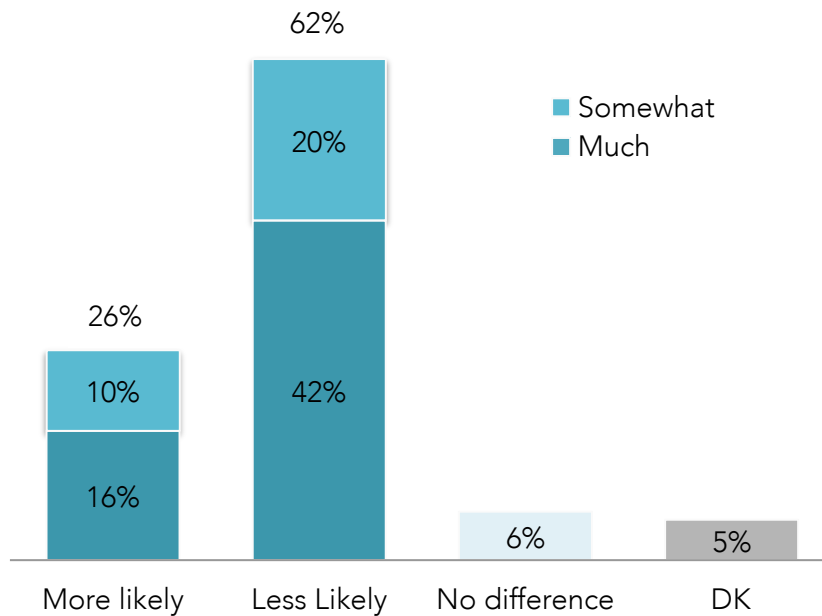
Majorities across all demographic groups, party affiliations, and regions of the state say they would be more likely to re-elect an official who supports this package of laws. Democrats and African-American voters are strongest in their support. (See Table 10.)

Table 10: Likelihood of Re-electing Official Who Supports Package

	% More Likely	% Less Likely
Total	70%	16%
Men	63%	22%
Women	76%	11%
White	64%	21%
African American	89%	2%
18 to 29 year olds	73%	14%
30 to 39 year olds	71%	19%
40 to 49 year olds	73%	17%
50-64 year olds	69%	16%
65+ year olds	65%	16%
High school or less	68%	13%
Some college	77%	9%
College educated	68%	20%
Democrats	91%	2%
Independents	64%	14%
Republicans	53%	33%
Hampton Roads	79%	10%
Northern VA	71%	15%
Richmond area	67%	19%
South	70%	18%

Voters say they are less likely to vote to re-elect an elected official who is in favor of laws to make it harder for women to get an abortion. Data suggest that six in ten voters (62 percent) may be less likely to vote for an elected official who favors more restrictions on abortion. One in four (26 percent) says they would be more likely to vote for someone who favors restrictions. (See Figure 11.)

Fig. 11: Majority Is Less Likely to Re-elect Official Who Support Restrictions



Q Let's say your elected official was in favor of laws that make it harder for women to get an abortion. Would you be more or less likely to vote to re-elect this elected official? (Would you be much more/less or just somewhat more/less likely?)

Democrats and African-American voters are the most inclined to say they would be less likely to re-elect an official who supported these restrictions. Independents are two to one less likely (53 percent) to re-elect officials who support these restrictions than more likely (23 percent) to re-elect them, and Republicans are more evenly split (46 percent less likely vs. 42 percent more likely). (See Table 11.)

Table 11: Likelihood to Re-Elect Official Who Supports Restrictions

	% More likely	% Less Likely
Total	26%	62%
Men	28%	60%
Women	25%	64%
White	28%	61%
African American	18%	70%
18 to 29 year olds	23%	64%
30 to 39 year olds	26%	60%
40 to 49 year olds	32%	60%
50-64 year olds	29%	64%
65+ year olds	22%	62%
High school or less	26%	62%
Some college	24%	60%
College educated	27%	64%
Democrats	12%	83%
Independents	28%	53%
Republicans	42%	46%
Hampton Roads	23%	67%
Northern VA	23%	64%
Richmond area	25%	60%
South	32%	56%

Conclusion

Virginia voters say that more work needs to be done to improve women's equality in the state – and they are largely supportive of efforts to advance the issue. Support crosses all demographic segments and geographic areas of the state. Data suggest voters make connections among reproductive decisions, abortion, financial stability, and women's equality.

Most voters disagree with recent efforts to restrict abortion and a majority say they support proposals to protect a woman's right to abortion.

The survey suggests a favorable political reality for women's equality and the protection of abortion access. A majority of voters say they would be more likely to re-elect an official who supported a package of laws designed to help women; a similar majority would be less likely to vote for an official who tried to restrict abortion access.

This landscape suggests that most Virginia voters support initiatives designed to protect abortion access, advance women's financial stability, and ensure women's equality.

Survey Methods

The survey was conducted by telephone among n = 801 registered Virginia voters statewide from June 10 through 15, 2015. The survey was administered by random digit telephone dialing, and it included interviews conducted by both landline and cell phones (50 percent of each). The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race and ethnicity. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points.

Survey Composition

	% of Respondents
Total	100%
Men	46%
Women	54%
White	72%
African American	20%
Latino	4%
18 to 29 year olds	19%
30 to 39 year olds	18%
40 to 49 year olds	16%
50-64 year olds	28%
65+ year olds	19%
High school or less	22%
Some college	25%
College educated	51%
Democrats	39%
Independents	23%
Republicans	34%
Hampton Roads	21%
Northern VA	33%
Richmond area	16%
South	19%