

# *Virginia Educated:* *A Post-College Outcomes Study*

## Pilot survey results

presented to the  
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

by the  
Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory, VCU



L. Douglas Wilder School of  
Government and Public Affairs  
Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory

July 13, 2020

# Overview

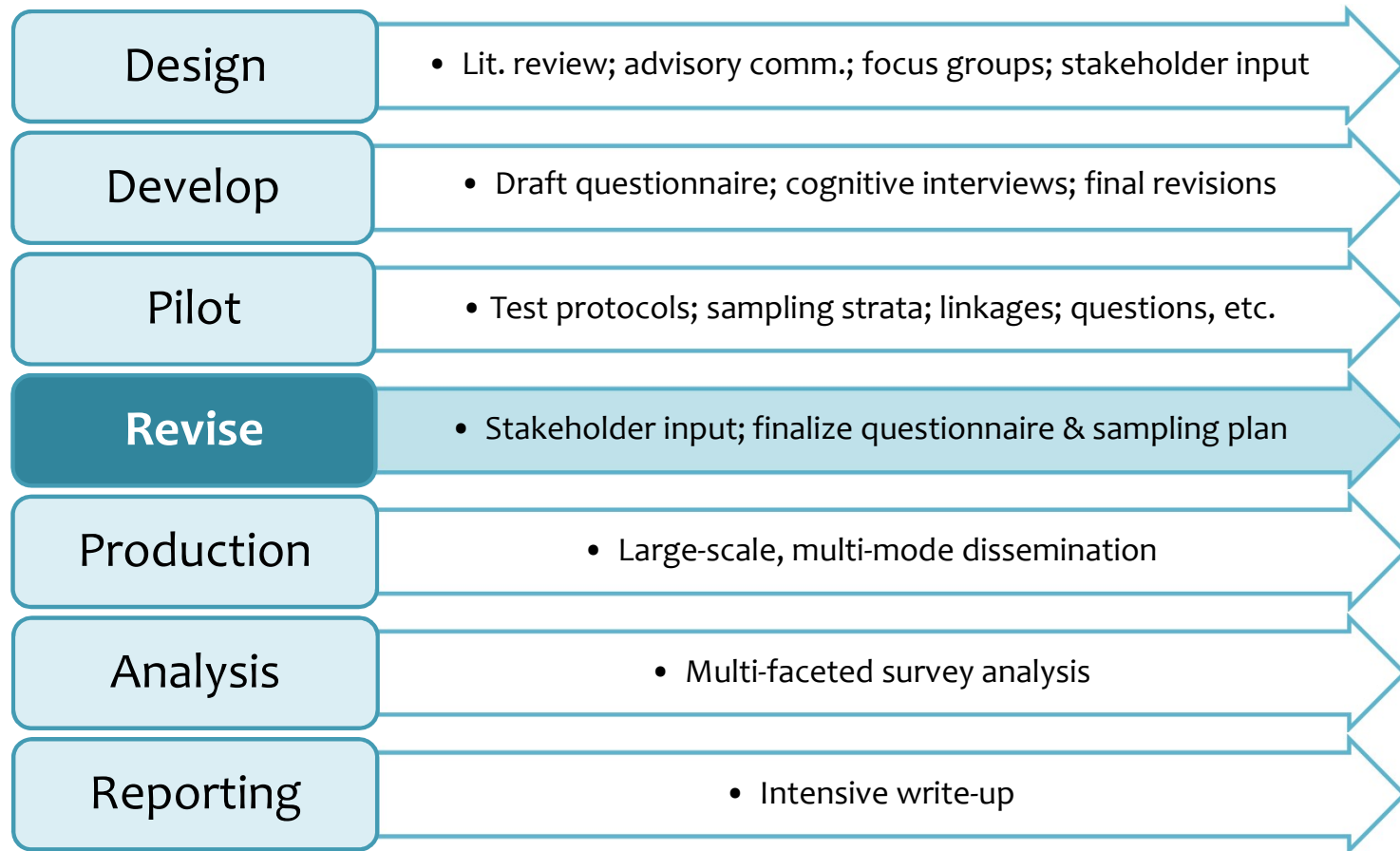
---

- Introduction
- Review of Pilot Report Executive Summary
- Recommendations
- Next Steps
- Questions



# Project Plan

---



# *Review of Executive Summary*

# *Virginia Educated* Pilot Survey

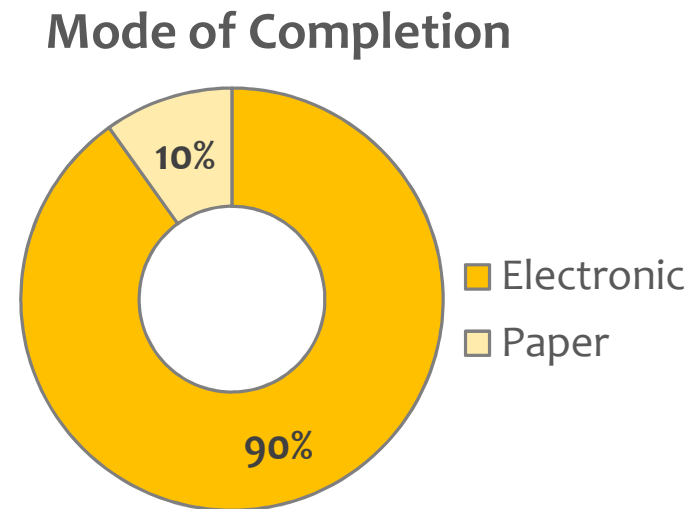
---

- Launched March 5, 2020, closed June 15
- Probability sample of 3,648 invited
  - Sample designed for variety, not proportional representation of the whole
- 1,019 total responses
- Very good response rate – 28% overall

# ES-1. Response was good

---

- Electronic (web-based)
  - Of 1,017 people who started the survey online, 919 completed it, a completion rate of 90.4%
  - Median completion time online was 32 minutes
- Paper
  - N = 101
  - 3.8% of all paper booklets sent out
  - 9.9% of all survey completions



# ES-3. Multiple contacts and modes

Date	Milestone
3/5 & 3/6	Contact 1: Advance letter mailed
3/16	Contact 2: Email sent to non-responders
3/18	Contact 3: Email sent to non-responders
3/24	Contact 4: Reminder Letter/Postcard mailed
4/1	Contact 5: Email sent to non-responders
4/24	Contact 6: Questionnaire paper packet mailed
4/29	Contact 7: Email sent to non-responders
5/6	Contact 8: Reminder Postcard/Letter mailed
5/11	Contact 9: Email sent to non-responders
5/15	Nominal close date for responses
6/15	Close data collection (most data received by May 27)

# ES-3. Incentives work as expected

Experiment	Response %	Recommendation for Production
<b>Cash</b>		
\$1	27	\$1 is recommended, if an up-front cash gift is used.
\$2	29	
<b>Gift Cards</b>		
No Offer	22	Offer higher gift card denominations for greater survey participation rate, but balance this against budget constraints and non-response bias.
\$5	24	
\$10	31*	
\$20	37*	
<b>Drawing</b>		
No Offer	27	Continue to offer, as this is a relatively small cost.
Offer	29	

\* - statistically significant difference, *t*-test,  $p < .05$



# ES-3. Contact features

---

Experiment	Response %	Recommendation for Production
<b>Envelopes</b>		
Regular	28	Include special state seal considering negligible cost.
Special seal	30	
<b>Stationery</b>		
Standard	28	Use standard stationery for the cost savings.
Linen	27	
<b>Reminder</b>		
Letters	29*	Although more expensive, use reminder letters.
Postcards	26	

\* - statistically significant difference, *t*-test,  $p < .05$

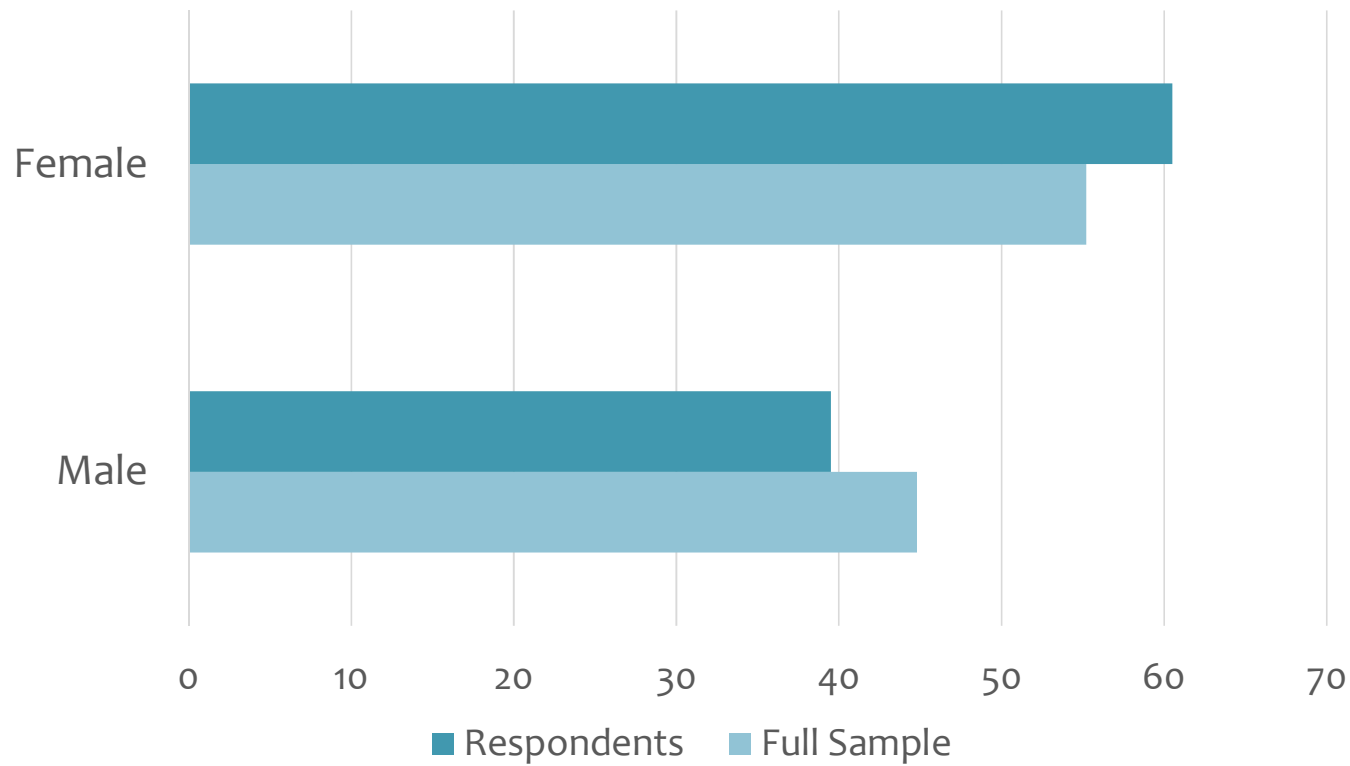
# ES-2 & 4. Linkages

---

- Gift Cards
  - Electronic system integrated well with web-based survey platform, Qualtrics
  - 55.4% requested physical gift cards
- Secondary Data Linkage
  - Linkage process worked well
  - 66.8% of participants agreed to data linkage
  - Initial analysis and modeling of employment outcomes worked well

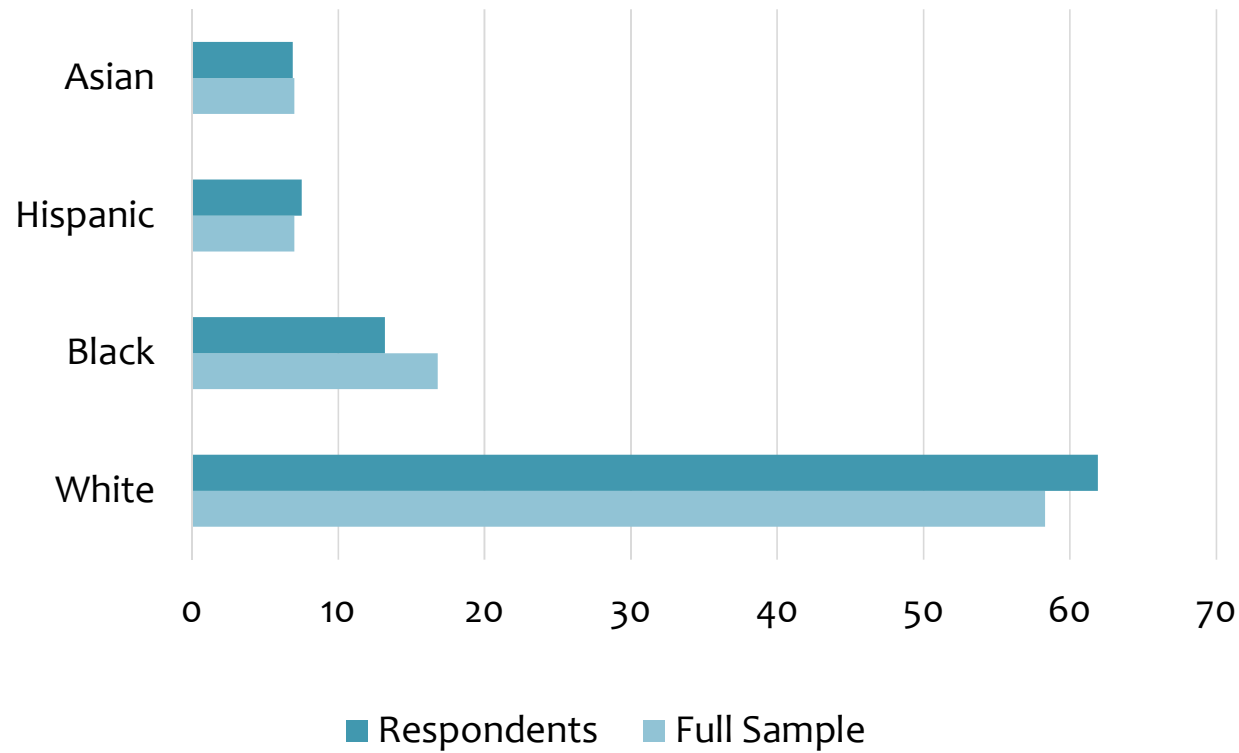
# ES-5. Participants vs. Sample (1)

---



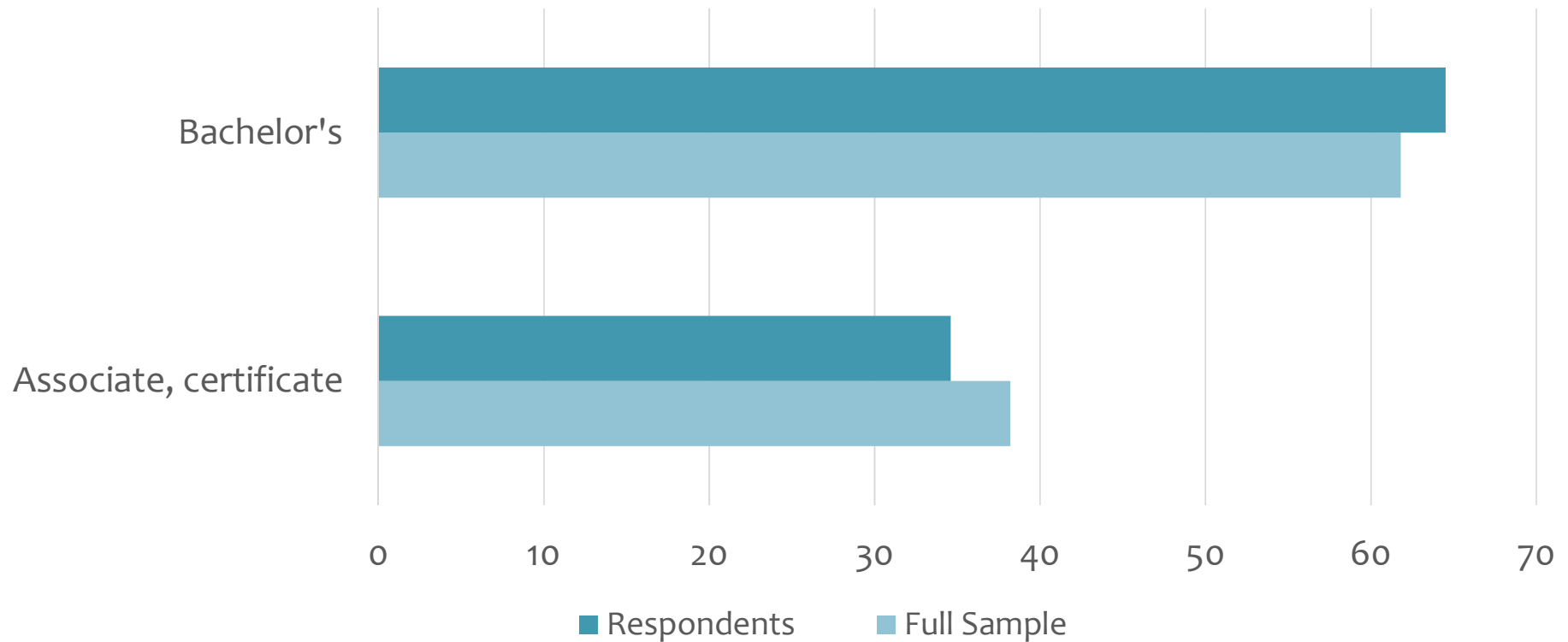
# ES-5. Participants vs. Sample (2)

---



# ES-5. Participants vs. Sample (3)

---



# ES-6. Differences by degree level

	Bach.	Assoc./Cert.
Participants	65%	35%
Full-time status when attending	93%	62%
Applied to multiple institutions	71%	15%
Had two-parents with degrees	50%	25%
Took care of others while attending	14%	48%
Post-degree move	67%	41%
To another state/territory/protectorate	60%	32%
Had one or more internships	54%	28%
Got résumé/interview help	55%	27%
Attended job/career advising session	47%	19%
Student loans more of a problem than expected	49%	61%

# ES-7. Satisfaction

---

- Undergraduate experience satisfaction (“satisfied” or “very satisfied”)
  - Overall: 89%
  - Academic Quality: 91%
  - Course Content: 90%
  - Class Size: 89%
  - Professional Networking Opportunities: 50%
- Only 2% reported not acquiring any useful skills

# ES-8. Impacts of education

---

Impact of Education	
Improved Career Status	79%
Improved Financial Status	58%
Improved Worldview	67%
Excellent Current Life Conditions	77%

Overall Life Satisfaction	
Currently Satisfied with Life	75%
Excellent Current Life Conditions	77%



# ES-9. Employment

---

- Most participants employed by another party (81%)
- Few (6.5%) reported being unemployed
- Benefits provided by employer
  - Health Care – 87%
  - Paid Leave – 86%
  - Retirement Contributions – 82%

# ES-9. Employment

---

- Overall, participants had a positive impression of their current employment situation.
  - 70% reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their progress towards long-term career goals
  - 59% felt their current job related well to their undergraduate degree.
  - But 14% noted their current job does not utilize any of their undergraduate education.

# ES-9. Employment

---

- About 9% of pilot respondents think they are underemployed, by self-report
  - 75% thought their jobs do not use their education skills enough, 13% said they worked part-time but wanted to work full-time, and 3% said they worked seasonal jobs.
- Measuring underemployment presents challenges

# ES-10. Additional insights

---

- 49% currently pursuing or got additional education
- Half had student loan debt at completion, 65% of those are still paying
- 58% indicated their undergraduate education was worth the cost
- Career-related reasons motivated most (65%) to pursue an undergraduate credential

# ES-11. Open-ended responses

---

- Open-ended responses provided rich, nuanced data about participant experiences during and after college
- Participants offered detailed, frank answers that offered both positive and negative perspectives
- SERL staff analyzed and coded more than 6,000 open-ended entries across 10 questions

# *Recommendations*

# Recommendations

---

- Sampling
  - Group community colleges for sampling AND reporting
  - Over-sample under-represented populations
  - Continue to verify addresses prior to sampling
- Data Collection
  - Expand web programming to prevent duplicates
  - Reduce paper questionnaire distribution
  - Use letter reminders rather than postcards
  - Collaborate with VEDP for occupation coding

# Recommendations

---

- Content
  - Convert some open-ended questions to closed-ended
  - Add COVID-19 questions, expand engagement questions
  - Request permission to follow-up on survey answers
  - Other minor corrections and edits
- Other
  - Invite respondents to be in an ongoing panel
  - Combine pilot survey and production data?



# *Next Steps*

# Next Steps

---

- Revise the timeline for completing the project
- Finalize sampling/cost scenarios
- Revise the questionnaire for the production survey
- Work on details with survey advisory committee
- Finish reviewing proposals from vendors for printing/mailing and electronic gift card services
- Determine VCU logistical capabilities/approvals

*Thank you!*  
*Questions?*

*Contact:*

*Jim Ellis, Ph.D.*

*Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory*

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

*[jmellis@vcu.edu](mailto:jmellis@vcu.edu)*

*804-828-2839*



**VCU**

L. Douglas Wilder School of  
Government and Public Affairs  
Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory