

Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #2

A Tale of Many Cities: Economy, Crime, and Politics

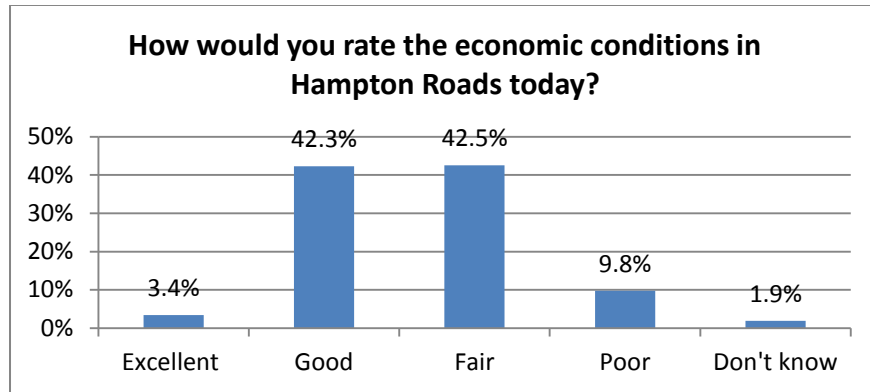
This report examines regional and sub-regional measures of economy, crime, and politics perceptions from the 2014 Life In Hampton Roads survey (LIHR 2014) conducted by the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center. For additional information on survey methodology, and analyses of other issues, please see the SSRC website at www.odu.edu/ssrc.

Perceptions of the local economy, of police and crime, and of local politics are a study in contrasts. While economic conditions are seen to be improving, less than half see conditions as good or excellent. There is wide variation across cities in the extent to which residents believe public resources are being used wisely. And there remain sharp divisions between those aligned with different ideologies and political parties. Although crime is seen as a major threat to regional quality of life by some respondents, and perceptions of the police are declining, overall victimization rates remain steady, and perceptions of local police vary substantially across cities. Under-reporting of crime also appears to be a significant problem, with one in 5 serious crimes not reported to the police.

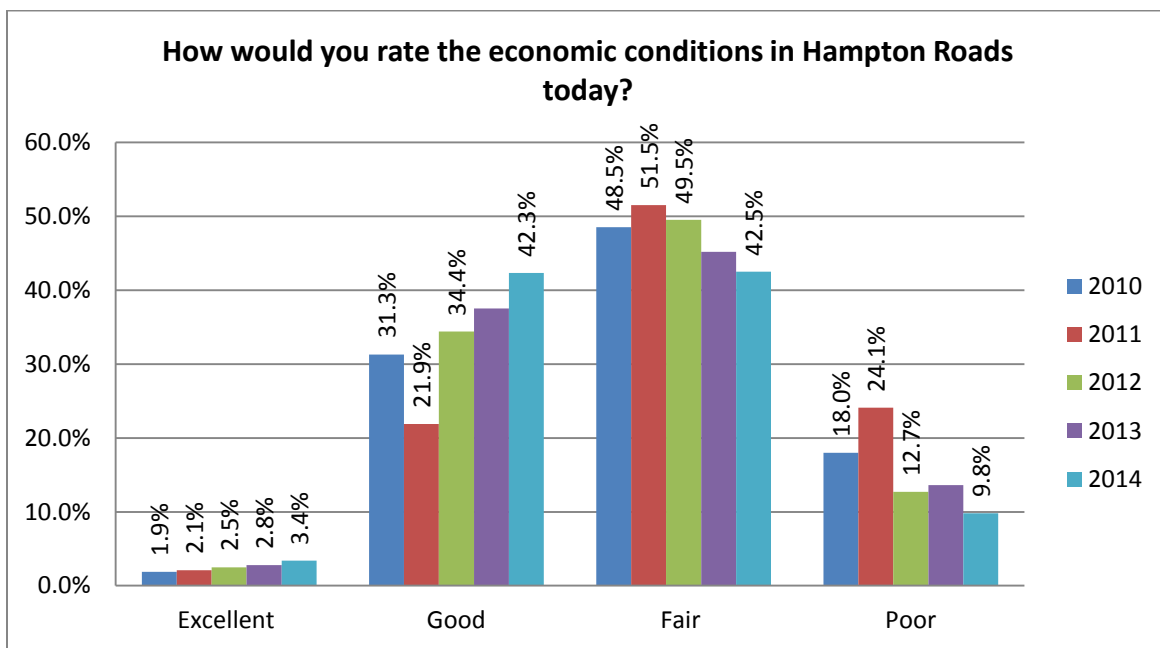
Responses were weighted by city population, race, age, gender, and phone usage (cell versus land-line) to be representative of the Hampton Roads region. Details of survey methodology are included in the 2014 LIHR demographics and methodology section (www.odu.edu/ssrc). The margin of error for the 2014 LIHR survey is 3.7 percent (95 percent confidence interval).

Economic Conditions in Hampton Roads

Respondents were asked to rate economic conditions in Hampton Roads. Less than half (45.7%) of respondents rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as either excellent or good (3.4% and 42.3%, respectively), while 52.3% rated the economic conditions as fair or poor.



The percentage of respondents rating the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as excellent or good is at a five year high in 2014. In fact, the 42.3% that reported the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as good is almost 5% higher than in 2013 (37.5%) and is almost double the percentage from 2011 (21.9%). Additionally, the percentage of respondents reporting that the economic conditions in Hampton Roads are poor is also at a five year low (9.8%). This percentage is down from 13.6% in 2013. The highest percentage of respondents reporting poor economic conditions was in 2011 (24.1%).



Respondents were also asked whether or not they own or are in the process of buying their home, rent, or have some other arrangement. Similar to past years, the majority of residents reported that they

own or are in the process of buying their home (65.6%). Another 31.9% indicated that they rent, while only 2 percent reported having another arrangement.

Home Ownership	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Own or in the process of buying	72.5%	62.5%		71.4%	65.6%
Rent	23.3%	33%		25.5%	31.9%
Other arrangement	3.7%	4.4%		3%	2%
Don't know/Refused	0.4%	0.1%		0.1%	0.6%

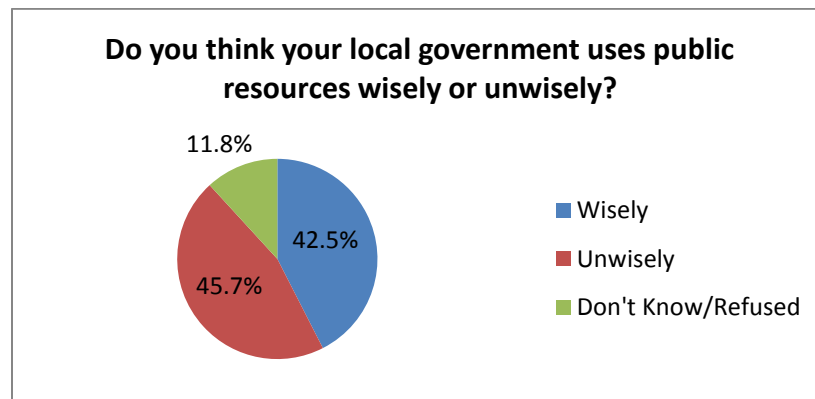
Hampton Roads residents were asked about their employment status. The majority of respondents indicated that they were employed full-time (52.8%). Another 14.2 percent reported being employed part-time, while 18.7 percent reported being retired. Only 14.1 percent reported being unemployed and only 7.8 percent of those respondents indicated that they were not looking for work. The reported employment status of Hampton Roads residents has remained fairly consistent since 2010.

Employment Status	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Employed ¹	65.6%				
Full-time		49.3%	53.3%	53.6%	52.9%
Part-time		14.3%	13.7%	13.7%	14.2%
Not employed	21.6%				
Looking for work		10.7%	8.3%	9.1%	7.8%
Not looking for work		6.1%	9.2%	4.5%	6.3%
Retired	12.8%	19.4%	15.3%	18.6%	18.7%
Refused	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%

¹ This question was worded as “Are you employed?” in 2010, and “Are you employed full time or part time?” in 2011. Respondents from the 2010 sample who said that they were not employed were not asked whether or not they were looking for work.

Local Government Spending

Another important focus was local government resource use. Respondents indicated whether they think their local government uses public resources wisely or unwisely. More people reported that their local government uses public resources unwisely (45.3%) than reported that their local government uses public resources wisely (42.1%). Another 11.7% reported that they did not know.

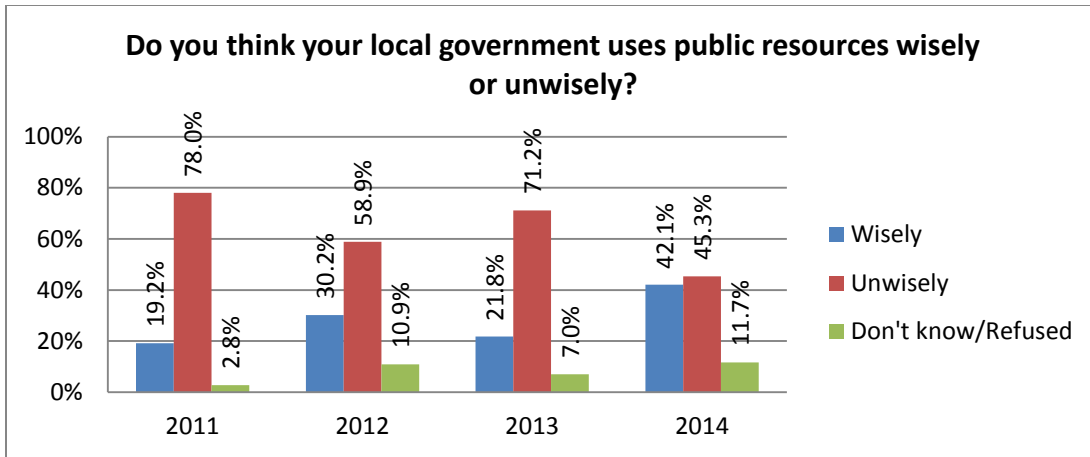


Comparing the data to previous years, more respondents reported that the local government uses resources wisely in 2014 (42.1%) than in any other year. That percentage is 20% higher than last year's percentage of people reporting that their local government uses public resources wisely (21.8%).

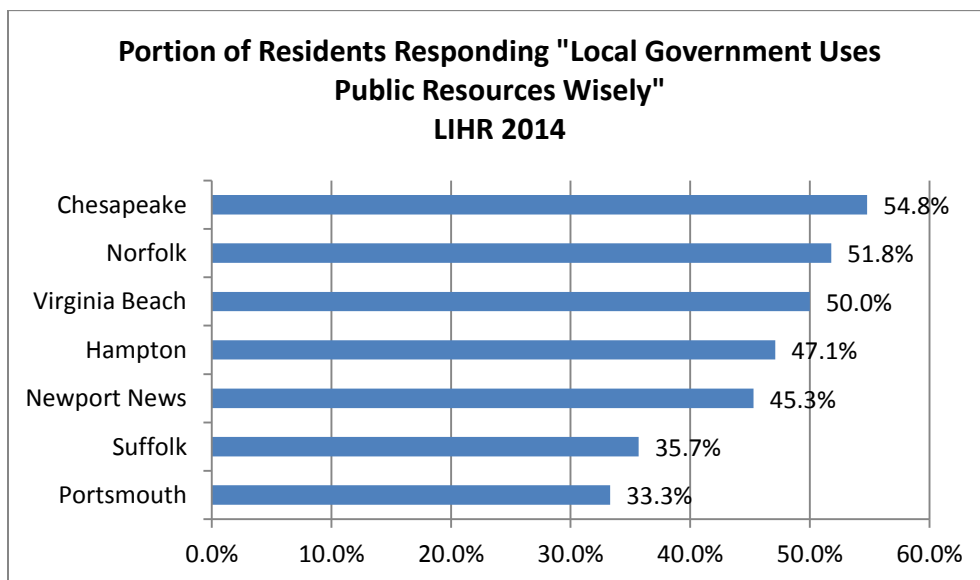
Although this appears to be good news for local governments, it may also reflect a shift in question wording.²

It is interesting to note that the groups least likely to indicate that local government uses resources wisely are those not affiliated with a political party. Among Democrats 53.6 percent believe local government uses public resources wisely, among Republicans that portion drops to 46 percent, but among all other respondents (independents, third party affiliation, etc.), only 32.4 percent believe resources are being used wisely.

² The response choices changed this year to “wisely” and “unwisely.” The question was first introduced in 2011 and in past years the response choices were “wisely” and “fair amount of waste.” This could help explain the dramatic difference in percentages reported.

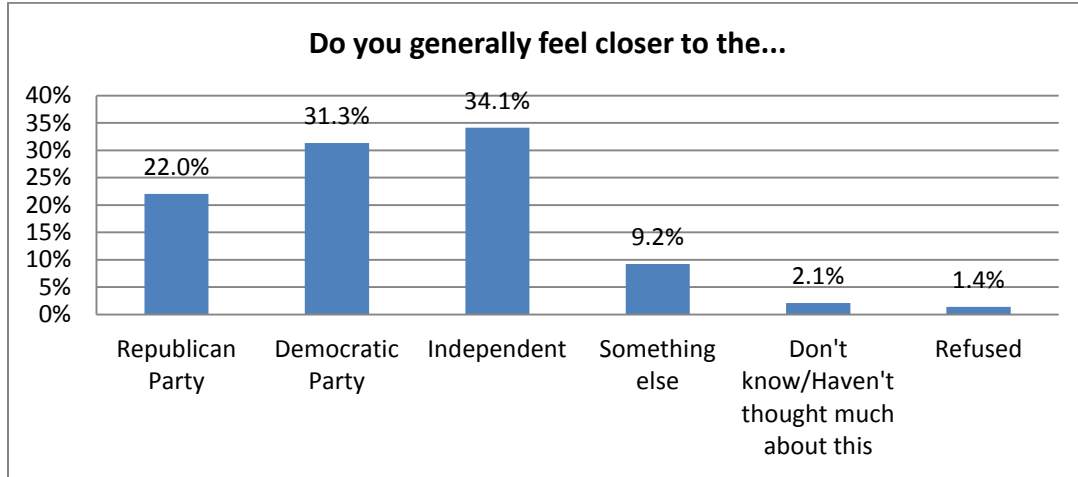


There is substantial variation across cities in the degree to which respondents believe their local government uses resources wisely. Among respondents who expressed an opinion (i.e. wisely or unwisely), the portion who perceive wise use of resources was highest for Chesapeake (54.8%) and also at or above 50 percent for Norfolk (51.8%) and Virginia Beach (50.0%). Hampton and Newport News were in the middle range (47.1% and 45.3%), while Suffolk and Portsmouth had the lowest public perceptions of local government resource use (35.7% and 33.3% respectively). Clearly some cities in Hampton Roads have a more favorable reputation for wise use of public resources than others.

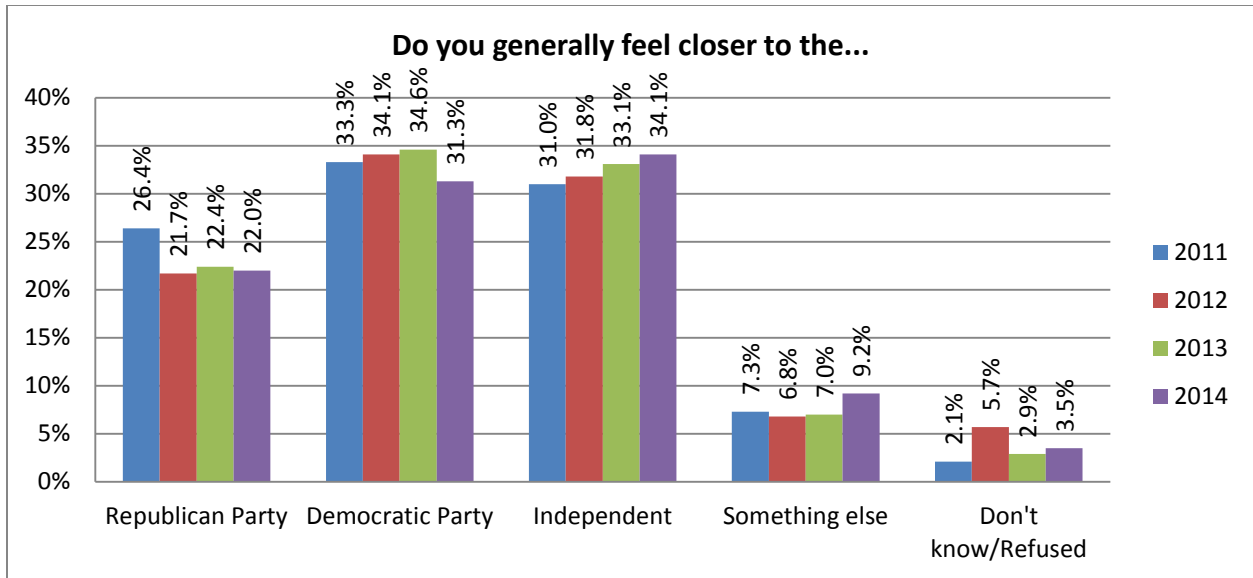


Political Affiliation and Attitudes

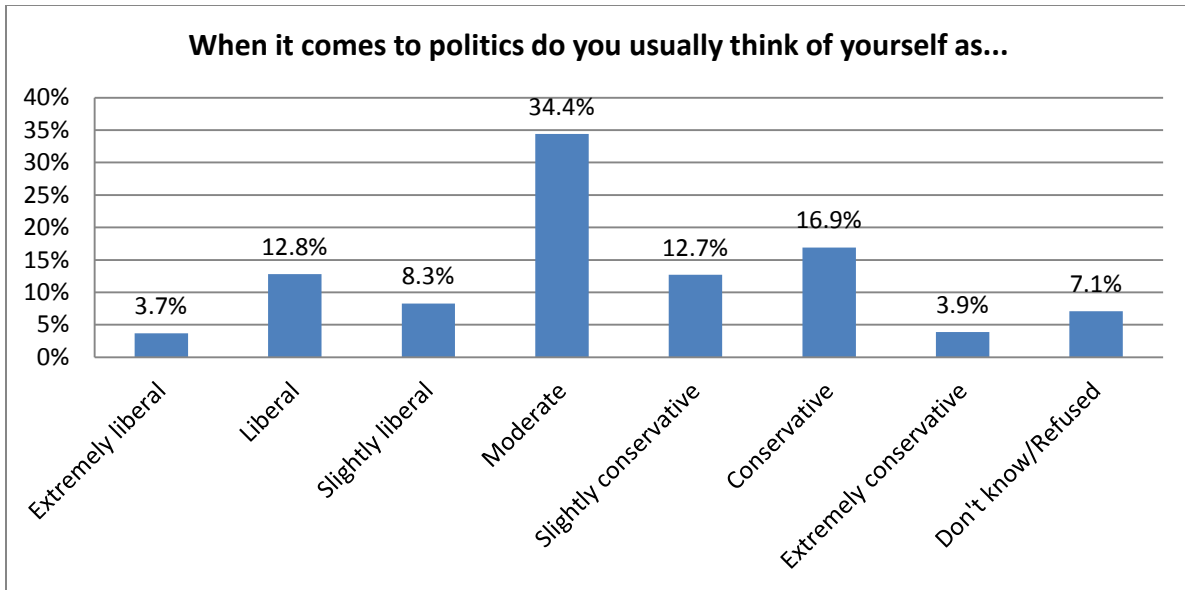
Respondents were asked what political party they generally feel closer to. The majority of respondents reported feeling closer to being Independent (34.1%) or the Democratic Party (31.3%). Only 22% reported feeling closer to the Republican Party and another 9.2% reported feeling closer to something else.



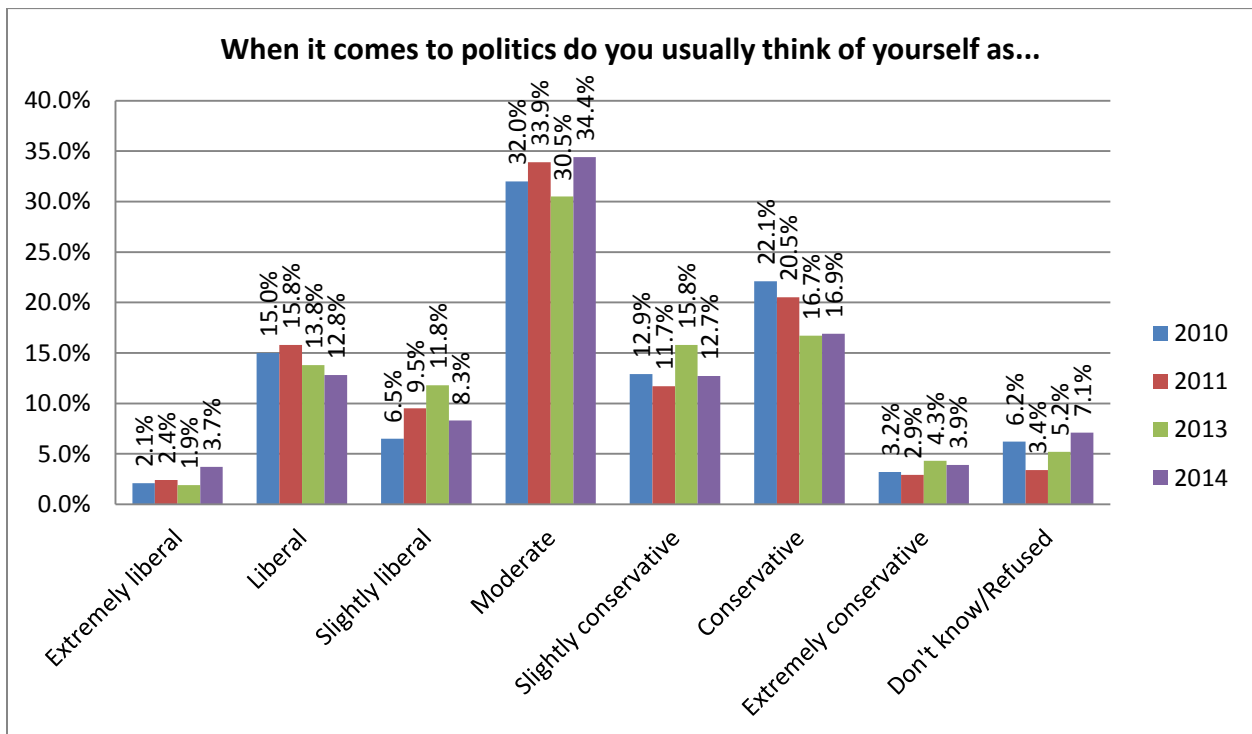
The upward trend in those reporting feeling closer to the Independents continued in 2014. In 2011, 31% reported feeling closer to the Independents, 31.8% in 2012, 33.1% in 2013, and 34.1% in 2014. This year also marked the highest percentage of those reporting to be “something else” (9.2%). The Democratic Party saw a small decline in percentage in 2014; down to 31.3% from 34.6% in 2013. The Republican Party saw an almost 5% decline between 2011 and 2012 (26.4% and 21.7%, respectively), but has stayed consistent since with 22.4% in 2013 and 22% in 2014.



Next, respondents were asked to identify whether they usually think of themselves as extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative. Not surprisingly, moderate was the most commonly given response (34.4%). However, despite the fact that more respondents identified with the Democratic Party (31.3%) than the Republican Party (22%), there were more respondents who reported being conservative (33.5%) than liberal (24.8%). In part this reflects the presence of non-white conservatives who rarely affiliate with the Republican Party. For instance, 22 percent of African American or Black respondents identify as conservative, but only 4.7 percent of these conservative respondents self-identify as Republicans. Those who reported being conservative was broken down as "conservative" (16.9%), "slightly conservative" (12.7%), and "extremely conservative" (3.9%). Those who reported being liberal were broken down as "liberal" (12.8%), "slightly liberal" (8.3%), and "extremely liberal" (3.7%).

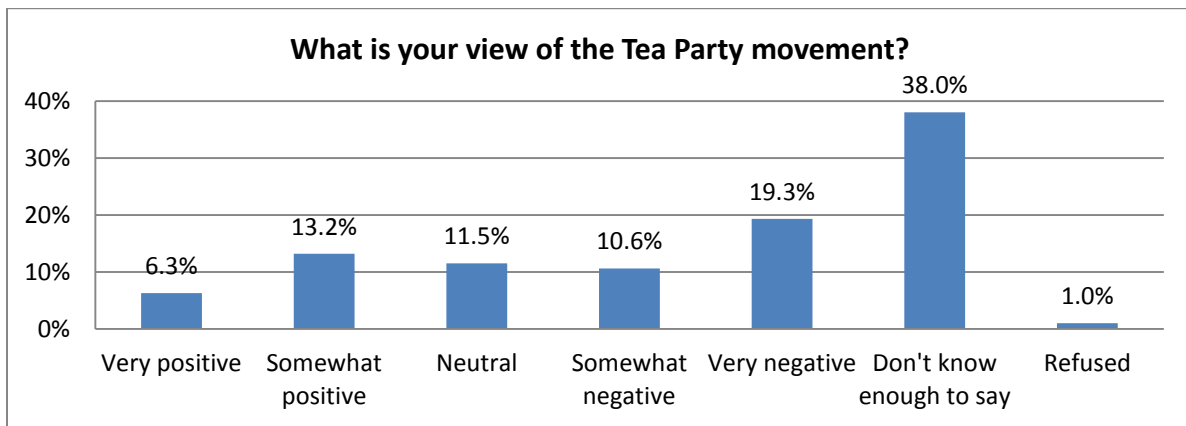


Data for this question has remained fairly consistent over the past several years. The biggest change can be seen in the percentage of those reporting that they think of themselves as conservative, 22.1% in 2010 and down to 16.9% in 2014.



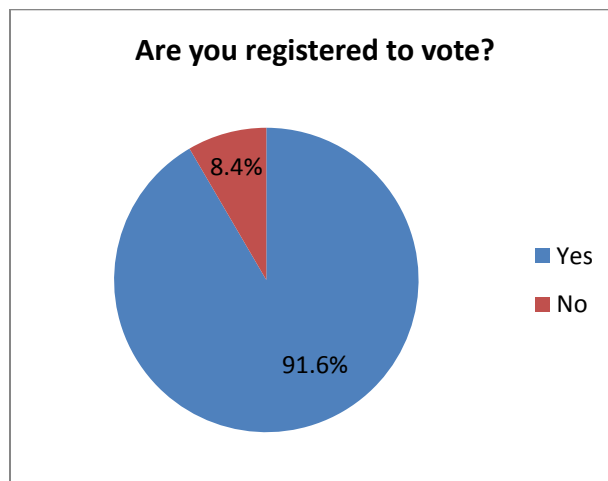
Respondents were also asked to give their view of the Tea Party movement. 29.9% viewed the Tea Party movement negatively, with 19.3% reporting very negative and 10.6% reporting somewhat

negative views of the Tea Party movement. 19.5% viewed the Tea Party movement positively, with 13.2% reporting somewhat positive and 6.3% reporting slightly positive views of the Tea Party movement. Additionally, 11.5% of respondents were neutral on their view towards the Tea Party movement. Republicans were the most likely to give a positive rating of the tea party movement (46.3%) while Democrats were the least likely to give a positive rating (4.2%). The last time the LIHR survey asked opinions about the Tea Party movement was in 2010. Reflecting the lower prominence of the movement today, many more respondents selected “don’t know” in 2014 (38.0%) versus 2010 (6.6%).

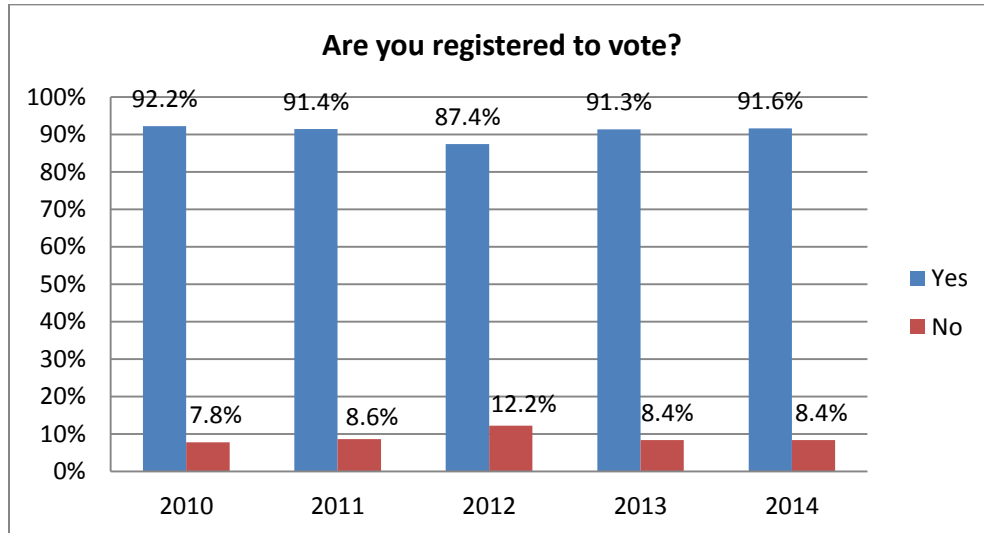


Voter Registration

Finally, respondents were asked whether or not they were registered to vote. The vast majority of respondents said that they were registered to vote (91.6%). Conversely, less than 9% of respondents were not registered to vote at the time of the survey (8.4%).



Since 2010, at least 90% of respondents have reported being registered to vote, except in 2012 when only 87.4% reported being registered to vote. There was almost no change in percentage who were registered to vote in 2014 (91.6%) over 2013 (91.3%).



It is interesting to note that while more respondents reported that they consider themselves conservative rather than liberal, there are more respondents who identify with the Democratic Party over the Republican Party. This can possibly be explained by the large percentage of respondents who identify as an Independent, and the challenges faced by the Republican Party in reaching out to non-white conservatives. In fact, more people reported being Independent over any other party affiliation and more people reported that they consider themselves a moderate over any other choice. Only 19.5% of respondents hold a positive view of the Tea Party, though it should be noted that the majority of respondents (38%) said they did not know enough about the Tea Party to give an opinion. As in past years, the overwhelming majority of Hampton Roads residents interviewed claimed that they were registered to vote.

Crime and Police

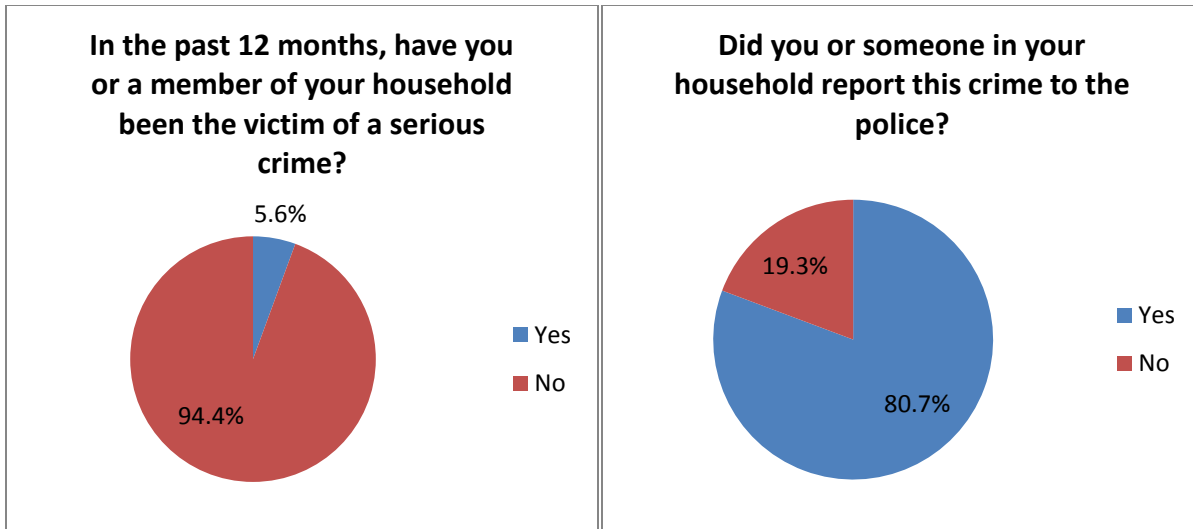
Control of crime and public safety are an important precondition for a high quality of life, and a significant concern among survey respondents. The 853 respondents were asked about various topics concerning local police and crime. Questions ranged from whether or not you or someone in your

household has been the victim of a serious crime in the last year to how satisfied respondents are with the local police. Despite the prominent place taken by crime among those who see the quality of life as fair or poor in Hampton Roads (it was the most commonly cited reason), only 5.6% of Hampton Roads residents reported being the victim of a serious crime, a figure essentially unchanged since the first year of the survey. Additionally, the respondents who reported they had been the victim of a serious crime in the last year were asked whether or not they reported that crime and of those 81.3% reported the crime to the police.

Criminal Victimization

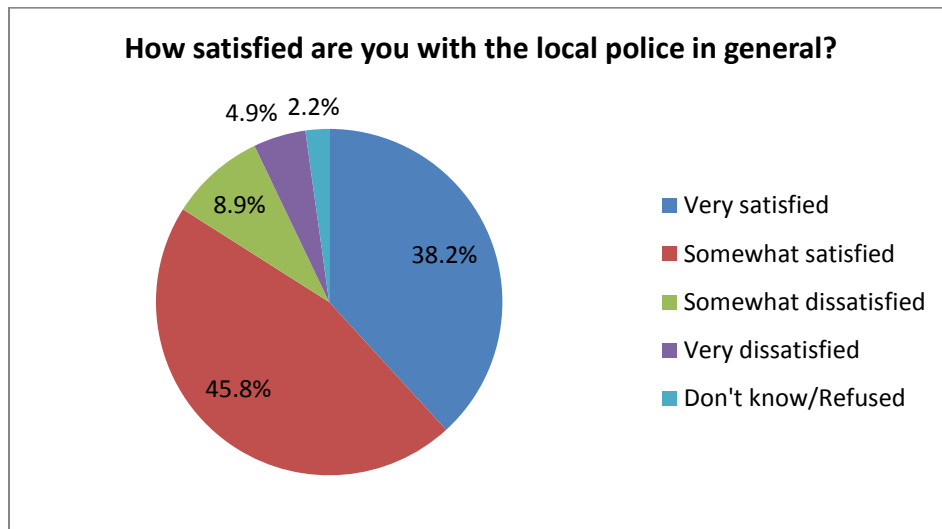
Respondents were asked if they or a member of their household had been the victim of a serious crime in the past 12 months and whether or not that crime was reported to the police. The vast majority (94.4%) reported that neither they, nor anyone in their household had been the victim of a serious crime. Of the 5.6% of respondents crime victimization, 80.7% reported that crime to the police, while only 19.3% did not report the crime.





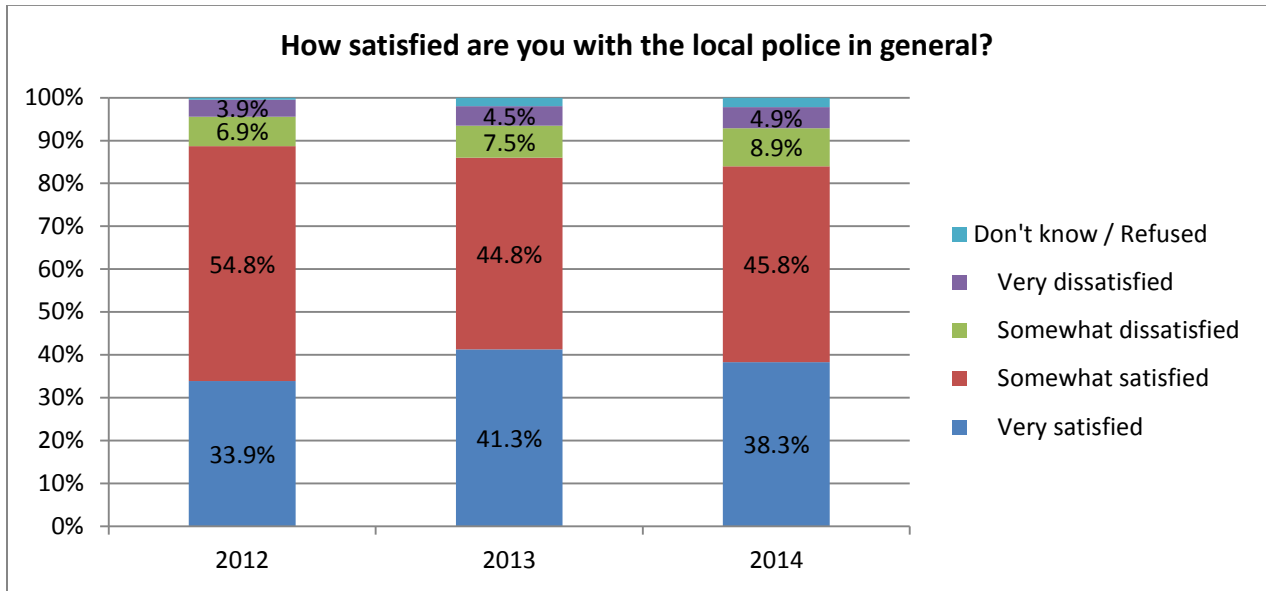
Satisfaction and contact with local police

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the local police in general. The majority of respondents reported being somewhat satisfied (45.8%) and very satisfied (38.2%). Only 8.9% reported being somewhat dissatisfied and 4.9% reported being very dissatisfied with the local police. Additionally, 2.2% either didn't know or refused to answer.

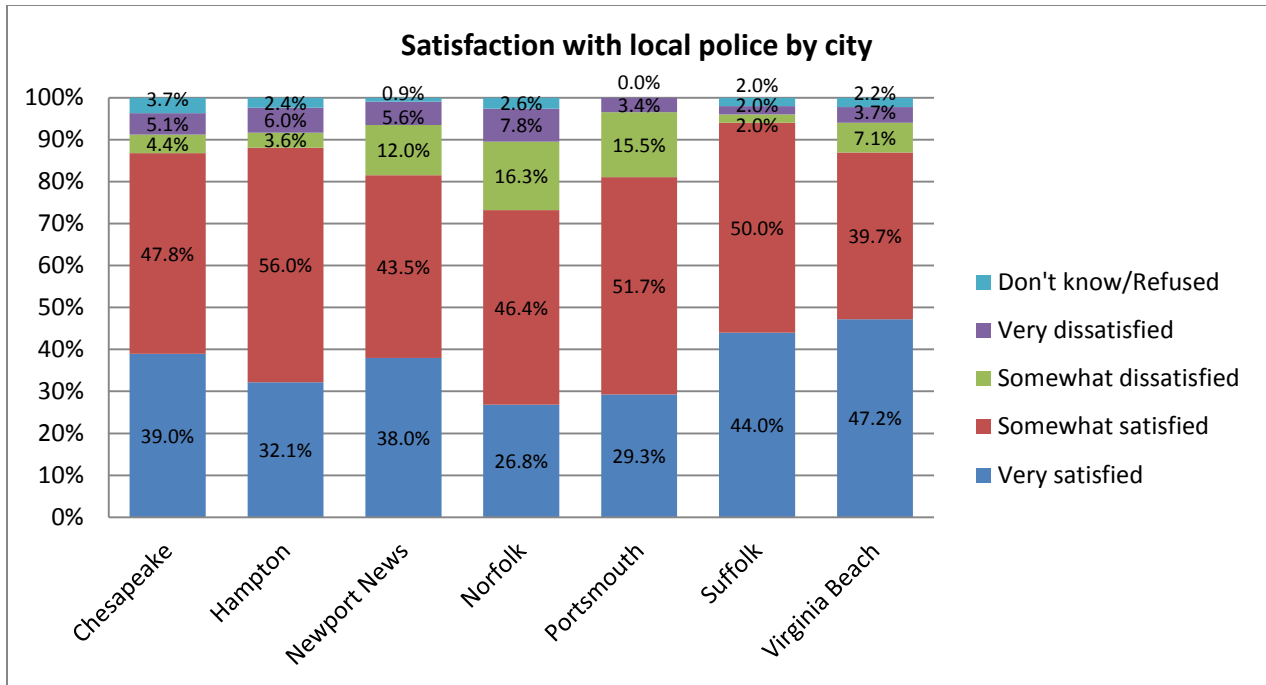


While overall satisfaction with the police remains high, it appears to be diminishing somewhat. In the three years the LIHR survey has asked about satisfaction with the local police, the portion reporting that they are very or somewhat dissatisfied has never been higher. The portion somewhat or very satisfied

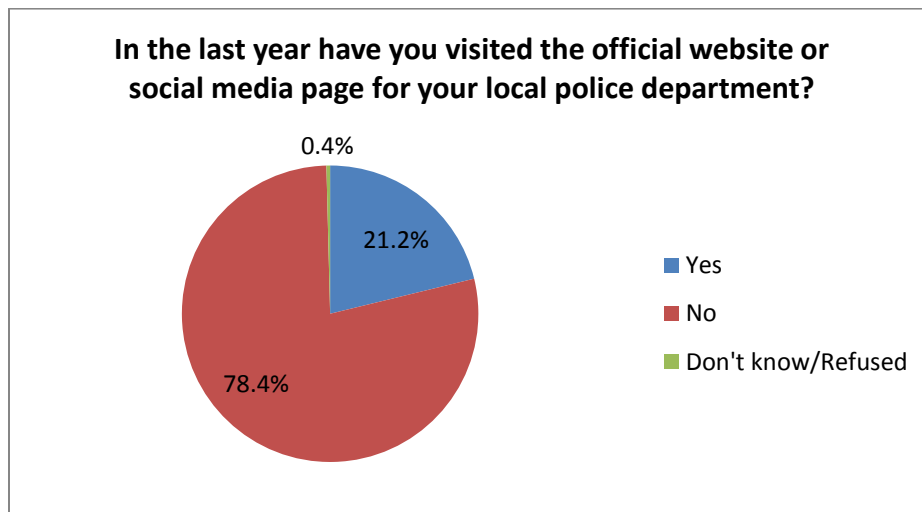
with local police has declined from 88.7 percent in 2012 to 86.1 percent in 2013, and now 84.1 percent in 2014. The decline from 2012 to 2014 is statistically significant ($p < .038$).



When examining respondent's satisfaction with the local police by city, it is apparent that some cities are more satisfied than others. For example, 47.2% of Virginia Beach residents and 44% of Suffolk residents reported being very satisfied with their local police compared to 26.8% of Norfolk residents and 29.3% of Portsmouth residents. Recent high profile crime cases in the city of Norfolk have likely played a role in depressing satisfaction with the police there.

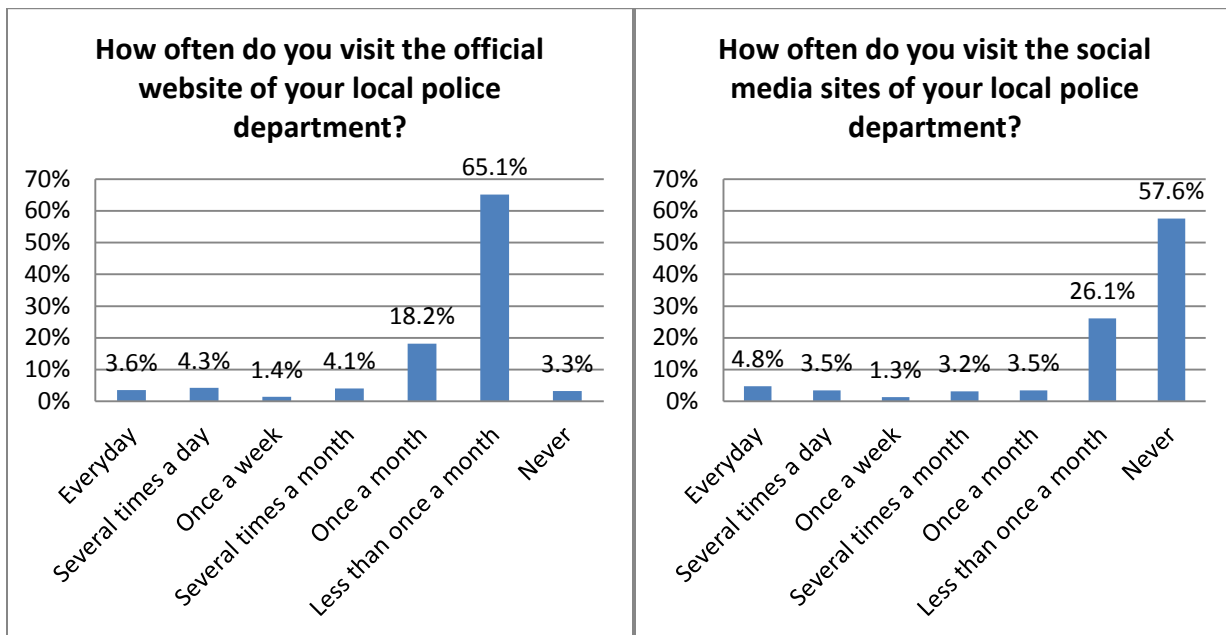


Respondents were also asked whether or not they had visited the official website or social media page for their local police department in the past year. About one-fifth of respondents (21.2%) reported that they had visited the official website or social media page of their local police department, while 78.4% reported they did not.



Of those who reported they had visited the official website or social media page for their local police department, 65.1% indicated that they visited the official website less than once a month. Additionally, 26.1% reported that they visit the social media page of their local police department

less than once a month. The majority of those who had visited the either the official website or social media page of their local police department (57.6%) reported that they never visit the social media page indicating that it is far more common for those interviewed to visit the official website of their local police department rather than the social media sites. Indeed, another 18.2% reported that they visit the official webpage once a month, 4.1% visit several times a month, and 3.6% visit every day. Conversely, only 3.5% visit the social media sites once a month, 3.2% visit several times a month, and 4.8% visit every day.



Overall, satisfaction with the local police is high among Hampton Roads residents, but somewhat diminished. Crime victimization appears to be largely unchanged, but perceptions of crime are up. There were very few people who claimed to have been the victim of a serious crime in the last year and the majority of those people did report the crime to the police. Contact between the internet presence of local police and respondents is relatively modest: only 21.2% of respondents said they have visited the official website or social media pages of their local police. Of those who reported visiting the official website or the social media pages of their local police, the majority said they visited the official website rather than the social media pages.

Summary

The economy and local politics are of central importance for the prosperity and success of the region. The percentage of respondents reporting that economic conditions in Hampton Roads are either excellent or good is up over 5% compared to last year. In fact, this year marks the highest percentage of respondents rating the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as either excellent or good in five years of LIHR surveys. Ratings of local government resource use also improved, although there is wide variation across cities in the degree to which residents believe resources are being used wisely. Despite significant concerns about crime, ratings of local police remain strong (although they are substantially stronger in some cities than others).

All Life In Hampton Roads Data Analyses will be placed on the Social Science Research Center website as they are released (www.odu.edu/ssrc). Follow-up questions about the 2014 Life In Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to:

Jesse Richman, PhD
Faculty Director
The Social Science Research Center
Associate Professor of Political Science and Geography
Old Dominion University
757-683-3853 (office) or 757-201-5484 (cell).
jrichman@odu.edu

Or

Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, PhD
Associate Director
The Social Science Research Center
Old Dominion University
757-683-3802 (office)
tvandeca@odu.edu