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2024

The 15th Annual
Life in Hampton Roads
Survey Report



OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

Life in Hampton Roads

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The Social Science Research Center at Old Dominion University

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	3
Survey Demographics	3
Quality of Life.....	6
Perceptions of the Region, City, & Neighborhood	6
Plans to Leave Hampton Roads	11
Attitudes Towards the Police & Fear of Crime.....	13
Satisfaction with and Trust in the Police	13
Satisfaction and Trust in the Police: Differences Between Cities & Demographic Groups	14
Combining Police Services Among Cities & Perceptions of Crime and Drugs	17
Fear of Criminal Victimization	20
The Hampton Roads Economy & Amenities.....	25
Ratings of the Economy.....	25
Employment.....	26
Local Amenities	26
Regionalism & Performance of Local Government.....	28
Combining Government Services	28
Barriers & Supports for Achieving Regional Cooperation	29
Performance of Local Government.....	32
Politics and Political Opinions.....	35
Baseline Party Identification and Ideology	35
The Senate Race.....	36
The Presidential Election	37
Election Security.....	40
Flooding	41

Executive Summary

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) has compiled the results from the 15th annual Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into residents' perceptions of the quality of life in Hampton Roads. A total of 640 telephone surveys were completed between June 4 and August 16, 2024. These interviews were conducted via telephone, as they were in the past, except for 2020 and 2021. Three-fifths of respondents rated the quality of life in the region as excellent or good (60.1%). As seen from previous surveys, there has been a downward trend in perceptions of quality of life (62.3% in 2022 and 69.3% in 2023) as well as previous non-COVID years (ranging from 68% to 71% between 2017-2019).

This year's survey also focused on issues of regionalism and regional cooperation and replicated many of the questions from the State of Public Opinion chapter of the 2000 *State of the Region* report developed by the Regional Studies Institute at ODU (now the Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy). Questions asked respondents about combining government services, barriers to regional cooperation, and support for regional mergers of local jurisdictions.

- Consistent with previous years, respondents rated the quality of life in their city and their neighborhood higher than they did for the region as a whole. About two-thirds rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent (65.8%) and 29.2% rated their city as fair. Only 4.8% rated their city's quality of life as poor. Neighborhood ratings of quality of life remain the highest, with 81.5% rating their neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 15.4% rated their neighborhood quality of life as fair and 3% rated it as poor.
- Hampton Roads residents were asked two questions focused on satisfaction with and trust in the police. About three-quarters (76.9%) of respondents indicated that they were either very (22.3%) or somewhat (54.6%) satisfied with the local police. Trust in the police was slightly higher with 79.8% of respondents trusting the police either a great deal (32.3%) or somewhat (46.5%). These perceptions vary, however, among various demographic groups.
- Respondents were asked: To what extent do you perceive crime and drugs to be a problem in your city? The most frequent response (36.4%) was "a moderate problem" and 29.4% rated crime and drugs to be a great problem (17.4%) or a very great problem (12%). Overall, almost two-thirds (65.8%) of respondents rated crime and drugs to be at least a moderate problem.
- Ratings of the economy have been on a downward trend since 2019. Less than two-fifths (38.4%) of those surveyed rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as excellent (4%) or good

(34.4%). A greater percentage (42.2%) rated economic conditions as fair and 17.8% of respondents rated them as poor.

- Respondents were asked to rate a variety of amenities and other features in Hampton Roads on a scale of very poor to very good. Restaurants (76.5%), higher education (70%), and quality of shopping (60.7%) received the most “good” and “very good” ratings, while earnings in wages (24.1%) and cost of living (20.6%) received the fewest good/very good ratings.
- Regarding combining government services, about half of respondents either favor or very much favor combining public housing (50.8%), fire services (50.5%), solid waste (48.5%) and water/sewer services (48.1%). There was less support for combining schools (39.2%), prisons/jails (36.4%) and police services (31.9%) across multiple jurisdictions.
- Respondents were mixed as to their approval of merging several Hampton Road cities into a single regional jurisdiction with only 39.1% indicating that they approve and 45.5% indicating that they disapproved. About 15% were unsure or did not wish to answer.
- In terms of politics, survey data collection took place during a span of time that included the decision by President Joe Biden to remove himself from the contest for the Democratic nomination. After Biden withdrew, a question was added to the survey that gave the final 237 survey respondents a chance to weigh in on that decision. More than 82% of respondents supported Biden’s decision to not run for re-election.
- Given national headlines about concerns of safety at the polls, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the election security at their polling place. More than 80% indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied and less than 9% were very or somewhat dissatisfied.
- Respondents were asked if they thought flooding has increased, decreased, or remained the same in Hampton Roads over the past 30 years. More than half (55.6%) of respondents felt that flooding has increased while more than one-third believe that flooding has either decreased (12.2%) or remained the same (22.8%). More than 40% of respondents reported experiencing school or work delays/closures (47%) or difficulty in commuting to work (43.9%) due to flooding in the past five years.

Introduction

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) recently completed data collection for the 15th annual Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight into residents' perceptions of the quality of life in Hampton Roads as well as other topics of local interest such as perceptions of police, politics, the economy, education, and health. Funding for the 2024 survey was provided by the Social Science Research Center and the Dragas Center for Economic Policy. The SSRC would like to thank the College of Arts and Letters and the ODU Office of Research for their continued support of the survey. A total of 640 telephone surveys were completed between June 4 and August 16, 2024. Surveys were completed over the telephone as they have been for all years except 2020 and 2021. This year, a mixture of listed and random-digit dial (RDD) cell phone and landline telephone numbers were used. In accordance with the practice of many social science surveys and political polls, this year we added education as a weighting variable, along with the variables that were included in our weighting protocol previously (phone type, gender, age, race, and Hispanic background). The "new" weight including education is used throughout the report except where noted. Changes to weighting this year and the temporary switch to web survey methodology during the Covid-19 pandemic limit, to some degree, the ability to compare this year's results with those from previous years, or to confidently generalize the results to the Hampton Roads population as a whole. However, some comparisons are provided in this year's report.

Survey Demographics

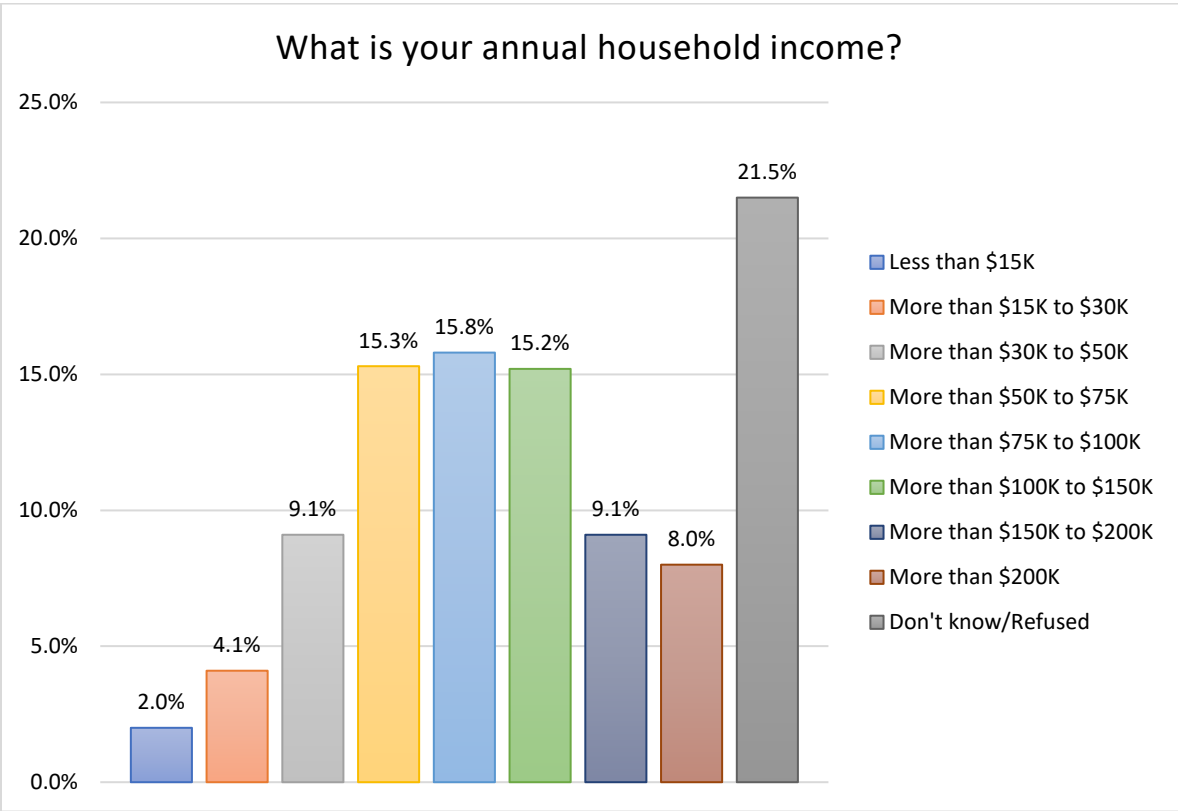
While most of the data reported here is weighted as described above, demographic data described below is unweighted to provide a description of the demographic coverage achieved by the survey. Of the 640 citizens interviewed, 54.8% were white, 26.1% were Black or African American, and 15.6% considered themselves to be another race/ethnicity. This includes 1.1% identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.9% Asian and 7.8% multiracial. In a separate question, 6.4% of respondents indicated that they were of Hispanic/Latino origin.

More than 45% of respondents were male (45.3%) and 53.1% were female, and the average age was 51.5. About one in three (36.3%) of the respondents received a high school diploma or GED, completed trade or professional school, or attended some college. An additional 51.1% of respondents completed a bachelor's or graduate degree. More than half of respondents were married (52.3%) and 16.4% were divorced, separated or widowed. Less than one-quarter of those surveyed were single and not living with a partner (21.6%) while a small portion of single people reported living with a partner (7%).

Race	Percentage
White	54.8%
Black/African American	26.1%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.1%
Asian	0.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2%
Multiracial	7.8%
Other	5.6%
Don't Know/Refused	3.5%
Hispanic/Latino Origin?	Percentage
Yes	6.4%
No	91.7%
Don't know/Refused	1.9%
Gender	Percentage
Male	45.3%
Female	53.1%
Prefer to self-identify	0.8%
Refused	0.8%
Highest level of school completed	Percentage
Some grade school	0.3%
Some high school	0.9%
High school diploma/GED	12.5%
Completed trade/professional school	3.0%
Some college	20.8%
Associate degree	10.3%
Bachelor's degree	27.5%
Graduate degree	23.6%
Other	0.6%
Don't Know/Refused	0.5%
Age	Age in years
Average age (years)	51.5
Marital Status	Percentage
Single, not living with partner	21.6%
Single, living with partner	7.0%
Married	52.3%
Divorced/separated	9.4%
Widowed	7.0%
Don't know/Refused	2.6%

Only 6.1% of participants reported their annual household income as \$30,000 or less, a quarter of respondents (24.4%) reported earning more than \$30,000 to \$75,000, while 48.1% earned more than

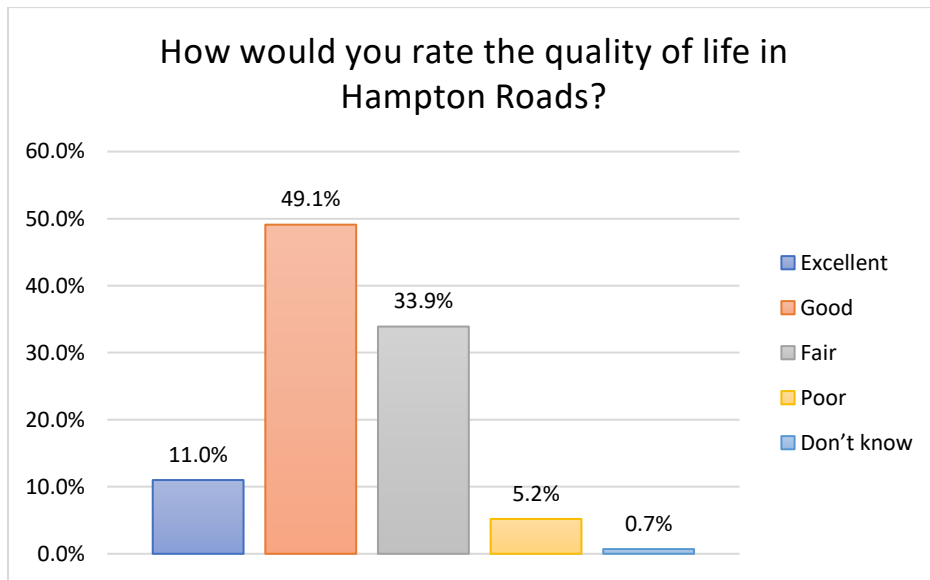
\$75,000. This is the most commonly refused demographic question in the survey, with 17.3% declining to answer and another 4.2% responding with “don’t know.”



Quality of Life

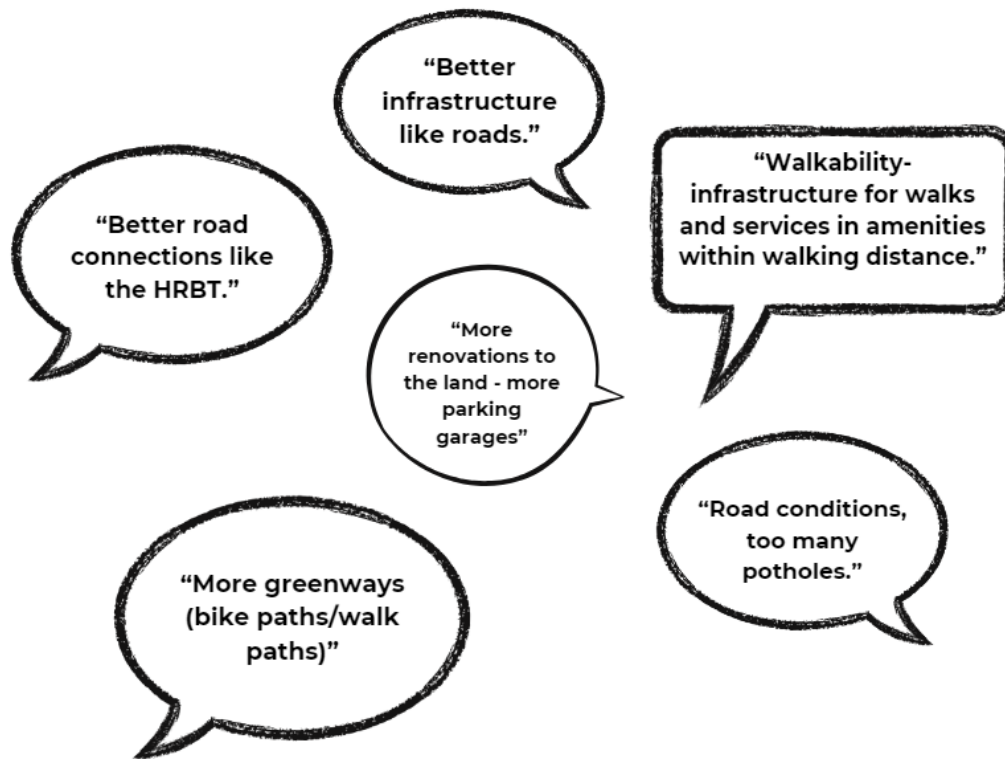
Perceptions of the Region, City, & Neighborhood

A majority, but less than two-thirds, of respondents rated the quality of life in the region as excellent or good (60.1%). This is lower than last year (62.3%) and is lower than most previous pre-COVID years (ranging from 68% to 71% between 2017-2019). About one-third rated Hampton Roads' quality of life as fair (33.9%) and 5.2% rated it as poor.



Those who rated the quality of life in the region as either fair or poor were asked: *What is the one thing that would most improve the quality of life in Hampton Roads?* The responses were reviewed and coded to identify major themes. Among the most frequently mentioned improvements were: improving infrastructure, increasing or improving access to social service and other outreach programs, and the need to reduce crime.

The most frequent theme among the responses was improving the infrastructure of Hampton Roads, particularly road conditions, but also accessibility to parking and greenways (e.g., bike lanes and walk paths). Some example responses are noted below:



The second most frequent theme observed in the responses is to increase or improving access to social services and other outreach programs. Respondents said:



The need to reduce crime rates and violence was also frequently mentioned by respondents, with many stating:



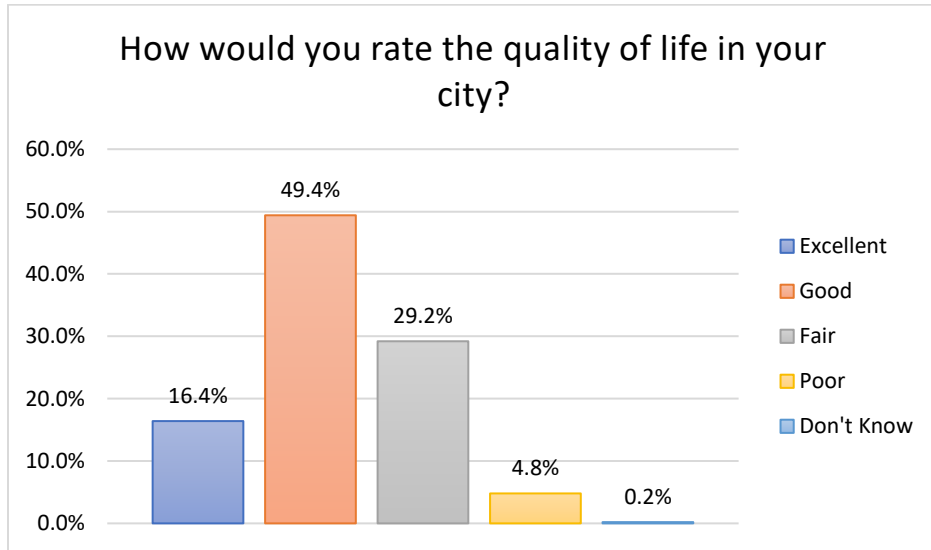
Other commonly mentioned ways to improve the quality of life in Hampton Roads included: Reducing the costs of housing and rent and increasing accessibility to housing, reducing traffic conditions, increasing pay rates and minimum wage, and addressing the unhoused.

Some respondents expressed that reducing housing costs and increasing accessibility to affordable housing options could improve the quality of life in Hampton Roads. Respondents mentioned:

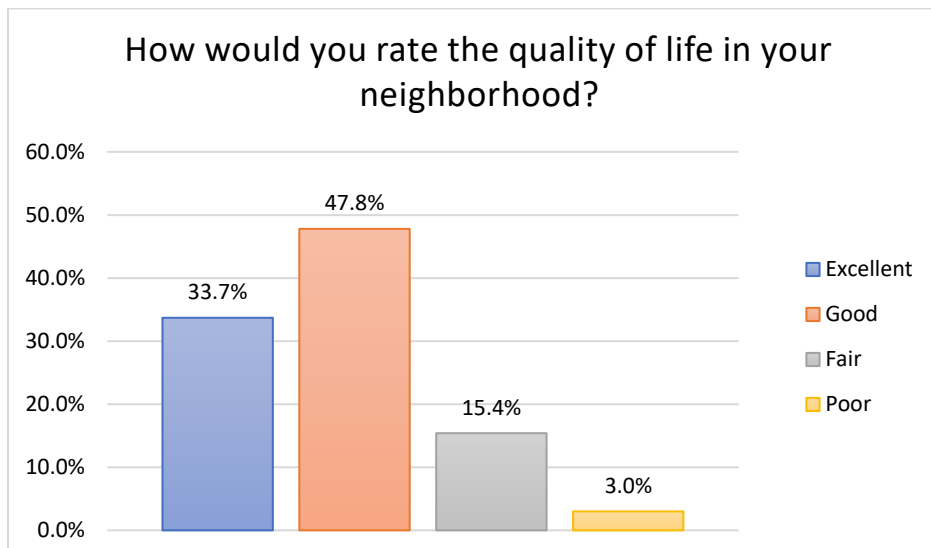


Respondents mentioned other concerns including the amount of traffic (congestion) in Hampton Roads, low wages/income/pay, and the number of unhoused persons and the need for more shelters.

Consistent with previous years, respondents rated the quality of life in their city and their neighborhood higher than they did for the region as a whole. About two-thirds rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent (65.8%) and 29.2% rated their city as fair. Only 4.8% rated their city’s quality of life as poor.

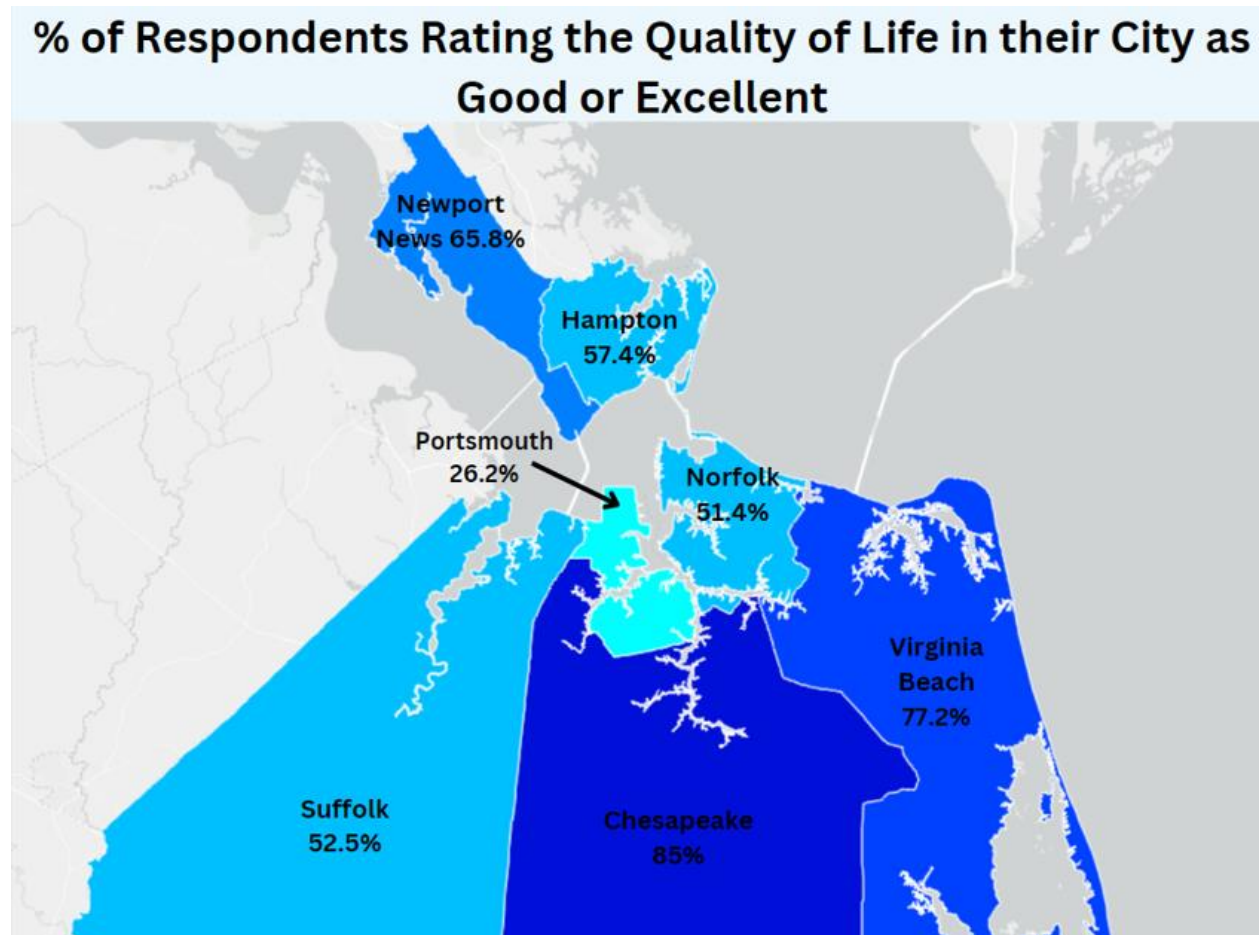


Neighborhood ratings of quality of life were the highest, with 81.5% rating their neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 15.4% rated their neighborhood quality of life as fair and 3.0% rated it as poor.



As in previous years, respondents varied in their ratings of quality of life in their city, with those living in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach having the largest percentage of excellent and good ratings (85% and 77.2%, respectively). Almost two-thirds of residents in Newport News (65.8%) and more than half in

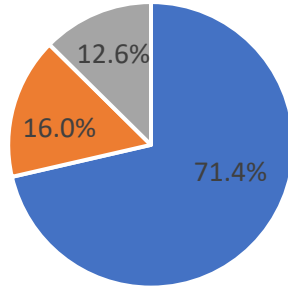
Hampton (57.4%) also rated their city as excellent or good. Slightly more than half of Suffolk (52.5%) and Norfolk (51.4%) residents rated the quality of their city as good or excellent while roughly only one quarter of residents in Portsmouth (26.2%) rated the quality of life that highly.



Plans to Leave Hampton Roads

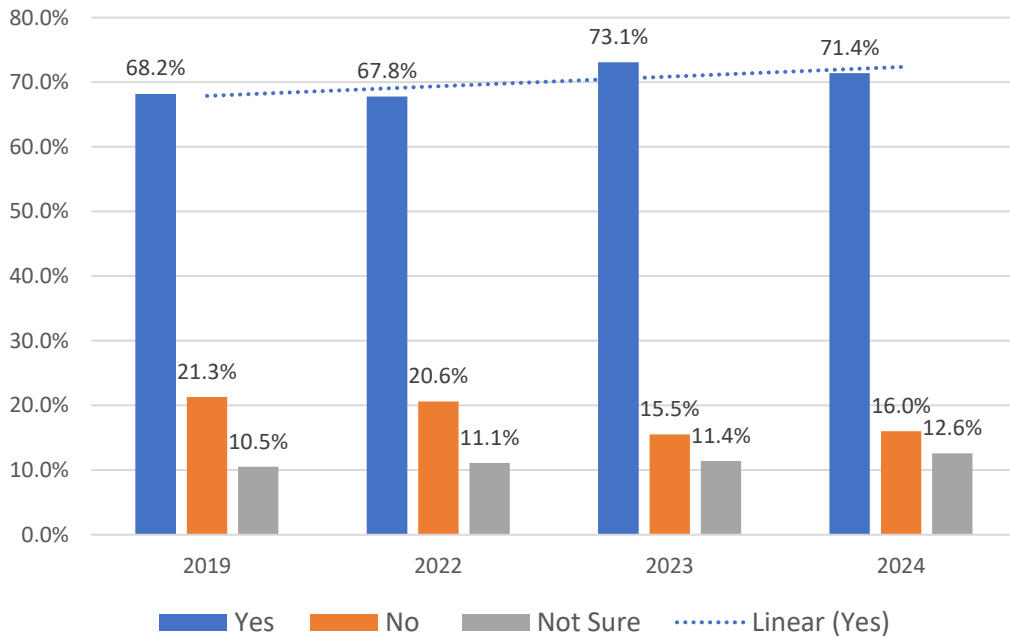
Respondents were asked how long they have lived in Hampton Roads. The responses ranged from less than a year to 91 years with an average of 29.3 years. Respondents were also asked if they plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now. Most respondents (71.4%) indicated that they still plan to live in the region while 16% do not plan to still be living in Hampton Roads in five years and 12.6% were unsure. Over time, the percentage of respondents who indicate that they do plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now has generally been increasing slightly since before the pandemic (68.2% in 2019 and 73.1% last year) while the percentage of those who are unsure has remained fairly steady.

Do you plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

Do you plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now?

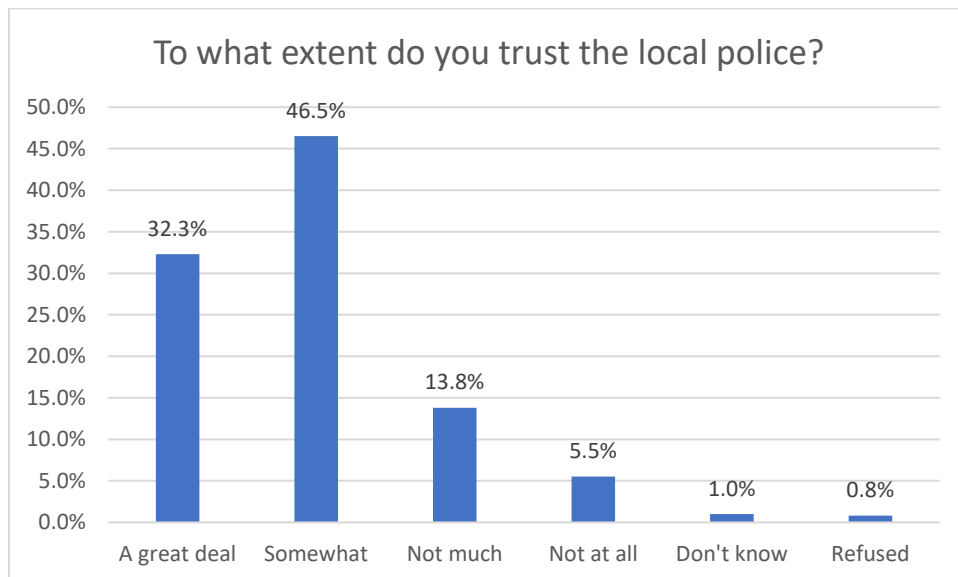
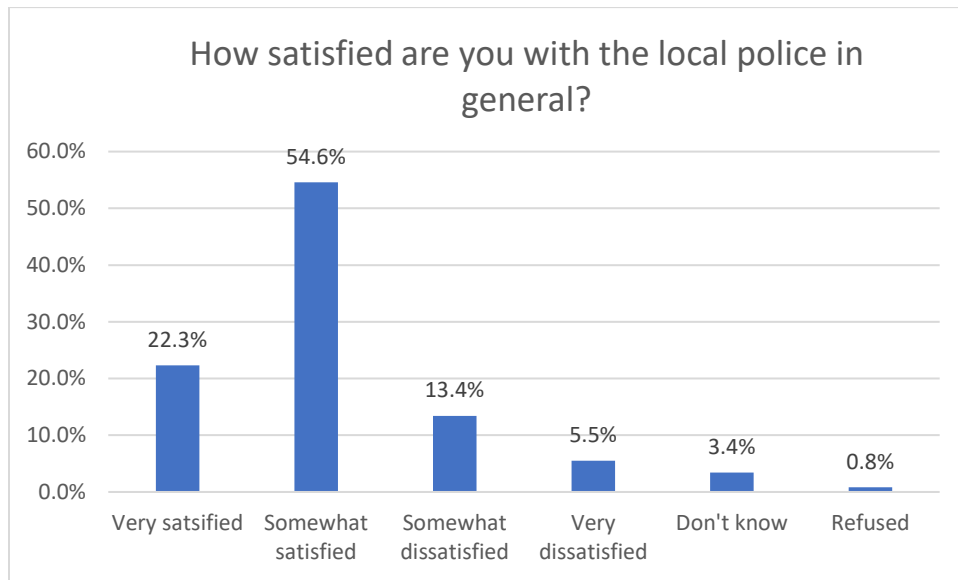


Attitudes Towards the Police & Fear of Crime

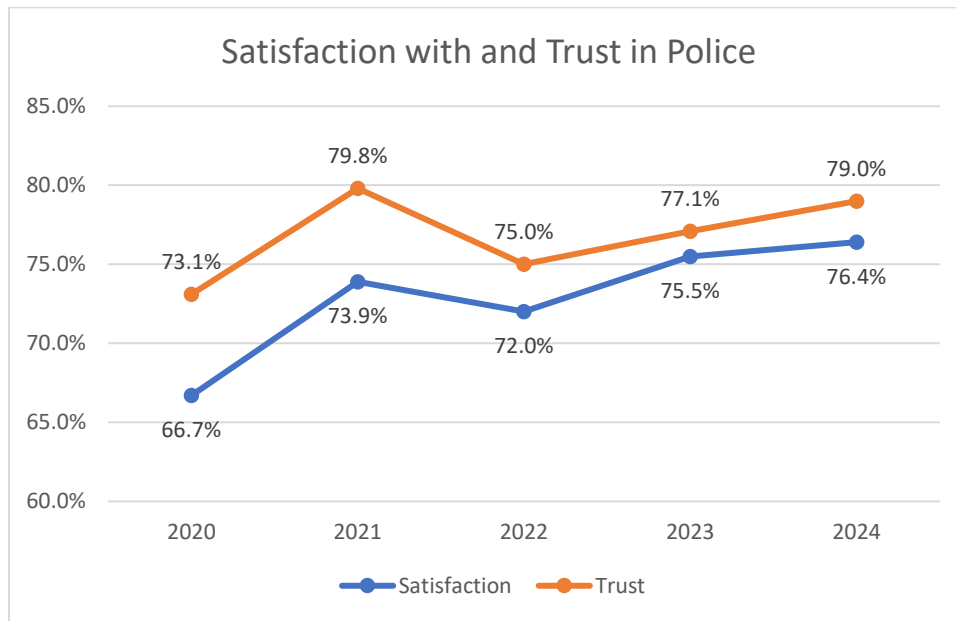
Satisfaction with and Trust in the Police

Hampton Roads residents were asked two questions focused on satisfaction with and trust in the police.

About three-quarters (76.9%) of respondents indicated that they were either very (22.3%) or somewhat (54.6%) satisfied with the local police. Trust in the police was slightly higher with 79.8% of respondents trusting the police either a great deal (32.3%) or somewhat (46.5%).



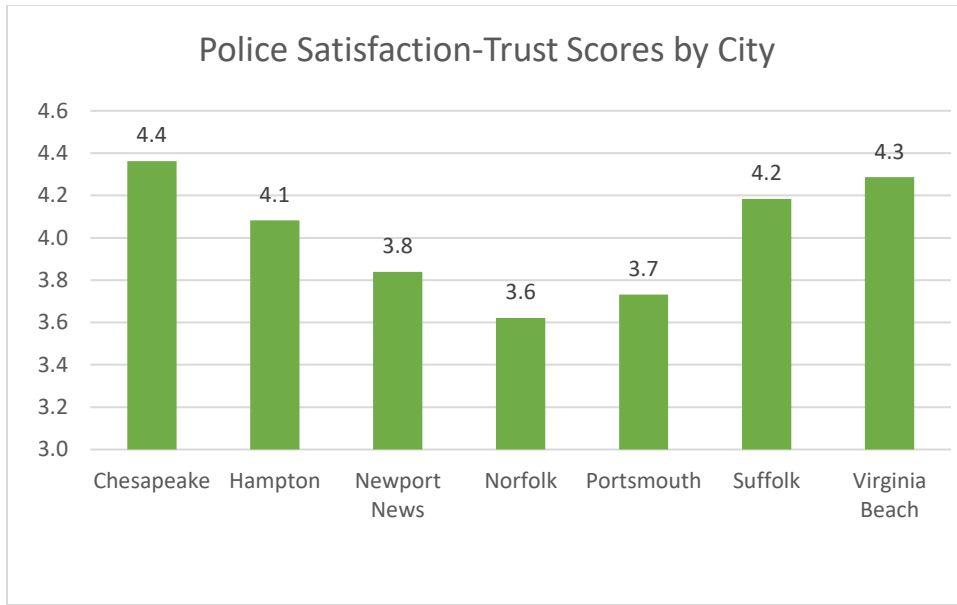
These questions were also asked in previous years. Looking over time¹, trust is consistently higher than satisfaction and it appears that overall perceptions of the police have become more positive in the last few years. Note that these trends follow some highly publicized events in the early 2020s (e.g., the deaths of Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd), anti-police protests, the Black Lives Matter movement, and efforts to defund the police.



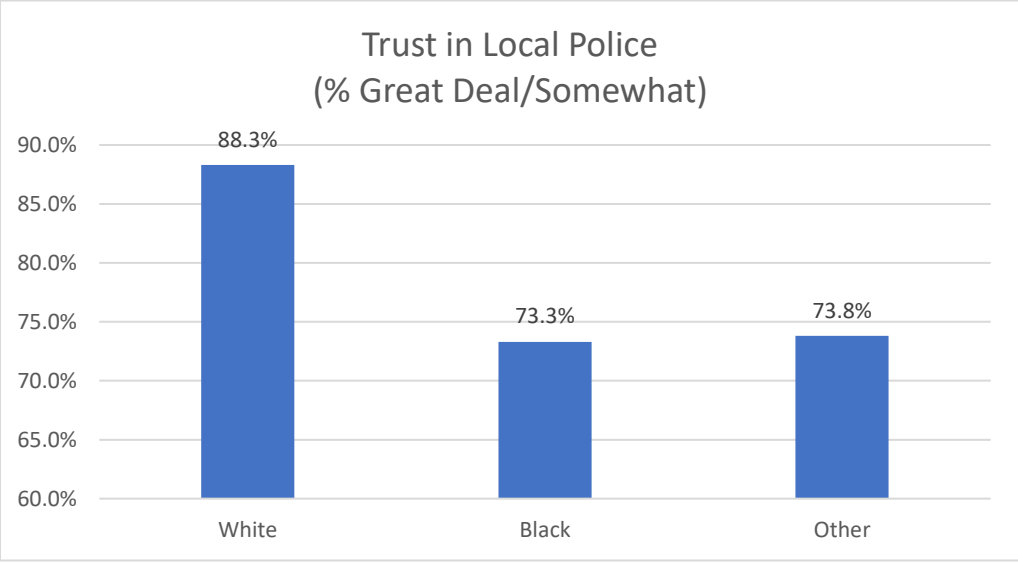
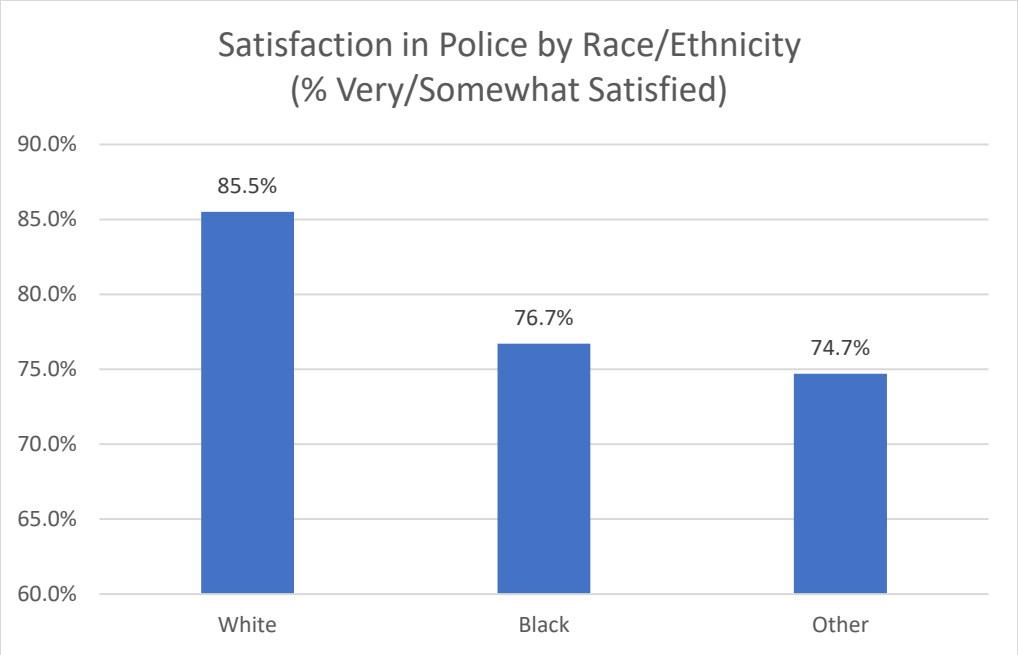
Satisfaction and Trust in the Police: Differences Between Cities & Demographic Groups

To further explore variation in attitudes towards the police, a composite scale of the two measures was created ranging from 0-6, where higher values indicated more positive attitudes (greater trust and satisfaction) towards the police. Several comparisons provide some interesting results including that the combined satisfaction-trust scale varied significantly by city. Consistent with trends from previous years, there are higher levels of satisfaction and trust in the wealthier and less demographically diverse cities of Virginia Beach (80.5% satisfied and 82.5% trust) and Chesapeake (83.0% satisfied and 85.0% trust) and less trust/satisfaction for the police in the less wealthy and more racially diverse cities such as Newport News, Norfolk and Portsmouth (66.7% satisfied and 74.1% trust).

¹ This comparison over time was done with the original weighting procedure (without education) in order to be consistent with the previous years' weighting.



Previous findings from the Life in Hampton Roads survey and other research nationwide show that persons of color are less satisfied with and trusting of the police than are whites. This year’s survey continues to show that persons of color are less satisfied and trusting of the police than are whites. More detailed data show that 85.5% of whites are either somewhat or very satisfied with the police. Alternatively, only about three-quarters of black and other respondents report being satisfied or very satisfied with the police. These differences were more pronounced when examining trust in the local police. Eighty-eight percent of whites reported trusting the local police a great deal (49%) or at least somewhat (39%) while only 73% of black respondents and those of other races report trusting the police somewhat or a great deal. Focusing on the highest level of trust, nearly half of white respondents reported trusting the police a great deal (49.3%) while only 18.8% of black respondents and 26.2% of other persons of color reported that they trust the police a great deal. To be clear, the data show that a majority of persons of color report general satisfaction and trust in the police, but the differences between blacks and whites remains notable.



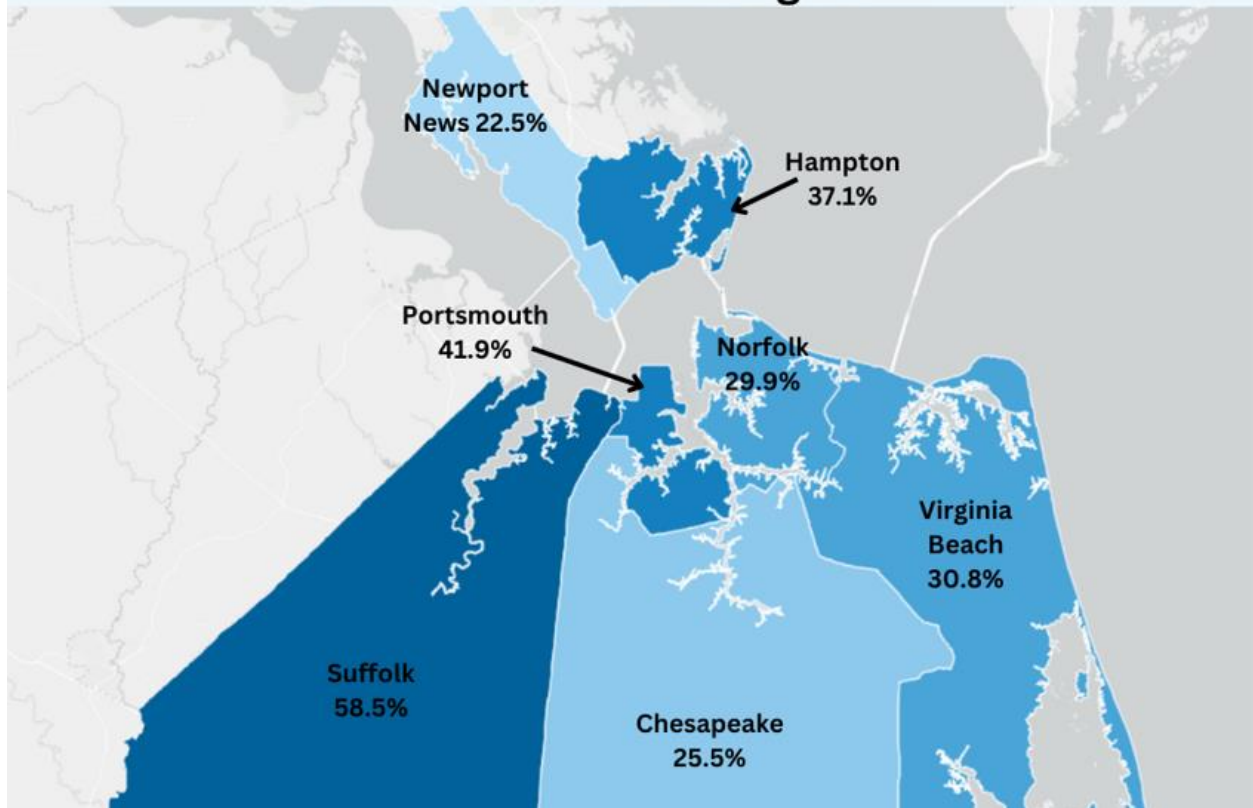
Consistent with prior years, male and female respondents held similar attitudes towards the police, but there were fairly striking differences by age of respondents with older respondents holding more positive attitudes towards the police than young respondents. The two younger age groups (ages 18-29 and 30-44) held relatively low levels of satisfaction with the police while those in the 45-64 age group had more positive views and the oldest group (ages 65 and older) reported the most favorable perceptions of the police.



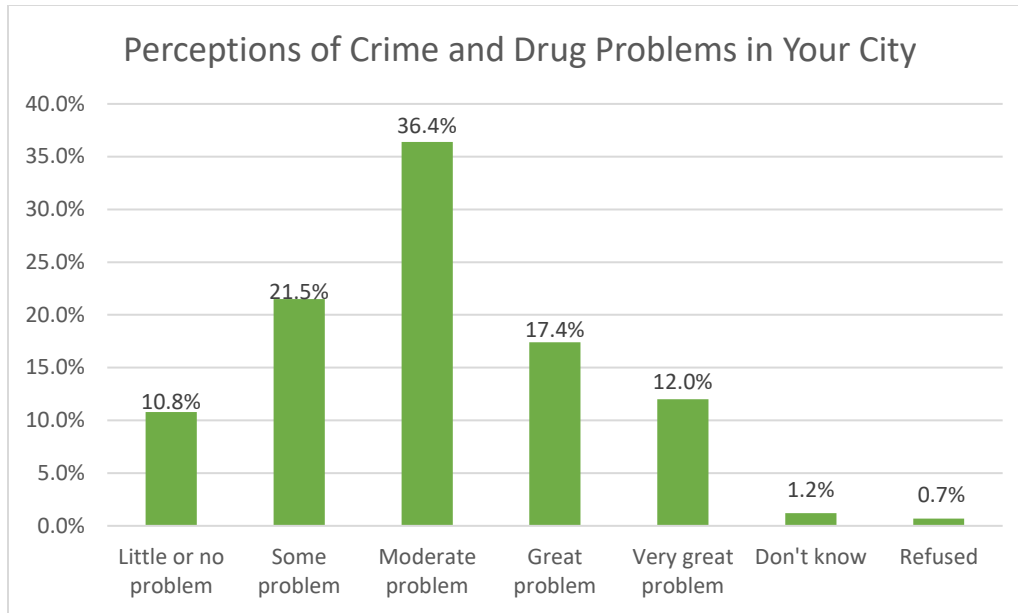
Combining Police Services Among Cities & Perceptions of Crime and Drugs

Respondents were asked to what extent they favored combining various services among the cities in Hampton Roads. There was significant variation between cities in terms of combining police services. Only in Suffolk did more than half of respondents (58.5%) favor or very much favor combining police services. Respondents from Portsmouth (41.9%) and Hampton (37.1%) were more likely to support combining police services than those living in Virginia Beach (30.8%), Norfolk (29.9%), or Chesapeake (25.5%). Newport News had the lowest percentage of respondents in favor of combining police services (22.5%).

% of Respondents in Favor/Very Much Favor of Combining Police Services Among Cities

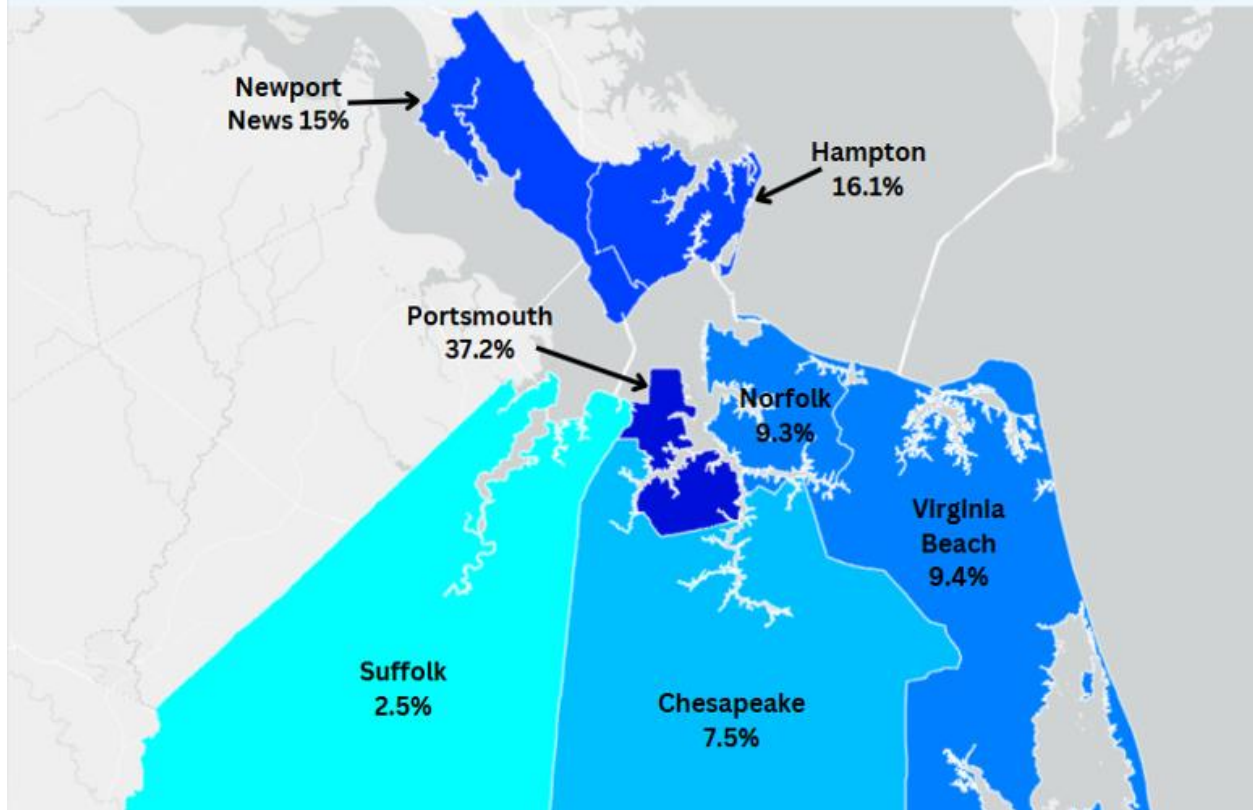


Respondents were asked: To what extent you perceive crime and drugs to be a problem in your city? The most frequent response (36.4%) was “a moderate problem” and 29.4% rated crime and drugs to be a great problem (17.4%) or a very great problem (12%). Overall, almost two-thirds (65.8%) of respondents rated crime and drugs to be at least a moderate problem.



Because the question asked about crime in one’s city, we examined variation in these perceptions across cities. There was significant variation across cities in the percentage of residents reporting that crime and drugs were a great or very great problem in their city. Concern about crime and drugs was highest in Portsmouth (37.2%), which was more than twice as high as in Hampton (16.1%) and Newport News (16.1%). Perceptions of crime and drugs as a great or very great problem did not reach double digits in Virginia Beach (9.4%), Norfolk (9.3%) and Chesapeake (7.5%). Only one person out of forty (2.5%) rated crime and drugs as a great or very great problem in Suffolk.

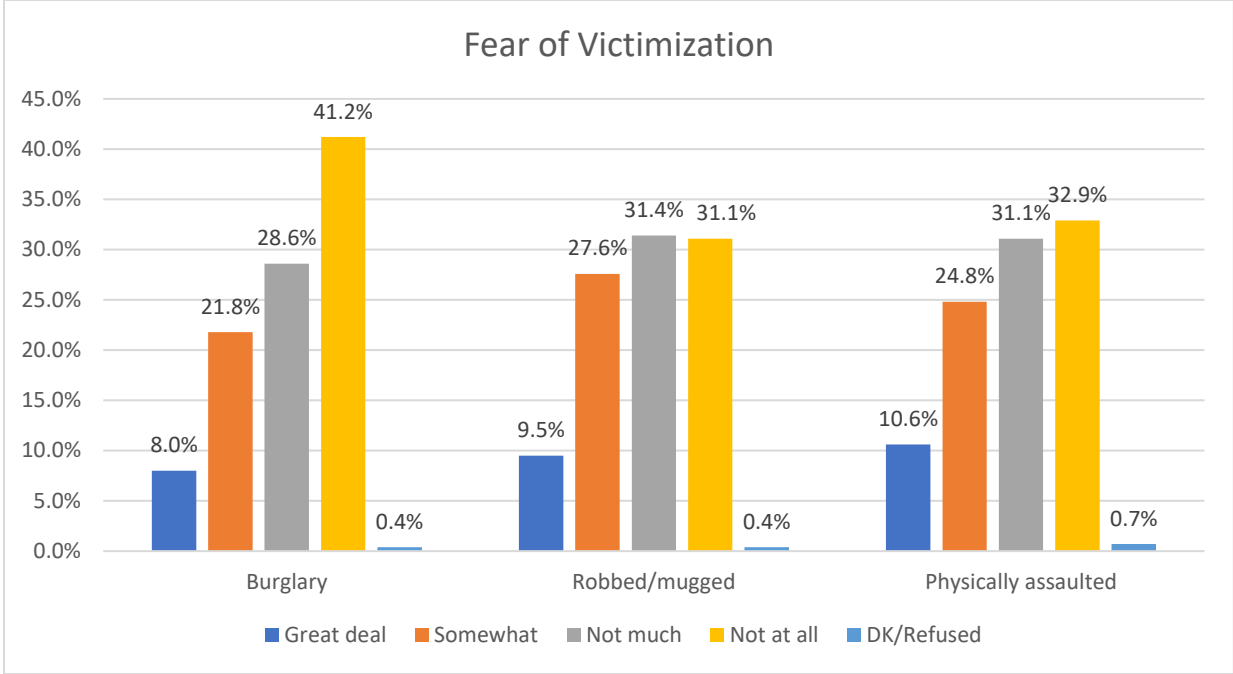
% Responding Crime/Drugs as a Very Great/Great Problem



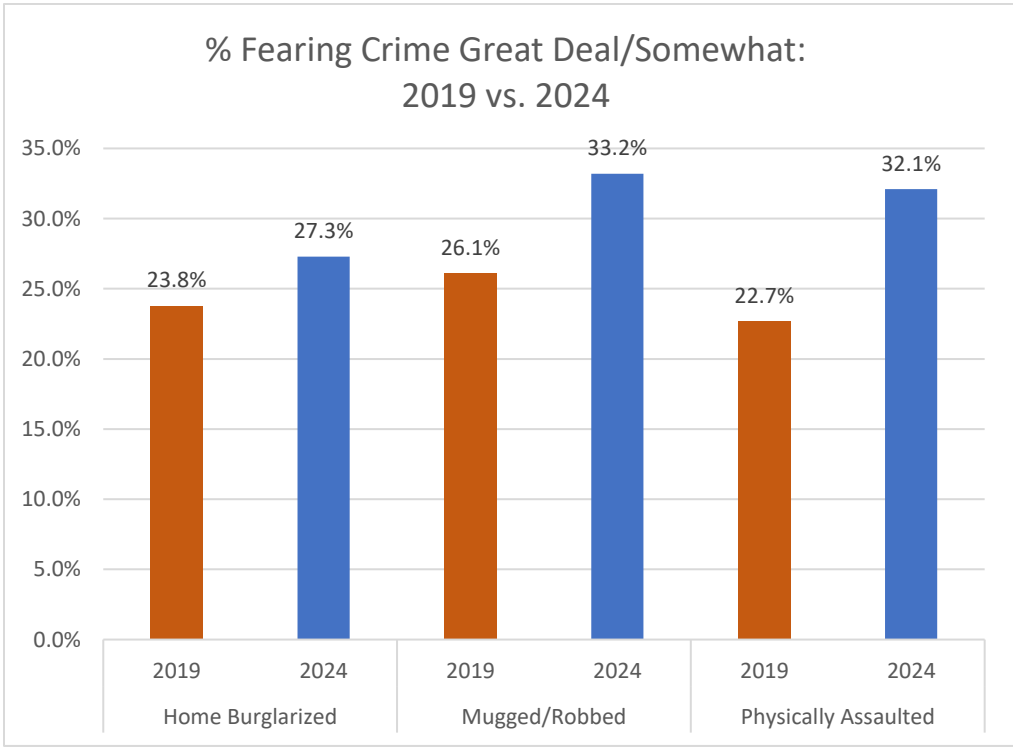
Fear of Criminal Victimization

There were three survey questions measuring respondents' fear of victimization. Specifically, the survey asked how afraid respondents were of: 1) *having your home broken into while you are at home*, 2) *being robbed or mugged on the street*, and 3) *being physically assaulted*. These are all serious crimes with the latter two involving very direct person-to-person crime potentially resulting in injury or even death.

About 8% of respondents report being afraid a great deal of being burglarized while at home, 9.5% fear being robbed or mugged a great deal and 10.6% report a great deal of fear of being physically assaulted. When combining the "great deal" and "somewhat categories," more than two-thirds of respondents fear being robbed or mugged on the street (37.1%) and being physically assaulted (35.4%).

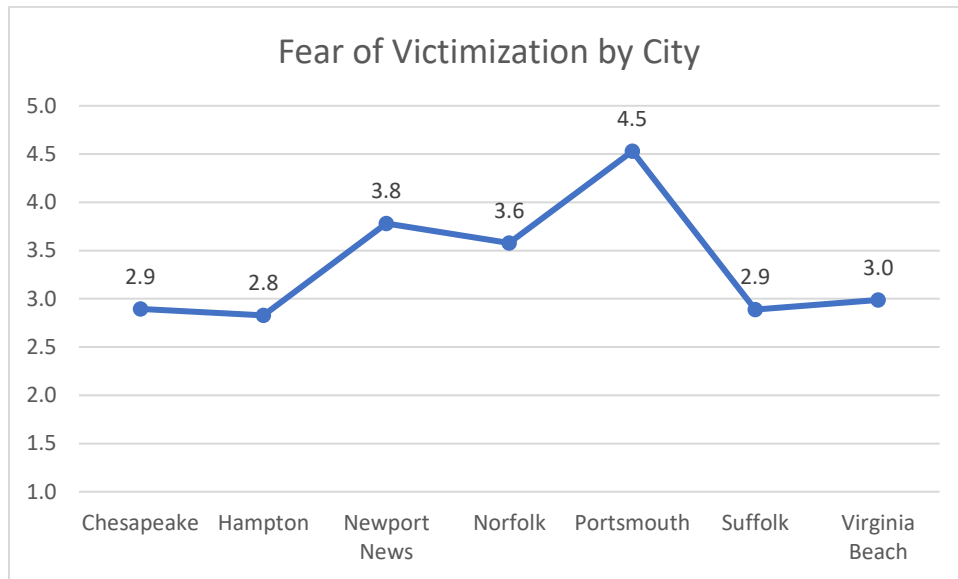


The fear of crime questions were previously asked in 2019 and the figure below shows that fear levels have increased slightly when focusing on fearing victimization “a great deal” or “somewhat.” Fear of burglary increased by 3.5%, robbery/mugging increased 7.1% and physical assault increased 8.4%².



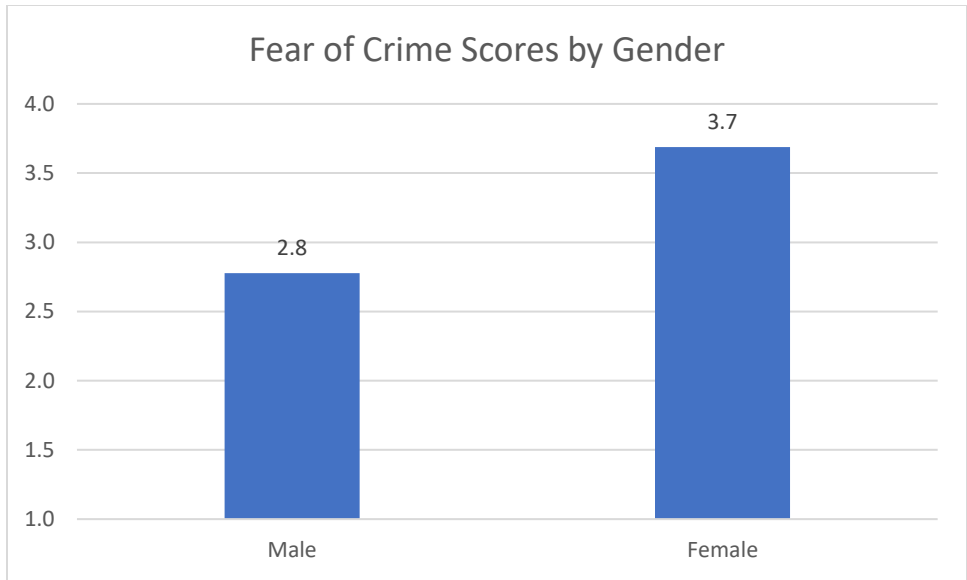
² This comparison over time was done with the original weighting procedure (without education) in order to be consistent with the previous year’s weighting.

The three fear items are highly correlated and form a reliable scale ranging from 0-9 with higher values indicating higher levels of fear. That scale is used to further examine how fear of crime varies across cities and across several demographic measures. Fear of crime varied significantly by city and, to some extent, reflect the earlier examination of perceived crime and drug problems in one's city. Clearly, residents of Chesapeake, Hampton, Suffolk and Virginia Beach report lower levels of fear of crime than in the other cities (mean values 3.0 or slightly lower). Newport News and Norfolk residents reported somewhat higher levels of fear while residents of Portsmouth were most fearful.

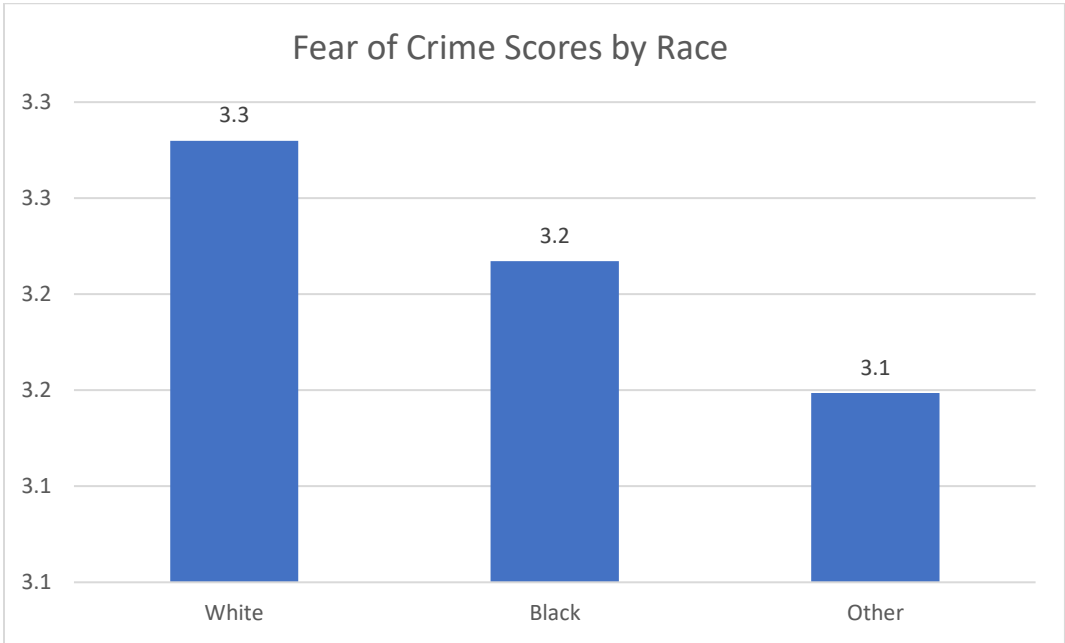


One of the most consistent findings in the research literature is that females report higher levels of fear than males. That was true in 2019 and remained true for respondents in 2024³.

³ See: Saad, L. (2023, November 16). Personal safety fears at three-decade high in U.S. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/544415/personal-safety-fears-three-decade-high.aspx>

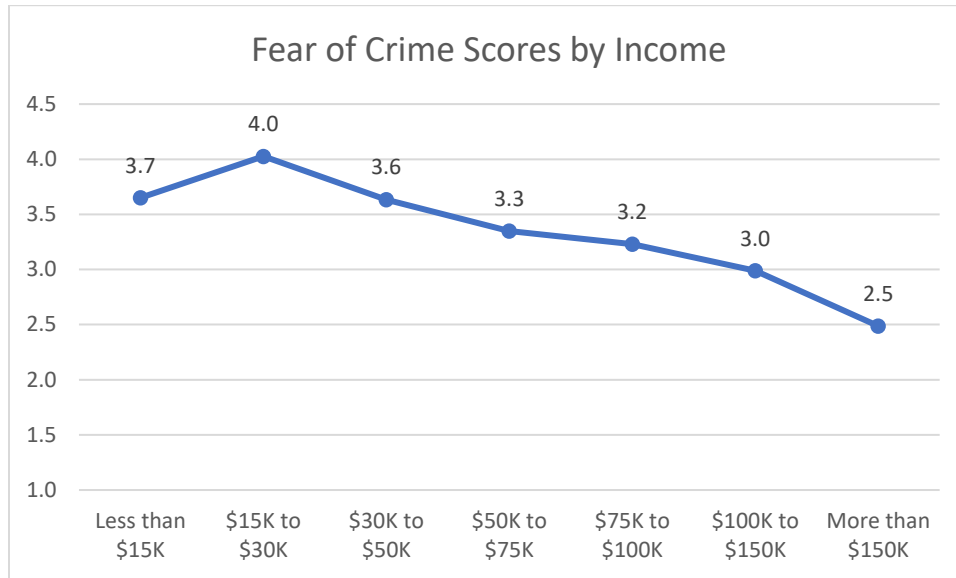


The relationship between fear of crime and race/ethnicity is more complex and appears to vary considerably across studies. In 2024, white respondents reported significantly higher levels of fear of crime than blacks or person of other racial backgrounds.



In general, wealth is associated with living in safer neighborhoods, lower levels of victimization, and levels of fear. In the 2019 survey, the relationship between household income and fear was not statistically different but did show lower levels of fear particularly among those households with incomes

over \$75,000. In Hampton Roads, the data showed that persons reporting higher levels of household income report significantly lower levels of fear⁴.

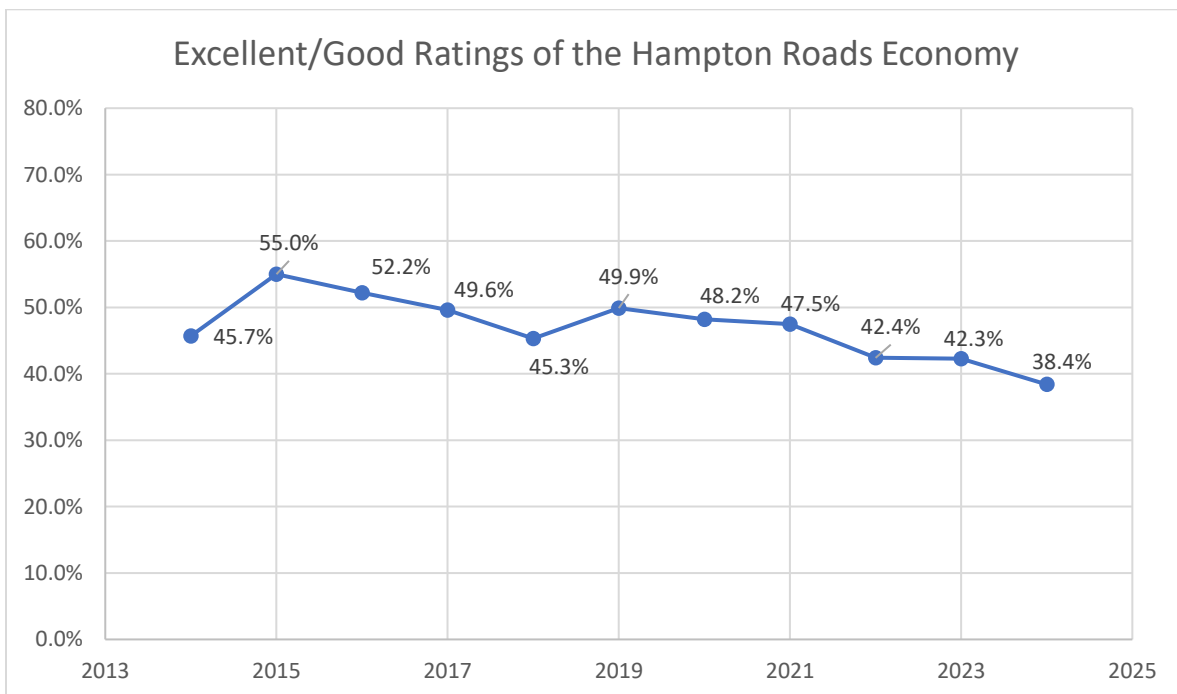
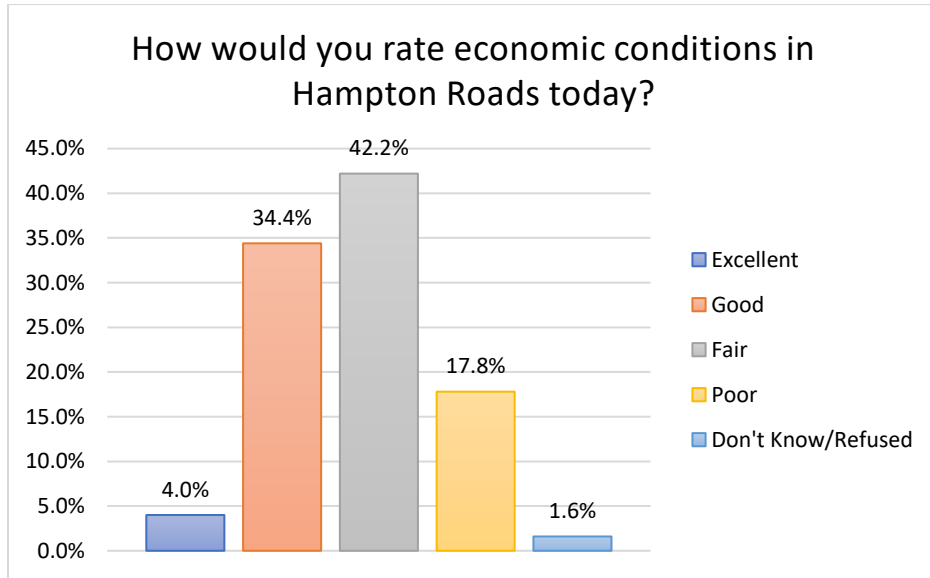


⁴ See: Saad, L. (2023, November 16). Personal safety fears at three-decade high in U.S. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/544415/personal-safety-fears-three-decade-high.aspx>

The Hampton Roads Economy & Amenities

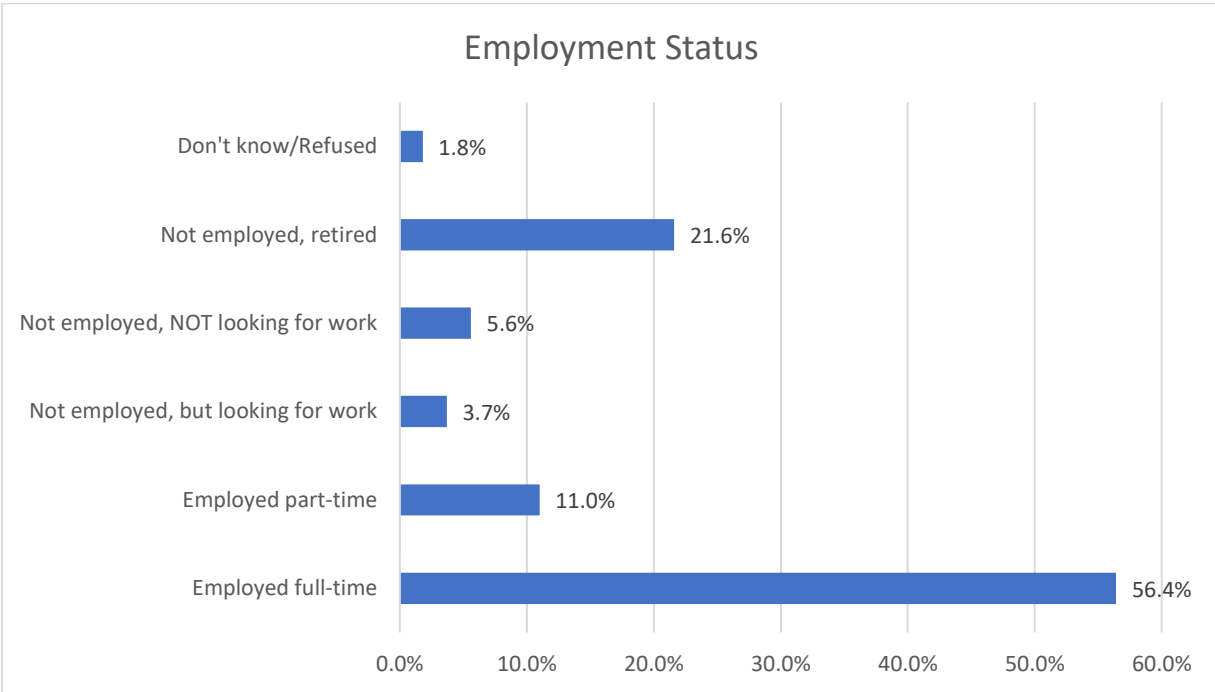
Ratings of the Economy

Hampton Roads' residents continue to have a less than rosy outlook on the regional economy, with 60% of survey respondents rating economic conditions in the area as either fair (42.2%) or poor (17.8%), and only 38.4% of respondents indicating a rating of good (34.4%) or excellent (4%). Ratings of the economy have been on a downward trend since 2019.



Employment

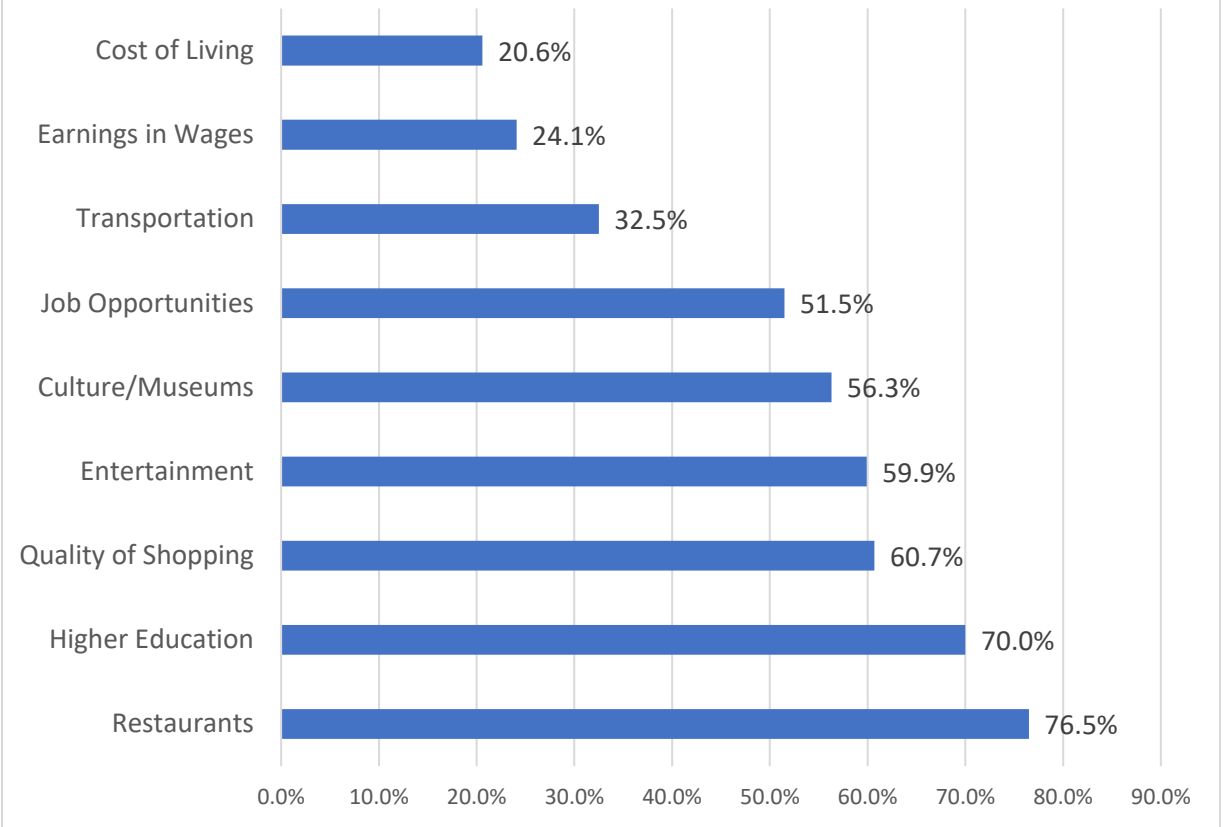
As can be seen from the graph below, more than half of those responding to this year’s survey were employed full-time (56.4%) while another 11% were employed part-time. Another 3.75% were not employed but looking for work (5.3%) while 5.6% were not employed and not looking for work. About one in five respondents (21.6%) were retired.



Local Amenities

Part of what contributes (or detracts) from an area’s quality of life are the various amenities available to residents and visitors. Respondents were asked to rate a variety of amenities and other features in Hampton Roads on a scale of very poor to very good. Restaurants (76.5%), higher education (70%), and quality of shopping (60.7%) received the most “good” and “very good” ratings. Between 50-59% of respondents also rated entertainment (59.9%), culture/museums (56.3%), and job opportunities (51.5%) as good or very good. Transportation was rated as good/very good by only 32.5% of responding residents while earnings in wages (24.1%) and cost of living (20.6%) received the fewest good/very good ratings.

Percentage Rating Hampton Roads Amenities as "Good" or "Very Good"

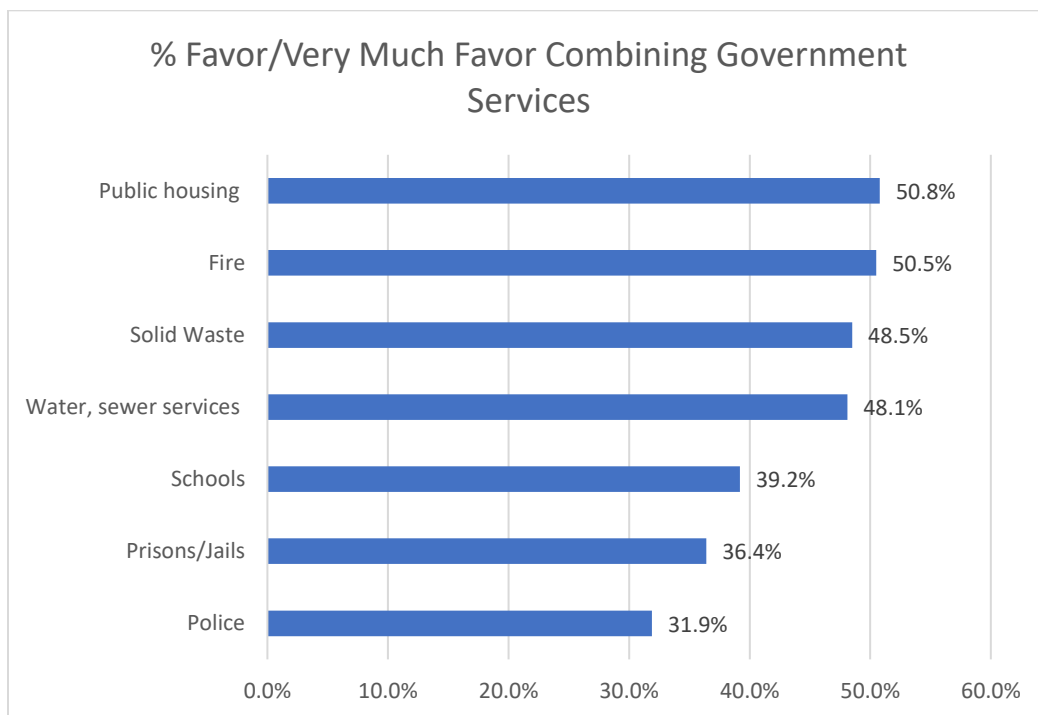


Regionalism & Performance of Local Government

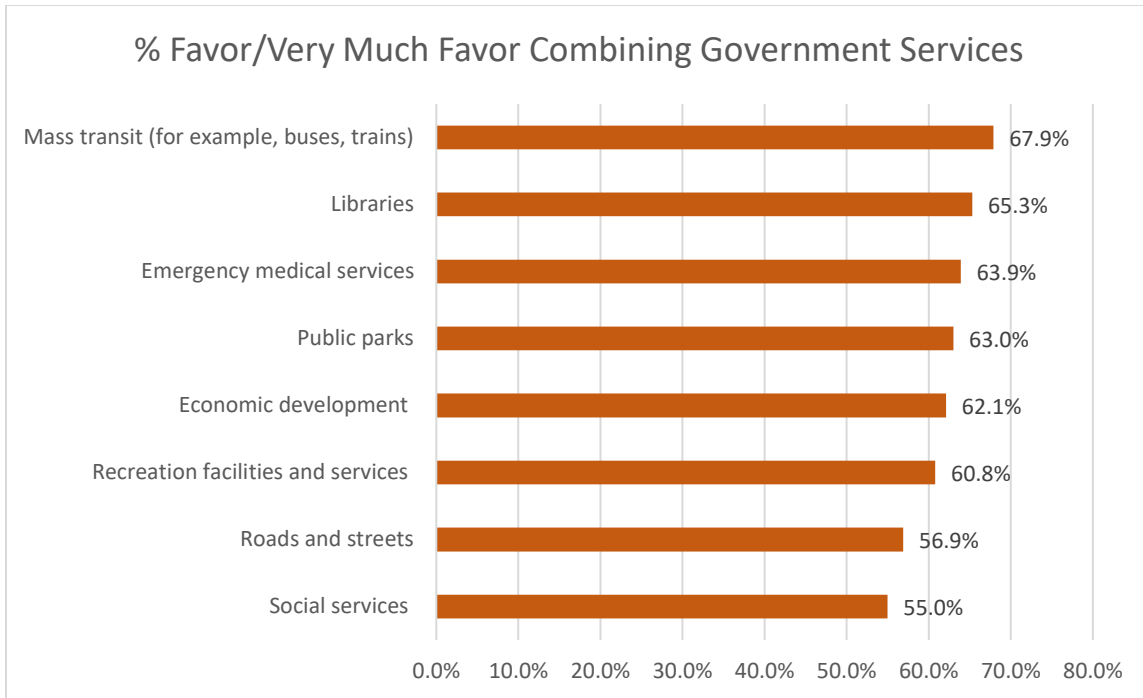
Much of this year's Life in Hampton Roads survey focused on issues of regionalism and regional cooperation and replicated many of the questions from the State of Public Opinion chapter of the 2000 *State of the Region* report developed by the Regional Studies Institute at ODU (now the Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy). Questions asked respondents about combining government services, barriers to regional cooperation, and support for regional mergers of local jurisdictions.

Combining Government Services

Respondents were asked to consider the possibility of formally combining government services among the cities, towns and counties in Hampton Roads and to indicate if they favor or oppose combining those services. About half of respondents either favor or very much favor combining public housing (50.8%), fire services (50.5%), solid waste (48.5%) and water/sewer services (48.1%). There was less support for combining schools (39.2%), prisons/jails (36.4%) and police services (31.9%) across multiple jurisdictions.



More than half respondents favor combining other services across jurisdictions including: social services (55%), roads and streets (56.9%), and recreation facilities and services (60.8%). More than 60% of respondents also favor combining economic development (62.1%), public parks (63%) and emergency medical services (63.9%). Combining library services (65.3%) and mass transit (buses/trains – 67.9%) received the most support.

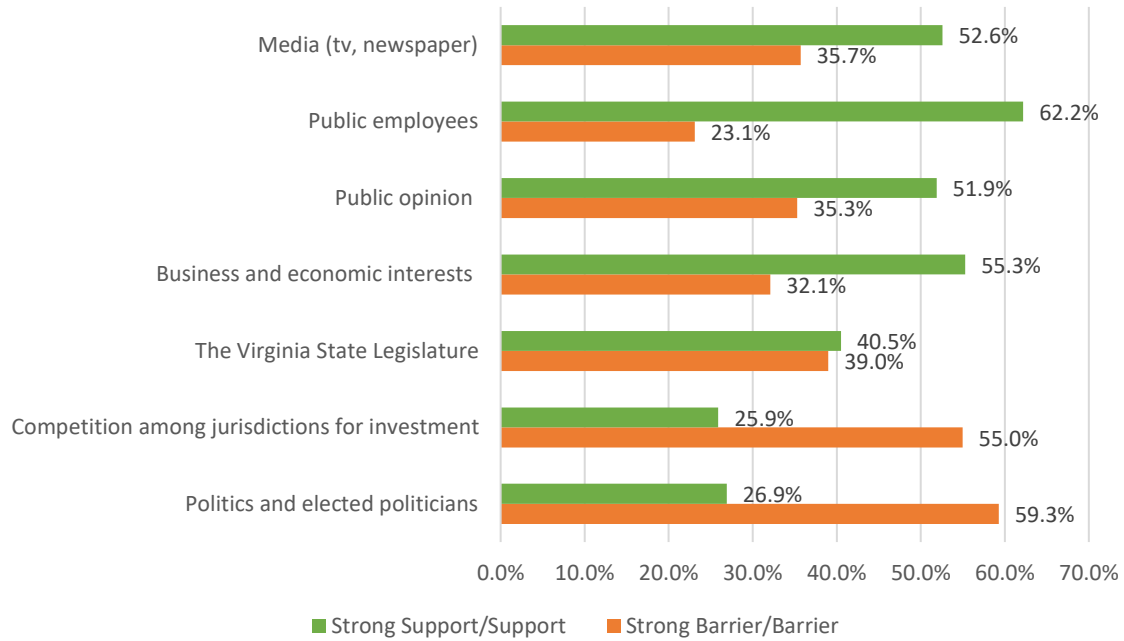


Barriers & Supports for Achieving Regional Cooperation

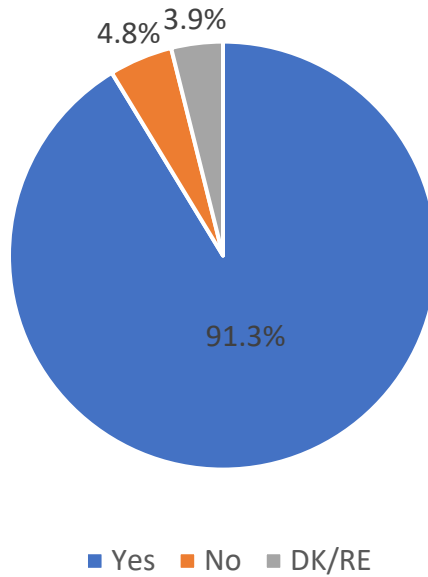
Respondents were asked to consider a list of items that might be barriers or supports for achieving regional cooperation among communities or agencies in Hampton Roads. More than half of respondents felt that media (tv, newspapers) (52.6%), public employees (62.2%), public opinion (51.9%), and business and economic interests (55.3%) are supports/strong supports for regional cooperation. More than half of respondents indicated that competition among jurisdictions for investment (55%) and politics and elected officials (59.3%) were barriers to regional cooperation.

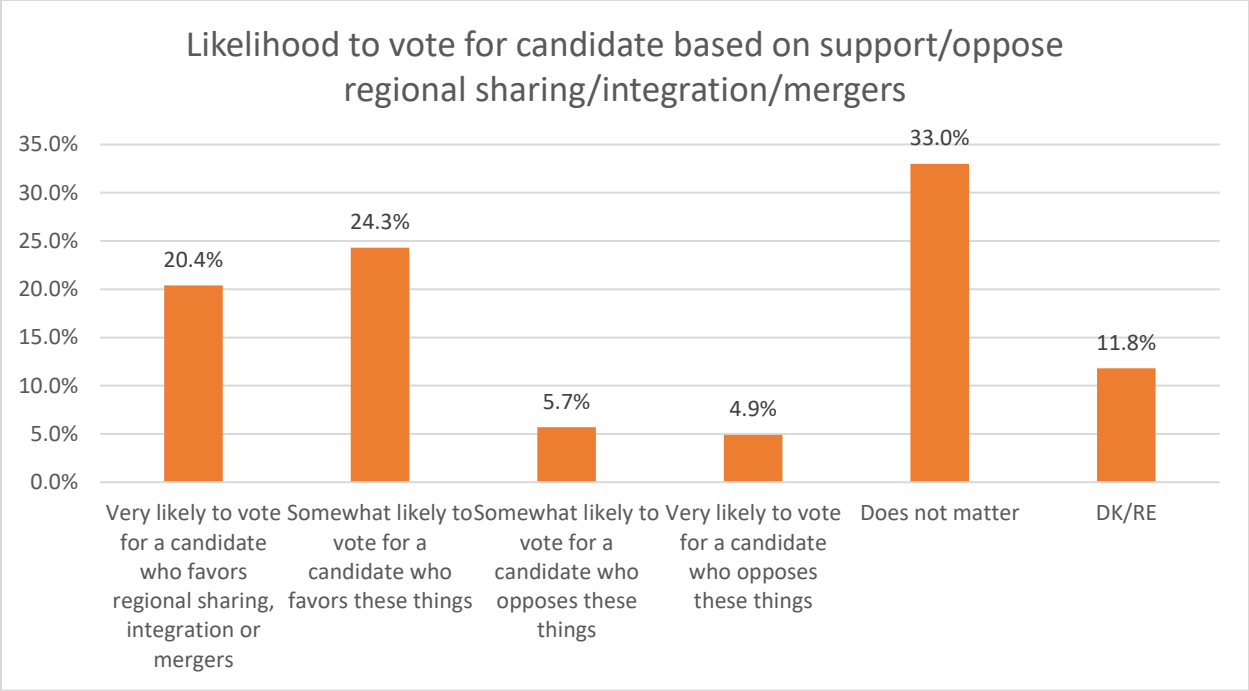
The vast majority of respondents (91.3%) believe that elected officials should work to encourage formal working relations among the different Hampton Roads jurisdictions. However, about one-third of respondents indicated that in a local election it would not matter if a candidate favored or supported regional sharing, integration, or regional mergers. About 45% indicated that they would be likely or very likely to vote for a candidate who favors regional sharing, integration, or mergers. Only 10.6% said that they would likely vote for a candidate who opposes these things.

Barriers/Supports for Regional Cooperation

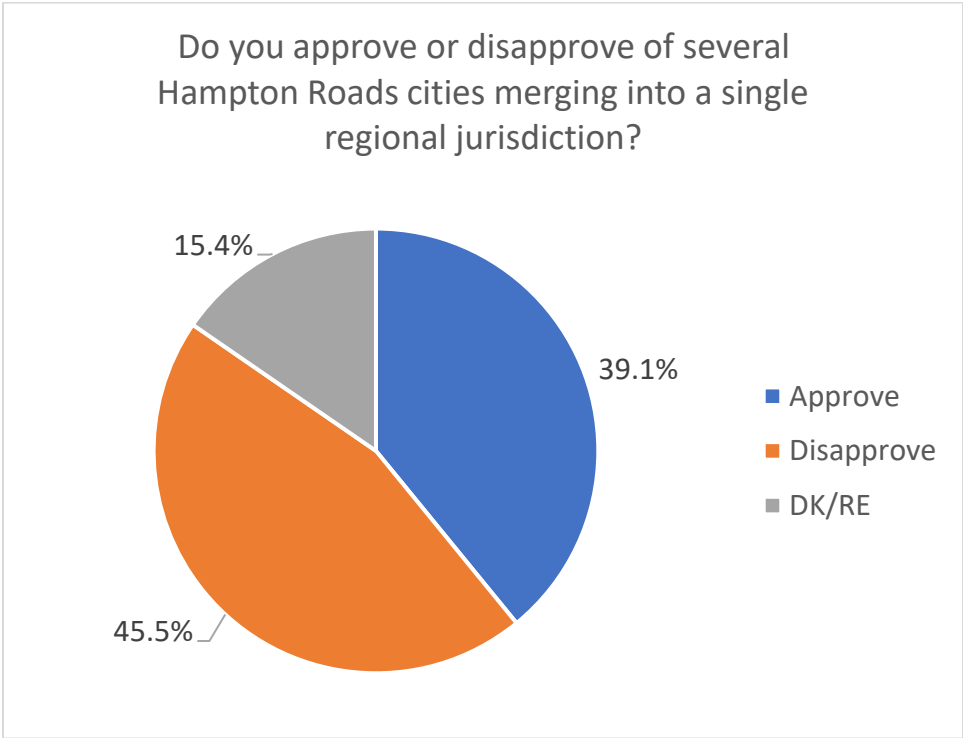


Elected officials should work to encourage formal working relations among the different Hampton Roads jurisdictions





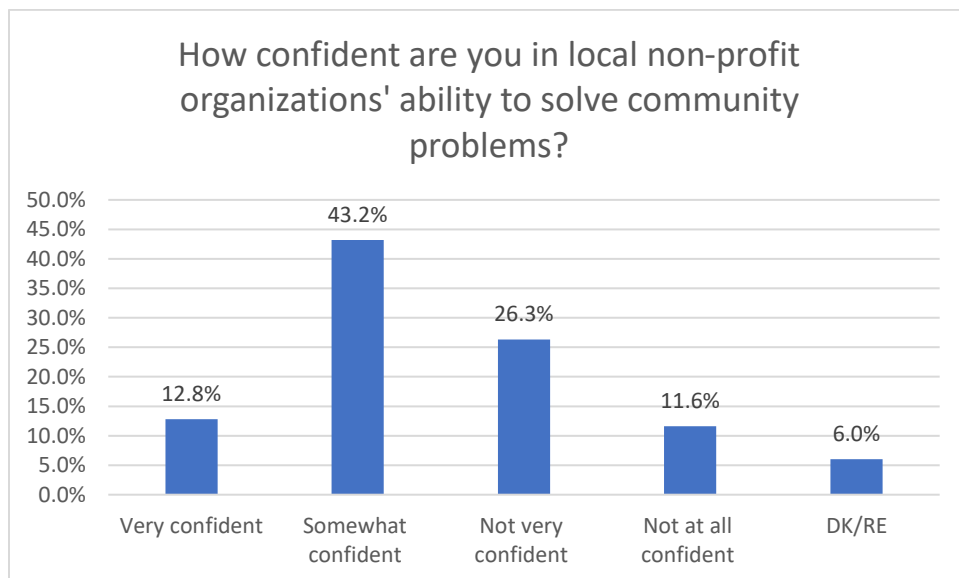
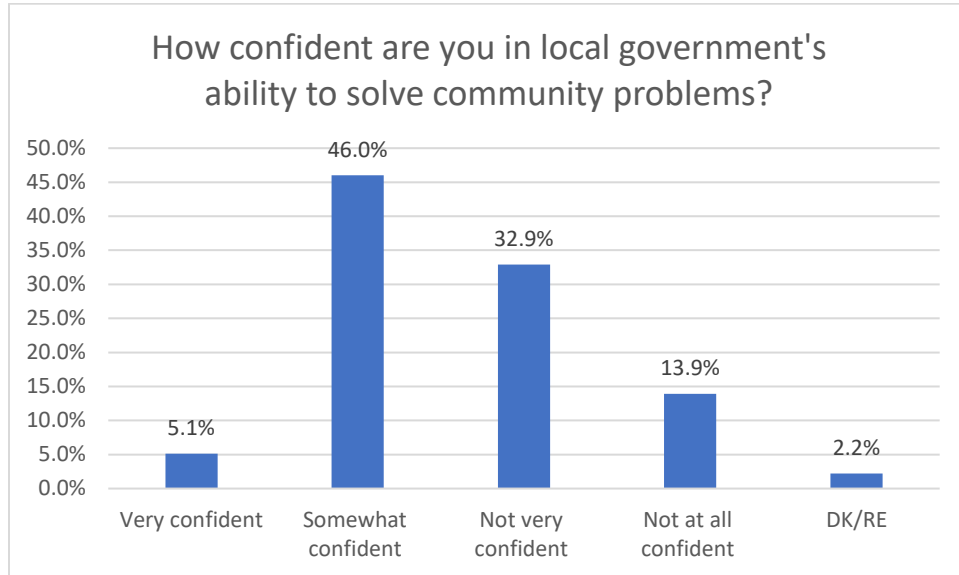
Respondents were mixed as to their approval of merging several Hampton Road cities into a single regional jurisdiction with only 39.1% indicating that they approve and 45.5% indicating that they disapproved. About 15% were unsure or did not wish to answer.



Performance of Local Government

Respondents were asked how confident they were in the ability of their local government to solve community problems and how confident they were in local non-profit organizations to do the same.

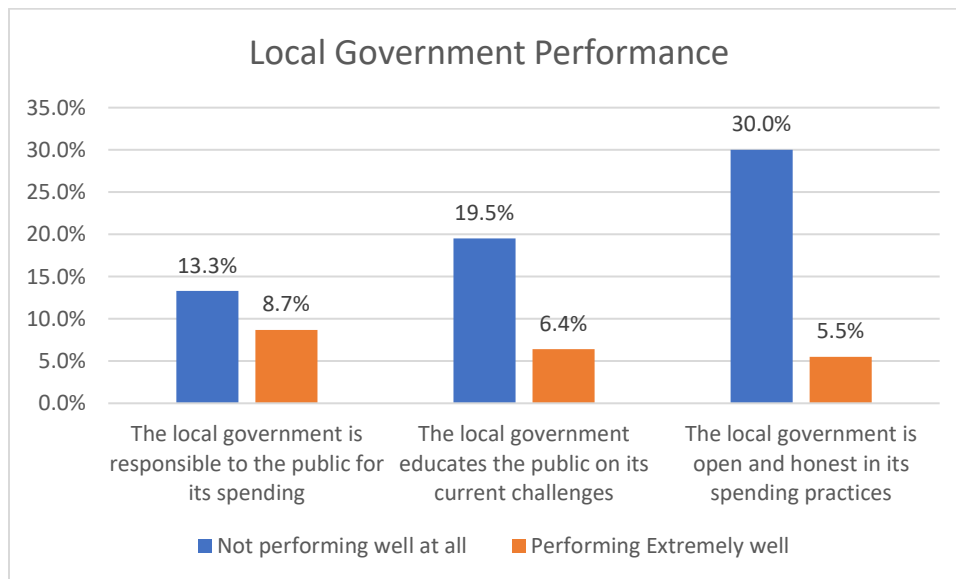
Residents expressed slightly higher levels of confidence in non-profit organizations with 56% indicating that they were somewhat or very confident in the ability of local non-profits to solve community problems compared to 51.1% who felt similarly about local government.



Other indicators of local government performance include transparency in spending and educating the public on current challenges. Respondents were asked to rate their local government on a scale of 1 (not performing well at all) to 5 (performing extremely well) to the following items:

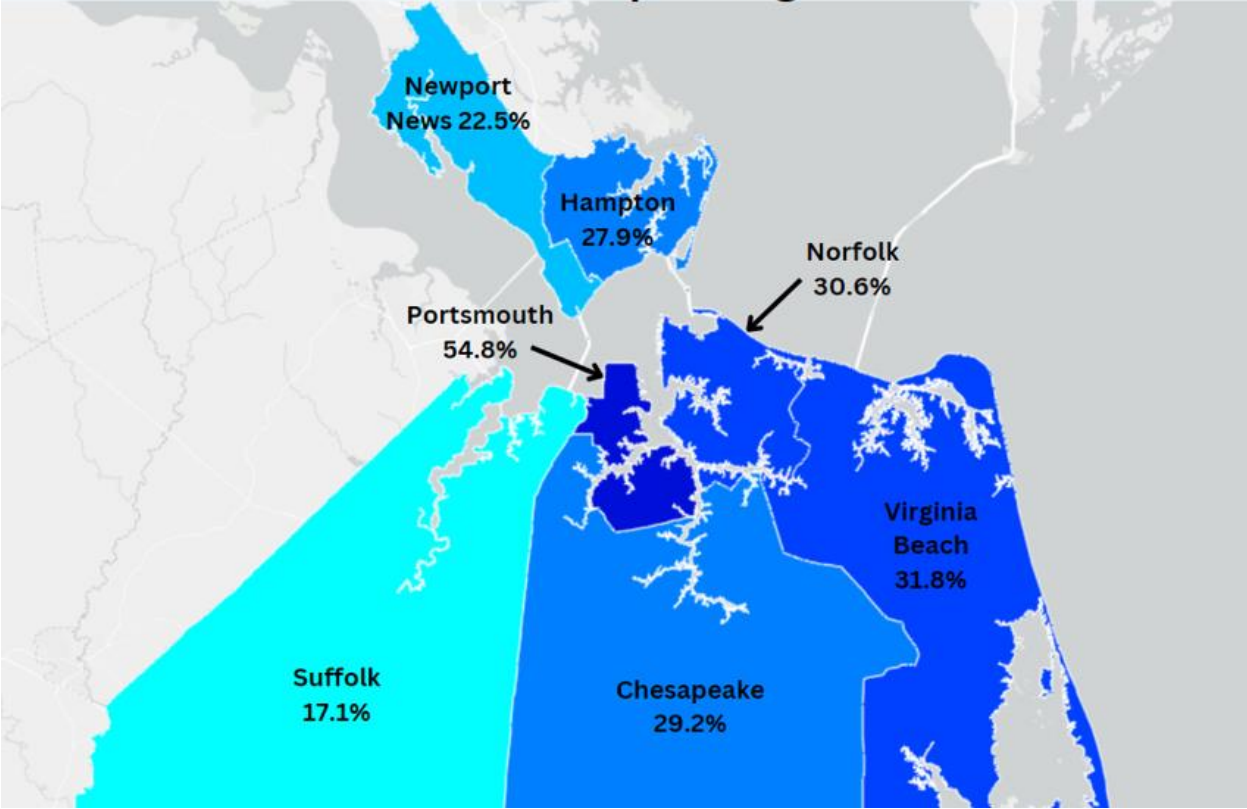
- 1) *The local government is responsible to the public for its spending.*
- 2) *The local government educate the public on its current challenges.*
- 3) *The local government is open and honest in its spending practices.*

Focusing on the two ends of the scale, we can see that respondents were more likely to indicate that local government is not performing well at all on these items with 30% indicating “not performing well at all” in terms of open and honest spending practices. Almost one in five also indicated that local government was not performing well at all on educating the public on its current challenges and 13.3% indicating the same for being responsible to the public for it spending. Less than 10% of respondents indicated that the local government was performing extremely well on any of these items.



There are differences in perceptions of performance between cities. The map below shows that more than half of the respondents from Portsmouth (54.8%) feel that local government is not performing well at all in terms of being open and honest in its spending practices. About 30% of respondents from Virginia Beach (31.8%), Norfolk (30.6%) and Chesapeake (29.2%) felt the same. Suffolk had the lowest percentage of “not performing well at all” responses (17.1%)

% Not Performing Well at all: The Local Government is Open and Honest in its Spending Practices



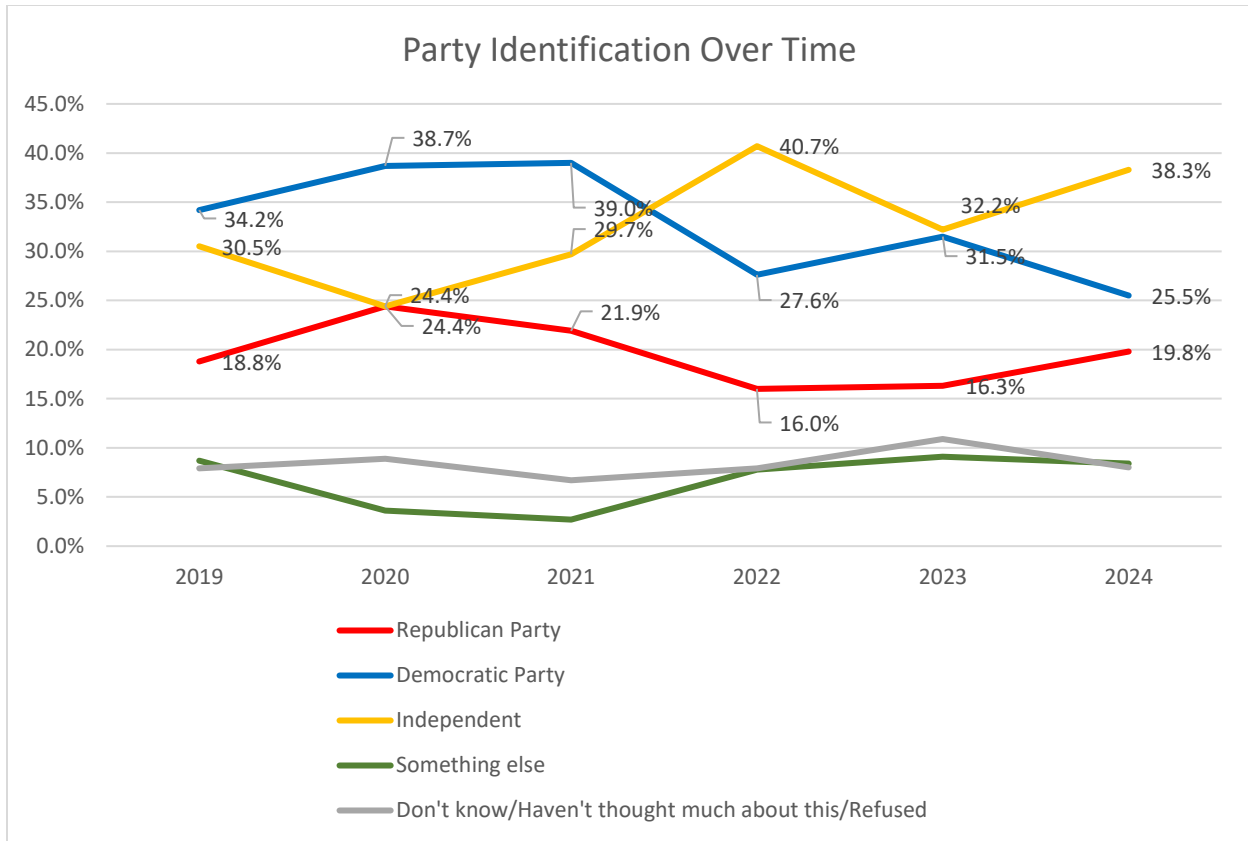
Politics and Political Opinions

Note: An earlier version of the politics and political opinions section below was originally released prior to the 2024 election. The section has been updated to reflect on the survey results relative to the 2024 election results.

Baseline Party Identification and Ideology

Political party affiliation among respondents to the survey continued to lean substantially toward the Democratic Party, in line with past Life in Hampton Roads' surveys, but also continued to track a decline in overall party identification. Less than 26% of respondents (down from more than 31% last year) said they felt closest to the Democratic party when asked the question "Do you generally feel closer to the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, or do you consider yourself to be an independent or something else?" Approximately 20% (19.8% up from 16 percent) responded Republican Party. This difference from the previous year is partly due to a change in survey weighting methodology. This year LIHR was weighted on the basis of education in addition to other variables. If the survey was not weighted on education, Democratic identification would have been slightly higher (27.8%) and Republican identification slightly lower (18.4%).⁵ Affiliation with both parties remains lower than in several recent years. In addition, as in 2022 and 2023, more respondents identified as independents than with either party alone, with less than half of respondents affiliated with the major parties.

⁵ Inclusion of weights brings LIHR more in line with current national practice and adjusts for the tendency of more educated individuals to be more likely to respond to surveys.



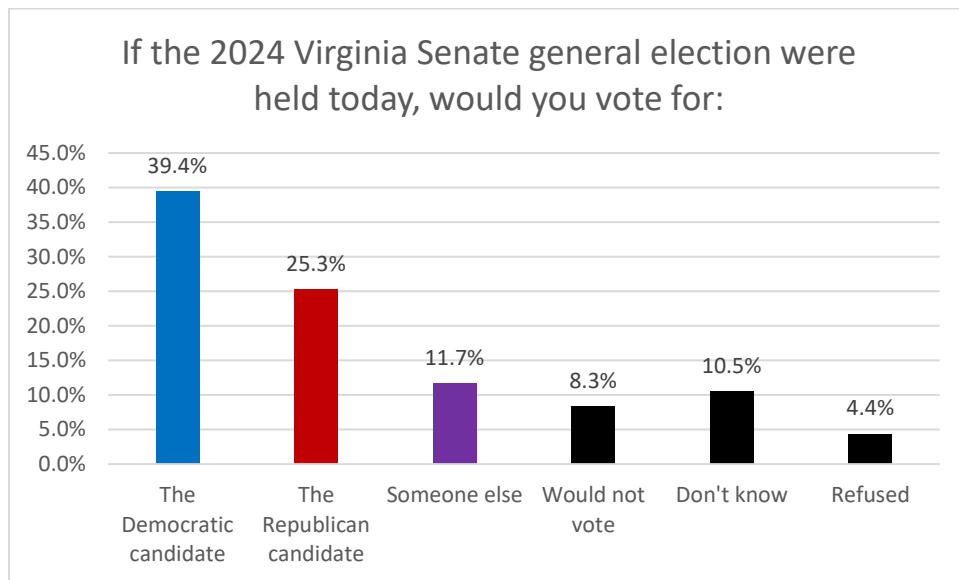
The Senate Race

In 2024, incumbent Democratic Senator Tim Kaine faced Republican challenger Hung Cao. The last time Kaine ran for Senate (in 2018) Kaine won statewide by a wide margin, winning 57% of the vote versus Republican Corey Stewart’s 41%. Within the seven Hampton Roads cities, Kaine won 63 percent of the two-party vote.

The 2024 survey asked respondents about their preferences in the Senate race. Overall, the results suggested that the Kaine campaign was positioned to win Hampton Roads, and the Senate race, but with a margin somewhat smaller than in 2018. Thirty-nine percent (39.6%) of all respondents indicated that they planned to vote for the Democratic candidate (61% of those who expressed a two-party preference), while 25.3% indicated that they would vote for the Republican candidate (39% of those with a two-party preference). Overall, these results were good news for Kaine, who appeared to be on track to win another Senate term. And the survey was quite accurate in relation to the final vote totals in the seven cities of

Hampton Roads. On November 5, Kaine received 60.2% of the two-party vote, and Cao received 39.8%. Thus, the survey predicted the final margin in Hampton Roads to within one percentage point.⁶

Roughly a third of respondents (34.9%) indicated that they currently would vote for someone else, would not vote, did not know who they would vote for, or refused to answer the question.⁷

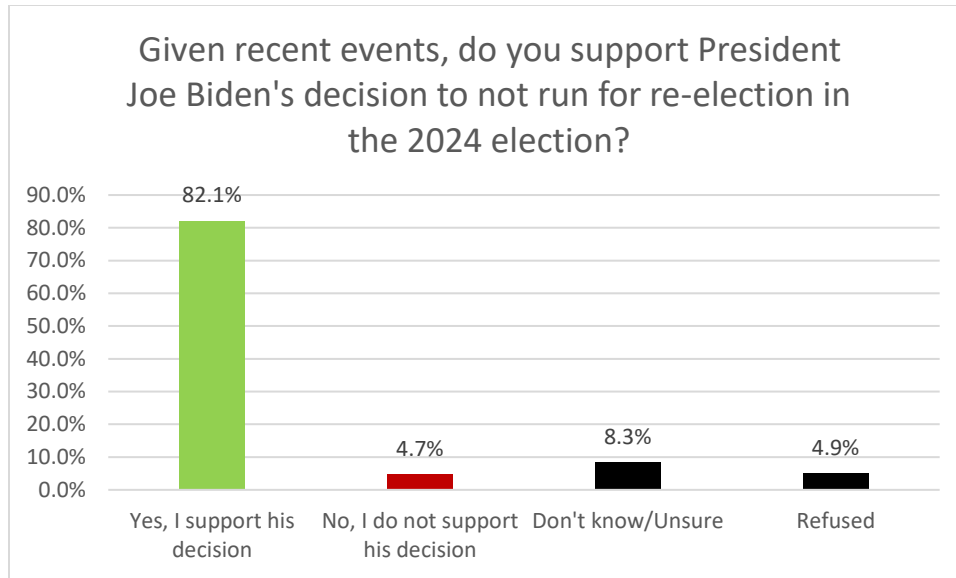


The Presidential Election

Survey data collection took place during a span of time that included the decision by Joe Biden to remove himself from the contest for the Democratic nomination. After Biden withdrew, a question was added to the survey that gave the final 237 survey respondents a chance to weigh in on that decision. This additional question asked: "Given recent events, do you support President Joe Biden's decision to not run for re-election in the 2024 election?"

⁶ As noted previously, the 2024 LIHR survey data were weighted by education as well as race, age, gender, Hispanic ethnicity, and phone type. Education was a new weighting variable relative to previous years. Had we used our 'classic' weights without education, the survey would have overstated Kaine's support to a much greater degree. The results when education was not included among the weighting variables had Kaine at 64.1 percent of the two-party vote, and Cao at 35.9 percent, which would have been much less accurate than the results with weighting by education.

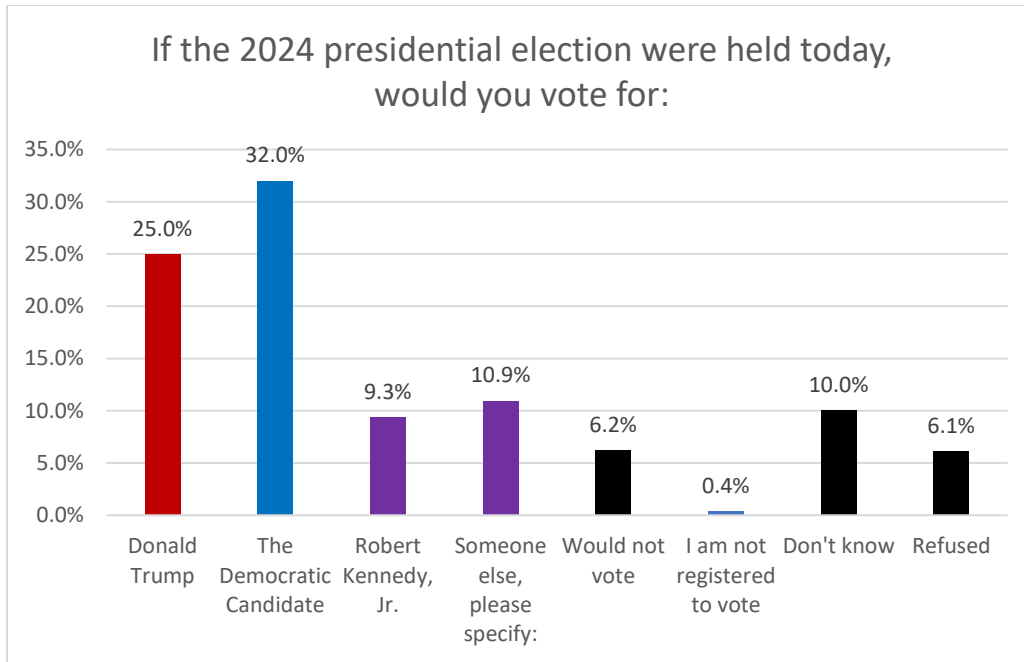
⁷ The figure includes all survey respondents, including non-registered voters. Thus, it does not add to 100 percent.



More than 82% of respondents supported Biden’s decision, with opposition concentrated among Republicans, only 11.6% of whom opposed Biden’s decision, versus the 92.5% of Democrats who supported the decision.

Polling the presidential race itself was complicated by the changes at the top of the Democratic ticket and in the dynamics of the race. The survey ultimately included three versions of the question: a question asking about support for Joe Biden, a question asking about support for “the Democratic candidate” and a question asking about support for Kamala Harris. The analysis below basically merges responses to all three of these questions, but also includes an examination of shifting support.

In the most recent Presidential election, Donald Trump lost the seven cities of Hampton Roads by a substantial margin to Joe Biden. Biden won 60.6% of the two-party vote, while Trump won only 39.3%.



In the overall survey data, the Democratic candidate (again this combines Biden and Harris) received 56 percent of the regional two-party vote, with Trump winning 43.8%. The election results were fairly close to the survey totals, but the survey somewhat overstated support for Trump. Within the seven cities of Hampton Roads, Trump won 41.2 percent of the two-party vote while Harris won 58.8 percent.⁸

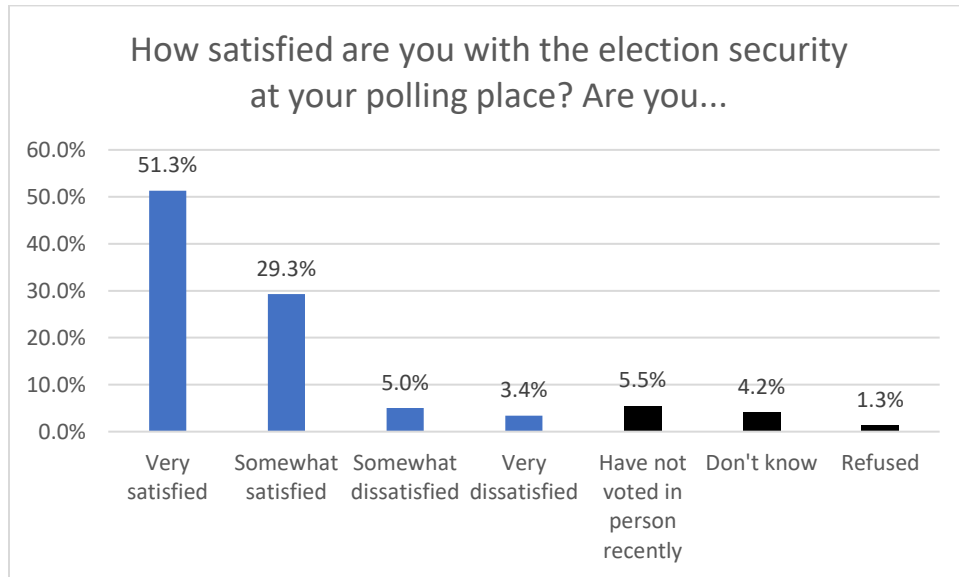
A likely explanation for the way the survey somewhat overstated Trump support is that the analysis above includes the period before Biden dropped out of the race, and many responses were collected during the period when Biden was a wounded candidate following a disastrous performance in the June 2024 presidential debate. In addition, some of the post-Biden-drop responses were collected before Harris was the official nominee, and the data collected once Harris was the nominee were from the initial weeks of her candidacy before she began to surpass Trump in national polling in early August.⁹ Thus, it is arguably not surprising that the survey somewhat over-stated Trump’s standing in Virginia relative to the final election result.

⁸ As noted previously the 2024 LIHR survey data were weighted by education as well as race, age, gender, Hispanic ethnicity, and phone type. Education was a new weighting variable relative to previous years. Had we used our ‘classic’ weights without education, the survey would have overstated Harris support instead of under-stating it. The results when education was not included among the weighting variables had Harris at 60 percent of the two-party vote, and Trump at 40 percent, which would have been slightly more accurate than the results with weighting by education.

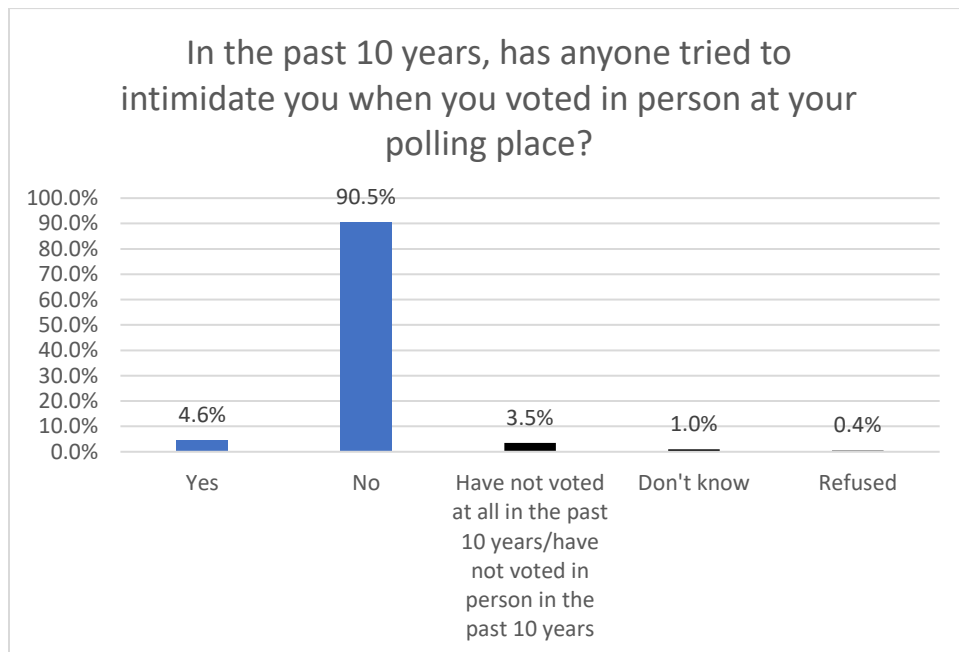
⁹ Several individuals said they would vote for “some other candidate” during this period, and then responded with Kamala’s name. These were recoded as supporting the Democratic candidate.

Election Security

This year's survey included two questions about election security. The first question asked respondents how satisfied they were "with the election security at your polling place?" More than 80% indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied and less than 9% were very or somewhat dissatisfied.

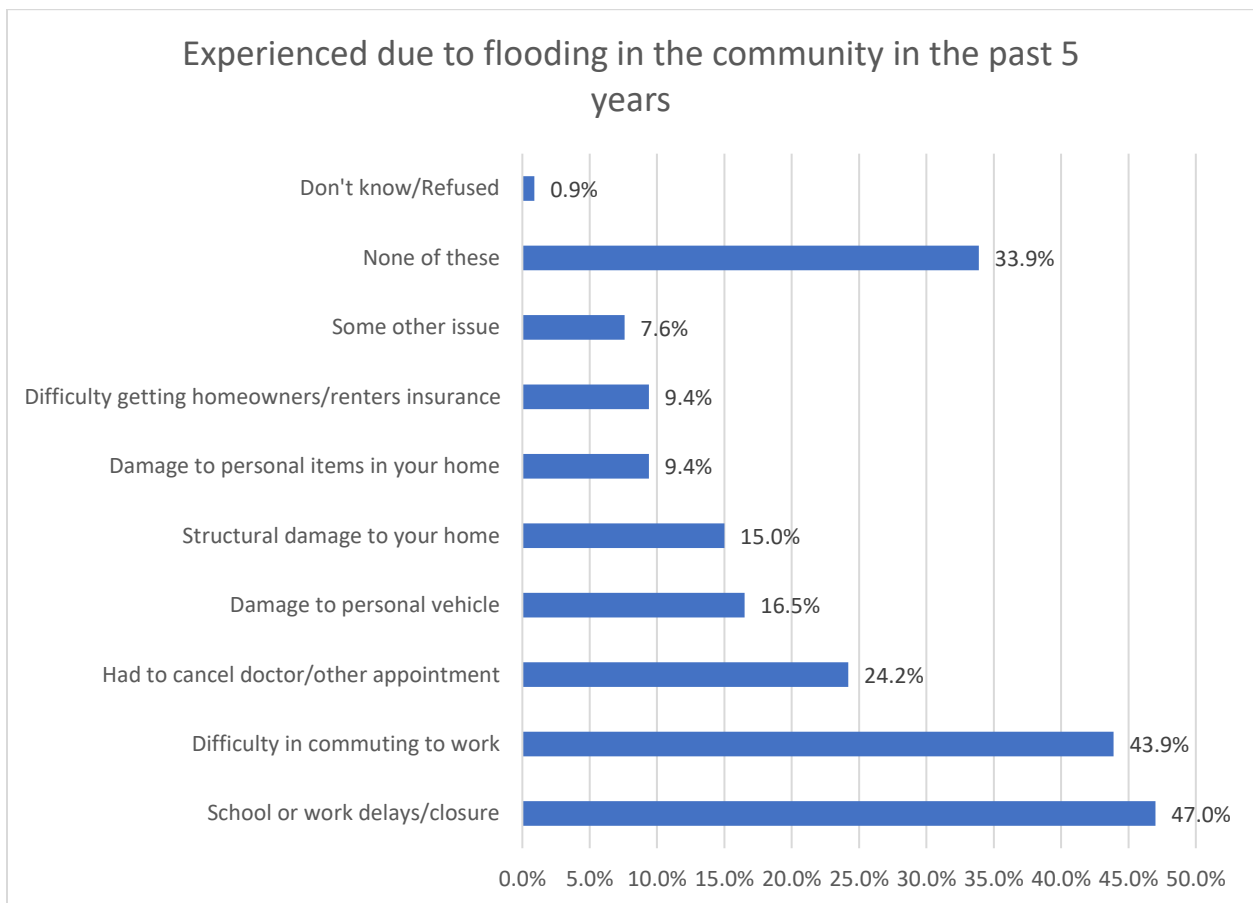


The second question asked, "In the past 10 years, has anyone tried to intimidate you when you voted in person at your polling place?" This question also indicated low levels of security issues at polling places, with less than 5% of respondents answering yes.

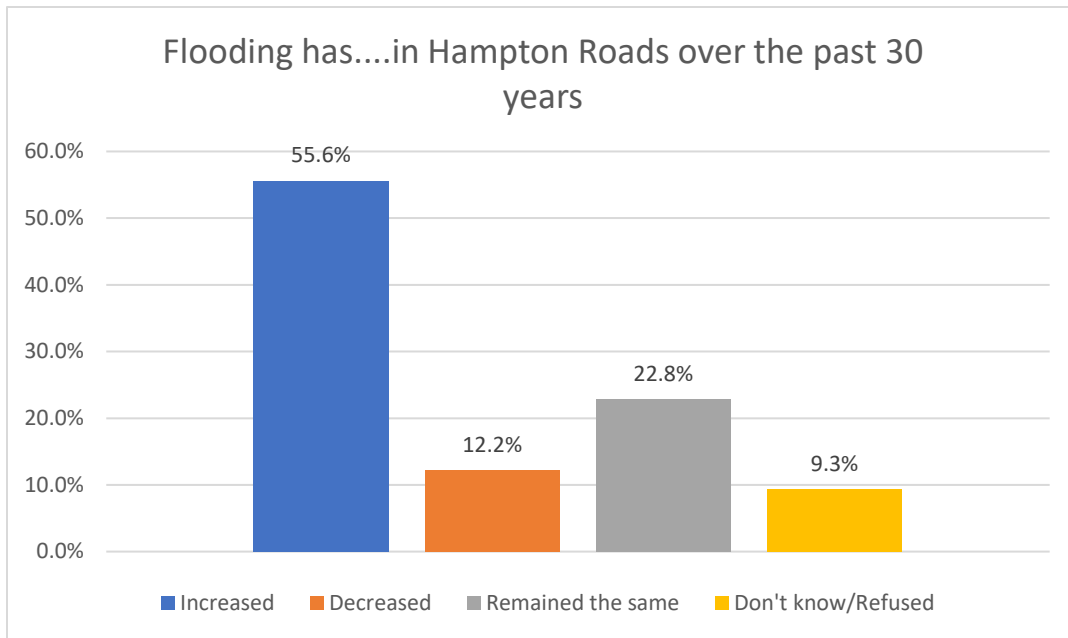


Flooding

The coastal cities of Hampton Roads are particularly vulnerable to recurrent flooding, storm surge, and nuisance or “sunny day” flooding which impacts the lives and daily routines of residents. Respondents were asked to indicate what types of events they have experienced due to flooding in their community in the past five years. About one-third indicated that they had not experienced any events due to flooding. However, 47% indicated that they had experienced school or work delays/closures and 43.9% indicated that they have had difficulty commuting to work. About one in five respondents (24.2%) indicated that they had to cancel doctor or other appointments due to flooding. More than 16% of respondents have experienced damage to a personal vehicle and 15% reported structural damage to their home. Less than 10% of respondents reported damage to personal items in their home or difficulty getting homeowner/renter’s insurance.

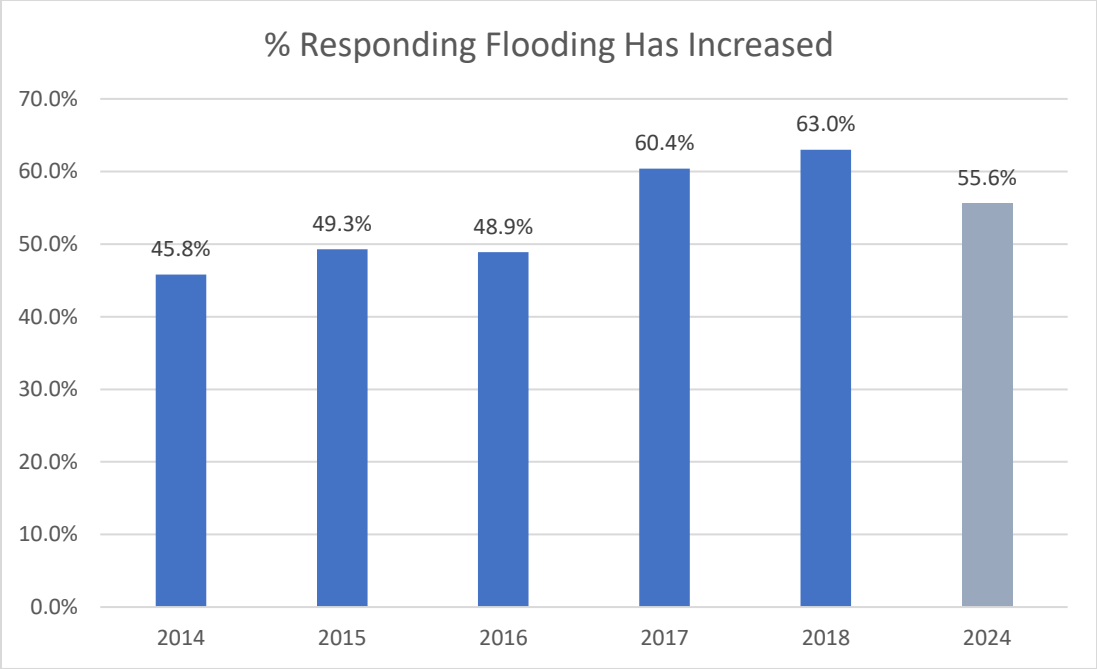


Respondents were also asked if they thought flooding has increased, decreased or remained the same in Hampton Roads over the past 30 years. More than half (55.6%) felt that flooding has increased while more than one-third believe that flooding has either decreased (12.2%) or remained the same (22.8%)



Perceptions of flooding have shown some variability over time in Hampton Roads. Respondents in 2014-2018 were previously asked the same question as to whether flooding has increased, decreased or remained the same in Hampton Roads over the past 30 years. There has generally been an upward trend since 2016 in the percentage of respondents who believe flooding has increased in the region. The years with the highest percentage of “increasing” responses were in 2017 and 2018 which are also among the top 10 wettest months of May on record¹⁰ (data collection for the Life in Hampton Roads survey typically begins in late May/early June). Hampton Roads also experienced Tropical Storm Hermine and Hurricane Matthew in the late summer/early fall of 2016 (the year prior). These events may have affected perceptions of flooding in the region.

¹⁰ See: https://www.weather.gov/media/akq/climateRECORDS/ORF_PRECIP.pdf





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