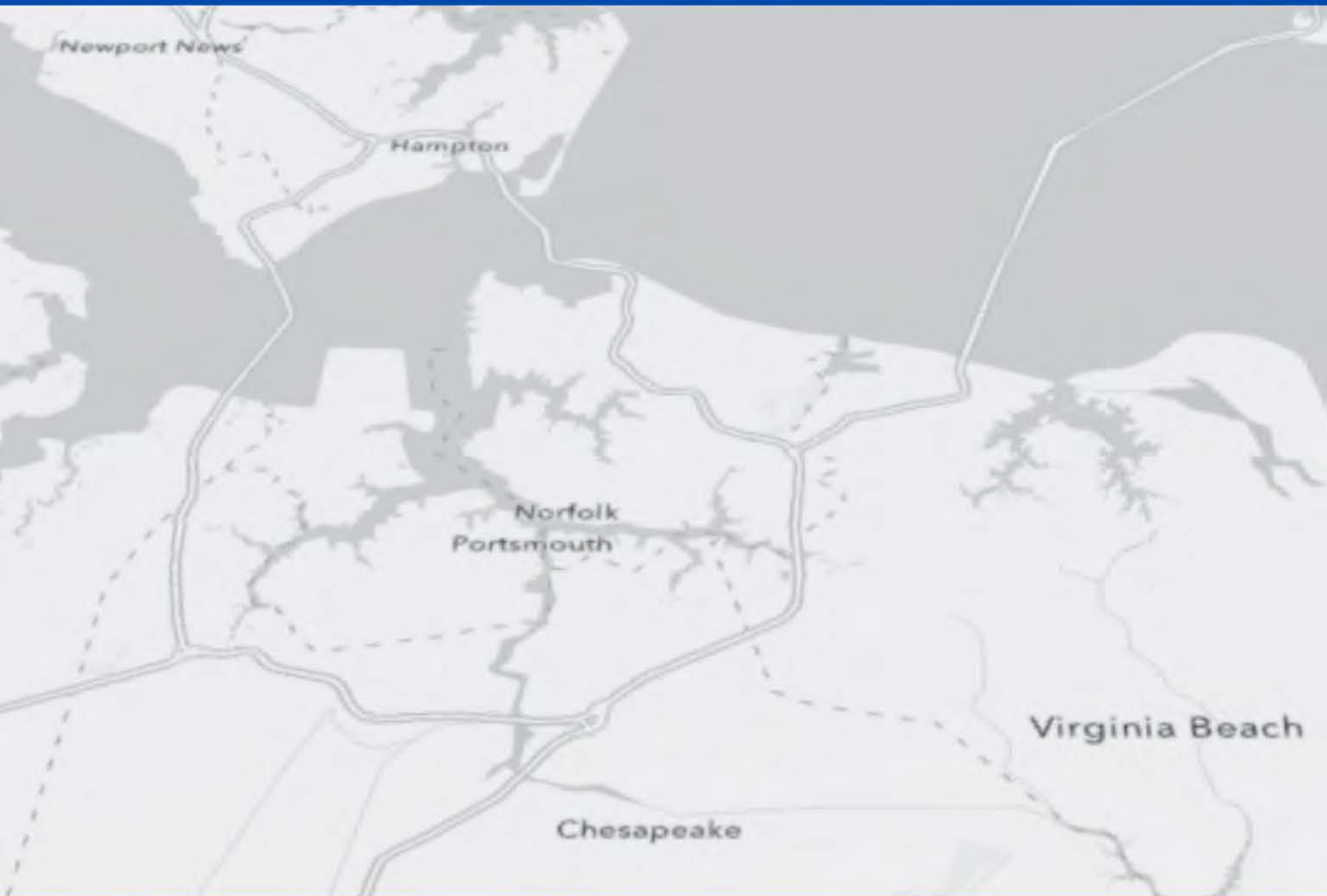


LIFE IN HAMPTON ROADS 2023

THE 14TH ANNUAL LIFE IN HAMPTON ROADS SURVEY REPORT



**THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

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Executive Summary

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) is pleased to present the results from the 14th 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. Surveys this year were completed over the telephone as they were last year and prior to 2020. Less than two-thirds of respondents rated the quality of life in the region as excellent or good (62.3%). This is lower than last year (69.3%) and is lower than most previous non-COVID years (ranging from 68% to 71% between 2017-2019). Less than a third rated Hampton Roads' quality of life as fair (31.4%) and 5.5% rated it as poor. 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 (66.5%) and 28% rated their city as fair. Only 5% rated their city's quality of life as poor. Neighborhood ratings of quality of life remain the highest, with 81.7% rating their neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 15.3% rated their neighborhood quality of life as fair and 2.9% rated it as poor.

- Hampton Roads residents had mixed perceptions of the economy but showed some optimism about their own financial situation. Less than half (42.3%) of those surveyed rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as excellent (5.7%) or good (36.6%). A similar percentage (43.2%) rated economic conditions as fair and 12.6% rated them as poor. These ratings of the economy are very similar to last year with 42.4% rating the local economy as excellent or good.
- When asked if they and their family were better or worse off financially compared to a year ago, 28.6% of respondents reported that they were better off and 46.9% reported that they were about the same. Another 23.8% indicated that they and their family were worse off. These numbers show a slightly more positive view of residents' financial standing compared to 2022 (27.8% thought they were better off, 44.9% thought they were about the same, and 26.5% thought they were worse off).
- The outlook for home purchasing and inflation, however, may be less optimistic, with 64.1% of respondents saying now is a bad time to buy a house and only 12.1% responding that it is a good time to buy. Only 17.8% think that it is neither a good nor bad time. This is a major decline from 2021 but is consistent with last year's statistics.
- Respondents were asked to rate their level of work burnout on a scale of 0 to 10, with "0" meaning "not feeling burned out at all and "10" meaning "feeling completely burned out." The

average rate given for work burnout was 5.6 which is slightly higher than last year (4.8). The most common ratings of work burnout reported were 0 (14.6%), 7 (14.6%), and 8 (10.1%).

- This year's survey also included questions about the affordability of various essentials in Hampton Roads and related personal financial issues. More than 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that affordable childcare is a problem in Hampton Roads (71%) and that there is not enough affordable housing available in Hampton Roads (77.7%). More than one in five respondents (22.6%) agreed that they had been concerned they would not be able to pay their rent/mortgage in the past 12 months. The majority of respondents (80.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to affordable healthcare.
- Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of medical and healthcare in Hampton Roads. Just under two-thirds (63.5%) rated the quality as excellent (21.4%) or good (42.1%). This is much lower than last year when 73.6% of respondents rated the quality of care as excellent or good.
- This year's survey included items about how well local public schools prepare students to enter the workforce and for college. Respondents were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that Hampton Roads' high schools do a good job of preparing students for college (54%) compared to preparing them to enter the workforce (46.9%). About 20% responded "don't know" (18%) or "refused" (2%) to each item.
- About three-quarters (75.5%) of respondents indicated that they were either very (24.4%) or somewhat (51.1%) satisfied with the local police. Trust in the police was slightly higher than satisfaction with 77.1% of respondents trusting the police either a great deal (32.3%) or somewhat (44.8%).
- Given the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, this year's survey included items about the importance of abortion as an issue for voters in 2023. When asked "How important is the issue of abortion to your decision" for the (then upcoming) November election, more than half of respondents (54.3%) indicated that it was "very important," and more than a quarter indicated that it was somewhat important (27.6%). Overall, 81.9% of respondents indicated that abortion would be at least "somewhat important" for their decision.

Introduction

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) recently completed data collection for the 14th 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. A total of 610 telephone surveys were completed between June 6 and Aug. 25, 2023. Surveys this year were completed over the telephone as they were last year and prior to 2020. In 2020, due to COVID-19, surveys were completed via on-line web panels. In 2021, a mixture of online web panels and telephone surveys were utilized. This year, a mixture of listed and random-digit dial (RDD) cell phone and landline telephone numbers were used. From 2012 to 2019, RDD landline and cell phone samples were used. This change limits, 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, as with previous years, this year's survey data was weighted to match a city's population distribution on several variables including race, Hispanic ethnicity, age and gender, along with telephone type (cell only versus landline). Funding for the 2023 survey was provided by the Social Science Research Center. 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.

Survey Demographics

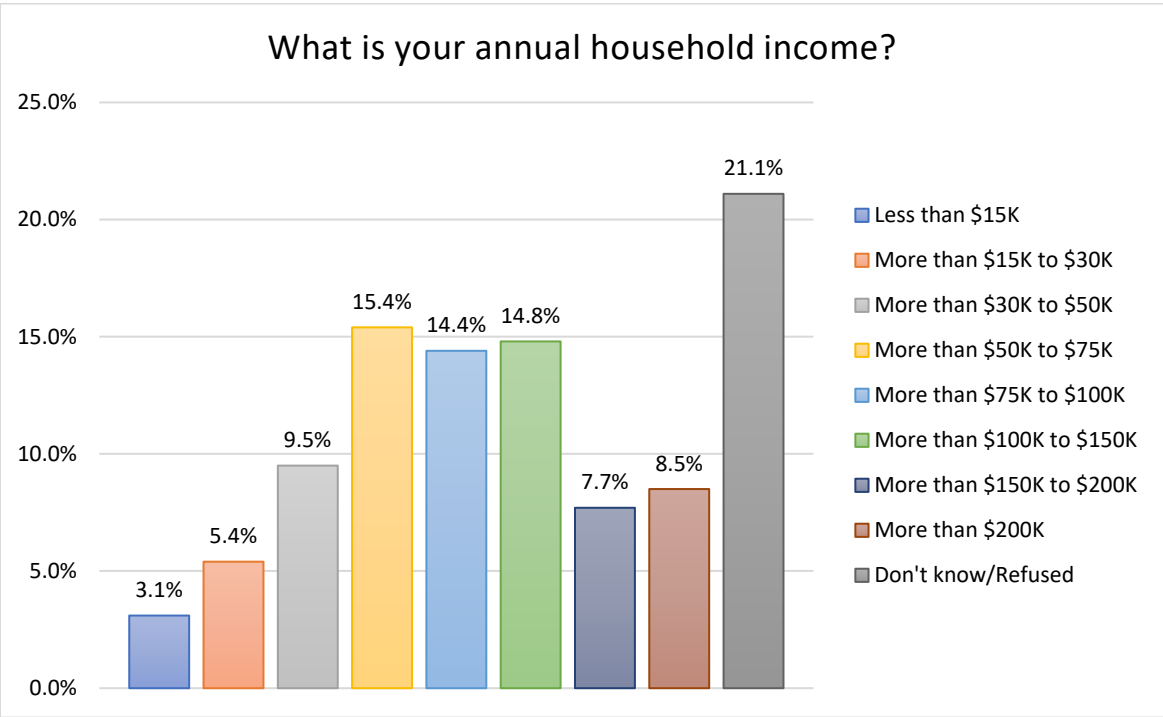
While most of the data reported here is weighted as described above, demographic data described below is unweighted to provide a description of the demographic coverage achieved by the survey. Of the 610 citizens interviewed, 62% were white, 23% were Black or African American, and 11.9% considered themselves to be another race/ethnicity. This includes 0.3% identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 1.6% Asian and 6.7% multiracial. In a separate question, 4.6% of respondents indicated that they were of Hispanic/Latino origin.

More than 40% of respondents were male (43.8%) and 54.9% were female and the average age was 52. More than one in three (39.8%) of the respondents received a high school diploma or GED, completed trade or professional school, or attended some college. An additional 44.2% of respondents completed an undergraduate or graduate degree. About half of respondents were married (49.3%) and 19.9% were divorced, separated or widowed. Less than one-quarter of those surveyed were single and not living with a partner (23%) while a small portion of single people reported living with a partner (5.9%).

Race	Percentage
White	62.0%
Black/African American	23.0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.3%
Asian	1.6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.3%
Multiracial	6.7%
Other	3.0%
Don't Know/Refused	3.2%
Hispanic/Latino Origin?	Percentage
Yes	4.6%
No	93.1%
Don't know/Refused	2.3%
Gender	Percentage
Male	43.8%
Female	54.9%
Prefer to self-identify	0.8%
Refused	0.5%
Highest level of school completed	Percentage
Some grade school	0.2%
Some high school	2.5%
High school diploma/GED	12.1%
Completed trade/professional school	4.6%
Some college	23.1%
Associate degree	10.0%
Bachelor's degree	23.4%
Graduate degree	20.8%
Other	2.6%
Don't Know/Refused	0.7%
Age	Age in years
Average age (years)	52
Marital Status	Percentage
Single, not living with partner	23.0%
Single, living with partner	5.9%
Married	49.3%
Divorced/separated	10.7%
Widowed	9.2%
Refused	2.0%

Only 8.5% of participants reported their annual household income as \$30,000 or less, a quarter of respondents (24.9%) reported earning more than \$30,000 to \$75,000, while 45.4% earned more than

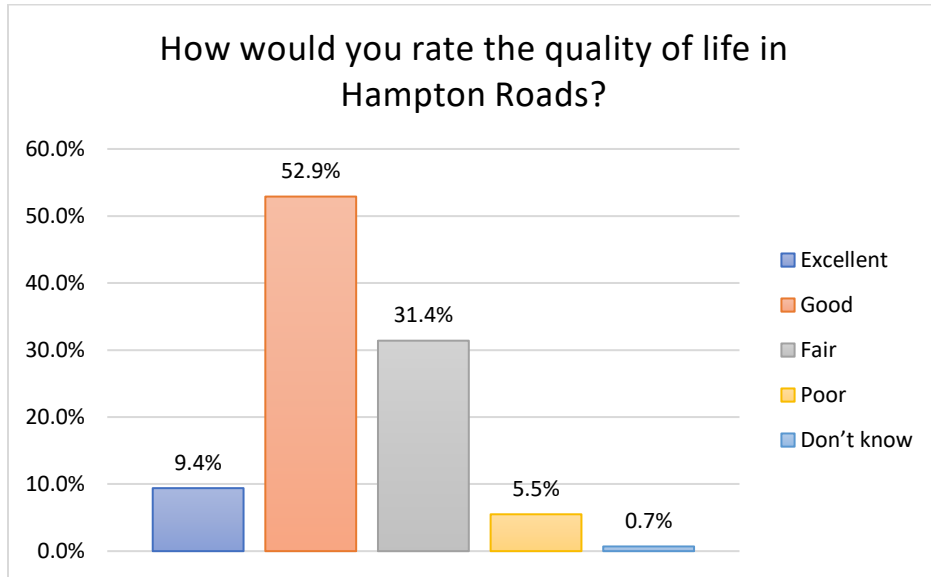
\$75,000. This is the most commonly refused demographic question in the survey, with 16.7% declining to answer and another 4.4% responding with “don’t know.”



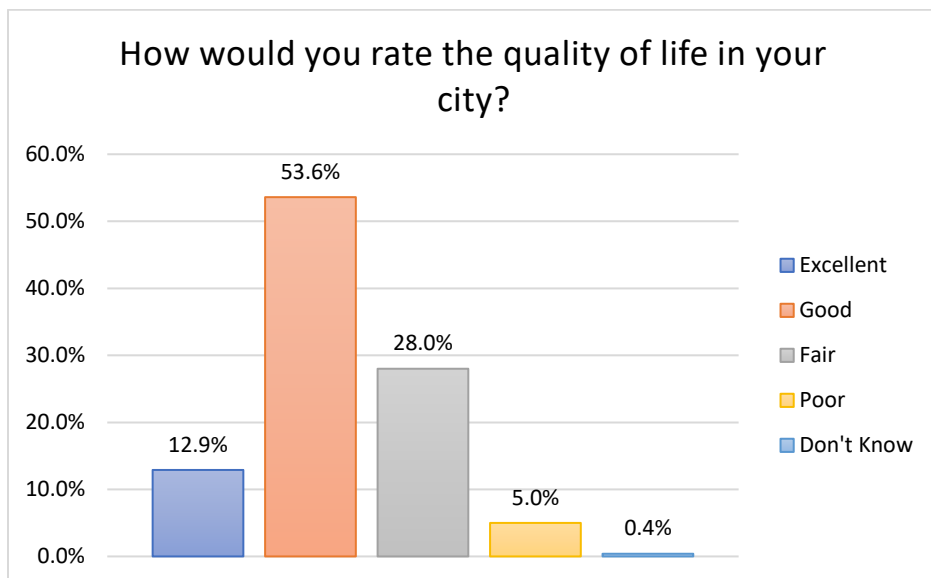
Quality of Life

Perceptions of the Region, City, Neighborhood

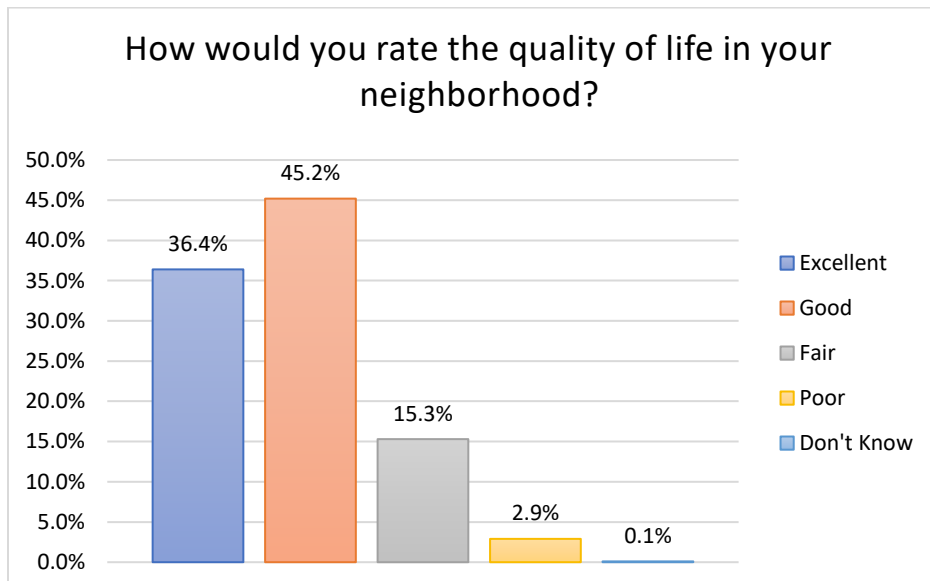
A majority but less than two-thirds of respondents rated the quality of life in the region as excellent or good (62.3%). This is lower than last year (69.3%) and is lower than most previous non-COVID years (ranging from 68% to 71% between 2017-2019). Less than a third rated Hampton Roads' quality of life as fair (31.4%) and 5.5% rated it as poor.



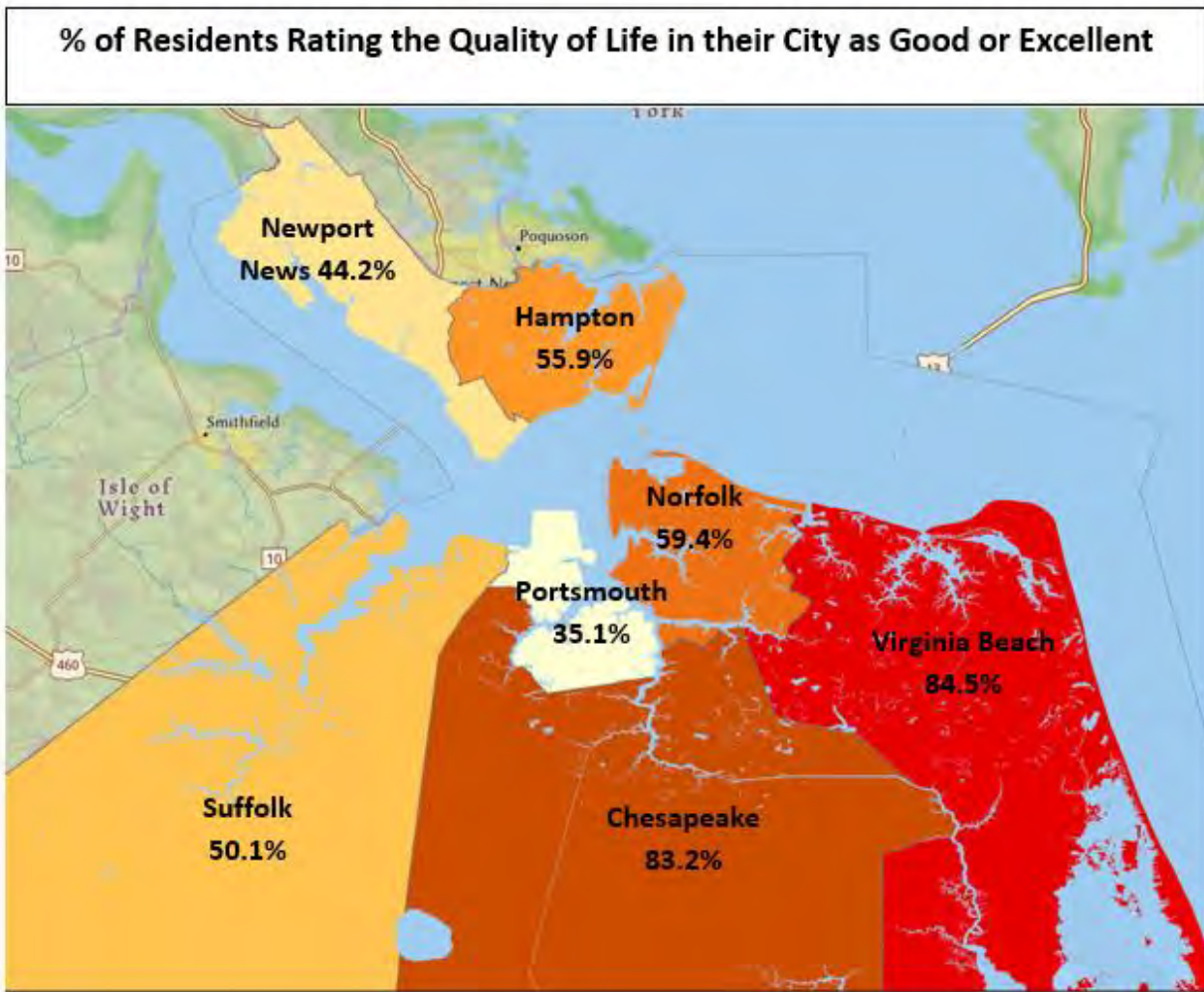
Consistent with previous years, respondents rated the quality of life in their city and their neighborhood higher than they did for the region. About two-thirds rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent (66.5%) and 28% rated their city as fair. Only 5% rated their city's quality of life as poor.



Neighborhood ratings of quality of life were the highest, with 81.6% rating their neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 15.3% rated their neighborhood quality of life as fair and 2.9% rated it as poor.



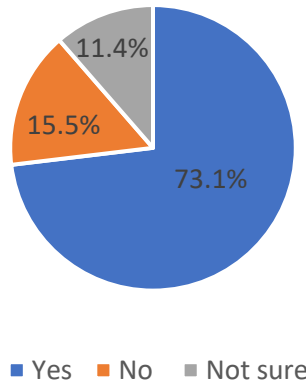
Respondents varied in their ratings of quality of life in their city, with those living in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake having the largest percentage of excellent and good ratings (84.5% and 83.2%, respectively). About 56% of residents in Hampton and about 60% in Norfolk also rated their city as excellent or good. About half of Suffolk resident rated the quality of their city as good or excellent while well under half of residents in Newport News (44.2%) and Portsmouth (35.1%) rated the quality of life that highly.



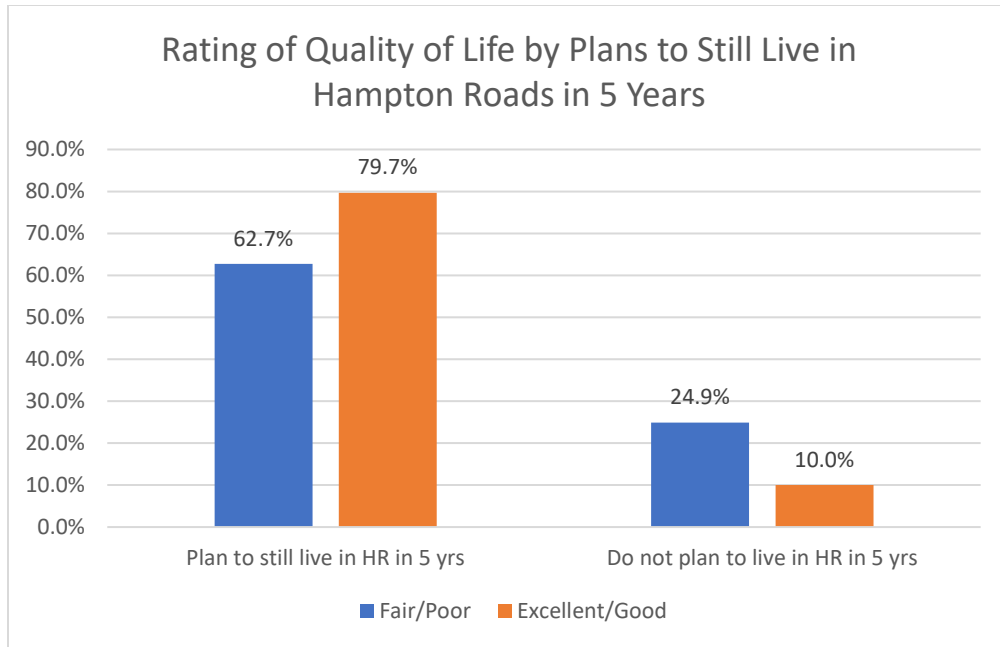
Plans to Leave Hampton Roads

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 27.6 years. Respondents were also asked if they plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now. Most respondents (73.1%) indicated that they still plan to live in the region while 15.5% do not plan to still be living in Hampton Roads in five years and 11.4% were unsure. Those who indicated that they were unsure or do not plan to still live in the region five years from now were asked what city/state they were most likely to move to. Responses were varied but some of the most frequently mentioned locations included: Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Maryland/Washington D.C., another part of Virginia, and even international locations.

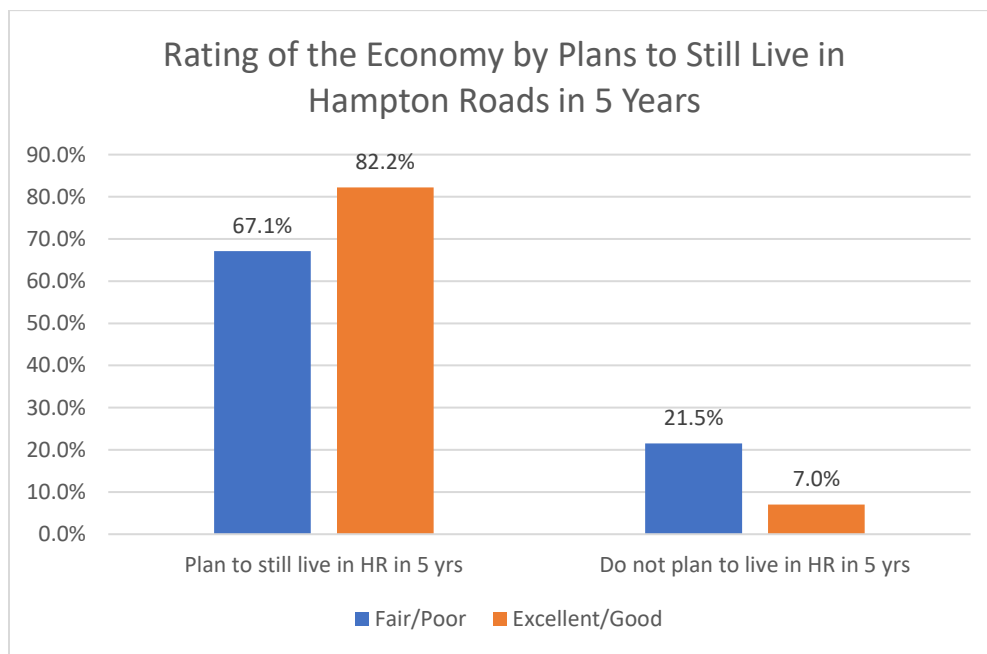
Do you plan to still live in Hampton Roads five years from now?



Perceptions of the quality of life and the economy in Hampton Roads are clearly related to whether respondents plan to leave or stay in the region over the next five years with those who rate the region as less desirable more likely to leave and those who rate the area more favorably more likely to stay. As described above, the majority of residents surveyed plan to stay in the area. Even among those who rate the region as fair or poor, a majority (62.7%) plan to stay, but a much larger majority, nearly 80%, of those who rate the area as good or excellent plan to stay. In contrast, only 10% of those who rate the area favorably (good or excellent) plan to leave the region in the next five years, while more than twice that percentage (24.9%) who rate the area as poor or fair plan to leave. Interestingly, rating of the quality of life in the region does not appear to affect those who are uncertain of their residence in future, with about 12.4% of those rating the quality of life unfavorably and 10.3% of those rating the area favorably unsure of their future residence.



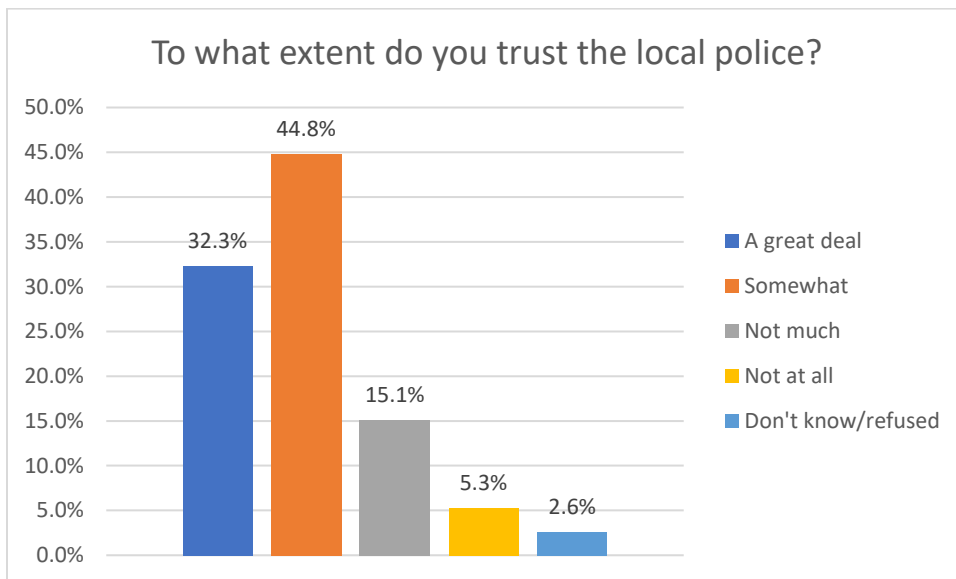
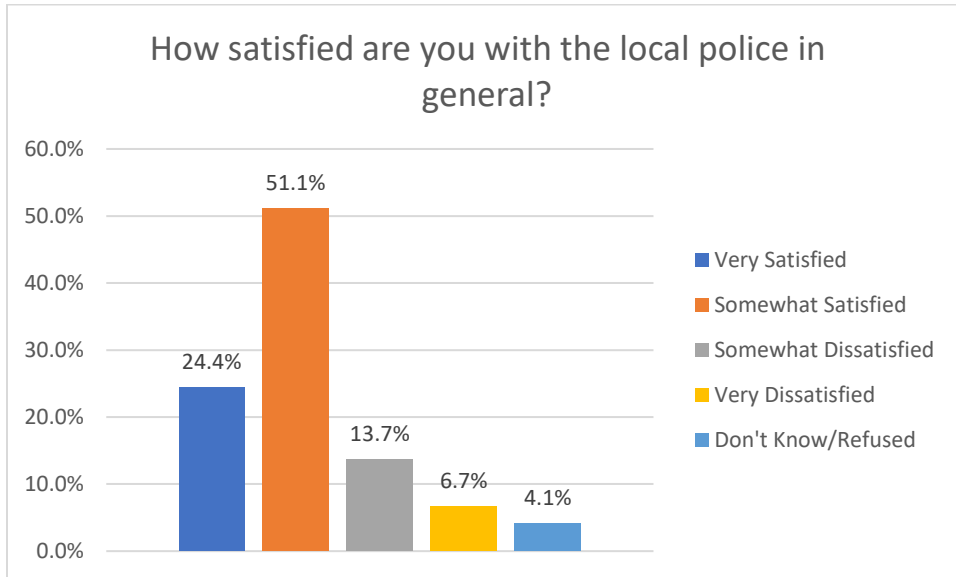
Results were similar when looking at the economy, with 67.1% of those who rated the economy as fair or poor planning to stay but 82.2% of those who rated it as excellent or good planning to stay. Only 7% of those who rate the economy favorably (good or excellent) plan to leave the region in the next five years, while more than one in five (21.5%) of those who rate the area as poor or fair plan to leave. Those who plan to leave are also younger (39 average age) than those who plan to stay (47.5 average age) and those who are unsure (43.5 average age).



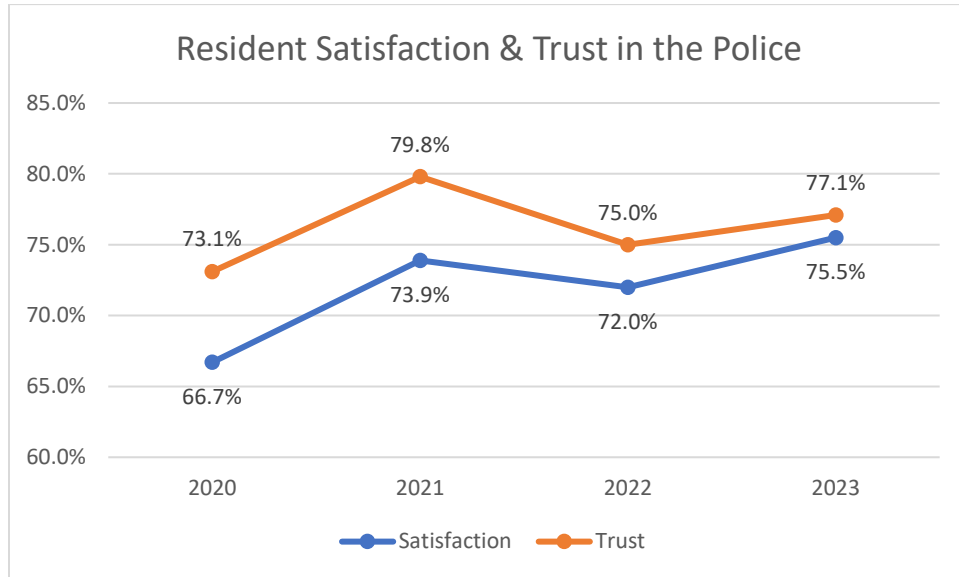
Attitudes Towards the Police

Satisfaction with and Trust in the Police

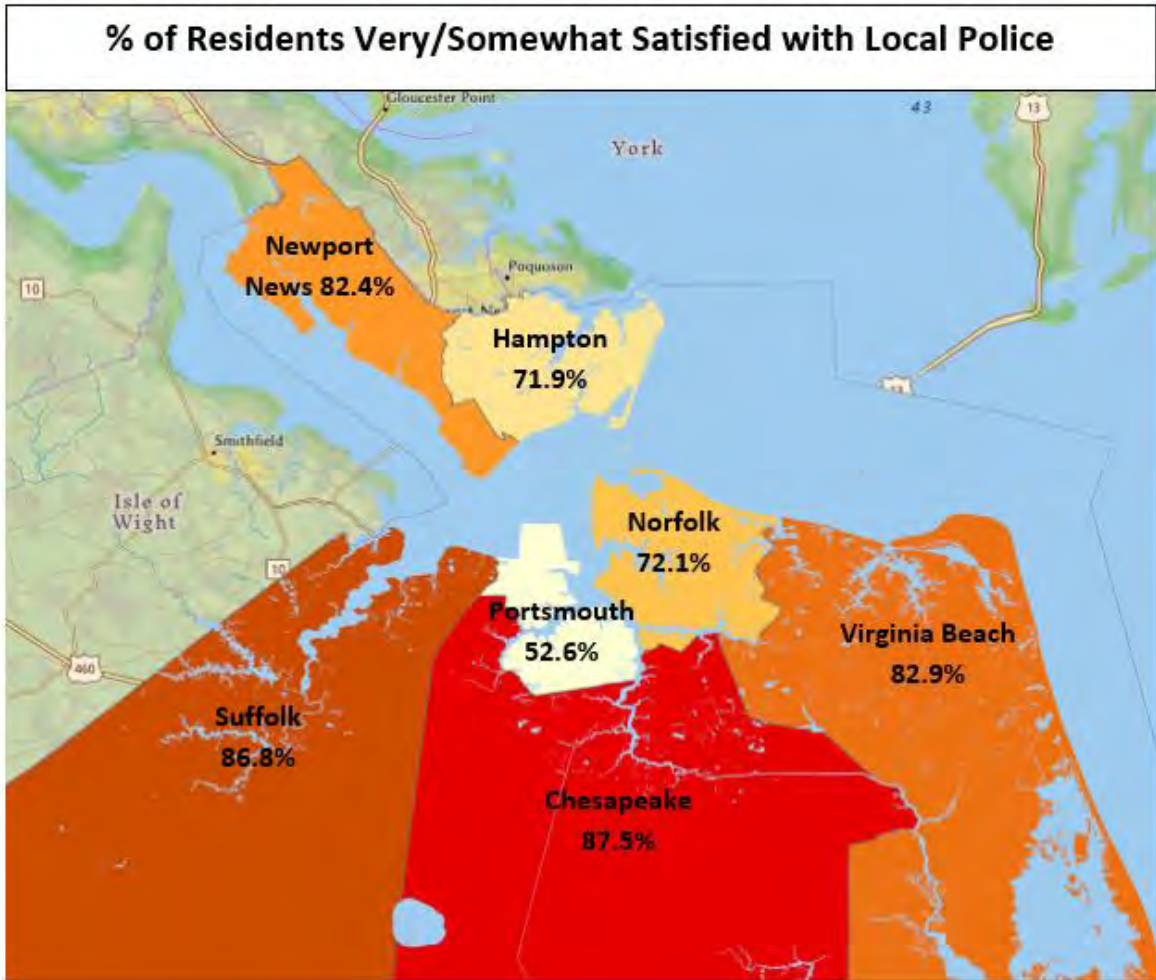
Hampton Roads residents were asked two questions focused on satisfaction with and trust in the police. About three-quarters (75.5%) of respondents indicated that they were either very (24.4%) or somewhat (51.1%) satisfied with the local police. Trust in the police was slightly higher than satisfaction, with 77.1% of respondents trusting the police either a great deal (32.3%) or somewhat (44.8%).



These questions were also asked in the 2020, 2021 and 2022 surveys. Looking over time, there are relatively high levels of both satisfaction and trust with the police, with both measures appreciably higher post-pandemic as opposed to during the pandemic.

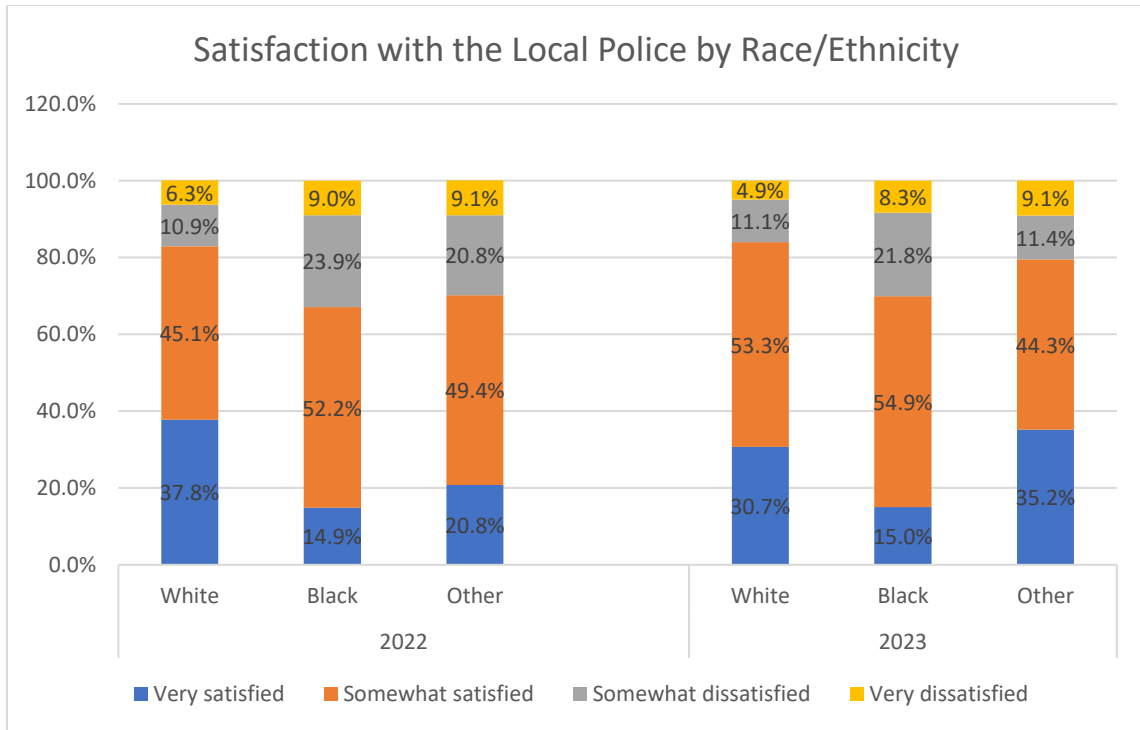


Satisfaction with the police varied significantly by city. More than 80% of respondents in Suffolk (86.8%), Virginia Beach (82.9%), Chesapeake (87.5%) and Newport News (82.4%) reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the police. Less than three-quarters of respondents in Hampton (71.9%), Norfolk (72.1%) reported satisfaction with police, with lowest percentage among residents in Portsmouth (52.6%). Statistically significant and similar inter-city variation was also found for trust in the police.



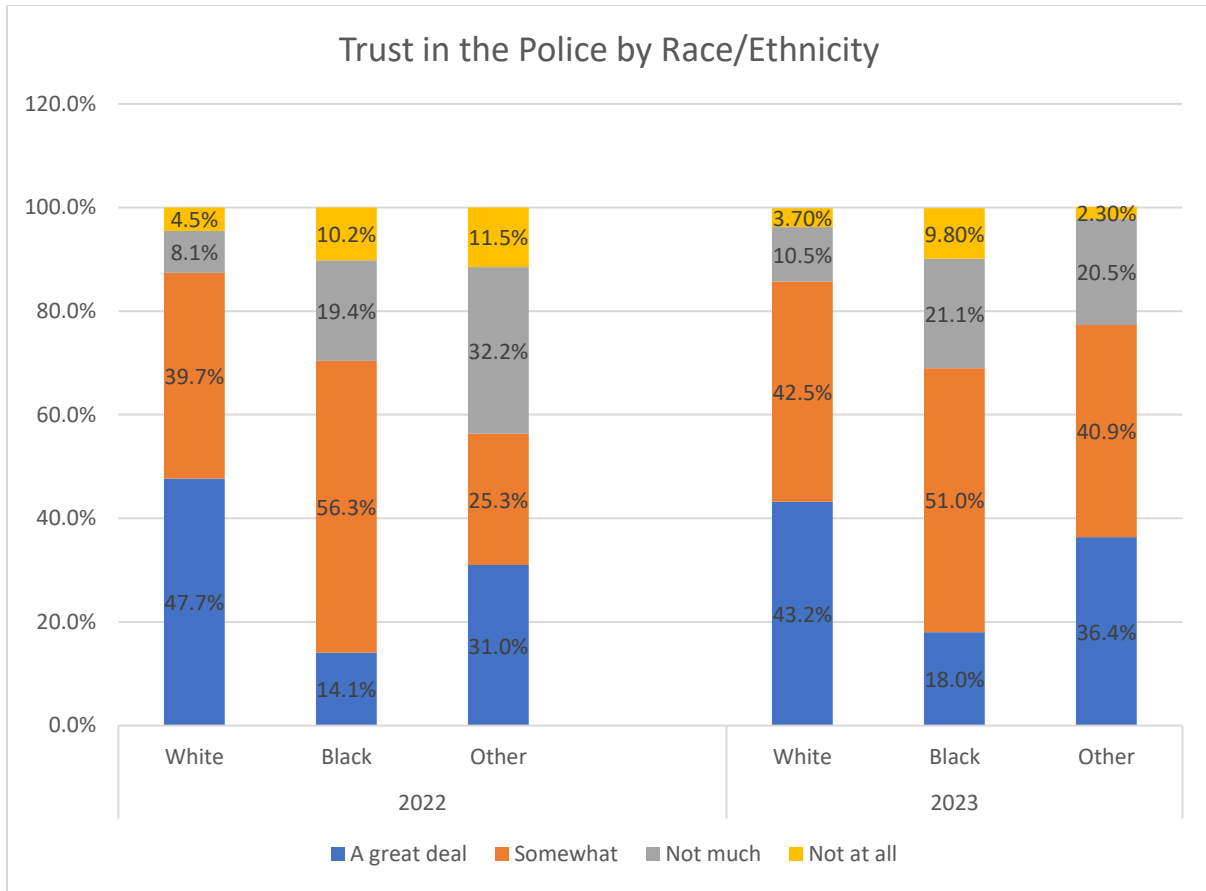
Satisfaction and Trust in the Police by Race and Ethnicity

Past 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. The Life in Hampton Roads survey continues to show that persons of color are less satisfied and trusting of the police than are whites. The data from 2022 and 2023 are presented below and show that just over 80% of whites are either somewhat or very satisfied with the police in both years while levels of satisfaction of Black respondents are between 67-70%. In 2022, about 70% of respondents of other racial groups reported being somewhat or very satisfied with the police, reflecting similar levels as Black respondents. In 2023, levels of satisfaction increased to levels comparable to whites at just under 80%.



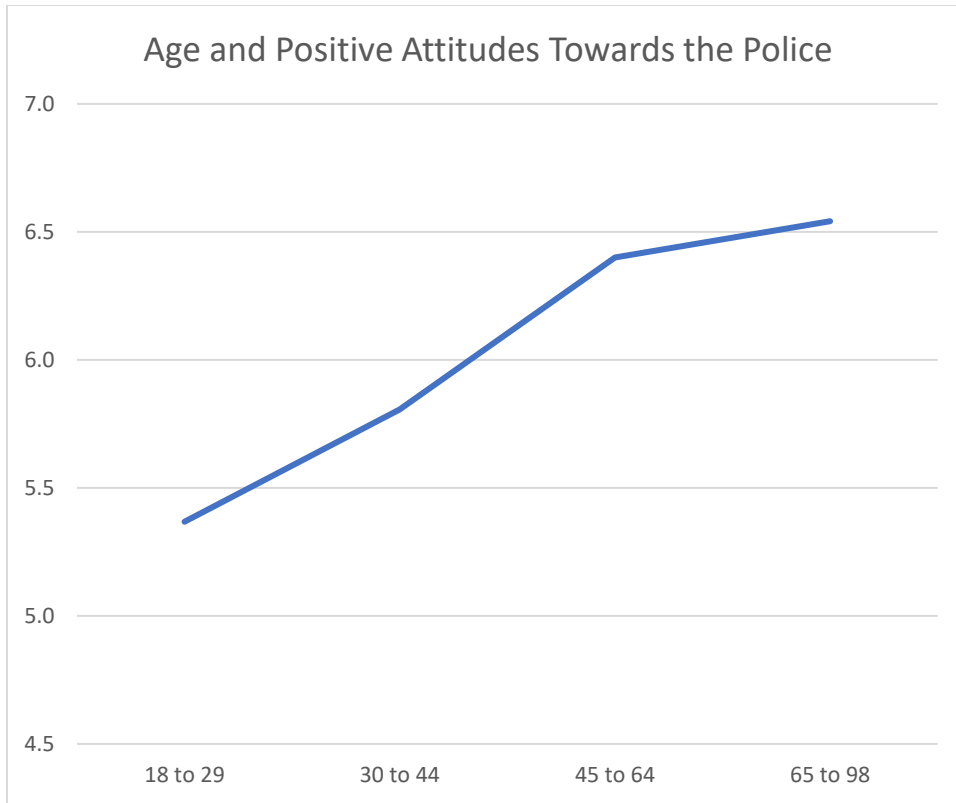
There are also significant differences in trust of the police by race/ethnicity, but the differences are even more striking when focusing on the percentages of residents who report holding a “great deal” of trust in the police. In both years, more than 40% of whites report that they trust the police a great deal, while less than 20% of Blacks report having a great deal of trust (14% and 18% in 2022 and 2023, respectively). In both years, about third of those respondents from other racial groups reported having a great deal of trust in the police (31% and 36%, respectively).

The analyses presented here suggest that there is significant variation across cities and between racial and ethnic groups in attitudes toward the police. Additional analyses show that the differences between cities are mostly explained by the racial composition of those cities. That is, once race/ethnicity is controlled for, the differences between cities are no longer significant.

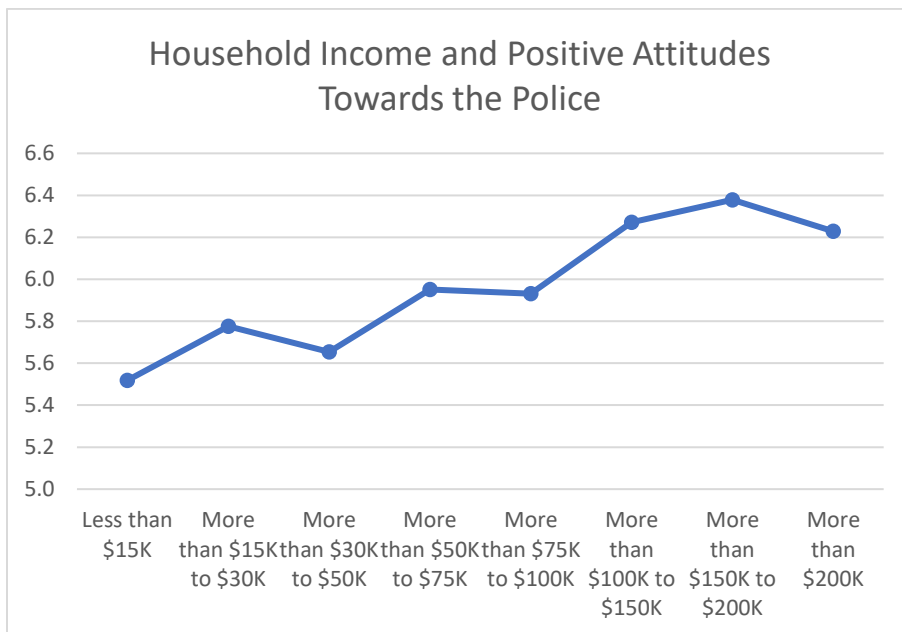


Satisfaction and Trust in the Police by Age, Income and Political Party

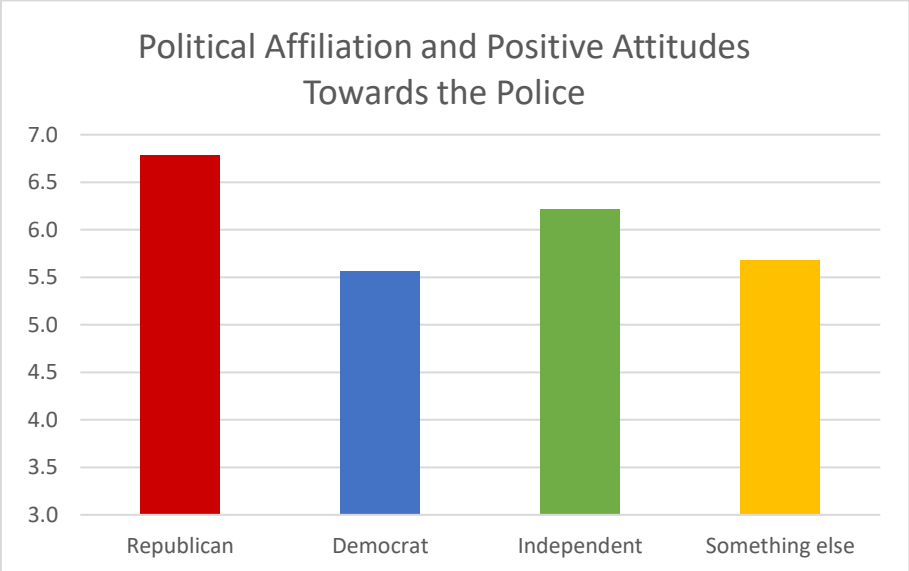
To further explore variation in attitudes toward the police, a composite scale of the two measures was created where higher values indicated more positive attitudes (more trust and satisfaction) toward the police. Several bivariate comparisons provide interesting results. First, although male and female respondents held similar attitudes toward the police, there were fairly striking differences by age of respondents with older respondents holding more positive attitudes than young respondents. That is, as the age of the respondent increased, so too did the positive ratings of the police.



We also found that college-educated respondents held more favorable attitudes toward the police than less-educated respondents and a significant effect of household income with residents in higher-income homes holding more favorable attitudes toward the police.

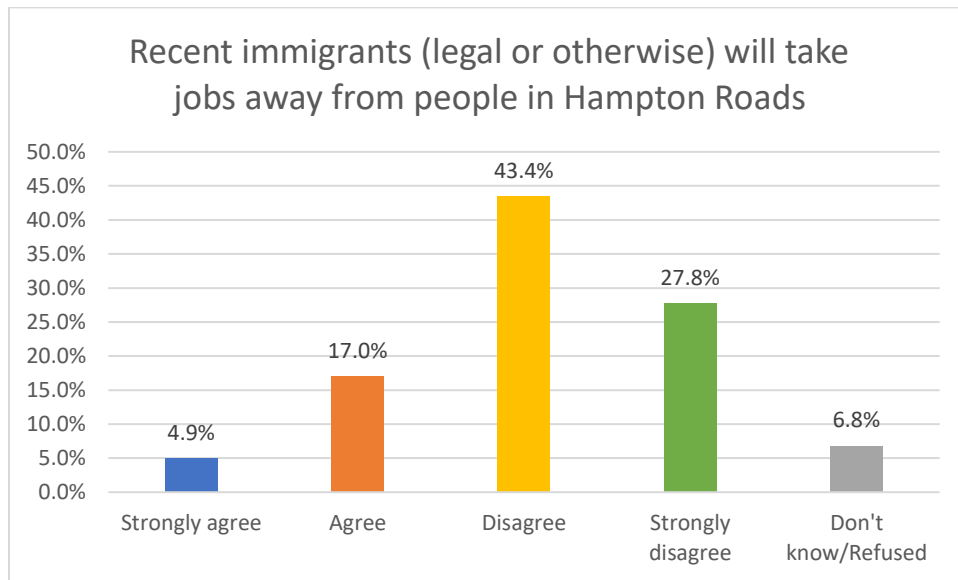


Finally, we find that attitudes toward the police are associated with political affiliation, with Republicans holding more favorable attitudes toward the police than Democrats, independents and those identifying as something else.

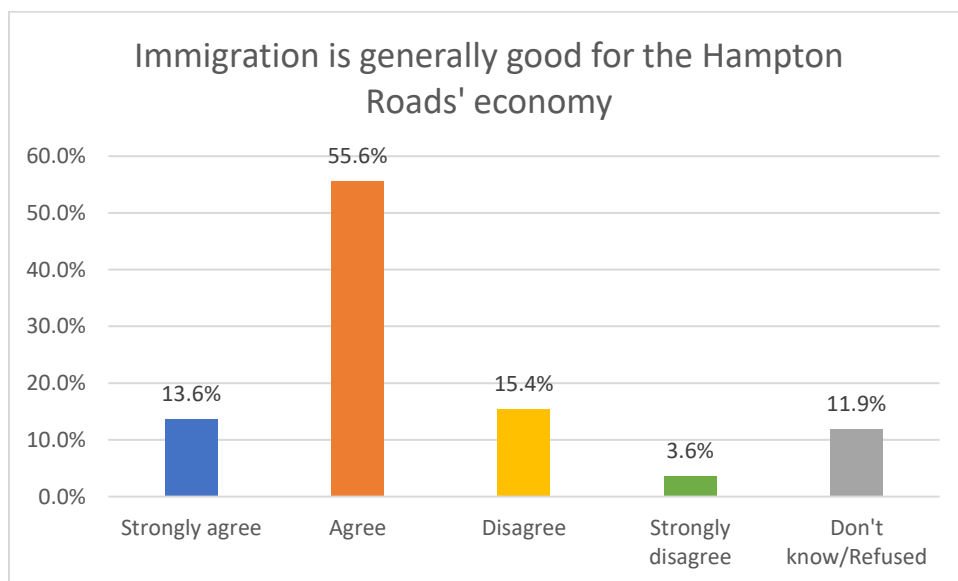


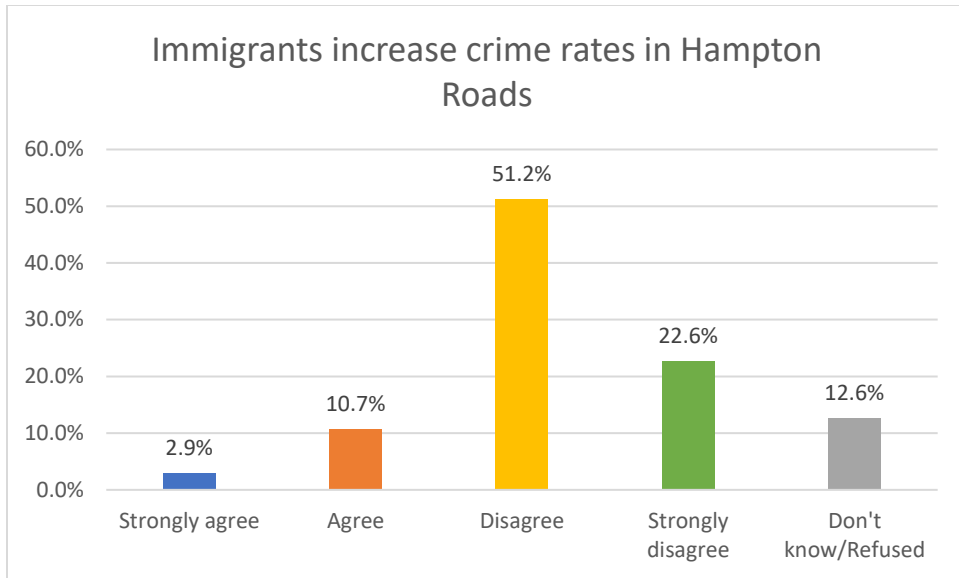
Attitudes Towards Immigration

There has been much debate about immigration policy at the national level. This year's survey included questions to attempt to measure Hampton Roads residents' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration in general. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that recent immigrants (legal or otherwise) will take jobs away from people in Hampton Roads. Only 21.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 71.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

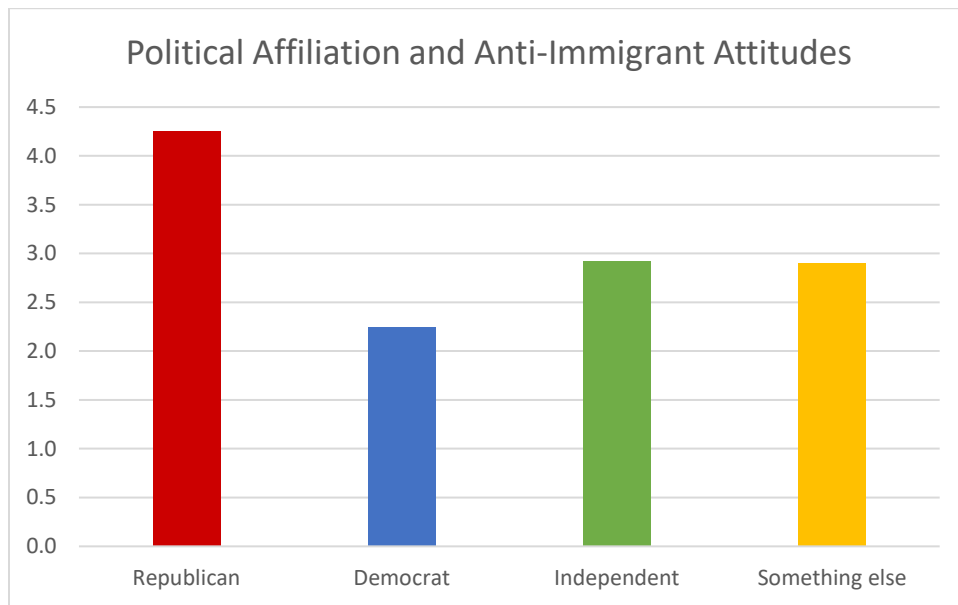
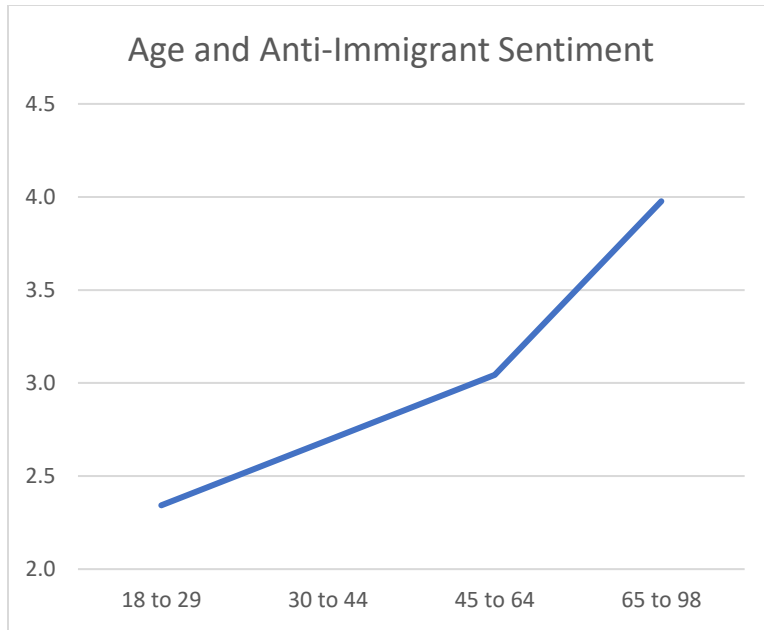


The majority of respondents (69.2%) agreed/strongly agreed that immigration is generally good for the Hampton Roads' economy and 73.8% disagree/strongly disagreed that immigrants increase crime rates locally.

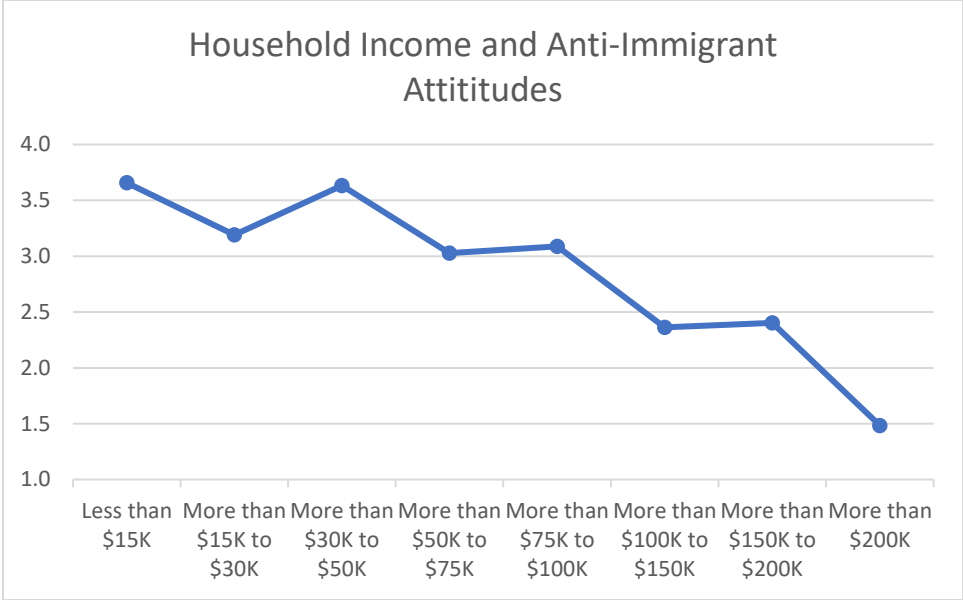




To further explore attitudes toward immigrants and immigration among Hampton Roads residents, a composite scale was created with the three survey items so that higher values indicated more negative attitudes toward immigrant in the region. Preliminary results suggest that there were not significant differences in anti-immigrant sentiments across cities or between men and women. Whites, however, held more negative attitudes toward immigrants than did Blacks. Negative attitudes toward immigrants in Hampton Roads increased as did the age of the respondent (e.g., older respondents expressing more anti-immigrant sentiment than younger respondents). There was also a statistically significant and fairly strong relationship between negative attitudes toward immigrants and political affiliation, with Republicans reporting the most anti-immigrant sentiments.



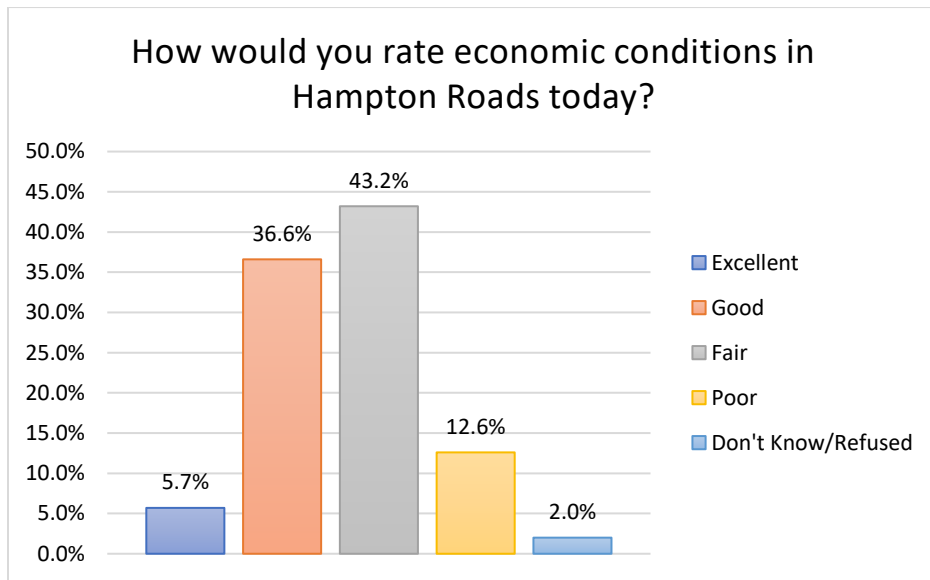
College-educated respondents reported significantly less negative attitudes toward immigrants in Hampton Roads, and there was a strong and statistical significant trend showing those in higher incomes households expressing less negative attitudes toward immigrants in the region. That is, generally as household income increased, negative attitudes toward immigrants decreased.



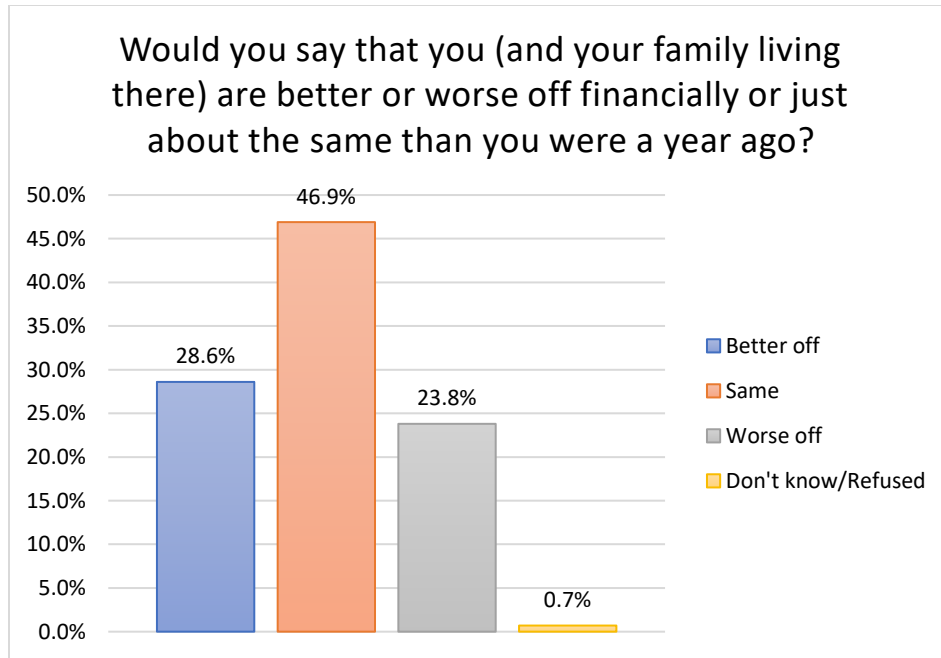
The Economy & Employment

Ratings of the Economy and Personal Financial Situation

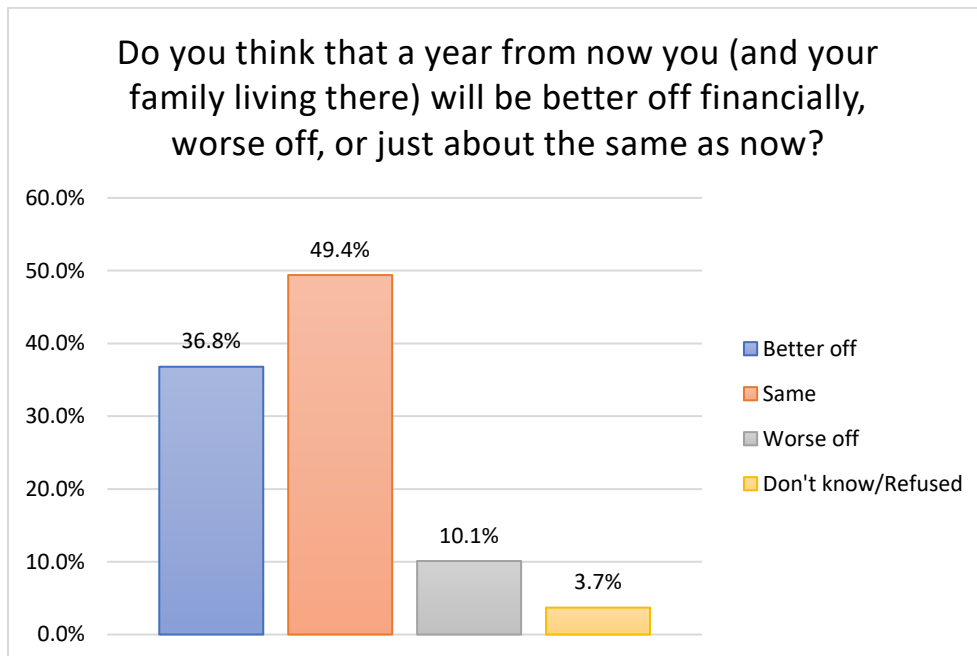
Hampton Roads residents had mixed perceptions of the economy but showed some optimism about their own financial situation. Less than half (42.3%) of those surveyed rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as excellent (5.7%) or good (36.6%). A similar percentage (43.2%) rated economic conditions as fair and 12.6% rated them as poor. These ratings are very similar to last year when 42.4% rated the local economy as excellent or good.



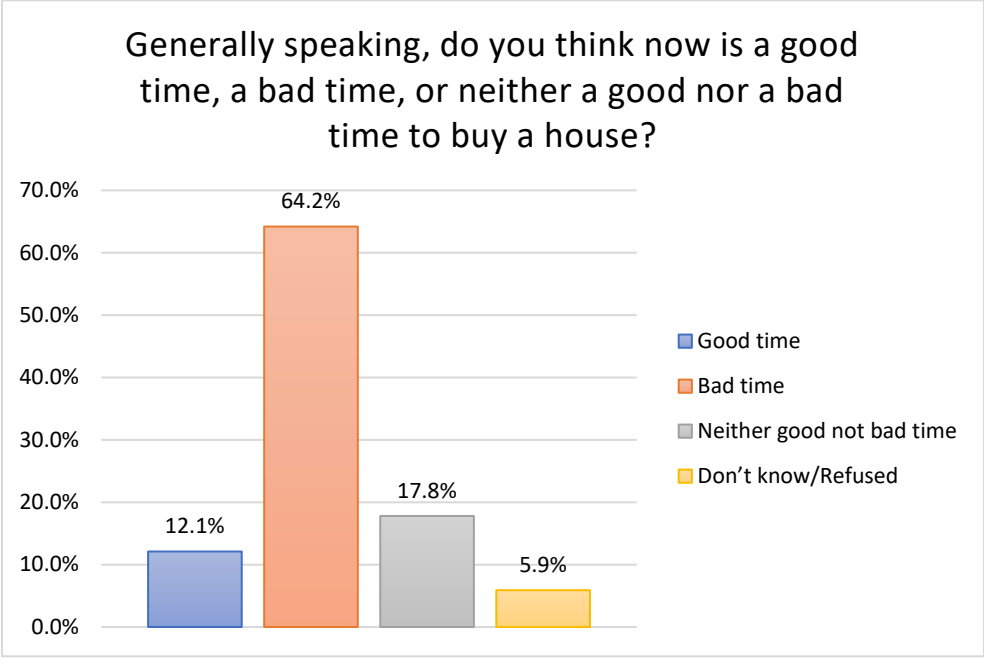
When asked if they and their family were better or worse off financially compared to a year ago, 28.6% reported that they were better off and 46.9% reported that they were about the same. About 23.8% indicated that they and their family were worse off. These numbers show a slightly more positive view of residents' financial standing compared to 2022 (27.8% thought they were better off, 44.9% thought they were about the same, and 26.5% thought they were worse off).



Respondents showed some optimism for the future, with 36.8% indicating that they think they and their family will be better off financially a year from now. Almost half (49.4%) think they will be the same and 10.1% think they will be worse off. A higher percentage of respondents last year felt that they would be the better off (42.9%) and a slightly higher percentage thought they would be worse off (12%).



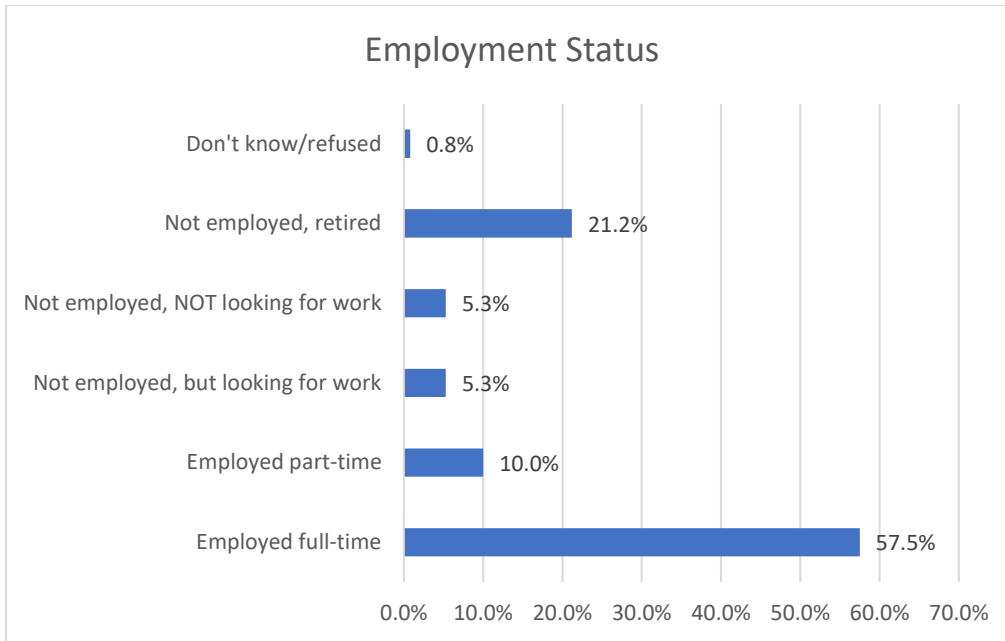
The outlook for home purchasing, however, may be less optimistic, with 64.2% of respondents saying that now is a bad time to buy a house and only 12.1% responding that it is a good time to buy. Only 17.8% think that it is neither a good nor bad time. This is a major decline from 2021 when 27.8% thought it was a good time to buy a house and only 41.3% thought it was a bad time to buy a house. These shifting sentiments perhaps reflect the impacts of rising interest rates and higher home prices.¹



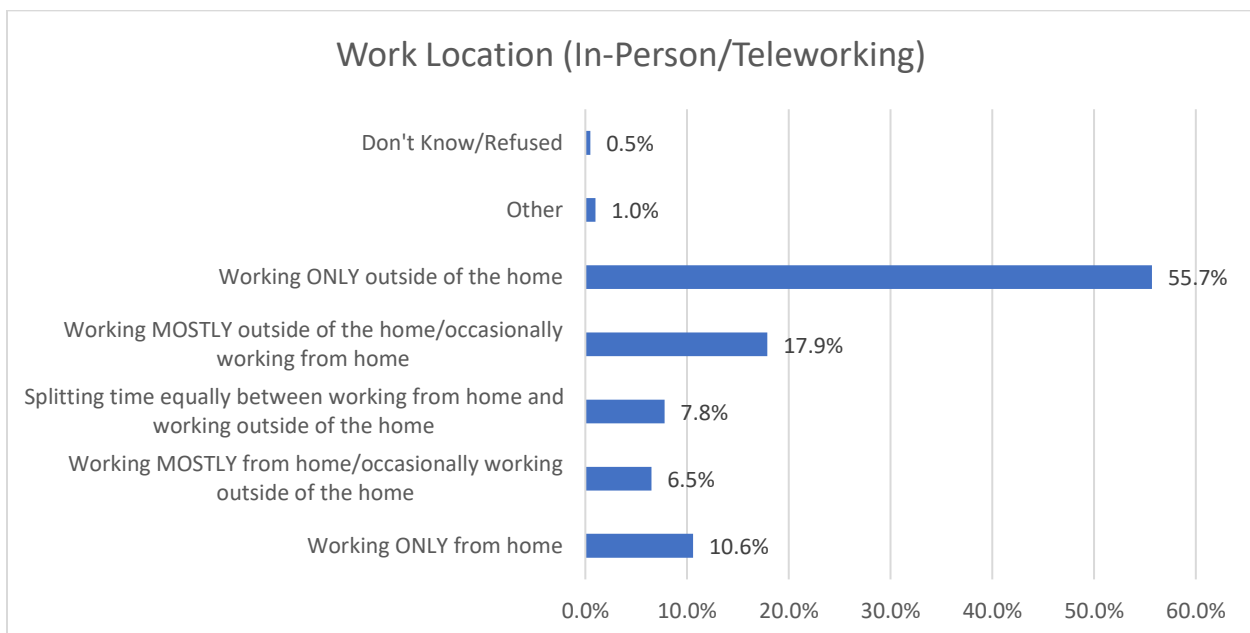
Employment

As can be seen from the graph below, more than half of those responding to this year’s survey were employed full-time (57.5%) while another 10% were employed part-time – these are slightly higher than last year. About 5% were not employed but looking for work (5.3%) while 5.3% were not employed and not looking for work. About one in five respondents (21.2%) were retired and of those who were retired, 15.8% are retired from the U.S. military.

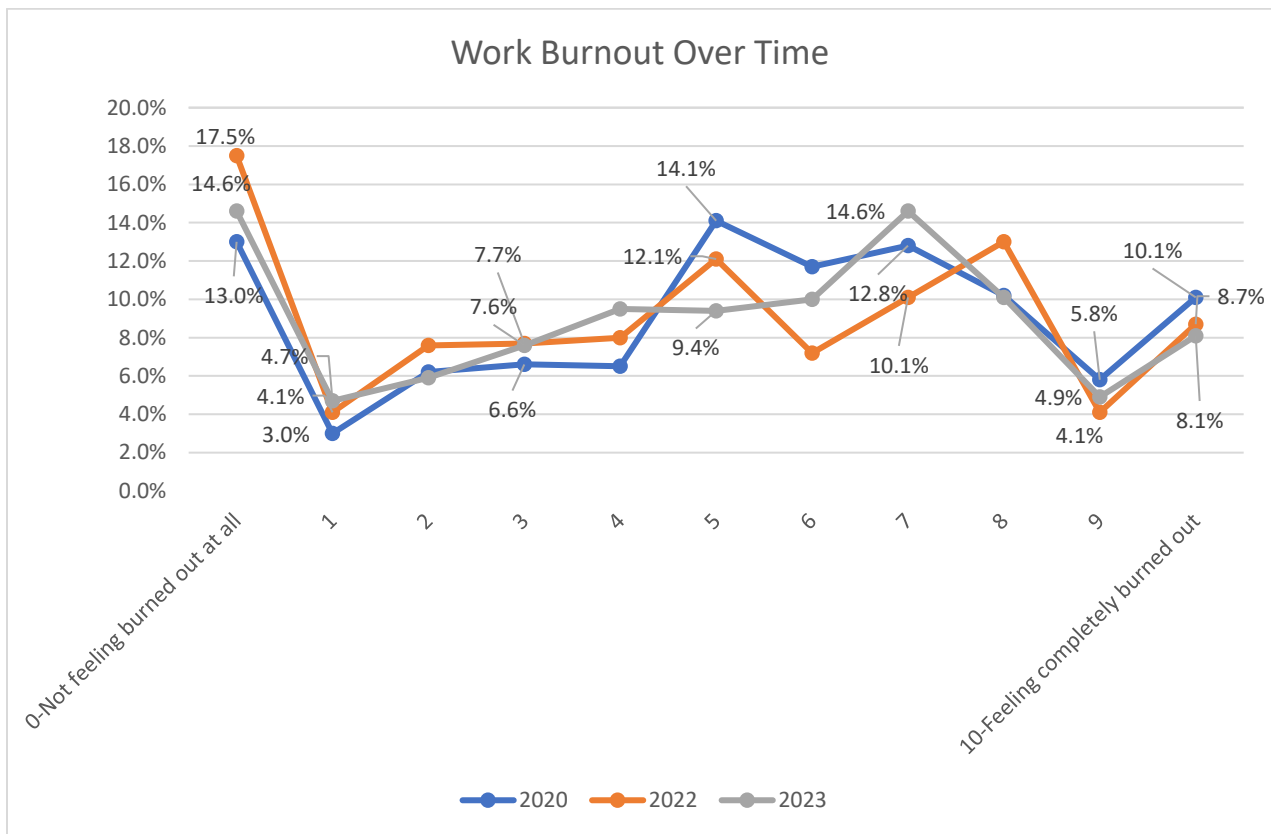
¹For example, see: <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/mortgages/real-estate/housing-market-predictions/>



More than half of respondents who are working either full or part-time reported they are working only outside of the home and not teleworking or telecommuting (55.7%). Another 10.6% said they are working only from home (teleworking or telecommuting). The remaining respondents reported either working mostly outside of the home (17.9%), splitting time equally between working from home and outside the home (7.8%), or working mostly from home (6.5%). Only 1% had some other arrangement. This continues the declines in work from home seen in 2021 and 2022. In 2020, nearly half of respondents were working mostly or only from home.



Respondents were asked to rate their level of work burnout on a scale of 0 to 10, with “0” meaning “not feeling burned out at all and “10” meaning “feeling completely burned out.” The average rate given for work burnout was 5.6 which is slightly higher than last year (4.8). The most common ratings of work burnout reported were 0 (14.6%), 7 (14.6%), and 8 (10.1%). Looking at burnout over time, ratings generally have followed a similar trend from 2020 to 2023. Those rating burnout as a 10 has decreased in the past two years compared to during the pandemic (8-9% most recently compared to 10.1% in 2020). Those indicating zero burnout has also increased since 2020 (14.6% this year compared to 13% in 2020).

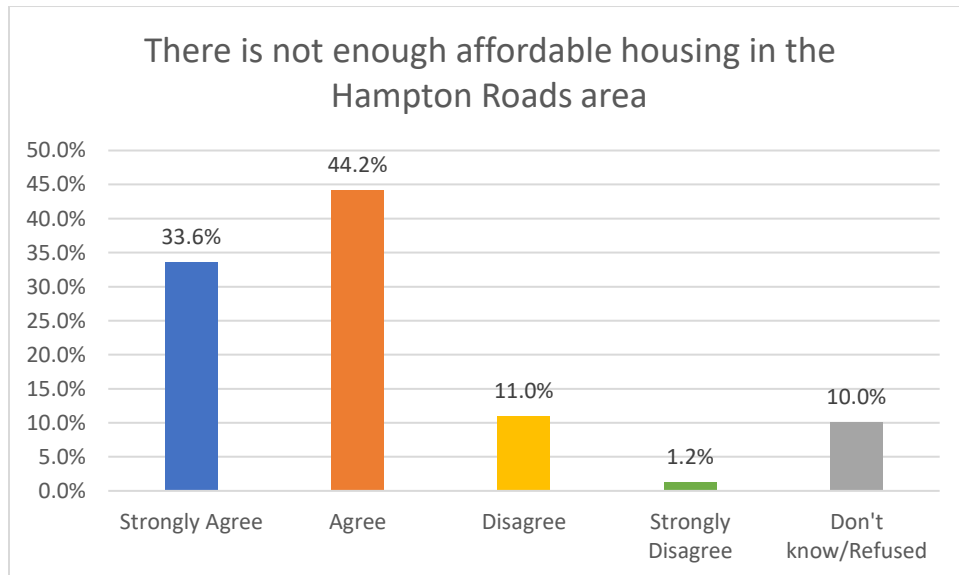
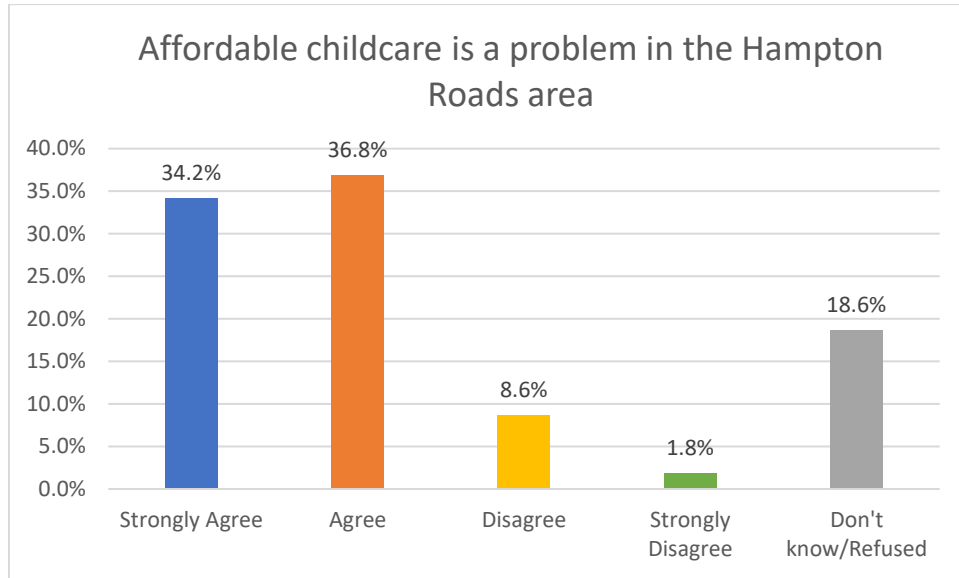


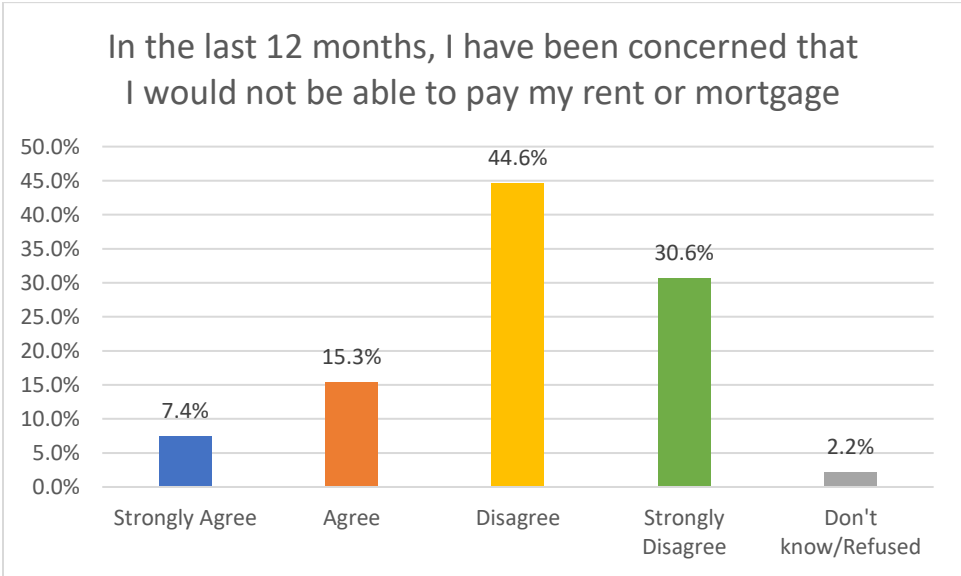
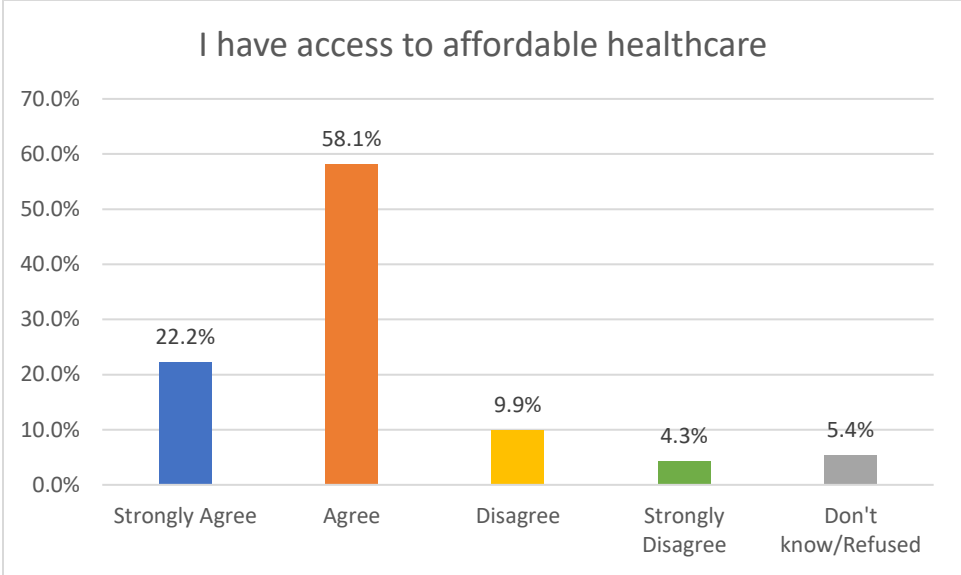
Affordability of Essentials in Hampton Roads

This year’s survey also included questions about the affordability of various essentials in Hampton Roads and related personal financial issues. Respondents were asked if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

- *Affordable childcare care is a problem in the Hampton Roads area*
- *There is not enough affordable housing in the Hampton Roads area*
- *I have access to affordable healthcare*
- *In the last 12 months, I have been concerned that I would not be able to pay my rent or mortgage*

More than 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that affordable childcare is a problem in Hampton Roads (71%) and that there is not enough affordable housing in Hampton Roads (77.8%). While 80.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to affordable healthcare and only 22.7% agreed that they had been concerned they would not be able to pay their rent/mortgage in the past 12 months, the results indicate that at least one in five respondents has financial difficulties related to healthcare and/or housing.

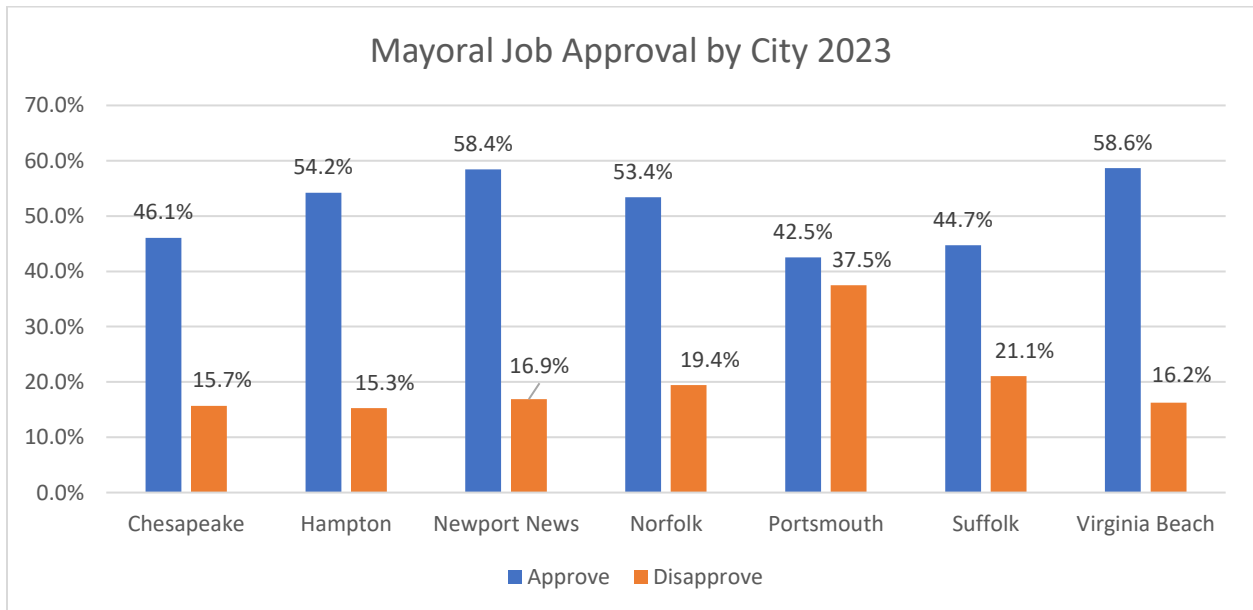


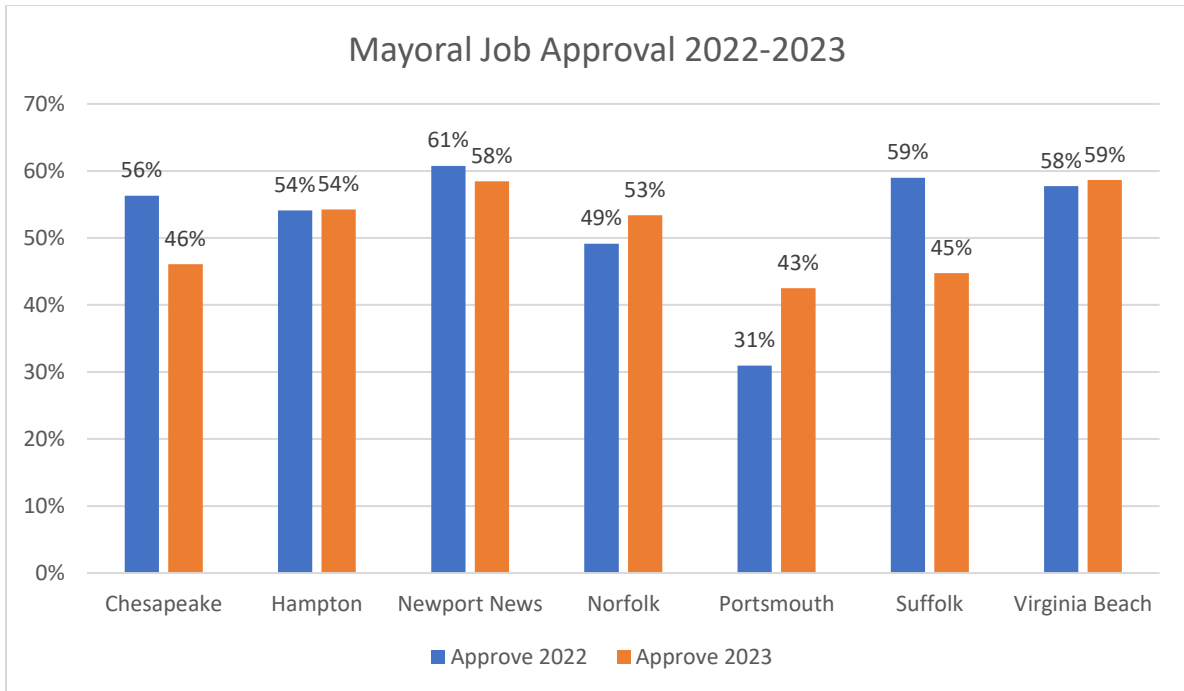


Politics and Political Opinions

Approval of City Mayors

As in previous years, the survey asked about mayoral job approval. Responses to this question were relatively strong for most mayors in 2023. Approximately 53% indicated that they approved or strongly approved (53.4%) while 18.5% voiced disapproval. Whereas in previous years Portsmouth has often been far below other cities in terms of approval of the mayor, Portsmouth's mayoral approval climbed from 31% to 43% and was joined by two other cities where approval of the mayor was in the 40-50% range – Suffolk (44.7%) and Chesapeake (46.1%). Approval for the Norfolk mayor also improved from 49% to 53%. Portsmouth does remain unique as the only city where more than 30% (37.5%) of respondents disapprove of their city's leadership, although this is a vast improvement for the city since disapproval stood at 57% in the 2022 survey. It is important to remember that the overall sample sizes here are quite small at the city level. Nonetheless, the data seems to suggest that the city leadership in some of the cities surveyed has more work to do to win public trust than does the leadership in other cities. Norfolk and Portsmouth seem to have made progress, but other cities (especially Suffolk and Chesapeake) have lost ground.

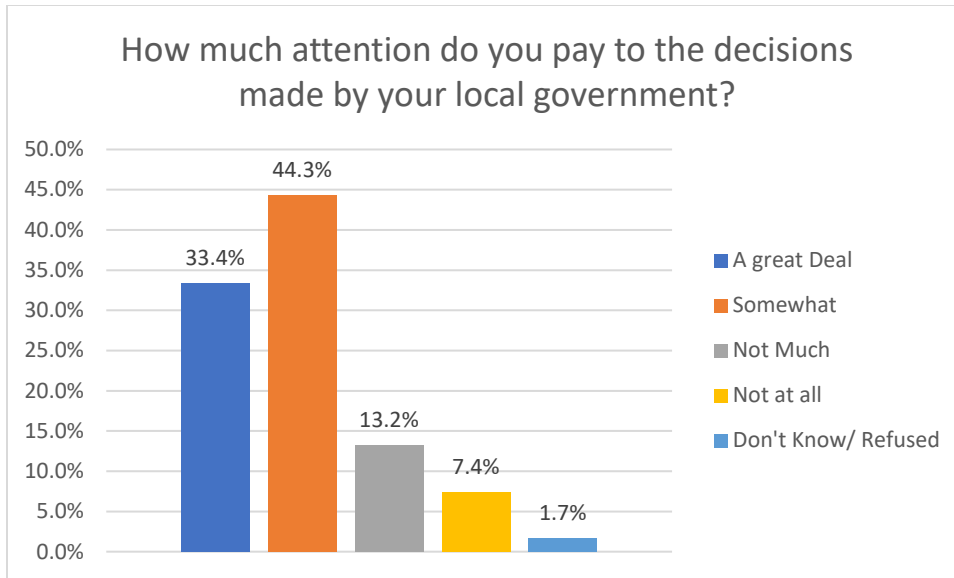




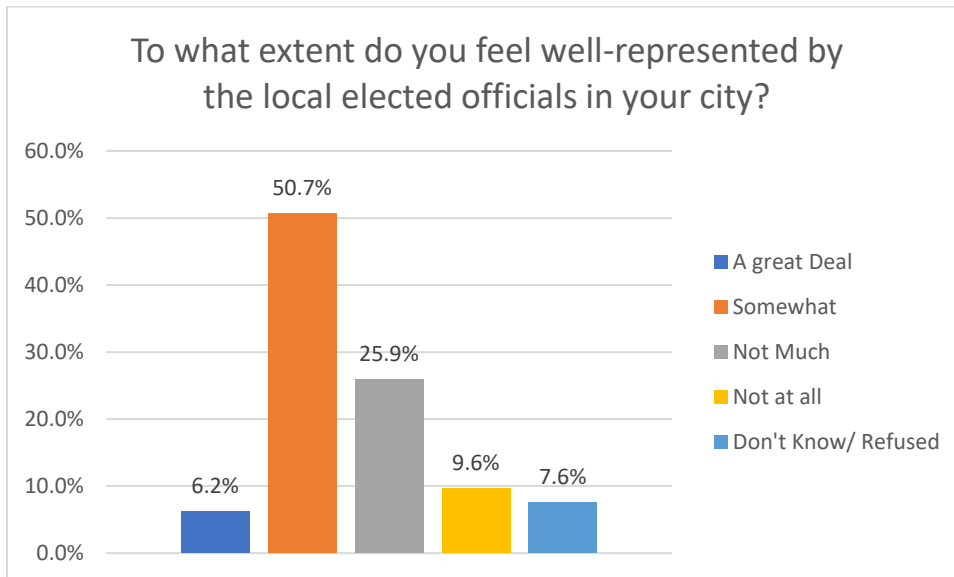
City Governance: Attention and Representation

How well-represented are you? Do you pay attention to your local government? These questions were included on the 2023 survey and the results show that those who paid attention to decisions made by their local government thought they were better represented than those who did not pay attention. Perceptions of representation did not differ significantly by race.

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents indicated that they pay at least some attention to decisions made by their local governments. One-third of respondents (33.4%) indicated that they pay “a great deal” of attention, and another 44.3% indicated that they pay attention “somewhat.”

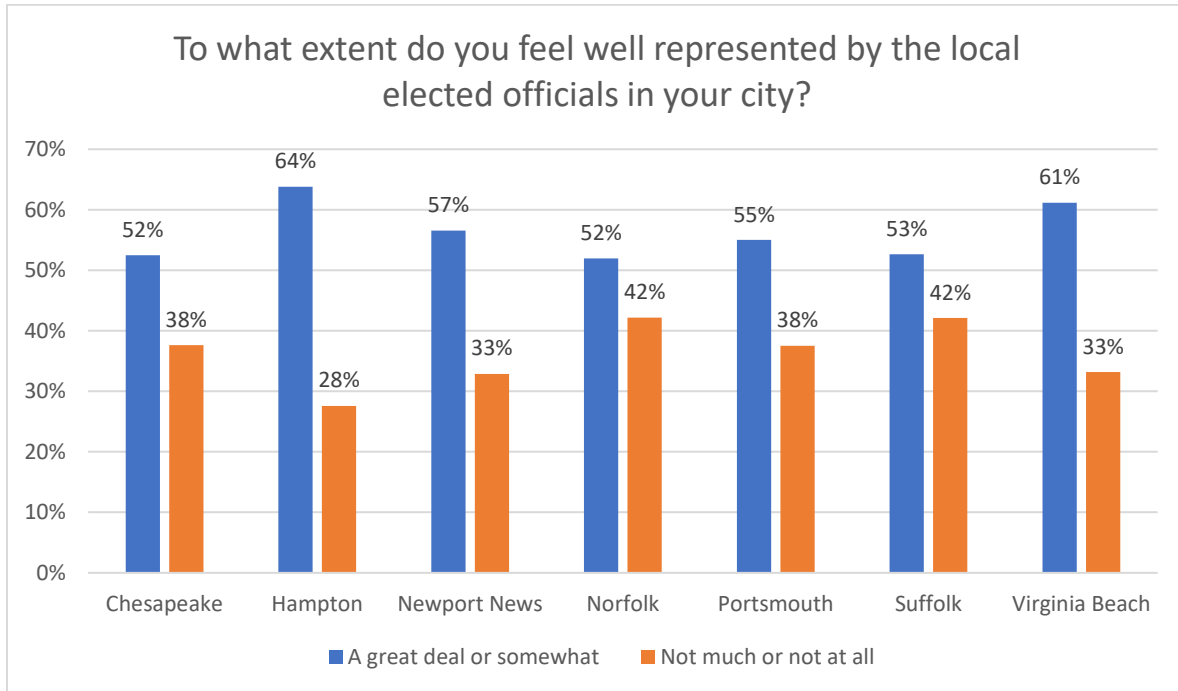


This year’s survey included a new question concerning the quality of representation. Respondents were asked: “To what extent do you feel well-represented by the local elected officials in your city?” Overall, the response was a collective shrug. Only 6.2% of respondents indicated that they thought they were well-represented “a great deal” but half (50.7%) indicated that they were “somewhat” well-represented. Another quarter of respondents (25.9%) indicated that they thought they were “not much” represented.

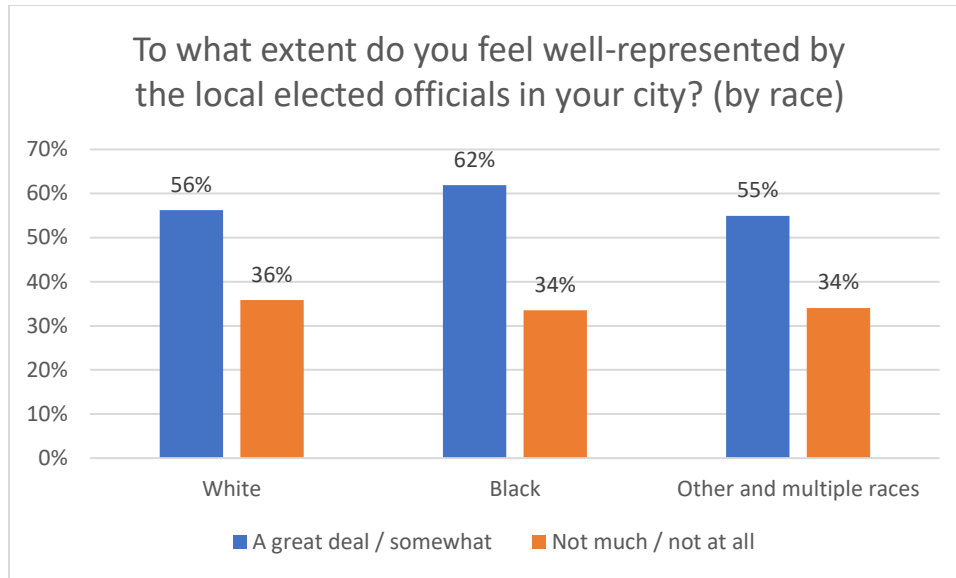


There was limited yet statistically significant variation across cities in terms of feeling represented, and Norfolk was perhaps notable for having the largest percentage responding “a great deal” (11.8%) and simultaneously the largest percentage responding “not at all” (16.7%), and the smallest differential between those who thought they were relatively well represented (52%) and those who did not (42%).

Overall, respondents in Hampton were the most likely to indicate that they felt well represented “a great deal” or “somewhat” (64%), and the least likely to respond that they felt represented “not much” or “not at all” (28%).

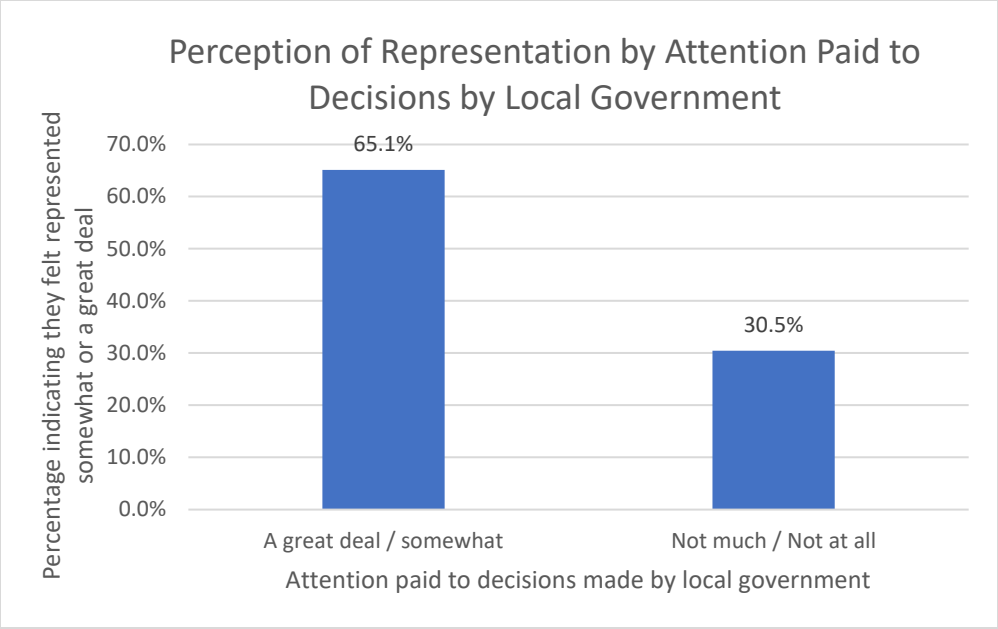


There was relatively little difference in responses to the representation question across racial categories. Overall, Black respondents were slightly more likely to report that they felt well-represented, but the differences between racial groups were not statistically significant. The relatively similar responses to this question across racial groups are modestly encouraging: if there were significant differences among racial groups in terms of feeling that they were not well-represented, that would be cause for concern.



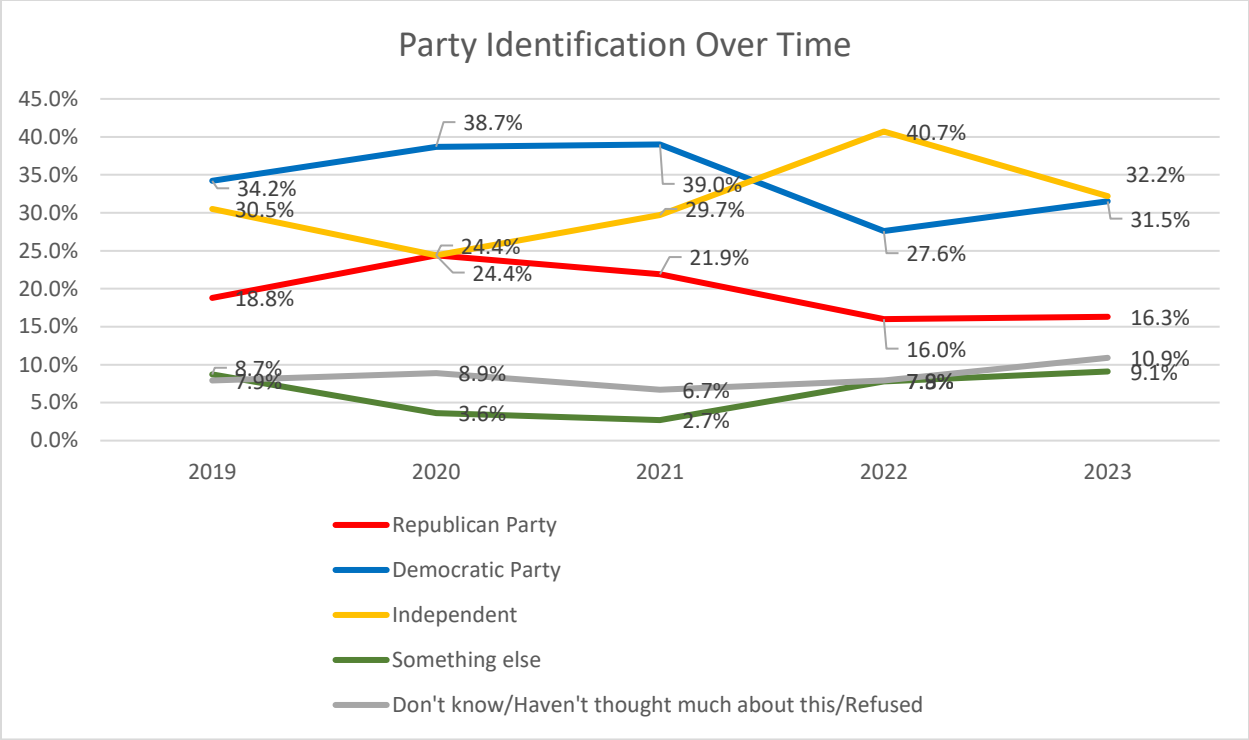
Age was associated to some degree with perceptions of the quality of representation. Respondents who were 65 or older were the most likely to feel that they were represented “a great deal” (11.5%) or “somewhat” (58.7%).

Responses to the local politics attention and representation questions were strongly associated with each other: respondents who indicated that they paid more attention were more likely to indicate that they thought they were well represented. This is encouraging in some respects – those who pay attention feel better represented, so perhaps if others paid attention they would also feel more adequately represented. But an alternative interpretation is that those who feel poorly represented may be tuning out and failing to pay the attention that would be needed for them to pressure local governments to represent them better.

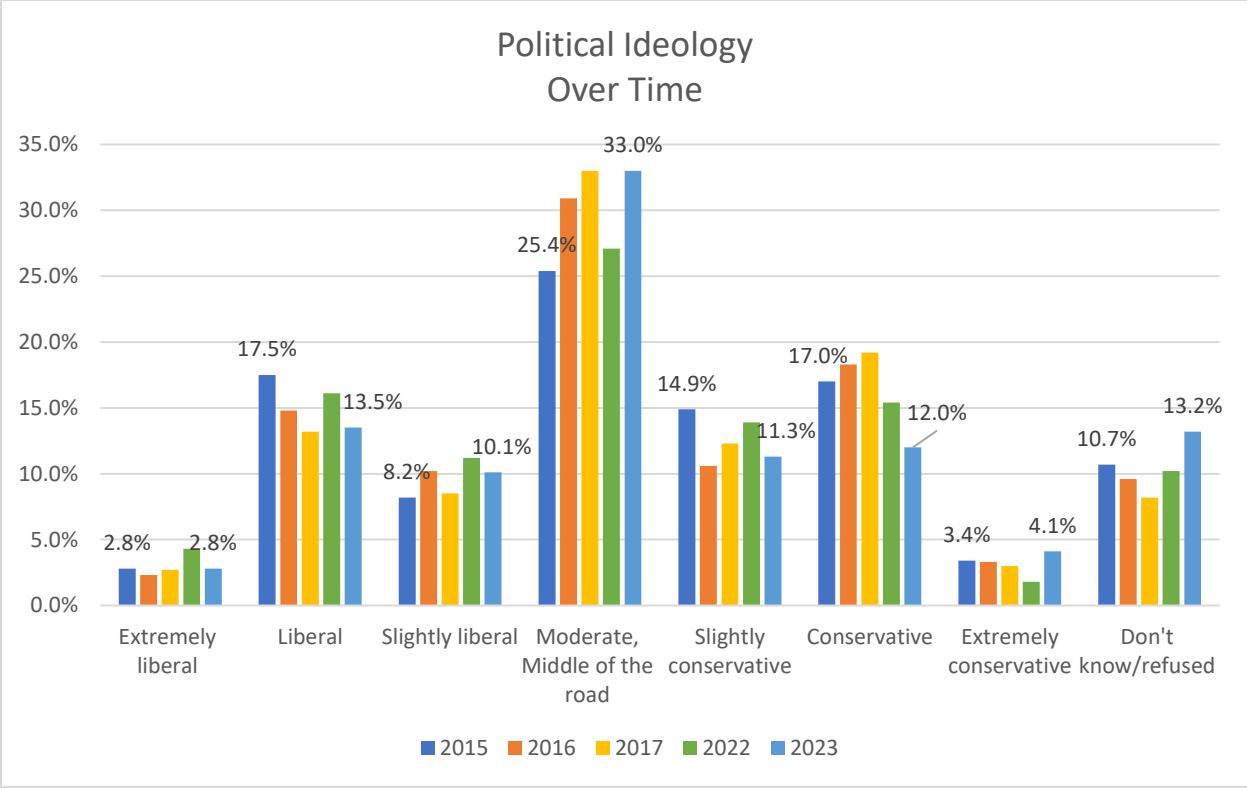


Party Identification and Ideology

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. More than 31% of respondents 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 16% responded Republican Party. Affiliation with both parties remains lower than in several recent years, although Democratic affiliation has increased modestly from last year (27.6%). As in 2022, more respondents identified as independents than with either party alone with less than half of respondents affiliated with the major parties. Weakening party affiliations potentially open the door for more individuals to support third-party candidates in the 2024 elections.

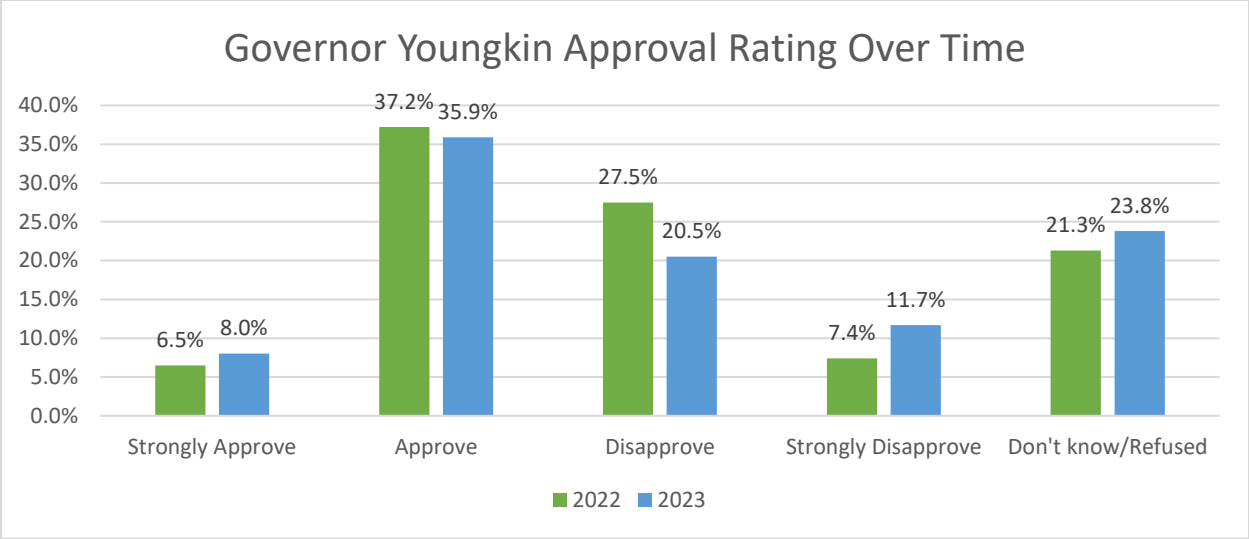


This year’s survey also asked about respondent self-rated political ideology. Individuals were asked to describe their political views on a seven-point scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. This item suggests that the region is quite balanced ideologically, with nearly equal numbers of liberals and conservatives. The largest group of respondents was those who said they were moderate (33%). Overall, just over one-quarter of respondents (26.4%) described themselves as liberal (summing across the three liberal categories) which is down 5.2% from 2022, and slightly more than one-quarter of respondents (27.4%) described themselves as conservative, also down nearly 4% from 2022. This year the portion of respondents who either refused to state their ideology or indicated that they did not know increased somewhat to 13.2%. Overall, almost half of survey respondents (46.2%) did not see themselves as either liberal or conservative. The many moderate, non-ideological, non-partisan respondents reflect the diverse audiences that both parties will potentially need to attract to win in the November elections.



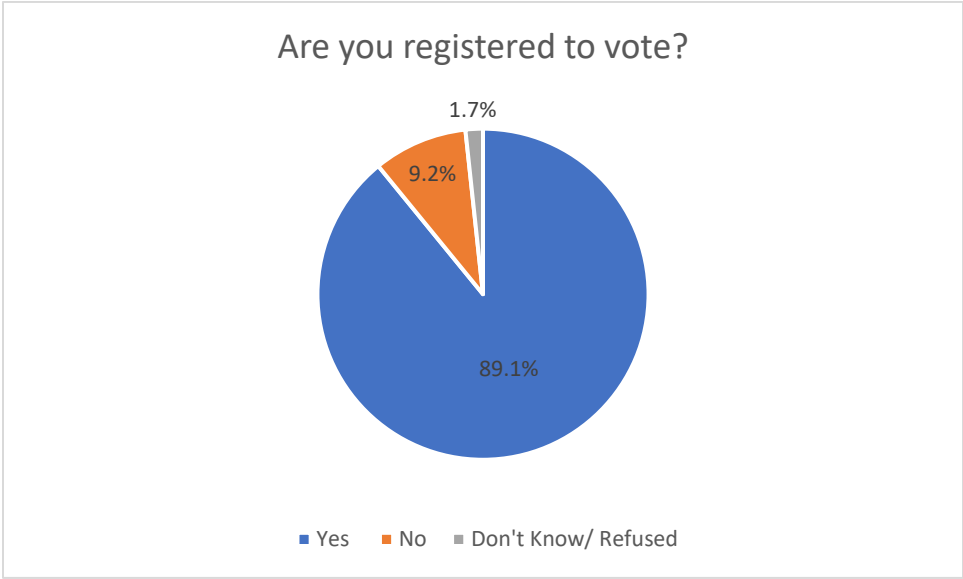
Approval of the Governor: Largely Unchanged

At the time that the survey was conducted, Glenn Youngkin was in his second year as governor. Opinion of the governor’s job performance remained mixed, with 43.9% approving or strongly approving and 32.2% disapproving or strongly disapproving. Nearly one in four respondents indicated that they either did not know or refused to answer (23.8%). Since Youngkin received roughly 45% of the vote in the November 2021 gubernatorial election within the seven cities surveyed (217,129 out of 479,886 votes), this level of approval seems consistent with neither major gains nor losses in popularity for the governor at this point in his administration. There has, however, been a modest hardening of opinion toward the governor since the 2022 survey, with more respondents (19.7% versus 13.9%) indicating that they held their views strongly compared to 2022.



The 2023 Legislative Elections

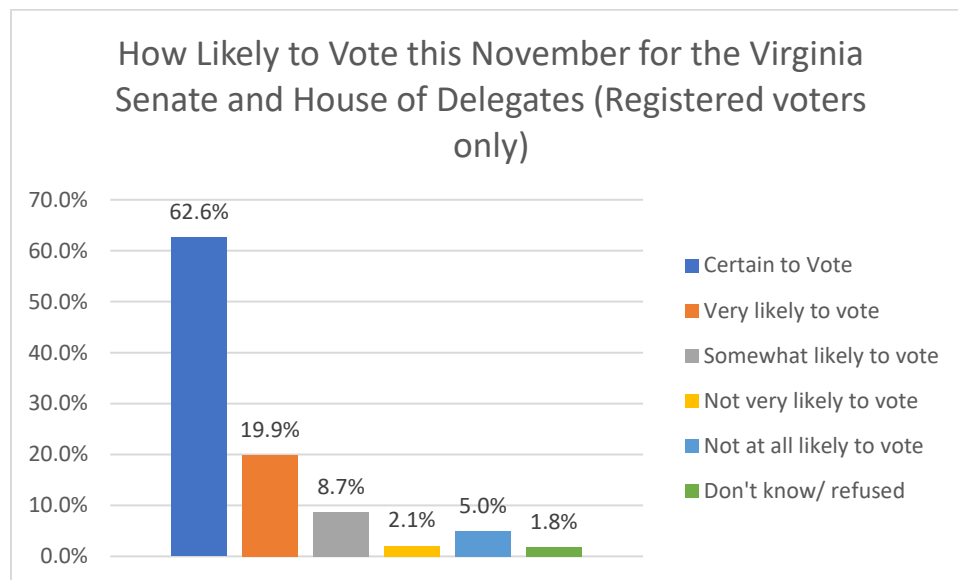
In November, Virginia held an election for all members of the House of Delegates and State Senate. Because of this, the Life in Hampton Roads Survey included several questions concerning the election. These questions included some issue priority questions, and questions concerning how respondents planned to vote. Most survey respondents (89.1%) indicated that they were registered to vote.



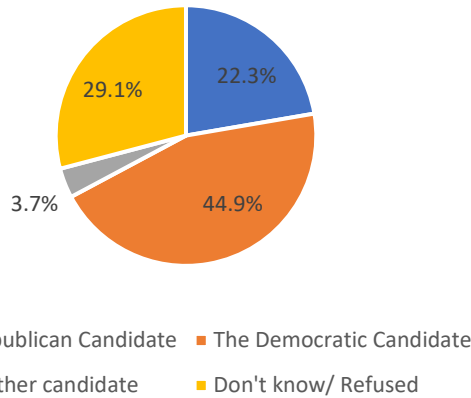
Among those who were registered voters, 62.6% indicated that they were “certain to vote,” with another 19.9% claiming that they were “very likely to vote” in the November election. Preliminary city-level voter turnout estimates from the Virginia Department of Elections indicate between 31% (Norfolk) and 50% (Virginia Beach) turnout among registered voters in the election. This suggests either that some people who thought they were certain to vote changed their mind, or that the sample contained a

disproportionate number of registered voters who intended to turnout. This could perhaps be due to some of the registered voters who did not turn out being more difficult to reach by survey or recently moved from the area.

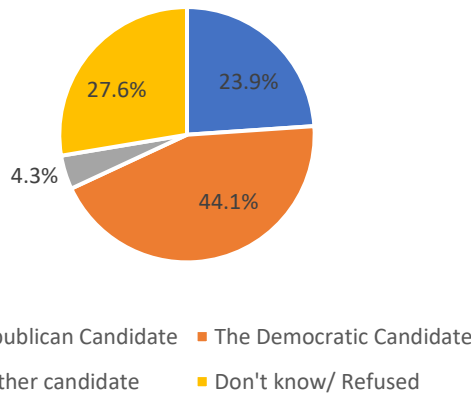
In the analyses below, some results are reported for the entire set of respondents, sometimes just those who were registered to vote, and sometimes only of likely voters, defined as respondents who indicated that they were at least “very likely to vote” and were also registered to vote. Many registered voters had yet to make up their mind about which candidate to support in the 2023 Virginia legislative election. This uncertainty may be multiplied by the major changes brought by redistricting – which resulted in many Hampton Roads residents in new districts with new candidates running. This year was the first year that Virginia’s legislature was elected using the new districts drawn by special masters hired by the Virginia Supreme Court after the redistricting commission deadlocked. For both the House of Delegates (29.1%) and Virginia Senate (27.6%), more than one quarter of respondents did not know what candidate they would vote for or refused to answer the question. These numbers were only marginally lower among likely voters (26.1% and 24.6%, respectively). Clearly, many respondents had yet to make up their minds at the time of the survey, and this could make a big difference in terms of the election outcomes if particular campaigns managed to attract the support of undecided voters.



If the election was held today, would you vote for
(House of Delegates - Registered voters):



If the election was held today, would you vote for
(Senate - Registered voters):



Among likely voters who had made up their minds, however, Democrats had a striking advantage in the House of Delegates. Almost two-thirds (64.7%) indicated that they planned to vote for the Democratic candidate for the Virginia House of Delegates, whereas only 31.3% indicated that they planned to vote for the Republican candidate. By contrast, when the last election for these offices took place in 2021, voters from the seven Hampton Roads cities gave 45.8% of their votes to Republican candidates, and 53.7% to Democratic candidates. This suggested Republicans might have some significant ground to make up if they wanted to avoid Hampton Roads area House of Delegates seat losses in the November election.² This

² Unweighted responses were somewhat more favorable for the Republicans. In the unweighted data, among likely voters who indicated a candidate preference, 58.4% supported the Democratic candidate, and 37.1% supported the Republican candidate for the House of Delegates. It is possible that the weighting process could have distorted

possibility was confirmed by the ultimate election results, in which Republicans lost control of the House of Delegates.

A similar pattern was observed for the Virginia Senate, although the political implications were somewhat distinct. Among likely voters who had made up their minds, 62.2% indicated that they would vote for the Democratic candidate if the election was held today, compared to 32.9% who supported the Republican candidate.³ The most recent election for Virginia's Senate occurred in 2019, a year that was favorable for Democrats, and several seats were not even contested by Republicans in that cycle. Democrats won 64.2% of votes cast in the Hampton Roads seven cities during the 2019 Senate contests, compared to only 30.8% for the Republicans. Thus, in contrast with the House of Delegates races, the results for the Virginia Senate offered some modest encouragement for Republicans concerning their prospects in that chamber as the polling placed Republicans modestly ahead of their 2019 performance. Ultimately, Republicans did gain one seat statewide in the Virginia Senate, although this was not enough to give the party control of the chamber. The key Republican seat pick-up occurred in Hampton Roads' 24th District where Democrat T. Monty Mason was the only Senate incumbent who ran for re-election and lost.

Taken together, the results of the survey suggested that Republicans would struggle to maintain their advantage in the House of Delegates which dated from a year where the strong performance of the Youngkin campaign in Hampton Roads helped boost Republican chances in the House of Delegates, but that Democrats potentially faced some challenges maintaining their advantages in the Virginia Senate which dated from the last Senate election in 2019 – a good election cycle for Democrats. For candidates from both parties, a major challenge was to win over the substantial share of the electorate that is still undecided, and given the low turnout overall in this election, it appears that to a significant degree both parties failed at that task. An important caveat is that this analysis looks across the seven cities in Hampton Roads as a whole and does not break the vote totals out by district. Future analyses might focus on estimating candidate performance in the new state legislative districts.

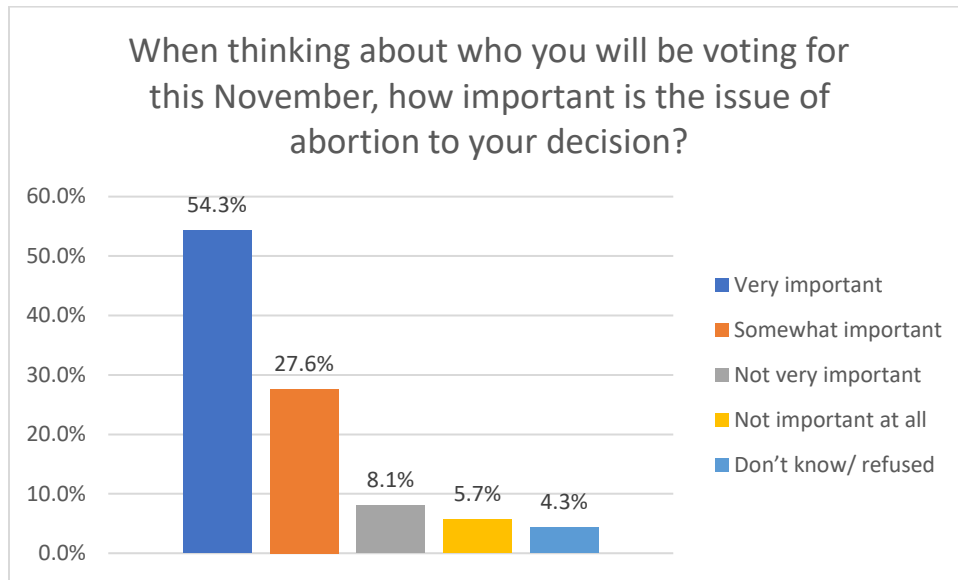
[Abortion: Still a Potent Electoral Issue](#)

What issues are moving voters? The survey included a set of questions about the importance of the issue of abortion. After the United States Supreme Court overturned the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 2022,

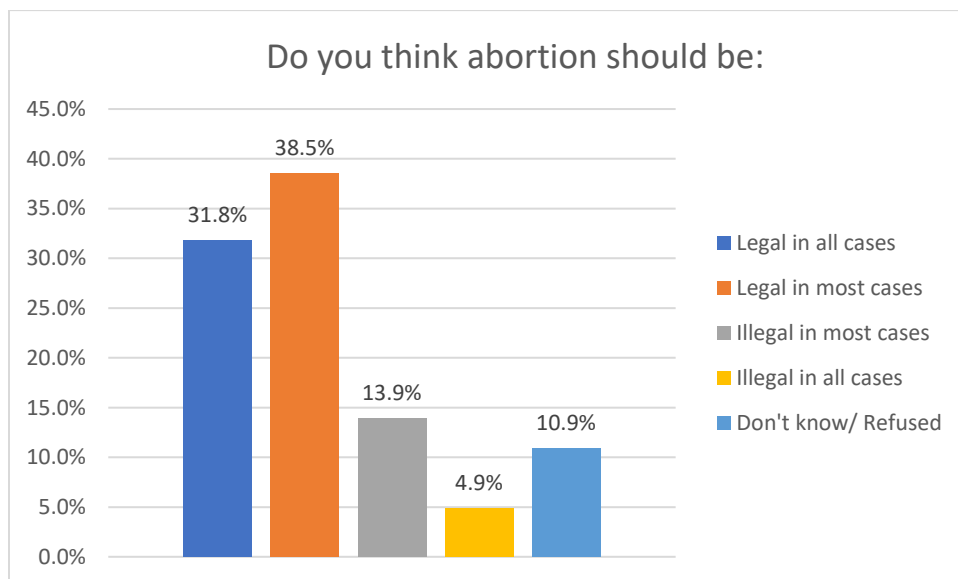
the Republican vote totals, particularly as (to retain consistency with past years) LIHR is not weighted based on education, and failure to weight on education sometimes leads to inaccuracies in favor of Democrats in polls.

³ As for the House of Delegates, unweighted responses were somewhat more favorable for the Republicans. In the unweighted likely voter sample, 58.4% indicated that they would vote for a Democrat if the election was held today, and 37.1% indicated that they would vote for a Republican.

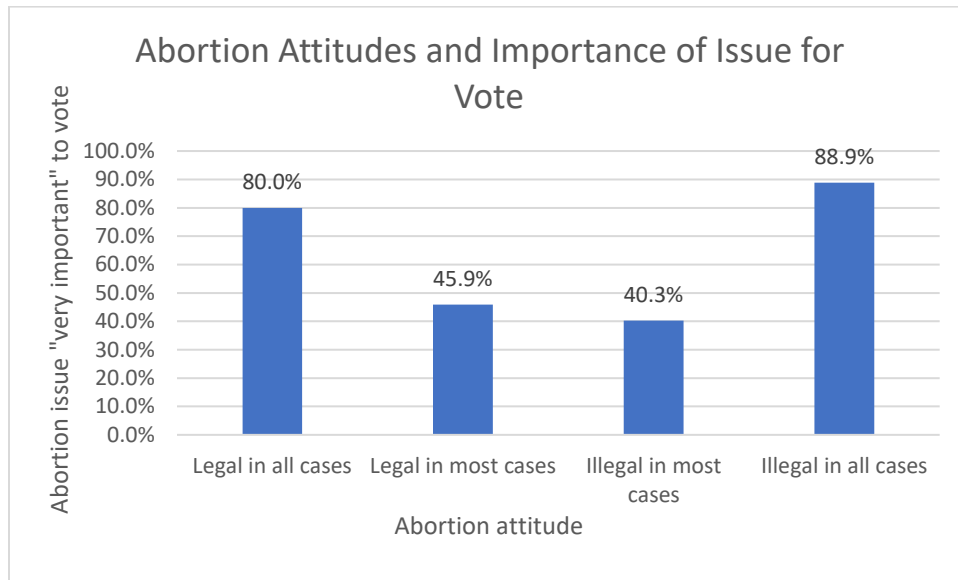
abortion became a much more salient issue in the subsequent Congressional midterm elections. The survey asked about abortion to assess whether and to what extent this intensity on the abortion issue continued into 2023. When asked “how important is the issue of abortion to your decision” in the election, more than half of respondents (54.3%) indicated that it was “very important,” and more than a quarter indicated that it was somewhat important (27.6%). Overall, 81.9% of respondents indicated that abortion would be at least “somewhat important” for their decision.



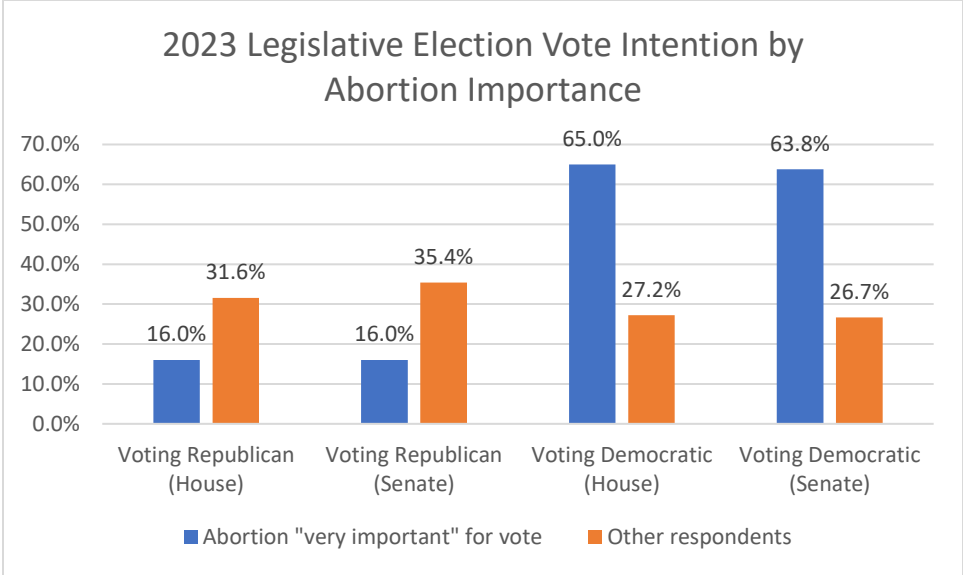
The political implications obviously depend upon voters’ views concerning abortion policy. Nearly one-third of respondents (31.8%) indicated that they thought that abortion should be legal in all cases, with the largest share of respondents (38.5%) indicating that it should be legal in most cases. Only 4.9% indicated that they thought abortion should be illegal in all cases.



There was a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between abortion attitude and the importance of abortion for the vote, with a “very important” for the vote response most likely among respondents who thought abortion should be legal in all cases (80.0%) and illegal in all cases (88.9%). Even among respondents with more moderate positions on abortion, the issue was seen as very important for the vote by more than 40% of respondents.

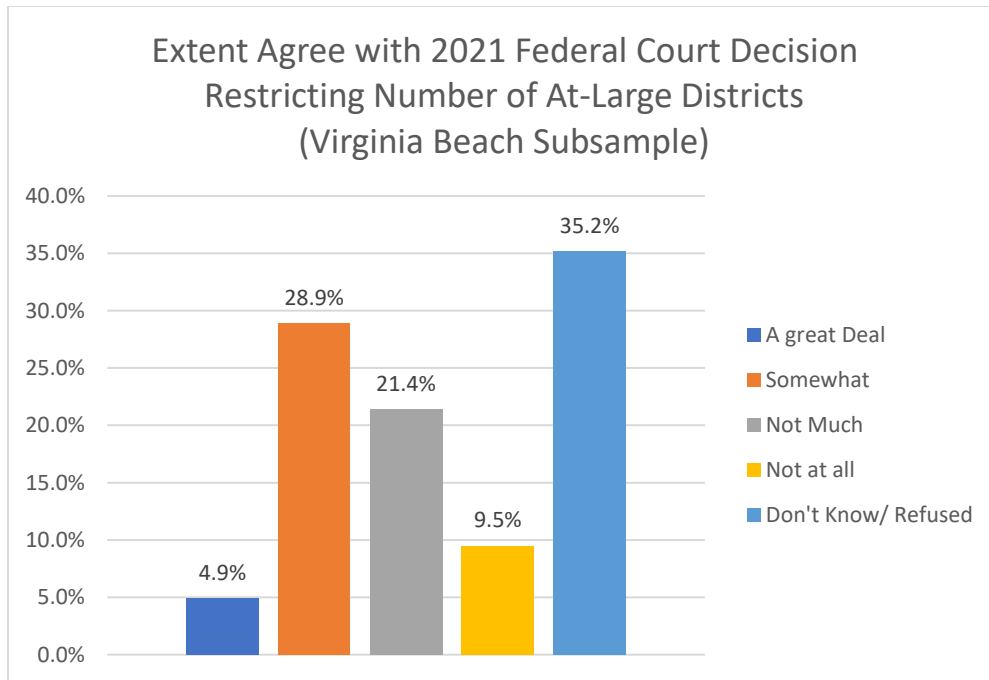


Among likely voters, Democrats thought abortion was a “very important” issue. About two-thirds (65.0%) of such respondents indicated that they would vote for the Democratic candidate for the Virginia House of Delegates and 63.8% indicated that they would vote for the Democratic candidate for the Virginia Senate. In 2022, Democrats performed relatively well in the midterm Congressional elections by emphasizing the abortion issue. These results suggest that the abortion issue continues to advantage Democrats in Hampton Roads.



City Council Changes in Virginia Beach

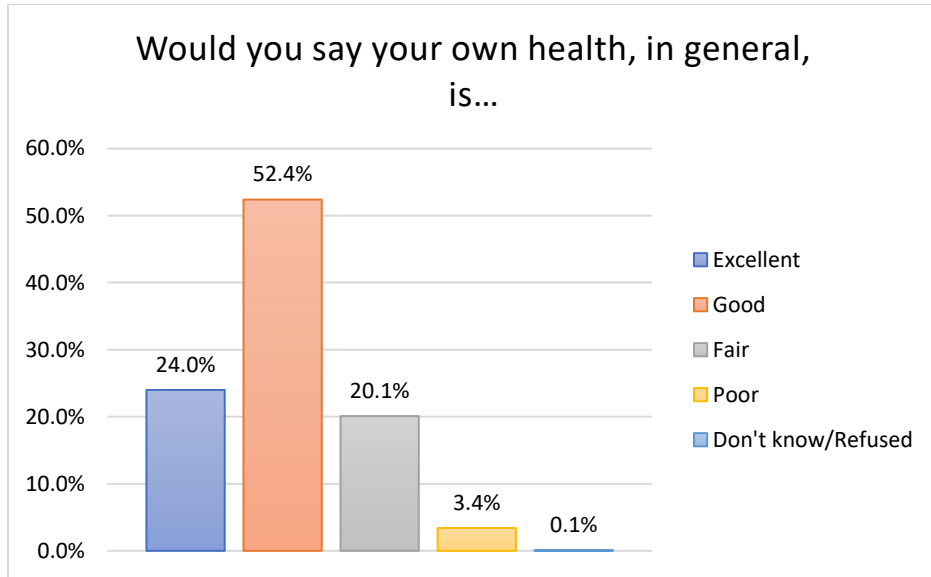
Virginia Beach residents (n=191) were also asked their views on the 2021 decision by a federal judge which restricted the number of at-large city council seats in Virginia Beach. Very few respondents said that they agreed “a great deal” with the ruling (4.9%) and the remainder of the respondents were split relatively equally between somewhat (28.9%), not much/not at all (30.9%) and don’t know/refused (35.2%).



Health, Climate, & Education in Hampton Roads

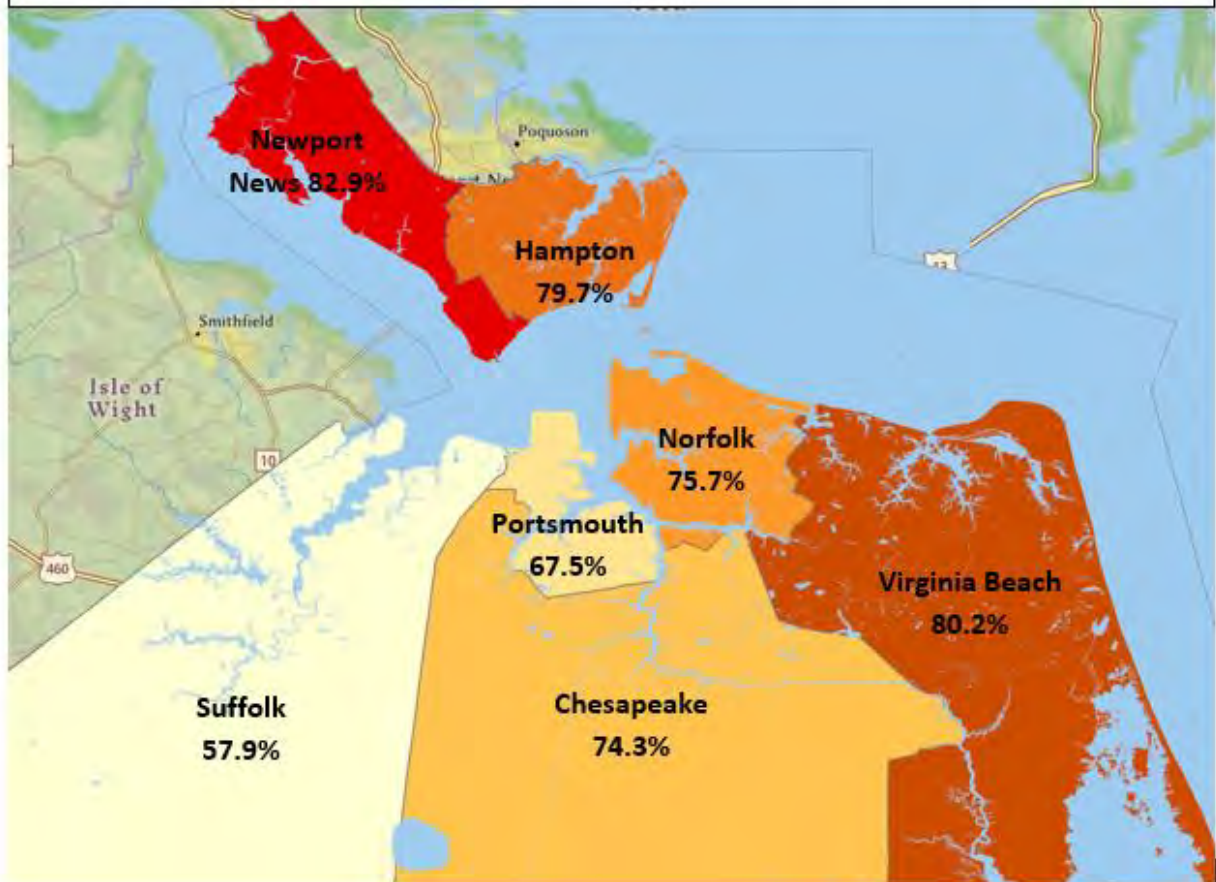
Health and Climate Change

More than three-quarters of respondents (76.4%) rated the quality of their own health as excellent (24%) or good (52.4%). This is slightly lower than last year (81.7%), while the percentage of those rating their health as fair (20.1%) is slightly higher than last year (14.7%). Only 3.4% of respondents rated their health as poor.

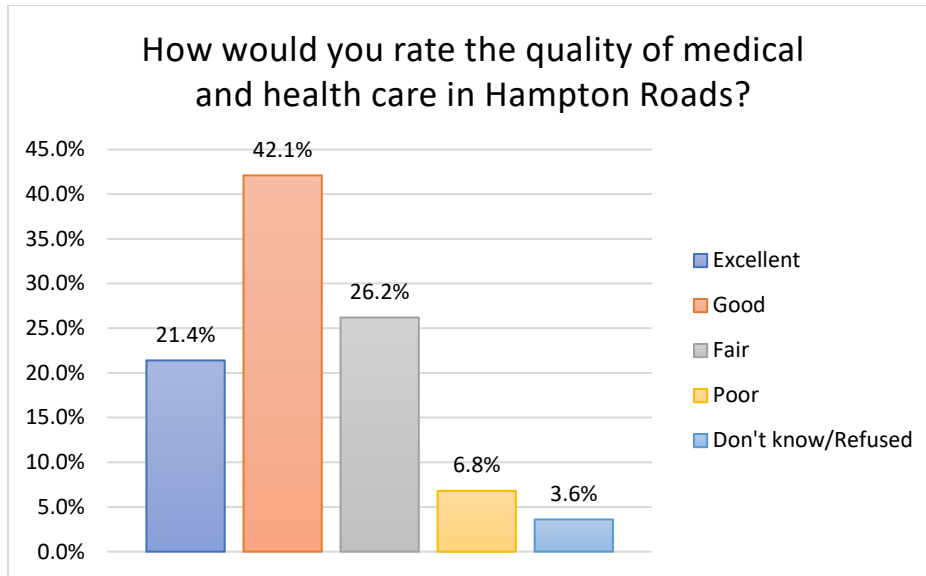


Ratings of one's personal health varied by city with 82.9% of respondents from Newport News rating their health as excellent or good followed by Virginia Beach (80.2%). Portsmouth (67.5%) and Suffolk (57.9%) had the lowest percentage of respondents rating their health as excellent or good.

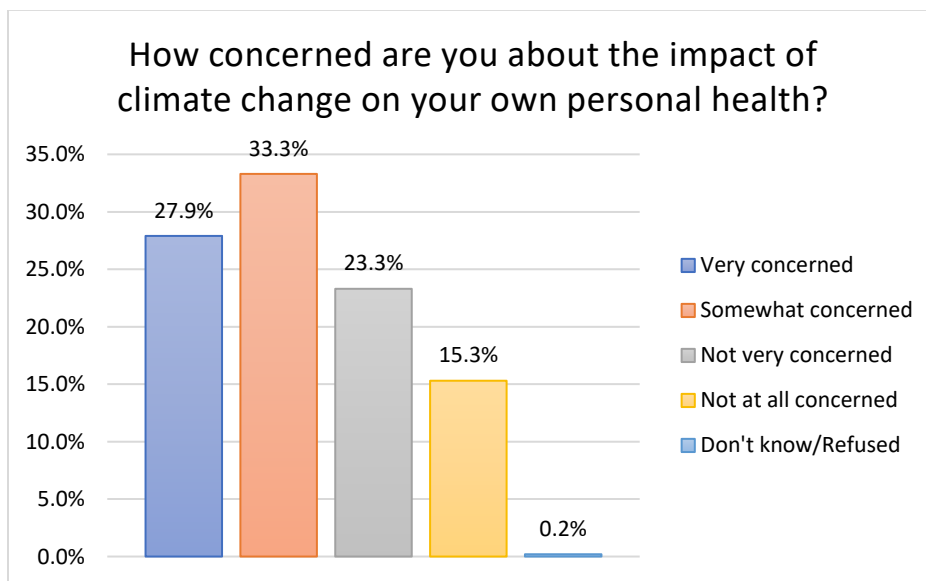
% of Residents Rating their Own Health as Good or Excellent



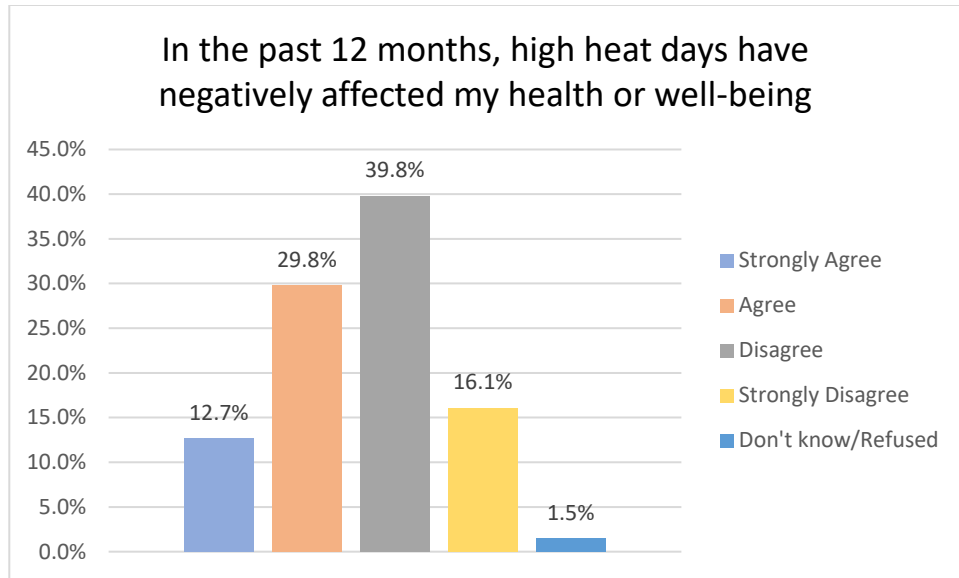
Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of medical and health care in Hampton Roads. Just under two-thirds (63.5%) rated the quality as excellent (21.4%) or good (42.1%). This is much lower than last year, when 73.6% of respondents rated the quality of care as excellent or good.



Another societal concern involves the impact of climate change on the Earth and on individuals. We asked residents of Hampton Roads how concerned they were about the impact of climate change on their personal health. About 61% reported that they were either somewhat (33.3%) or very concerned (27.9%). This is higher than the 57.9% of respondents who reported being concerned about climate impacts on their health last year. Just over 38% indicated they are not very concerned or not at all concerned (38.6%).

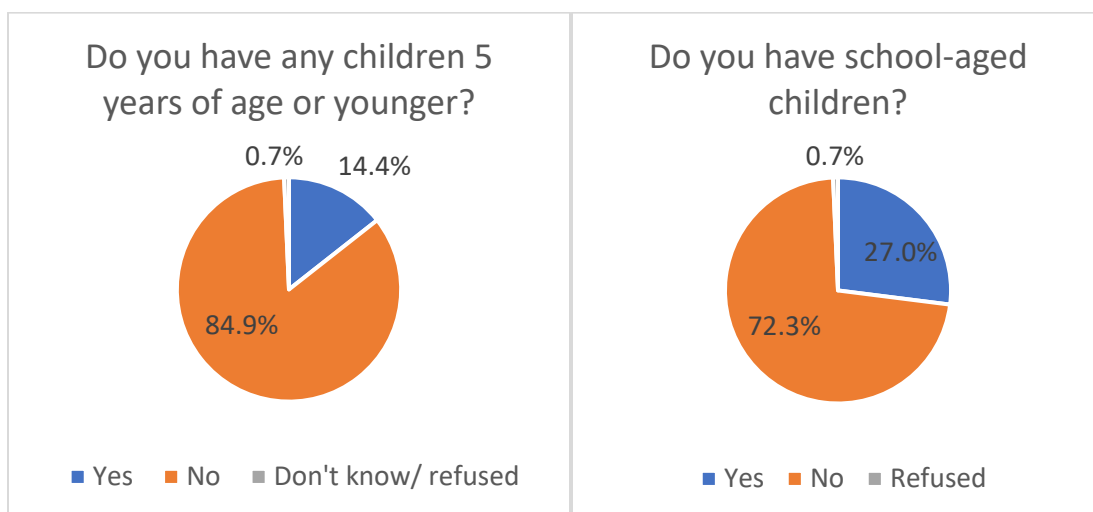


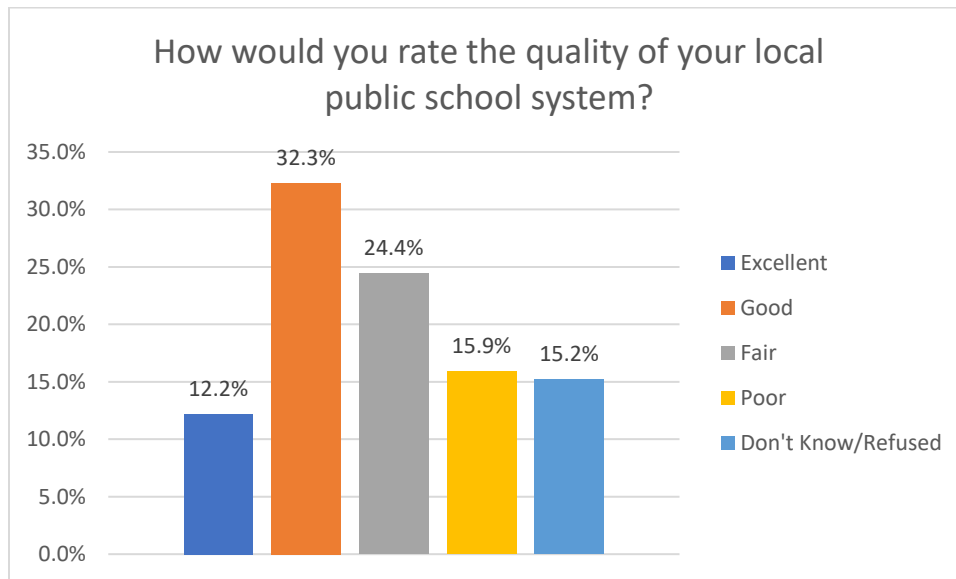
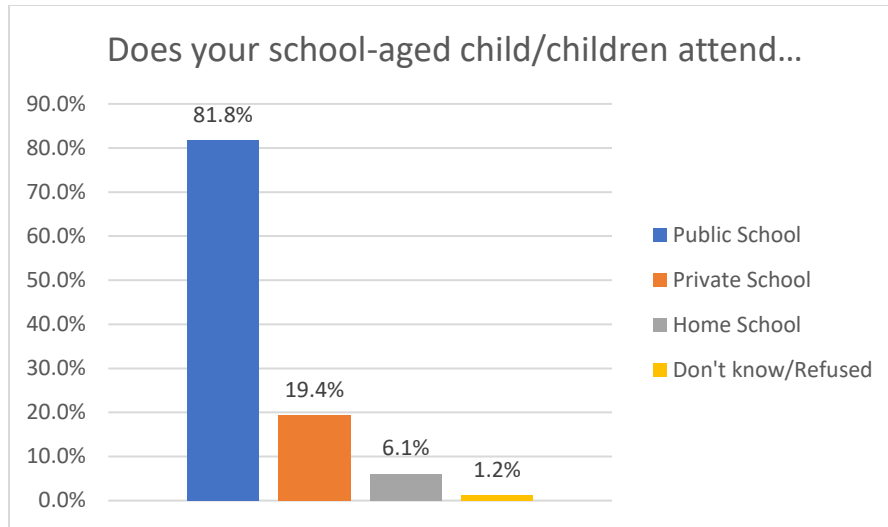
Respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “In the past 12 months, high heat days (very hot days and/or nights) have negatively affected my health or well-being.” More than 42% either agreed (29.8%) or strongly agreed (12.7%) with the statement, which reveals the adverse effects of heat on a large portion of respondents.



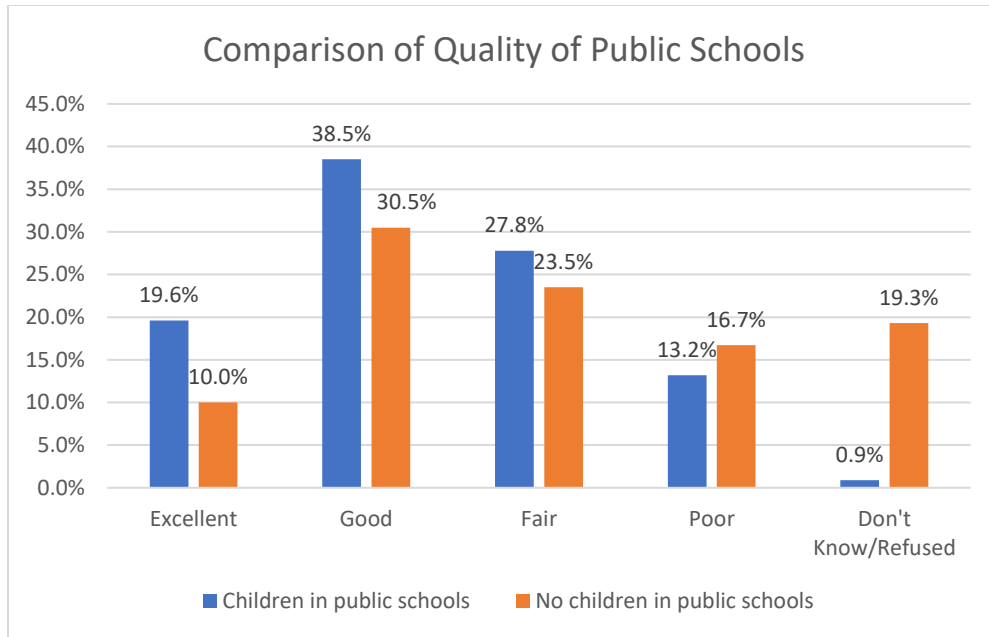
Education

The majority of respondents did not have very young children, with only 14.4% indicating that they had children 5 or younger and 27% of respondents had school-aged children. Of those respondents who had school-aged children, the vast majority (81.8%) attend public school while 19.4% attend private school and 6.1% have children who are home-schooled. Regardless of if respondents had school-aged children or if they had children in public schools, all were asked to rate the quality of their local public school system and there was considerable variation in the responses. About 12% reported that their public school system was excellent and another third (32.3%) reported their school system was good. Still, 24.4% rated their local public school as fair and another 15.9% rated it as poor.

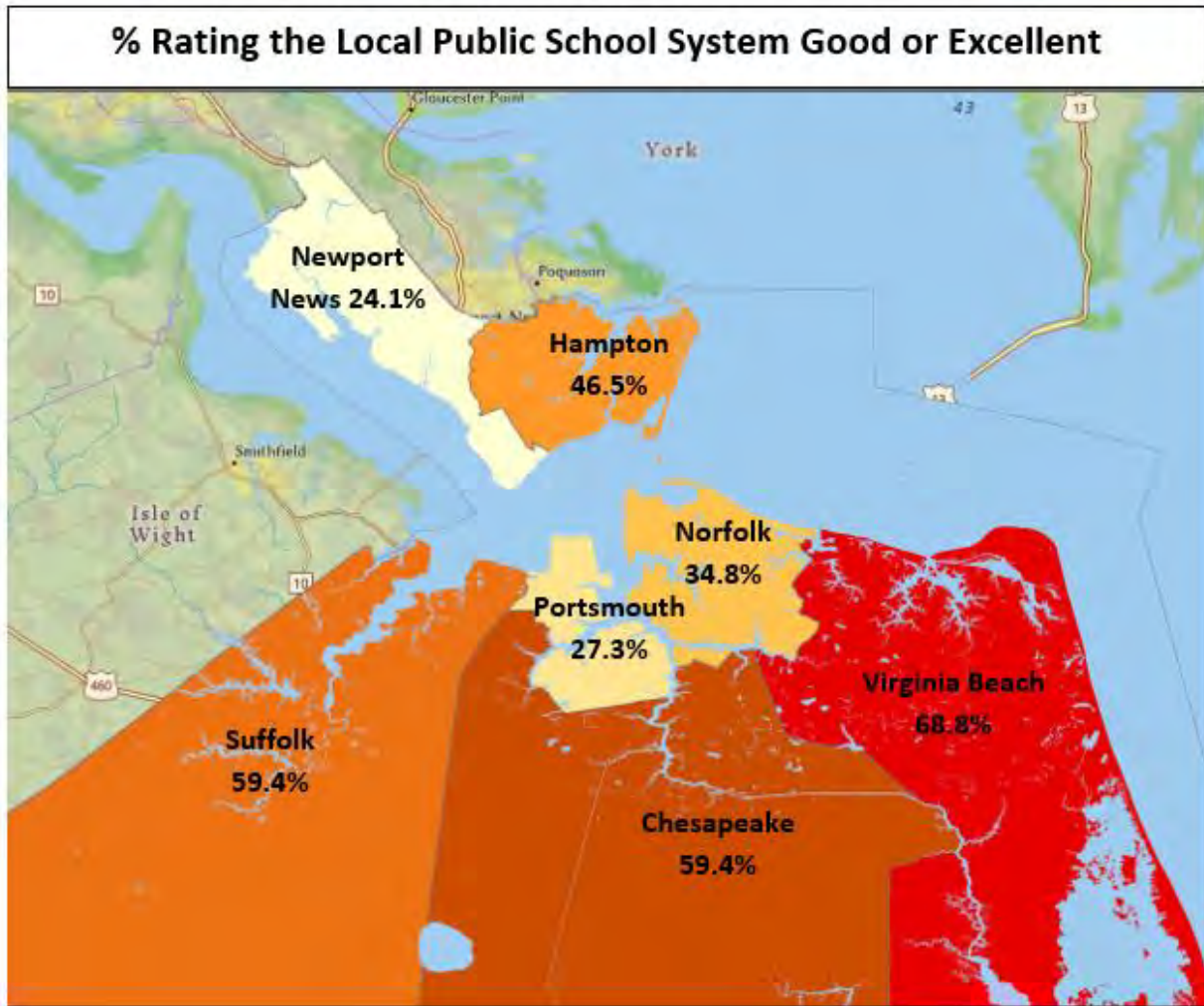




Below, respondents with children in public schools (n=135) are compared with respondents without children in the local public schools. There are a couple of items of note. First, parents with children in public schools were less likely to report that they did not know about the quality of the public schools. Second, they tended to view them more favorably than those without children in the public schools. Parents with children in the public schools were more likely to describe them as excellent (19.6% compared to 10%) or to describe the schools as good (38.5% compared to 30.5%). Respondents without children in the local public schools were more likely to rate them as poor (16.7% compared to 13.2%).



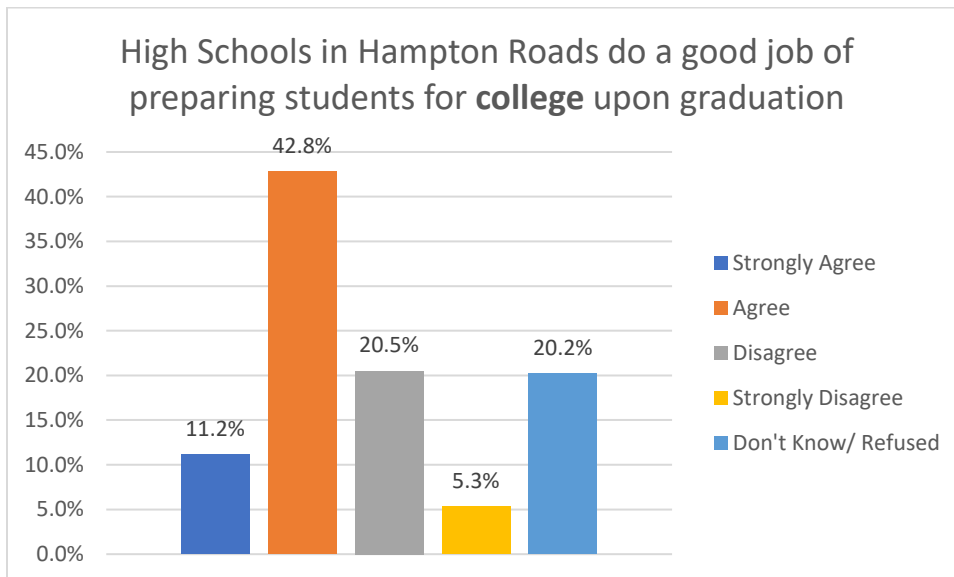
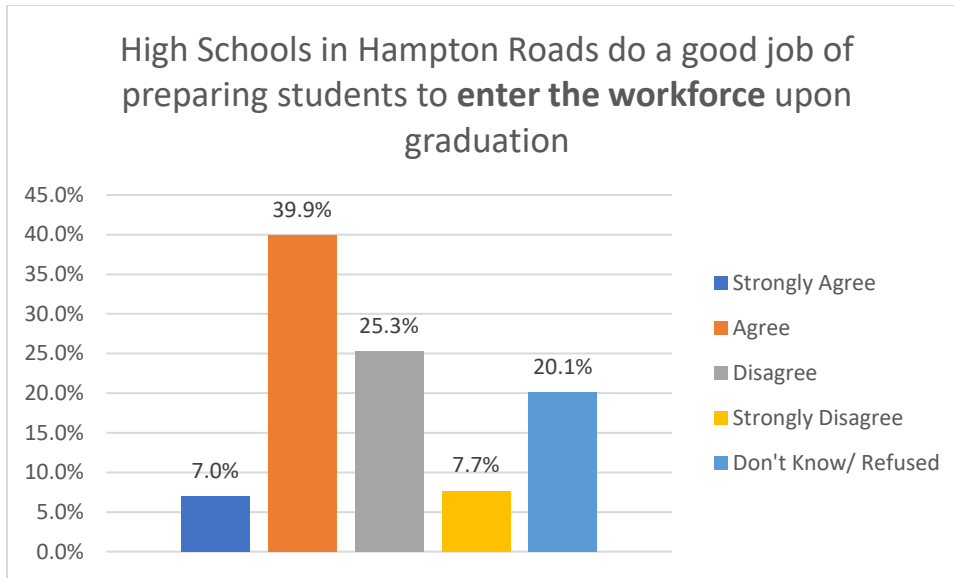
The perceptions of school quality also varied by city with residents in Virginia Beach rating the school the highest (68.8% good or excellent), followed by Chesapeake and Suffolk (59.4% each good or excellent). Newport News (24.1%) and Portsmouth (27.3%) had the lowest percentage of residents rating the schools at good or excellent.



Respondents were asked if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements regarding the local schools:

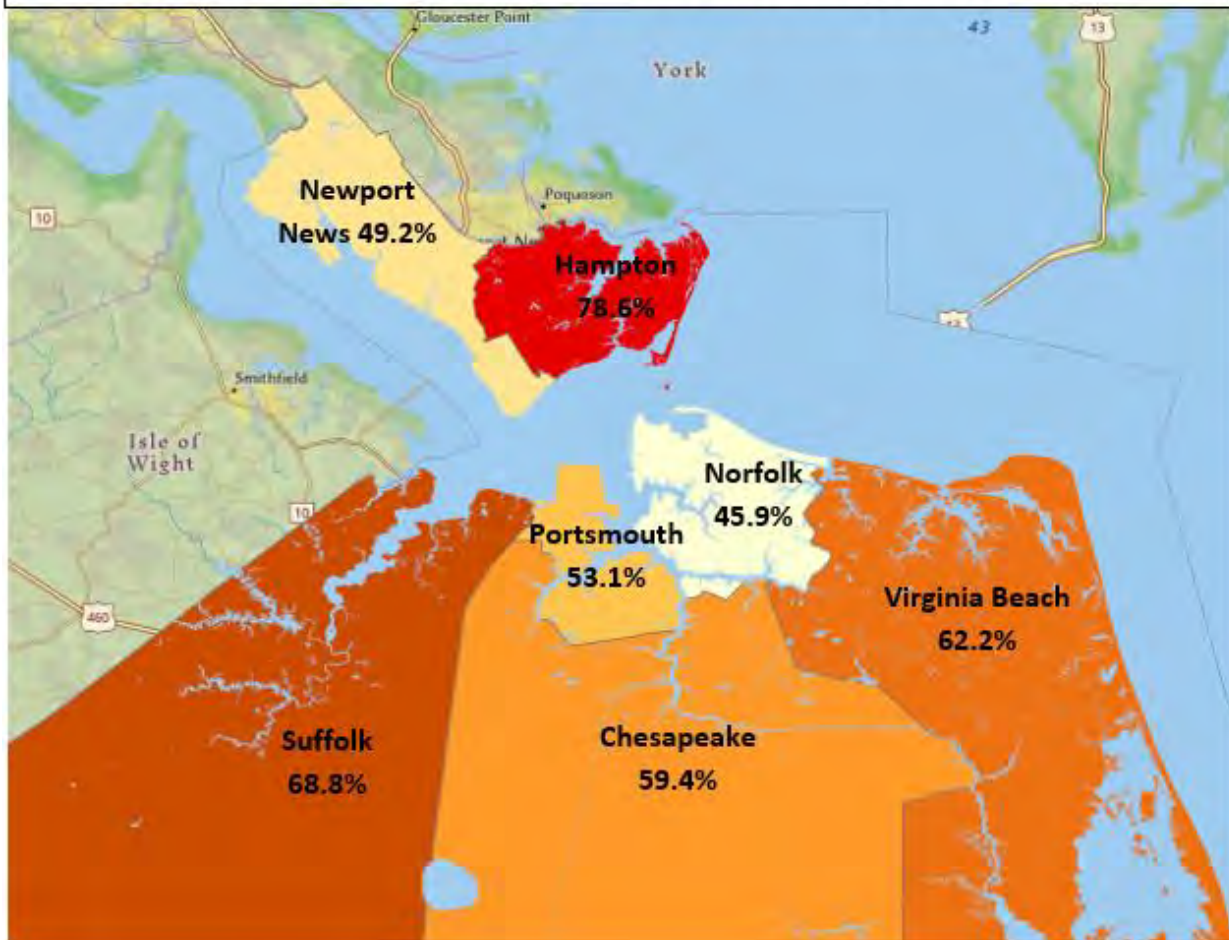
- High schools in Hampton Roads do a good job of preparing students to enter the workforce upon graduation
- High schools in Hampton Roads do a good job of preparing students for college upon graduation

Respondents were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that Hampton Roads' high schools do a good job of preparing students for college (54%) compared to preparing them to enter the workforce (46.9%). About 20% of respondents responded, "don't know" (18%) or "refused" (2%) to each item.



Perceptions of how well the schools prepare students for the workforce also varied quite a bit by city. More than three-quarters (78.6%) of respondents in Hampton agreed that the public schools do a good job preparing students to enter the workforce followed by Suffolk (68.8%), Virginia Beach (62.2%) and Chesapeake (59.4%). Less than half of respondents from Norfolk (45.9%) and Newport News (49.2%) agreed that the public schools do a good job of preparing students for the workforce.

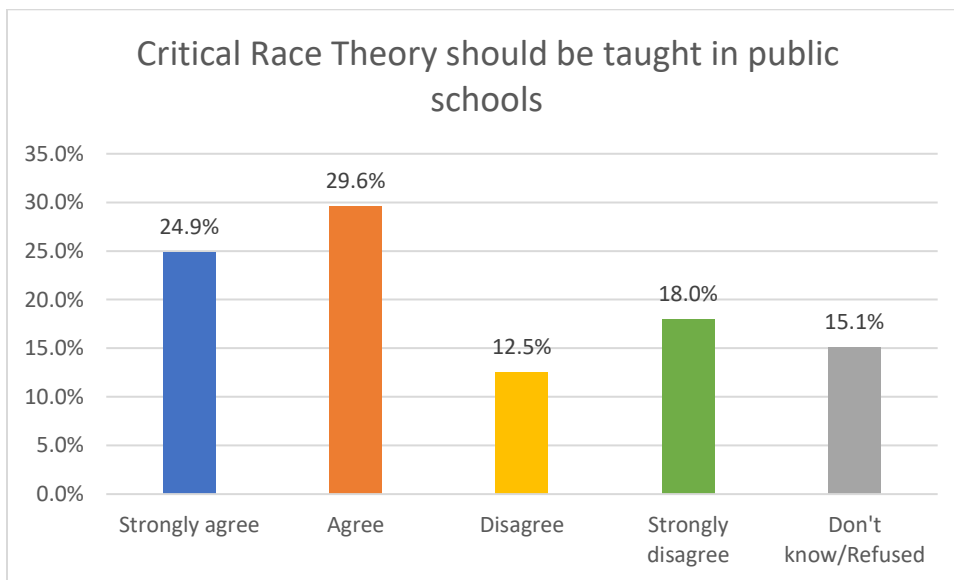
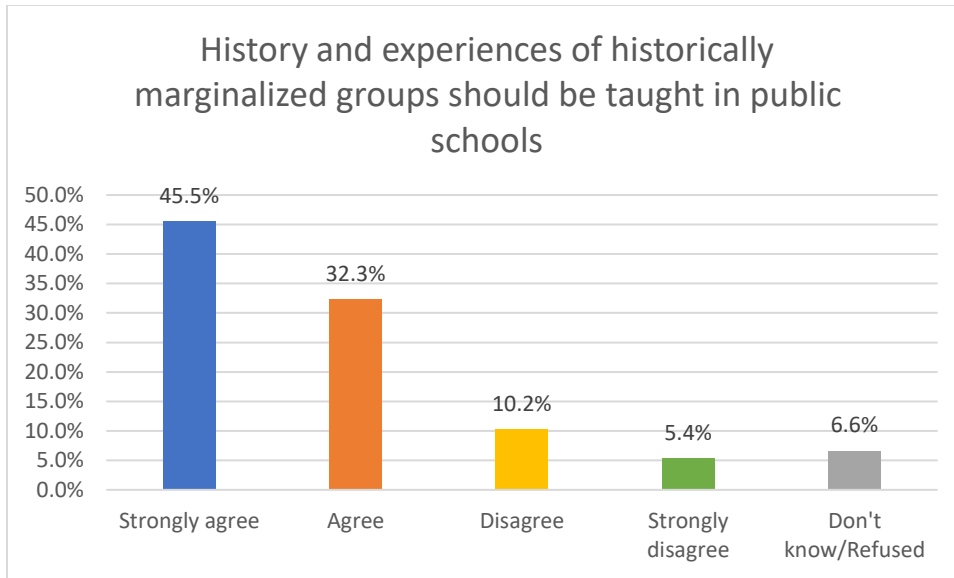
% Strongly Agree/Agree that Public Schools do a Good Job Preparing Students to Enter the Workforce upon Graduation



Finally, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that certain topics should be taught in the public schools including:

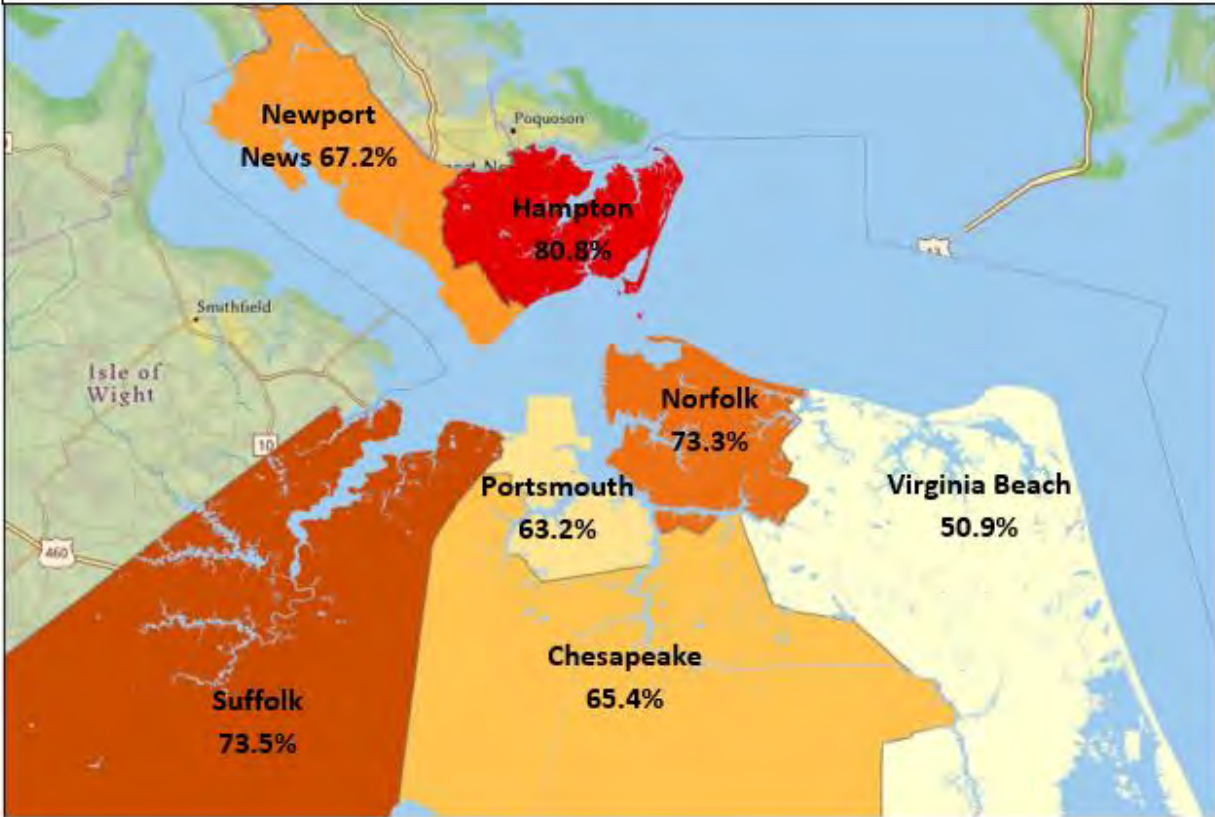
- The history and experiences of historically marginalized groups (for example, African Americans, Hispanics, women, LGBTQ and others) in the United States, and
- Critical Race Theory

More than three-quarters of respondents (77.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the history of marginalized groups should be taught in public schools compared to 54.5% who agreed with teaching critical race theory. A definition of critical race theory was not provided thus leaving respondents to answer based on their understanding of the term.



Respondents across Hampton Roads varied in their support for Critical Race Theory (CRT) being taught by schools with 80.8% of those from Hampton agreeing that CRT should be taught in schools compared to only about half of respondents from Virginia Beach (50.9%).

**% Strongly Agree/Agree that Critical Race Theory Should be Taught
in Public Schools**



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