

## How is Life in Hampton Roads?

The Social Science and Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University recently conducted a Life in Hampton Roads telephone survey with the purpose of gauging the relative satisfaction regarding life in Hampton Roads. Additional goals of the survey were to determine the attitudes and perceptions of citizens regarding local issues, economics, government, as well as other key issues. In order to generate questions for the Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey, Dr. Xiushi Yang, Director of the SSRC sent a University-wide email to invite faculty to submit questions of interest to them for the survey. This would allow faculty to obtain pilot data from a local sample relating to research topics of interest to them. First year funding was supplied by the ODU Office of Research. The initial email invitation generated approximately 200 questions, which were narrowed down by SSRC staff and the Associate Dean of Research for the College of Arts and Letters. Questions that presented definitional issues for respondents, were not specifically relevant to life in Hampton Roads, those that dealt with sensitive information and/or were unsuitable for a telephone survey were eliminated. Once this process was completed, the survey consisted of 106 questions which asked respondents about media and news consumption, arts, culture, and travel, quality of life, transportation, local and state government and political issues, environmental issues, health and education, housing, spirituality and well-being, neighborhood issues and crime, military life, and basic demographic information.

The survey was programmed by SSRC staff using a computer assisted

A random digit dial (RDD) telephone sample was requested from Marketing Systems Group to be comprised of telephone numbers with Hampton Roads exchanges. Calls were conducted from May 26, 2010 through July 8, 2010. Calls were made Monday through Friday during the evening hours and occasionally during daytime hours, excluding University holidays.

A total of 681 completed surveys were obtained; however, this sample was not representative of

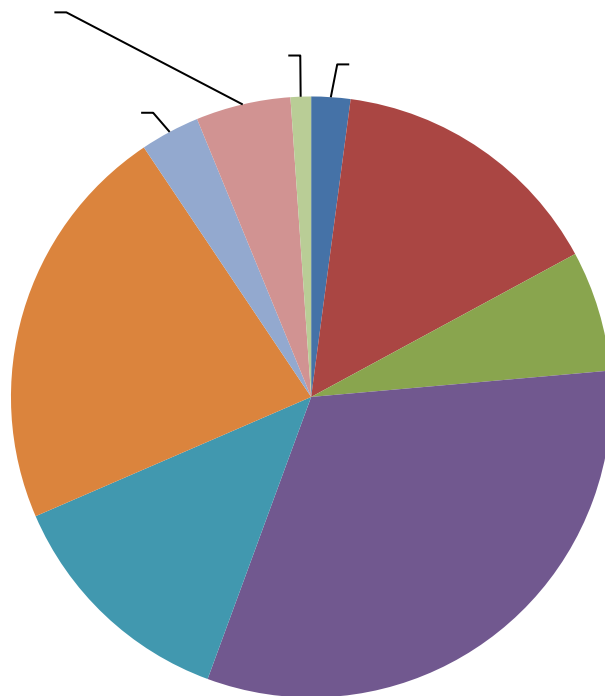
The majority of survey participants, ages 64 and younger, were employed (72.9%); of all respondents who were employed, 18.2% worked part-time while 81.8% worked full-time. Of all respondents, 12.8% were retired. Participants in the survey reported family household income for last year with 17.5% earning \$30,000 or less while 25.3% earned more than \$80,000.

The majority of those interviewed (80.5%) reported that the overall quality of life in the growing  
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Questions regarding neighborhood and crime found that 69.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the police are doing a good job of preventing crime in the area. Just over half of those surveyed report that minor crimes are not a problem at all in their neighborhood. Happily, even more respondents (73.5%) reported that major crimes in their neighborhoods are also not an issue (7.2% and 6.4%, respectively). Few people agreed that minor and/or major crimes were a very serious problem in their neighborhood. Over half of the sample reported that they were not afraid that they, or a member of their household, would be a victim of any serious crime. Only 2.4% of the Hampton Roads respondents were



respondents consider themselves to be moderate. The remainder of the sample (38.2%) answered that they were extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative as seen in the figure below. After answering questions about their political ideology, survey participants were asked to rate current economic conditions. Thirty-three percent felt that economic conditions are excellent or good in Hampton Roads while only 13.4% believe national economic conditions to be excellent or good. However, the overwhelming majority of respondents (66.5%) felt that the economic conditions were actually either fair or poor in Hampton Roads as well as 86.6% believing the same about the United States as a whole. Please see the table below for further illustration. Additionally, 47.6% of the surveyed population either strongly agree or agree that recent immigrants, legal or otherwise, will take jobs away from people already in Hampton Roads. Of further note, 41.9% of the sampled residents feel that gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry in Virginia.





Moreover, respondents were asked what level of government should be responsible for dealing with global warming and climate change; 72.8% stated the federal government should be responsible for the environmental situation, 54.9% placed responsibility with the state government, 37.2% with the local government, and only 14.1% of the surveyed populace stated that the government should not be responsible for dealing with this issue at all.

Respondents answered questions regarding their attendance at events related to arts, culture and travel. Even though the commute between communities within Hampton Roads is often long and sometimes arduous, over half of the survey respondents stated that they had attended an exhibition such as a museum or gallery showing, a concert, or other performance in the past year in Hampton Roads. Almost two-thirds (65.6%) of citizens that attended



wanted to see, and, lastly, 9.1% reported problems with transportation.

Every day people deal with the eleven draw bridges and five bridge-tunnels in the Hampton Roads area, traversing them for work, family, activities for children, or even cultural events. However, survey questions dealing with transportation found that only 6.3% of people reported using public transportation in the past week, including buses and taxis. The average one-way commute to work or school was 43.5 minutes; everyone has become accustomed to the brake-tapping pattern of entering every tunnel in the Hampton Roads area. Just under half of those surveyed (43.9%) report that they would be more likely to use public transportation once the much-anticipated light rail trains become available. Another 24.4% stated that they might possibly use the light rail once it becomes available. When asked rail extended at all. The top three destinations that those surveyed wanted to see the light rail reach were Virginia Beach (62.9%), Norfolk International Airport (46.9%), and Chesapeake (40.4%) as seen in the table below.

