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Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #6: Politics and 2016 Presidential Election

Social Science Research Center, Old Dominion University

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Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #6

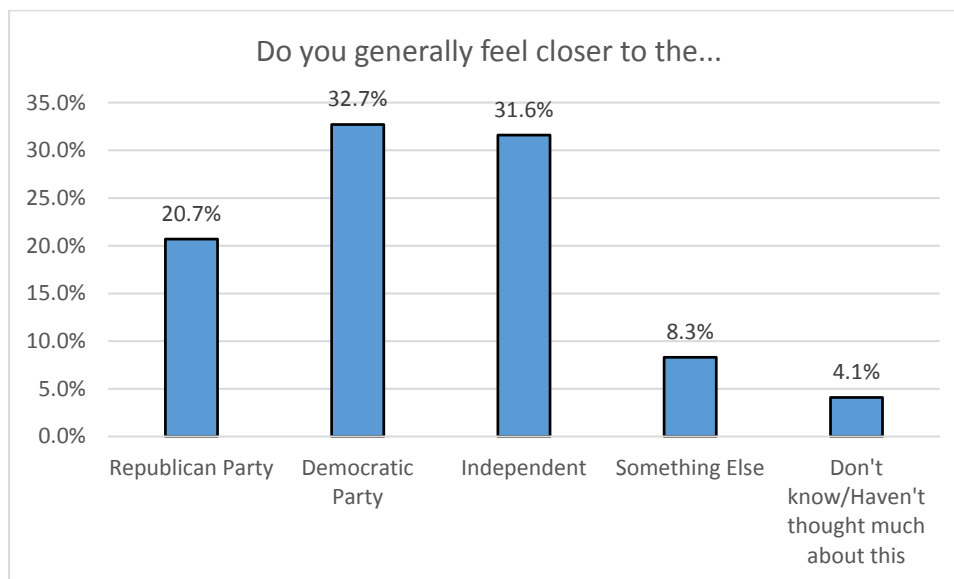
Politics and 2016 Presidential Election

This report examines regional perceptions of political figures and political affiliation from the 2016 Life In Hampton Roads survey (LIHR 2016) conducted by the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center. Data from prior years is also provided when available to show comparisons in responses over time. Responses were weighted by city population, race, age, gender, and phone usage (cell versus land-line) to be representative of the Hampton Roads region. For additional information on survey methodology, and analyses of other issues, please see the SSRC website at www.odu.edu/ssrc.

Local politics are of central importance for the prosperity and success of the region. Respondents were asked a variety of questions including party affiliation, political attitudes and voter registration. Additionally, 2016 marks a presidential election year and several questions were asked about the candidates and the upcoming election. The 962 participants gave a wide variety of answers to these questions and much of the data reflects response patterns seen in years past.

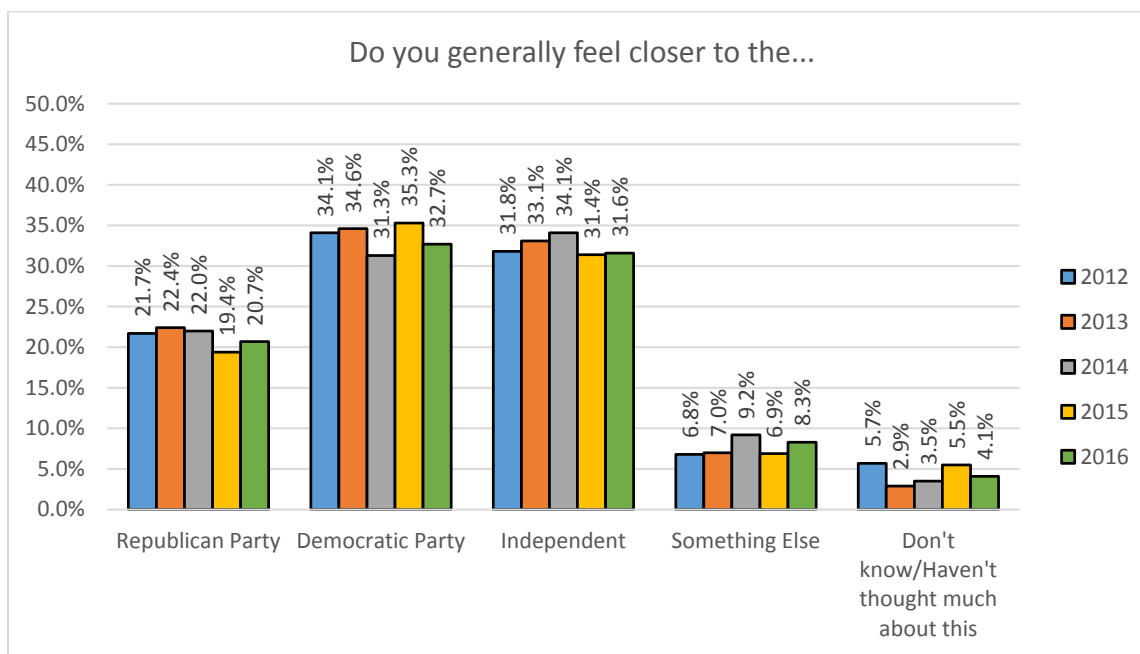
Political Affiliation and Attitudes

Respondents were asked what political party they generally feel closer to. A larger proportion of respondents reported feeling closer to the Democratic Party (32.7%) or being Independent (31.6%) than the Republican party (20.7%) or feeling closer to something else (8.3%).



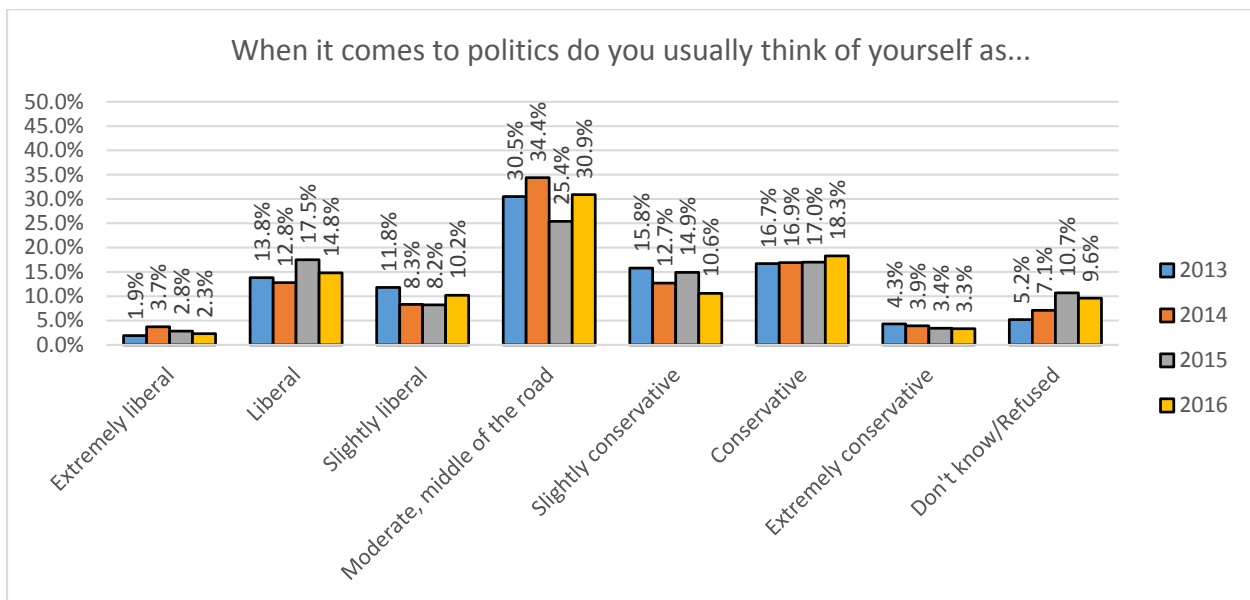
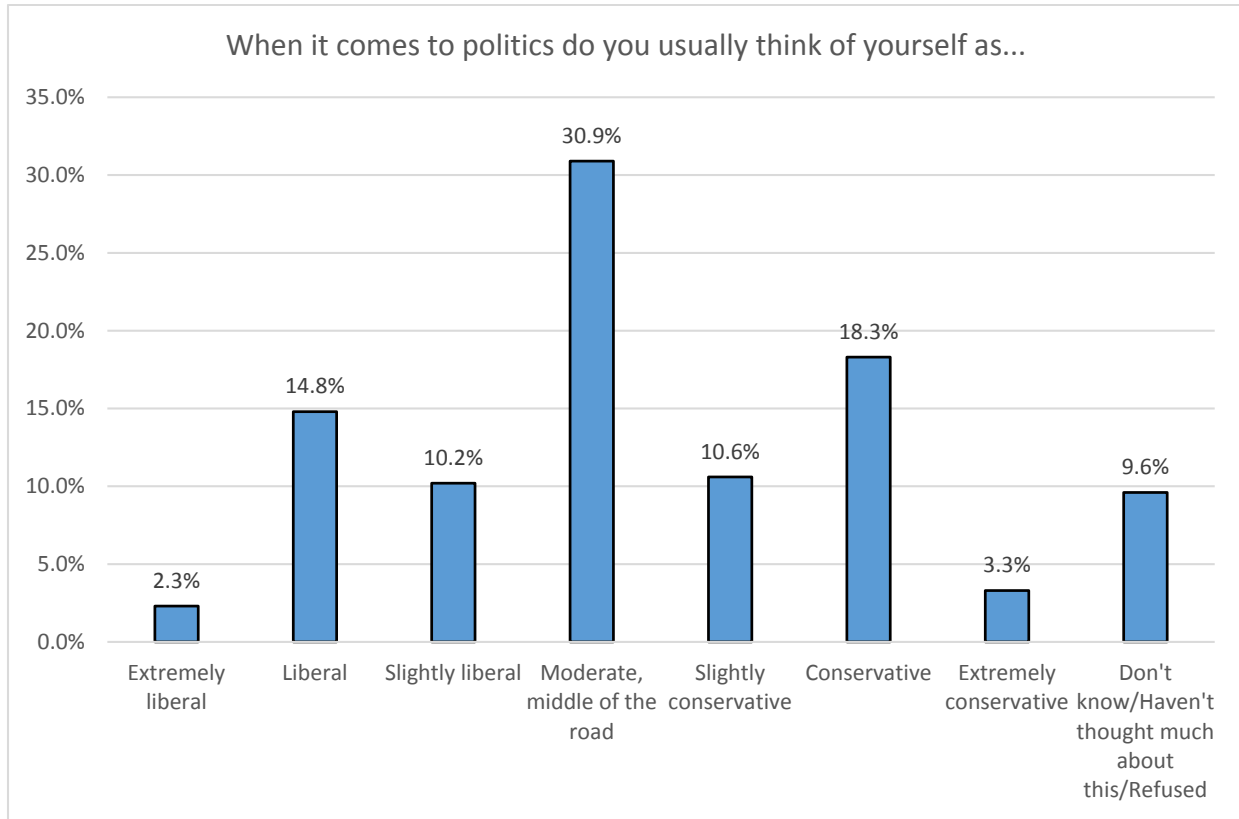
While party affiliation remained fairly consistent with past years there was a very slight increase in percentage of respondents reporting feeling closer to the Republican Party and a slight decrease in

percentage of respondents feeling closer to the Democratic Party. The percentage of respondents reporting being independent is almost identical to the percentage from 2015, only increasing 0.2 percent. Additionally, respondents who reported their political affiliation as something else increased 1.4 percent from 2015.



Next, respondents were asked to identify whether they usually think of themselves as extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative. Not surprisingly, moderate was the most commonly given response (30.9%). Those respondents who reported being conservative (overall 32.2%) were broken down as "conservative" (18.3%), "slightly conservative" (10.6%), and "extremely conservative" (3.3%). Those who reported being liberal (overall 27.3%) were broken down as "liberal" (14.8%), "slightly liberal" (10.2%), and "extremely liberal" (2.3%). However, despite the fact that more respondents identified with the Democratic Party (32.7%) than the Republican Party (20.7%), there were more respondents who reported being conservative (32.2%) than liberal (27.3%). This year's results continue a very modest trend in the data towards more support for the

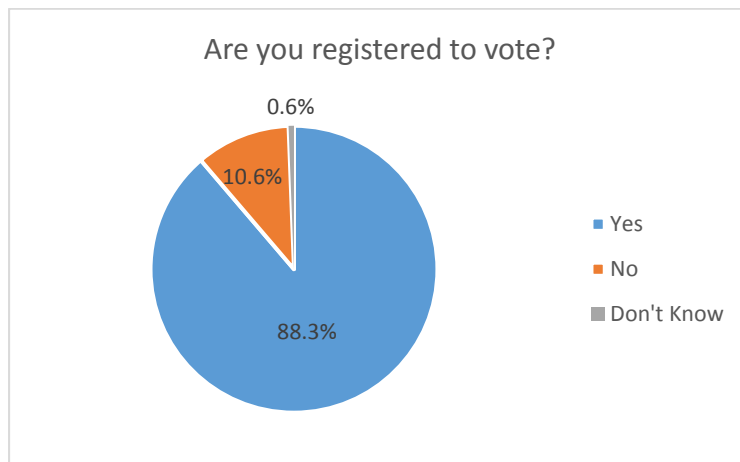
Democratic Party in Hampton Roads, one consistent with the broader statewide trend toward modestly stronger identification with the Democratic Party.



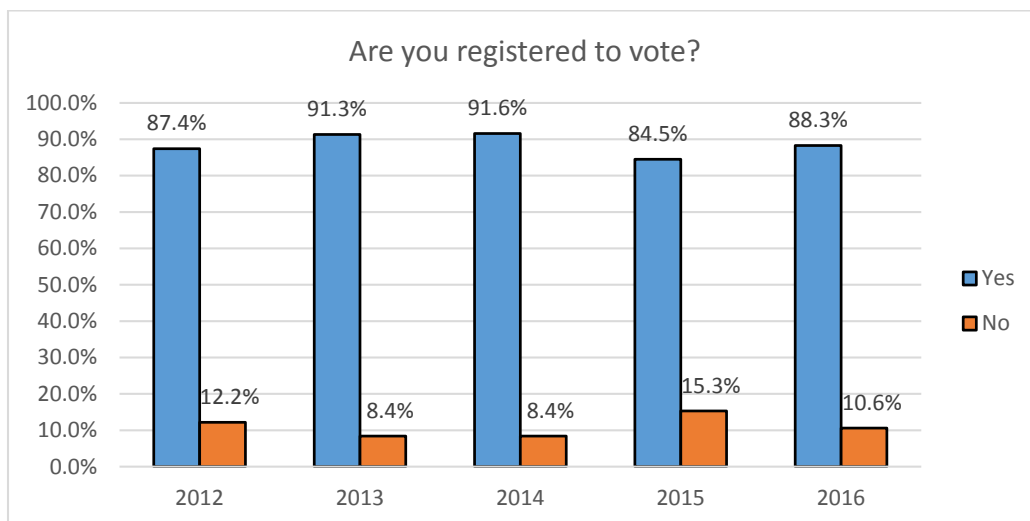
*This question was not asked to respondents during the 2012 LIHR Survey.

Voter Registration

Finally, respondents were asked whether or not they were registered to vote. The vast majority of respondents said that they were registered to vote (88.3%), while only 10.6 percent of respondents were not registered to vote at the time of the survey. The percentage of respondents who said they were registered to vote increased 3.8 percent from 2015.



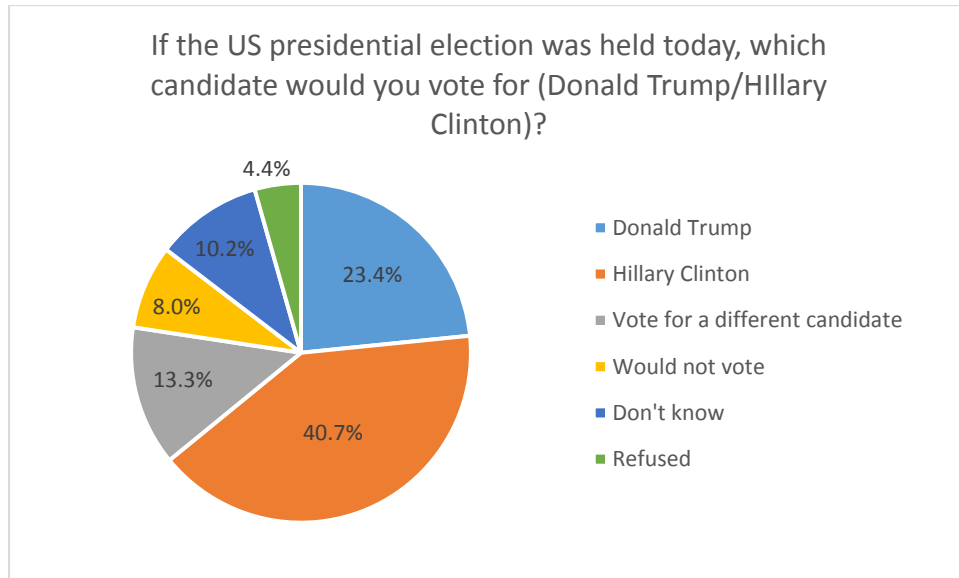
With 2016 being a presidential election year, this may explain the increase of respondents who are registered to vote. In the last presidential election year, 2012 (87.4%), the percentage was very similar to 2016 (88.3%). Interestingly, the two highest years for respondents reporting being registered to vote were 2013 and 2014 (91.3% and 91.6%, respectively), which were during non-presidential election years.



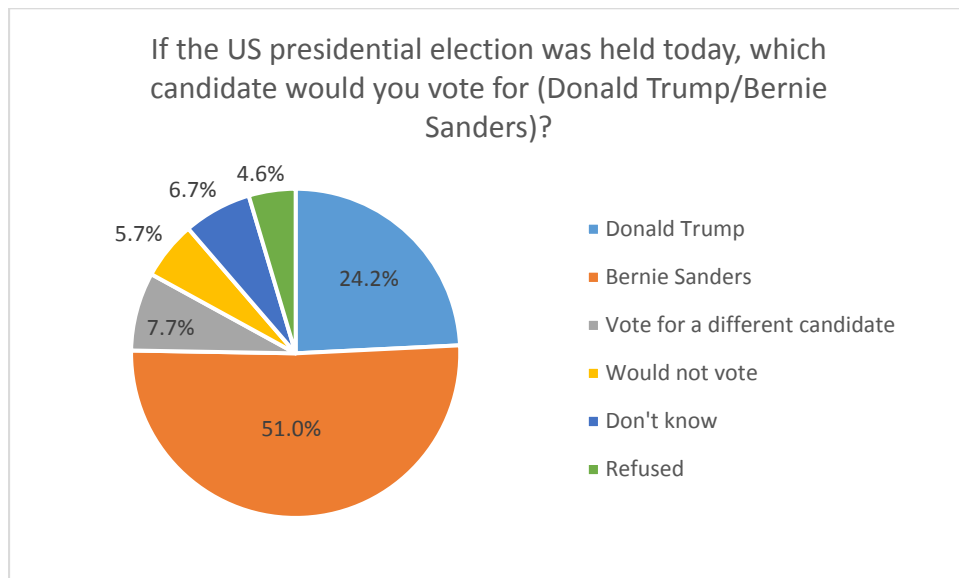
Respondents that reported that they were registered to vote were also asked a series of question about the upcoming presidential election. Respondents were asked if the US presidential election was held today, which candidate would they vote for, who they think will win the US presidential election regardless of who they will vote for, and the political favorability of several candidates and current President Barack Obama.

Note that the 2016 Life in Hampton Roads survey was conducted prior to both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. At the time, Donald Trump was the presumptive Republican nominee with all other Republican candidates suspending their campaigns. Additionally, both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders were still active Democratic presidential candidates. As a result, respondents were asked questions about potential scenarios in which Donald Trump was the Republican presidential candidate against either Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders.

In response to the question of which candidate respondents would vote for between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, substantially more respondents said they would vote for Hillary Clinton (40.7%) over Donald Trump (23.4%). Additionally, another 13.3 percent said they would vote for another candidate if their options were Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton and 10.2 percent said they did not know who they would vote for in this scenario. Interestingly, 8 percent said they would not vote if the presidential candidates were Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

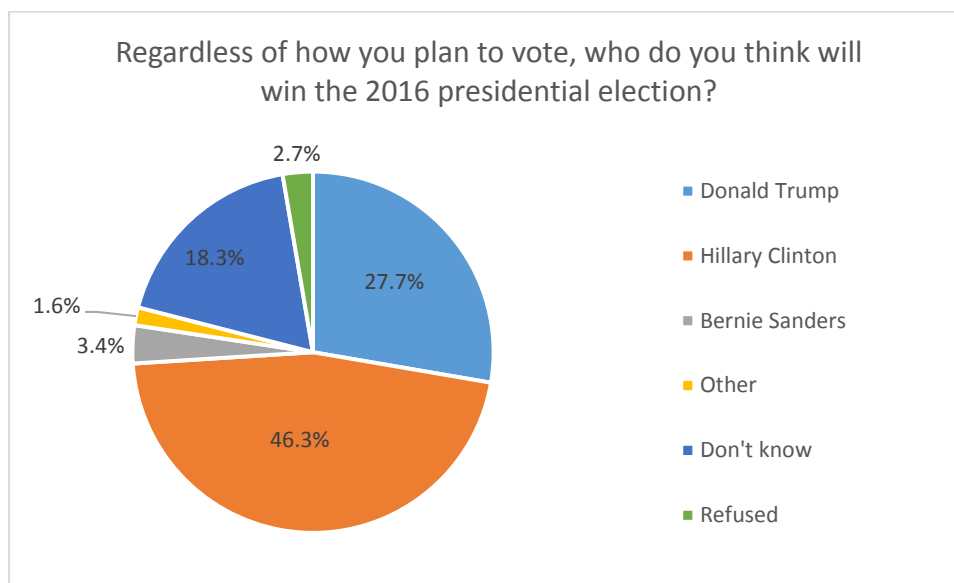


In response to the question of which candidate respondents would vote for between Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, more than half of respondents said they would vote for Bernie Sanders (51.0%) over Donald Trump (24.2%). Additionally, another 7.7 percent said they would vote for another candidate if their options were Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders and 6.7 percent said they did not know who they would vote for in this scenario. Finally, another 5.7 percent said they would not vote if the presidential candidates were Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders.



Considering that over half of Hampton Roads respondents said they would vote for Bernie Sanders over Donald Trump, it is interesting to note that 13.3 percent said they would vote for another candidate and 10.2 percent said they did not know who they would vote for when the options were Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. This could be explained by the so called “Bernie or Bust”¹ movement as many potential voters claimed they would never vote for either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.

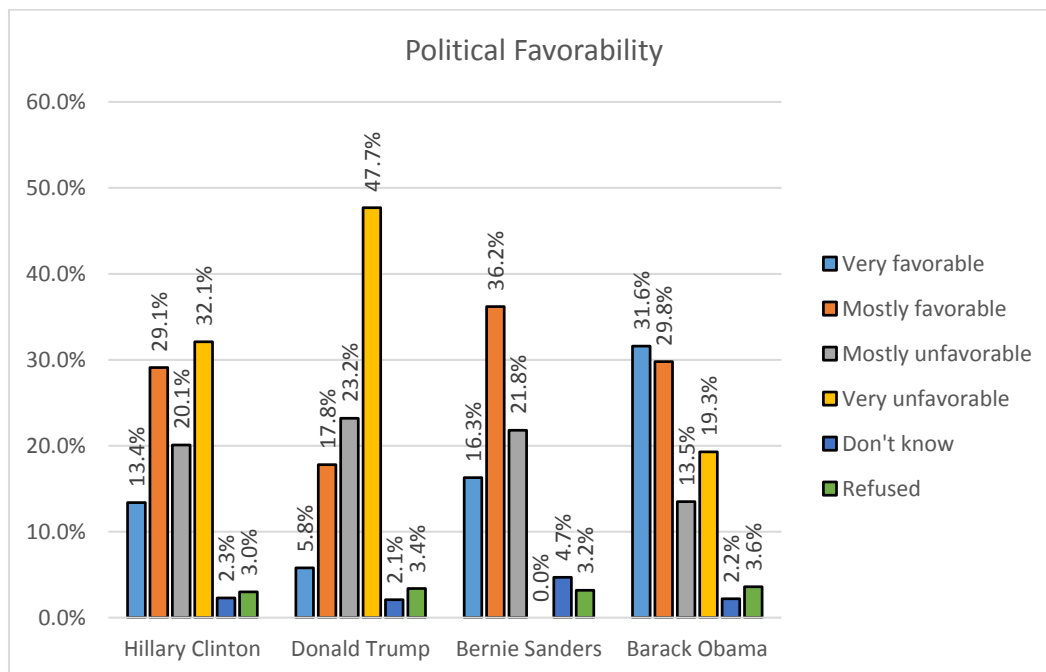
Respondents were also asked who they thought would win the 2016 Presidential election regardless of how they planned to vote. Almost fifty percent of respondents (46.3%) said they thought that Hillary Clinton would win the election. Another 27.7 percent said they thought that Donald Trump would win the election. Interestingly, despite over half of respondents stating they would vote for Bernie Sanders over Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders having the highest favorability of the three candidates, only 3.4 percent said they thought Bernie Sanders would win the election. Additionally, 18.3 percent said they did not know who would win the 2016 Presidential election.



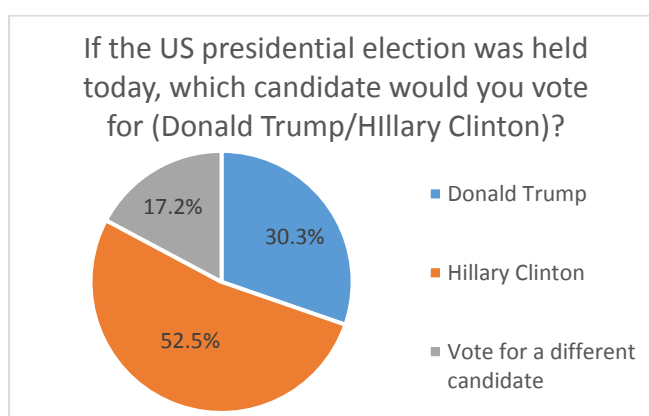
¹ Zeleny, J. (2016, June 2). Bernie or bust: Sanders supporters vow to hold out. Retrieved August 15, 2016, from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/01/politics/bernie-sanders-hillary-clinton-bernie-or-bust/index.html>

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had a very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of four politicians: Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders. Donald Trump is the least popular of the four: only 23.6 percent of respondents had a very favorable or mostly favorable view of the Republican candidate for President. Second least popular was Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, with 42.5 percent holding a favorable view of Clinton, and 52.2 holding an unfavorable view. While more than half rated Clinton as unfavorable, she had a nearly two-to-one edge over Trump in this survey. Views of Trump among Democratic Party identifiers and independents were almost uniformly negative – only 3.1 percent of Democrats had a favorable view of Trump, and only 16.9 percent of independents had a favorable view. Clinton was regarded favorably by 4.8 percent of Republicans, and by 36.4 percent of independents.

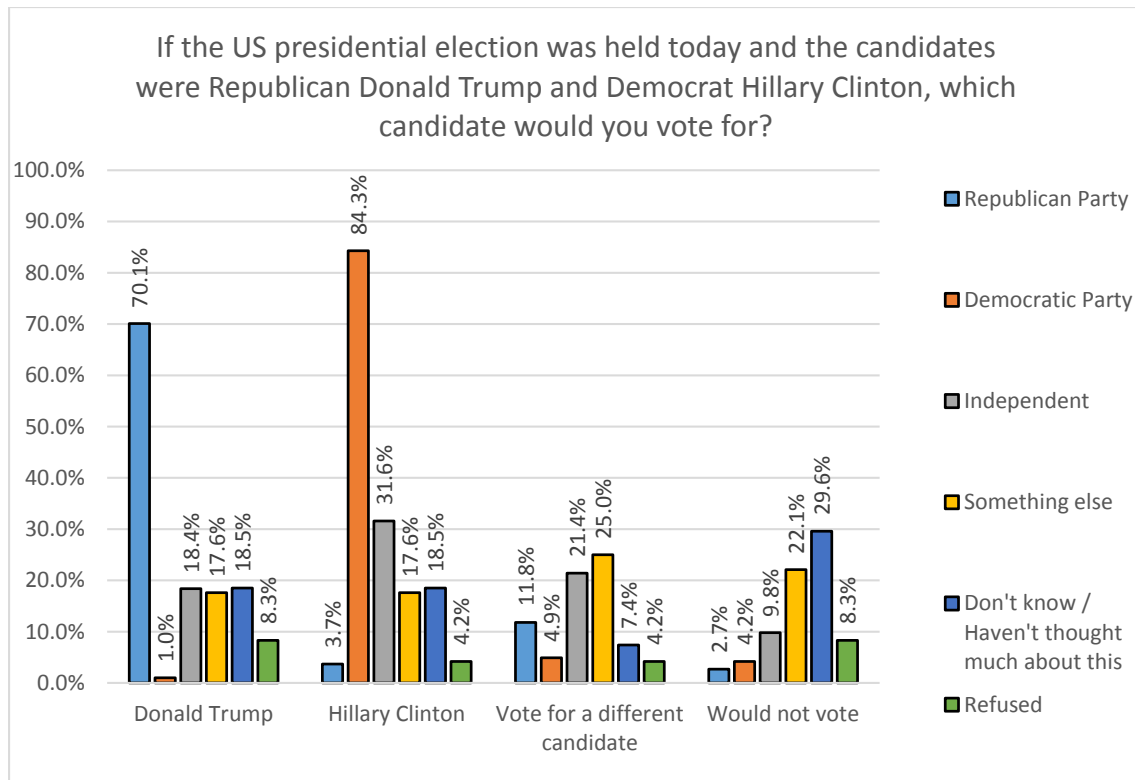
Bernie Sanders and Barack Obama were both viewed more favorably. Sanders was seen favorably by 52.6 percent of respondents while Obama was rated “very favorable” by 31.6 percent and mostly favorable by another 29.8 percent. Even 14.5 percent of Republican identifiers viewed Obama favorably. Obama’s strong favorability numbers in Hampton Roads will tend to bolster support for the Democratic candidate.



Since the time the survey was conducted, Hillary Clinton has won the Democratic presidential nominee and Donald Trump has won the Republican presidential nominee. The responses reflect the challenges the Trump campaign will face in Hampton Roads. With regard to support in a two-candidate race between Clinton and Trump among registered voters (excluding respondents who state they would not vote, did not know, or refused), only 30.3 percent of respondents indicated that they would vote for Trump, while 52.5 percent said they would vote for Clinton, and 17.2 percent indicated that they would vote for a different candidate.



A critical sign of weakness for the Trump campaign is the relatively weak support among Republicans – 70.1 percent of registered voters who identify as Republicans indicated that they would vote for Trump “if the US presidential election was held today” compared to 84.3 percent of Democrats who indicated they would support Clinton. Independents also broke strongly towards Clinton, with only 18.4 percent indicating that they would support Trump.



Trump's numbers in the seven cities surveyed suggest that this campaign is on track to underperform Romney's losing campaign in 2012. In 2012, Romney won 40.8 percent of the two-party vote in Hampton Roads. These survey results suggest Trump is on track to win only 36.6 percent of the two party vote. While Republican candidates can win Virginia without winning in Hampton Roads, expanded margins for Democrats in Hampton Roads will be difficult for Trump's Republicans to make up elsewhere.

All Life in Hampton Roads data summaries will be placed on the Social Science Research Center website as they are released (<http://www.odu.edu/al/centers/ssrc>). Follow-up questions about the 2016 Life in Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to:

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