


2015

# Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press release #1: Regional, City and Neighborhood Quality of Life

Social Science Research Center, Old Dominion University

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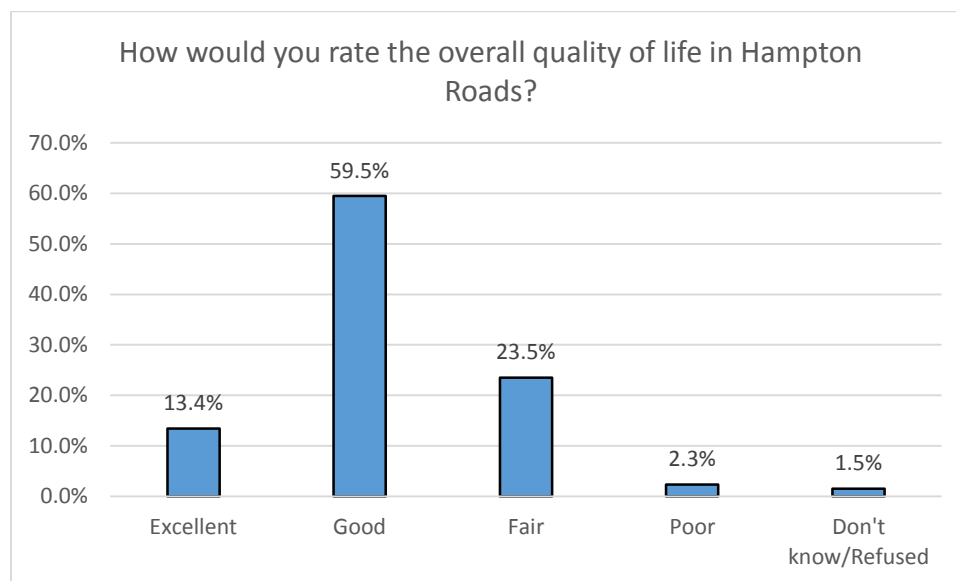
## Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #1

### Regional, City and Neighborhood Quality of Life

*The Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center is proud to release the first part of the 2015 Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) Survey Report. LIHR has been conducted by the Social Science Research Center with support from the Old Dominion University Office of Research and the College of Arts and Letters since 2010 and is now in its sixth year. Release #1 focuses on regional quality of life indicators. 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. Subsequent releases will focus on health and education, crime and politics, transportation and tolls, and flooding and sea level rise. For additional information on survey methodology, and analyses of other issues, please see the SSRC website at [www.odu.edu/ssrc](http://www.odu.edu/ssrc).*

### Overall Quality of Life

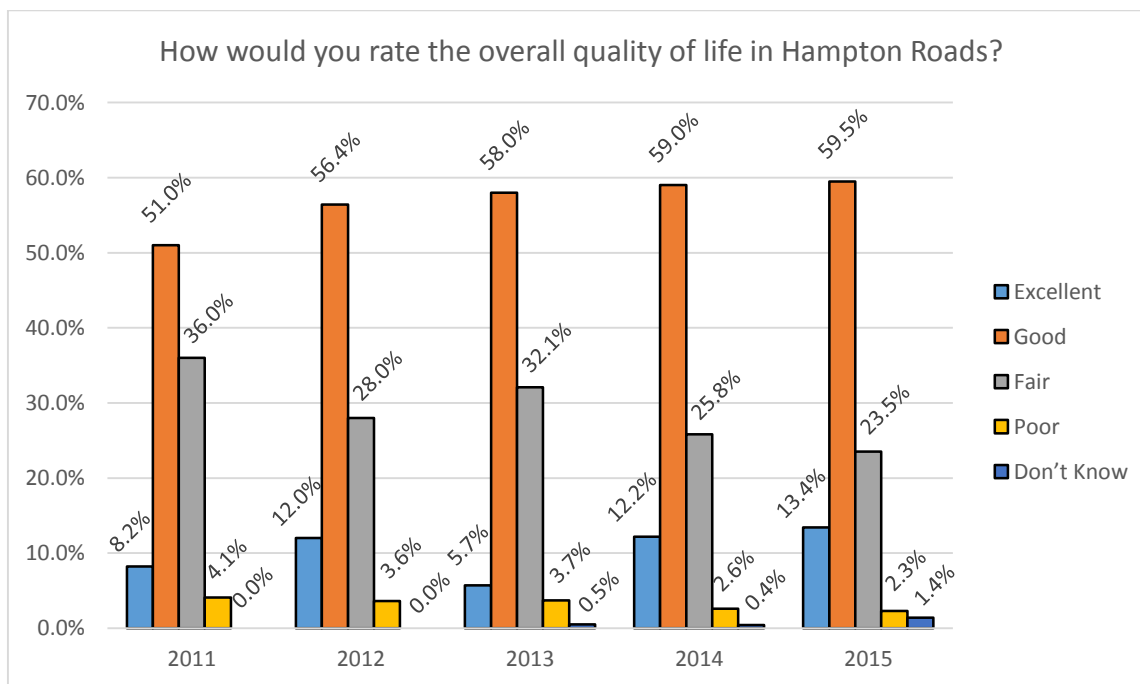
Life continues to get better in Hampton Roads. The 2015 Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey continues to show an improving regional quality of life. The majority of those interviewed (72.9%) reported that the overall quality of life in Hampton Roads was excellent or good while 25.8 percent found it to be fair or poor. The portion of respondents rating regional quality of life as good or excellent is higher than last year's portion (71.2%) which was the highest since 2011. Recreational opportunities remain a key plus for the regional quality of life, while crime and transportation are key challenges.



The survey's demographic and weighting appendix provides details about survey respondents and coverage. The total sample size for 2015 was 883 respondents drawn from the seven cities at the core of Hampton Roads – Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach. Responses were weighted to match city-level population, race, gender, cell-phone-usage, and age estimates.

## Quality of Life in Hampton Roads

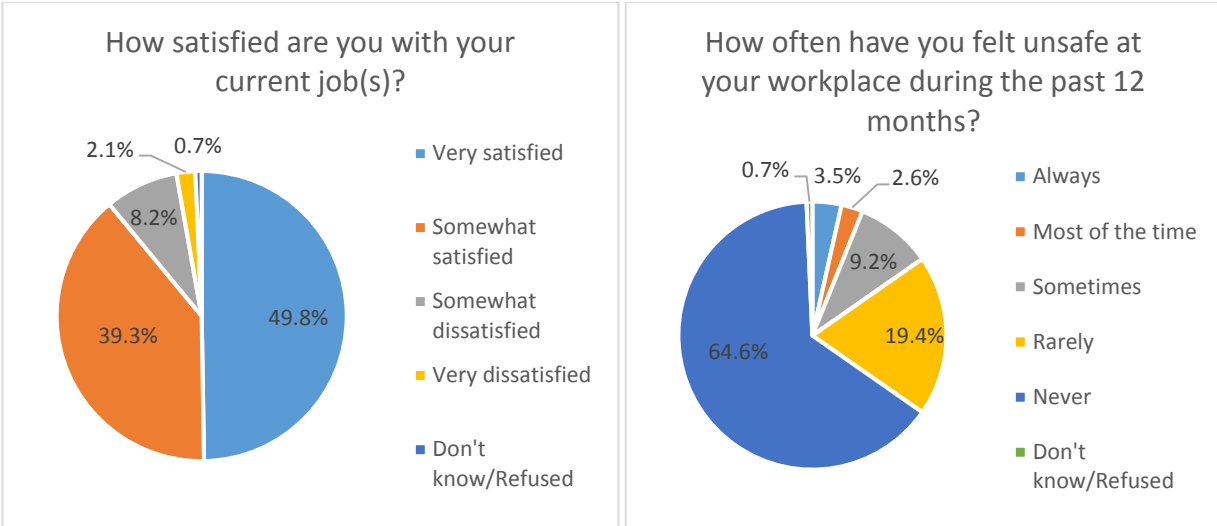
Over the last several years, reported quality of life in Hampton Roads has shown a modest upward trend. In 2012, 12 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as excellent. In 2013, there was a small decrease to 5.7 percent, but in 2014, 12.2 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as excellent and this year that percentage rose to 13.4 percent. Those that reported the quality of life in Hampton Roads as good increased over the past five years; 2011 (51%), 2012 (56.4%), 2013 (58%), 2014 (59%), and 2015 (59.5%). Additionally, only 23.5 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as fair, compared to 36 percent in 2011, 28 percent in 2012, 32.1 percent in 2013, and 25.8 percent in 2014. Only 2.3 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as poor, compared to 4.1 percent in 2011, 3.6 percent in 2012, 3.7 percent in 2013, and 2.6 percent in 2014. Finally, only 1.4 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as don't know, compared to 0.0 percent in 2011, 0.0 percent in 2012, 0.5 percent in 2013, and 0.4 percent in 2014.



In addition to rating the overall quality of life in Hampton Roads, participants were asked to provide a few words as to why they choose their rating. The respondents (72.9%) who rated the quality of life as good or excellent mentioned several common themes. The most common was access to excellent recreational resources, such as beaches, museums, restaurants, shopping, and parks. Although a few respondents complained about too few such opportunities near them, this was the most commonly given answer to why Hampton Roads was rated favorably. Several other factors were also frequent positives for the region. The availability of quality schools and health care facilities was often cited. The economic climate in Hampton Roads was also seen as a plus by a number of respondents, with job or economic opportunities mentioned regularly. The weather and climate also ranked well, with almost all of those who mentioned the weather considering it a positive for the region.

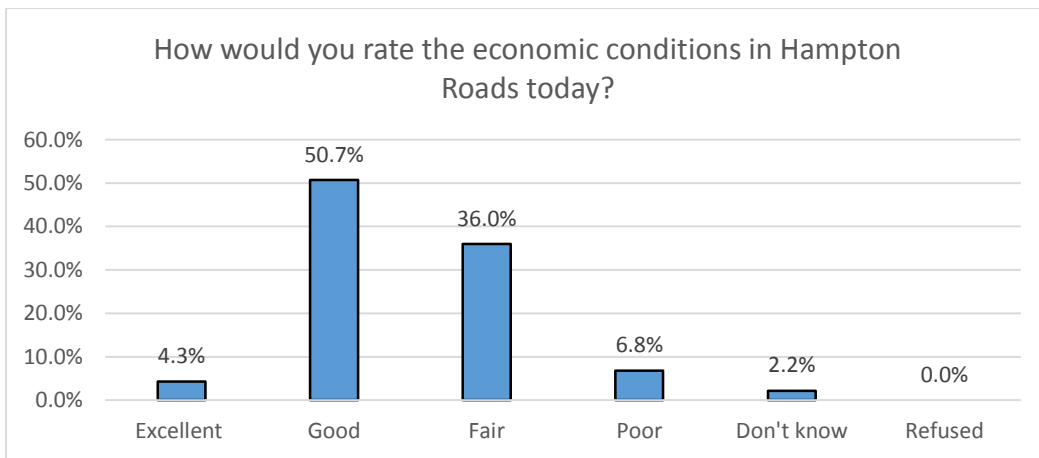
Crime was the most commonly cited reason for giving a fair or poor rating for quality of life in Hampton Roads, with several respondents pointing towards shootings that have eroded their sense of safety. Transportation issues, such as poor road quality, bridges, traffic congestion, public transit limitations, and tolls, were the second most often cited negative. Respondents also indicated that economic issues, such as a higher cost of living, inequality, homelessness, and poverty were a negative.

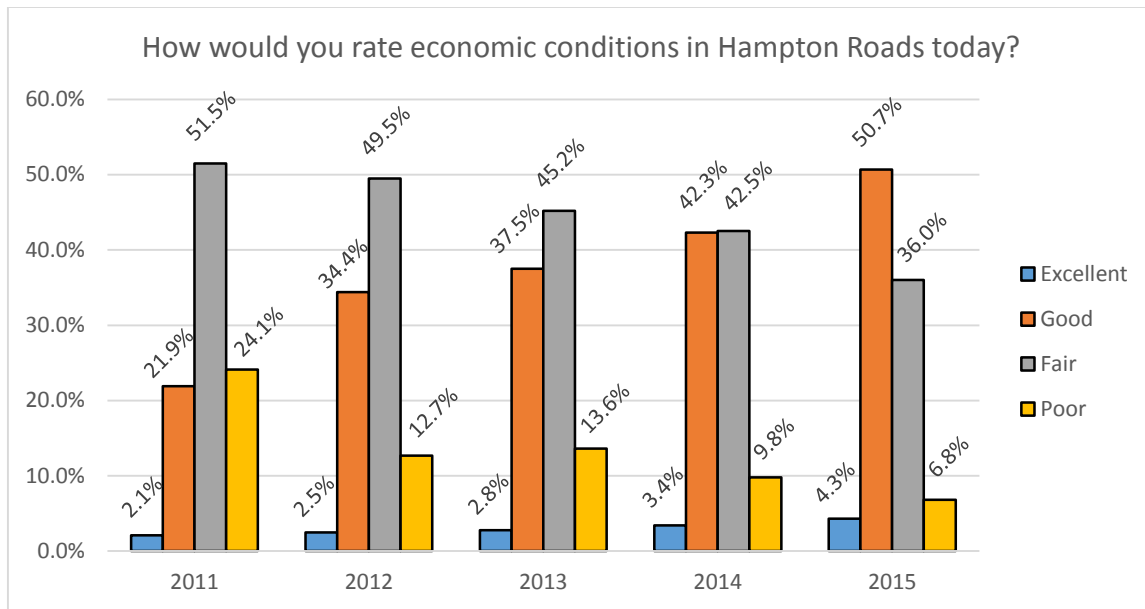
In 2015, respondents were asked questions about job satisfaction and how safe they feel within their workplace. The majority of Hampton Roads residents who work reported being satisfied with their current job with 49.8 percent being very satisfied and another 39.3 percent being somewhat satisfied. Conversely, only 10.3 percent reported being either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (8.2% and 2.1%, respectively). Additionally, 64.6 percent reported never feeling unsafe at their workplace in the past 12 months and 19.4 percent reported rarely feeling unsafe at their workplace in the past 12 months. It is worth noting that 6.1 percent reported either feeling unsafe at their workplace in the past 12 months most of the time (2.6%) or always (3.5%).



### Economic Conditions in Hampton Roads

Perceptions of the regional economy are improving along with quality of life. Consistent with the mixed role played by the economy in respondents' evaluation of regional quality of life, ratings of the regional economy remained modest in the 2015 LIHR survey, though they were better than in any previous year of the survey. Over half (55%) of respondents rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as either excellent or good, while 42.8 percent rated economic conditions as fair or poor. Nonetheless, the portion rating the regional economy as excellent or good was the highest in six years of LIHR surveys, exceeding by almost ten percent the previous high set in 2014.





### Home Ownership in Hampton Roads

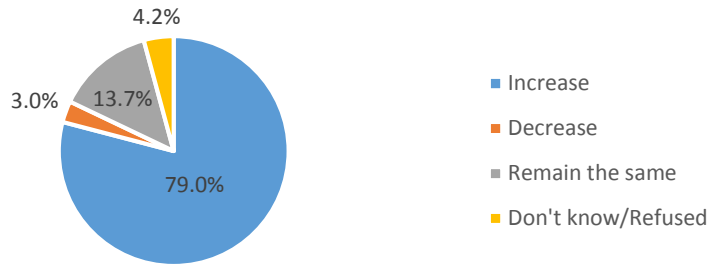
Respondents were asked whether or not they own or are in the process of buying their home, rent, or have some other arrangement. Similar to past years, the majority of residents reported that they own or are in the process of buying their home (65.5%). Another 30.6 percent indicated that they rent, while only 3.1 percent reported having another arrangement.

Home Ownership	2011	2012*	2013	2014	2015
Own or in the process of buying	62.5%	N/A	71.4%	65.6%	65.5%
Rent	33%	N/A	25.5%	31.9%	30.6%
Other arrangement	4.4%	N/A	3%	2%	3.1%
Don't know/Refused	0.1%	N/A	0.1%	0.6%	0.9%

\*This question was not asked in the 2012 survey.

Respondents were asked whether they thought residential electricity costs will increase, decrease, or remain the same in Hampton Roads in the next five years. The majority of respondents (79.0%) reported that they believe residential electricity costs will increase in Hampton Roads in the next five years. Only 3.0 percent thought residential electricity costs would decrease in Hampton Roads in the next five years and 13.7 percent thought they will remain the same.

Do you think residential electricity costs will increase, decrease, or remain the same in Hampton Roads in the next 5 years?

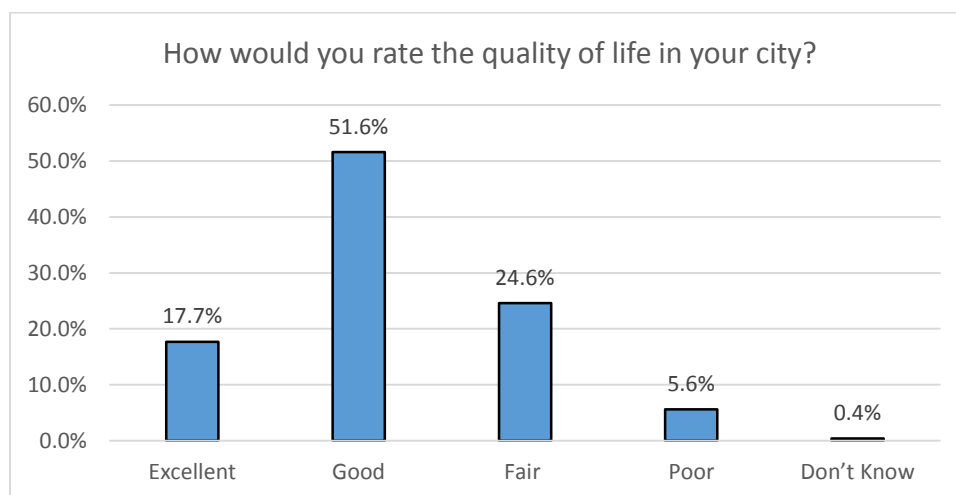


## Neighborhood and City Quality of Life Ratings

The 2015 Life in Hampton Roads survey examined sub-regional measures of neighborhood and city quality of life and governance, and also examined relevant measures at the city level. Although such analyses have significant value, they should also be understood in the context of the much greater uncertainty associated with inferences from sub-population analyses. The maximum margin of error, including design effects from weighting, for the entire sample of LIHR is 3.9 percent (95% confidence level). Thus, only quite large differences between subsample groups are statistically significant.

### City Quality of Life

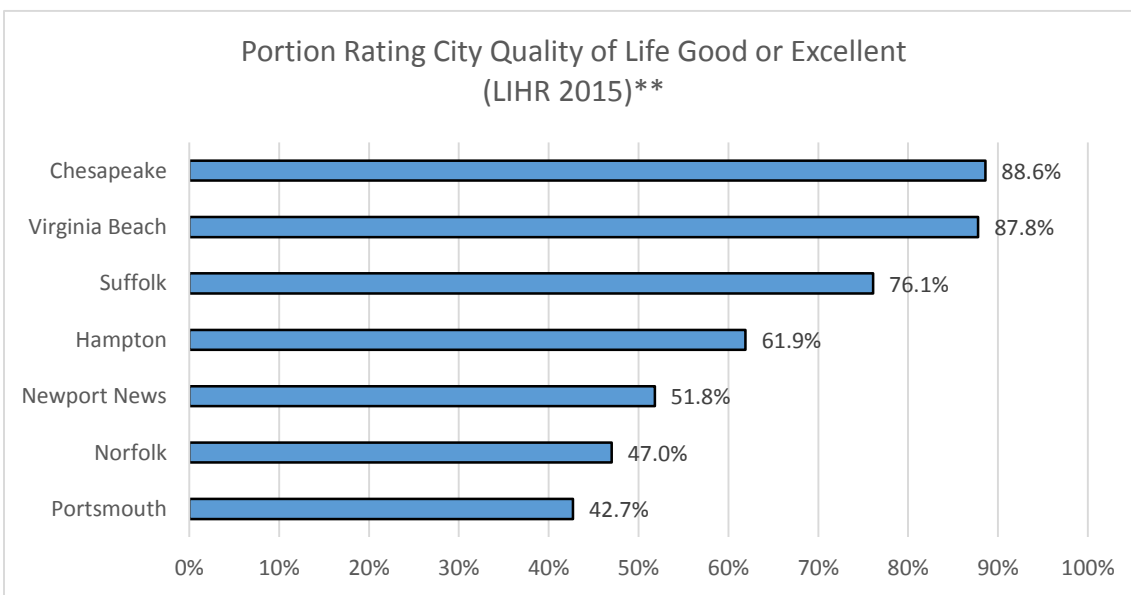
Respondents were asked to rate the quality of life for their city of residence. Almost 70% of respondents reported the quality of life in their city as excellent or good (17.7% and 51.6%, respectively). This is a slight increase from 2014 when 68.2 percent rated their city's quality of life as good or excellent (16.4% and 51.8%, respectively). Another 30.2% rated the quality of life in their city as fair (24.6%) or poor (5.6%).



Reported city quality of life varied significantly ( $p < .05$ ) across the Hampton Roads region. At the top end, 88.6 percent of respondents from Chesapeake rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent, as did 87.8 percent of respondents from Virginia Beach. Suffolk was slightly lower, with 76.1 percent rating city quality of life good or excellent. Hampton and Newport News ranked somewhat

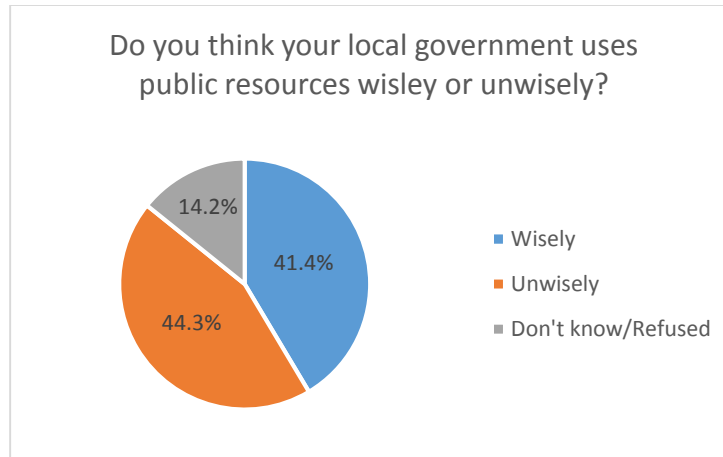


lower, at 61.9 percent and 51.8 percent respectively. Finally, Norfolk and Portsmouth ranked substantially lower at 47 percent and 42.7 percent. Residents in some cities appear to have a substantially higher perceptions of quality of life than others. Although the rankings within the top group (Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Suffolk) and the bottom group (Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, and Portsmouth) cannot be known with statistical confidence, we can be confident at more than the 95 percent confidence level that the top group and bottom group are different, and the observed rankings are broadly consistent with patterns we have seen in previous survey years.

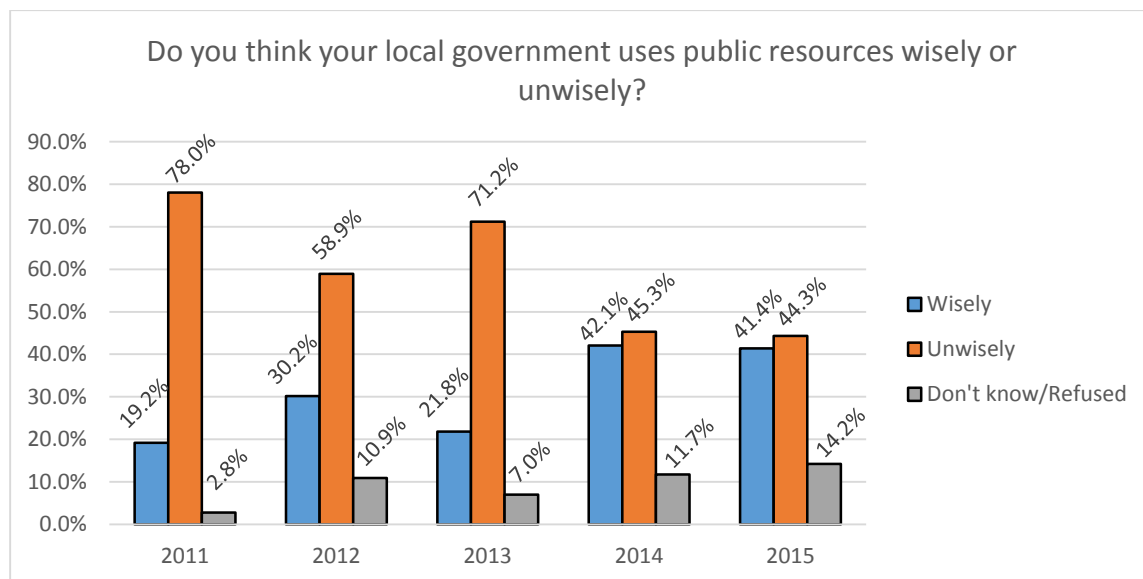


\*\*p<.05 statistically significant, 2-tailed test

The LIHR survey also included a measure of local government resource use perceptions: “do you think your local government uses public resources wisely or unwisely”. Overall, 41.4 percent of respondents indicated that they believed their local government uses resources wisely, while 44.3 percent indicated that their local government uses resources unwisely, with 14 percent selecting “don’t know” and .2 percent refusing to answer.

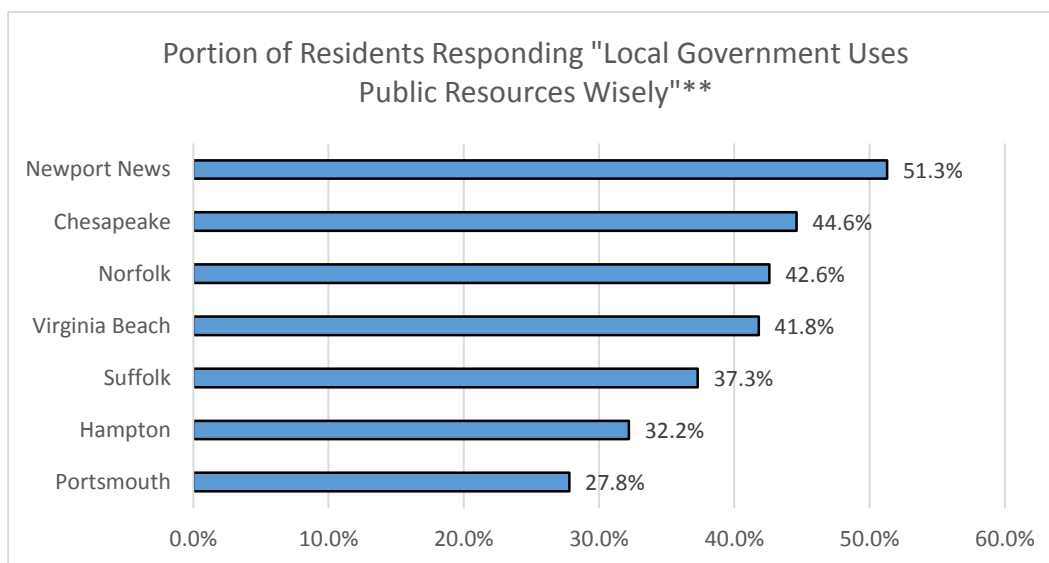


Comparing the data to previous years, a similar percentage of respondents reported that their local government uses resources wisely in 2015 (41.4%) to 2014 (42.1). More respondents reported that the local government uses resources wisely in 2014 (42.1%) than in any other year. That percentage was 20 percent higher than the 2013 percentage of people reporting that their local government uses public resources wisely (21.8%). Although this appears to be good news for local governments, it may also reflect a shift in question wording.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The response choices changed in 2014 to “wisely” and “unwisely.” The question was first introduced in 2011 and in past years the response choices were “wisely” and “fair amount of waste.” This could help explain the dramatic difference in percentages reported.

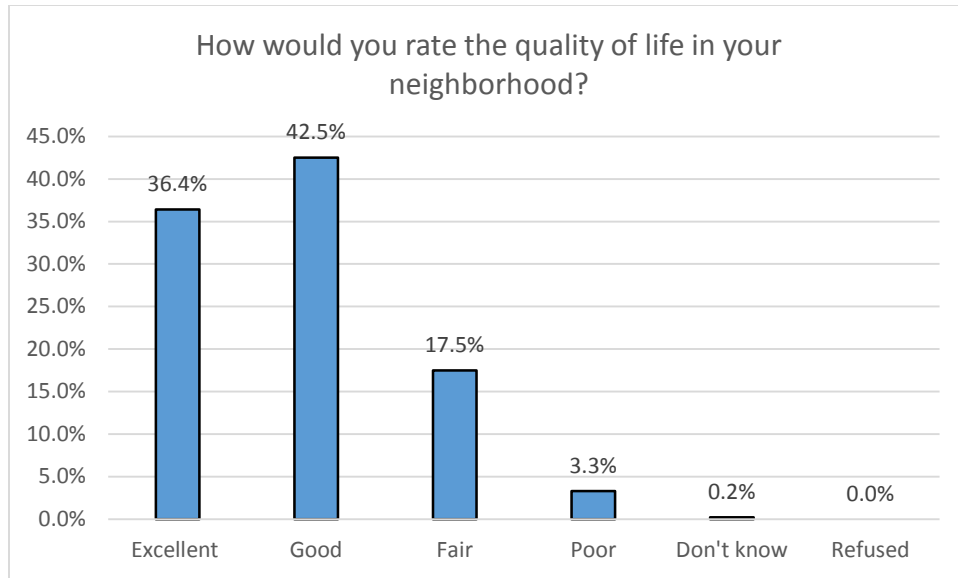
As with the city quality of life question there is significant variation ( $p < .05$ ) across cities in the degree to which respondents believe their local government uses resources wisely. Among respondents who expressed an opinion (i.e. wisely or unwisely), the portion who perceive wise use of resources was highest for Newport News (51.3%), Chesapeake (44.6%), and Norfolk (42.6%). Virginia Beach and Suffolk were in the middle range (41.8% and 37.3%, respectively), while Hampton and Portsmouth had the lowest public perceptions of local government resource use (32.2% and 27.8%, respectively). Interestingly, Newport News and Norfolk reported lower rates of quality of life in Hampton Roads, but reported higher percentages for local government using public resources wisely. Clearly some cities in Hampton Roads have a more favorable reputation for wise use of public resources than others.



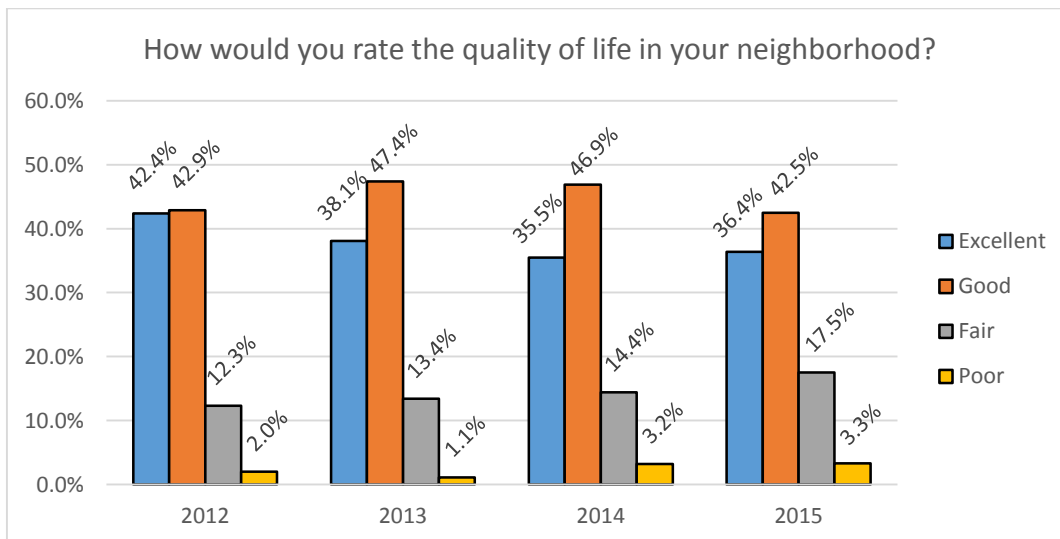
\*\*\* $p < .05$  statistically significant, 2-tailed test

### Neighborhood Quality of Life

Overall, respondents reported a very high rating for quality of life in their neighborhood. The majority of respondents (78.9%) rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as either excellent or good. In contrast, only 20.8 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as fair or poor. Overall, quality of life was rated the highest (excellent and good) for respondent's neighborhood (78.9%), followed by Hampton Roads as a whole (72.9%), and finally city of residence (69.3%).



Respondents who rated quality of life in their Hampton Roads neighborhood as excellent has been on the decline for the past several years. In 2012, 42.4 percent rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as excellent, but that number decreased to 38.1 percent in 2013, and 35.5 percent in 2014. That percentage did slightly increase in 2015 (36.4%), however, this year marked the highest percentage of respondents' ratings of fair (17.5%) and poor (3.3%) in the past four years.



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All Life in Hampton Roads Data Analyses 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 2015 Life in Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to:

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