


2014

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

Social Science Research Center, Old Dominion University

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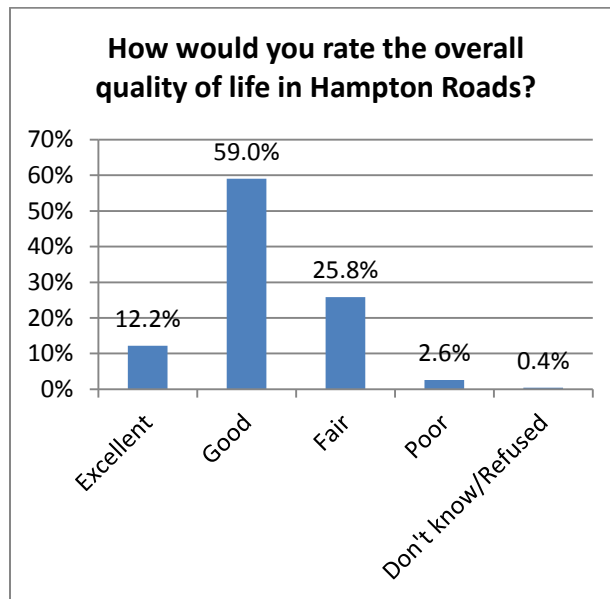
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Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #1

Regional, Neighborhood, and City Quality of Life

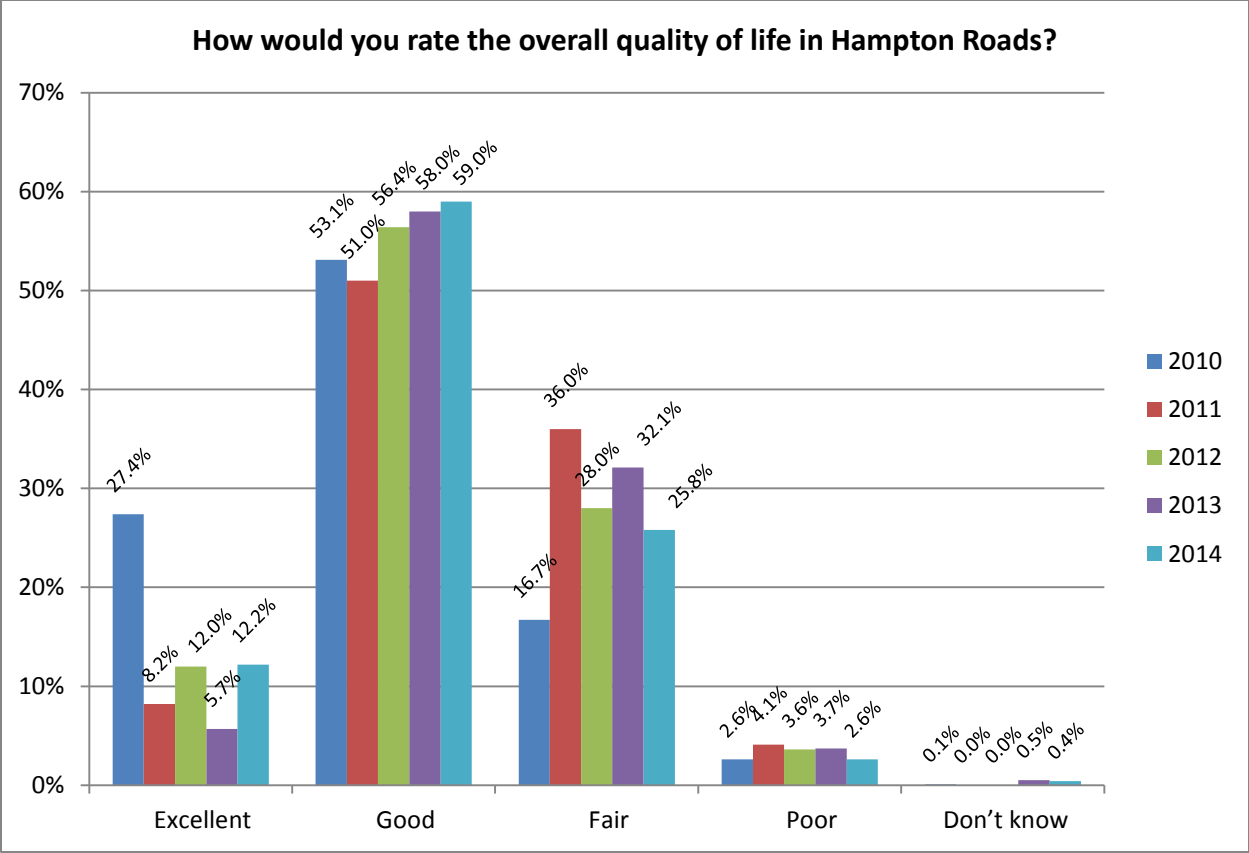
The Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center is proud to release the first part of the 2014 Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) Survey Report. LIHR has been conducted by the Social Science Research Center with support from the Old Dominion University Office of Research and the College of Arts and Letters since 2010 and is now in its fifth year. Release #1 focusses on regional quality of life indicators. Subsequent releases will focus on health and education, the economy and politics, transportation and tolls, crime and police, and flooding and sea level rise..

Life is getting better in Hampton Roads. The 2014 Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey conducted by the ODU Social Science Research Center shows an improving regional quality of life. The majority of those interviewed (71.2%) reported that the overall quality of life in Hampton Roads was excellent or good while 28.4% found it to be fair or poor. The portion of respondents rating regional quality of life as good or excellent was the highest since 2010. 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 (www.odu.edu/ssrc) provides details about survey respondents and coverage. The total sample size for 2014 was 853 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. The margin of error for the 2014 LIHR survey is 3.7 percent (95 percent confidence interval).

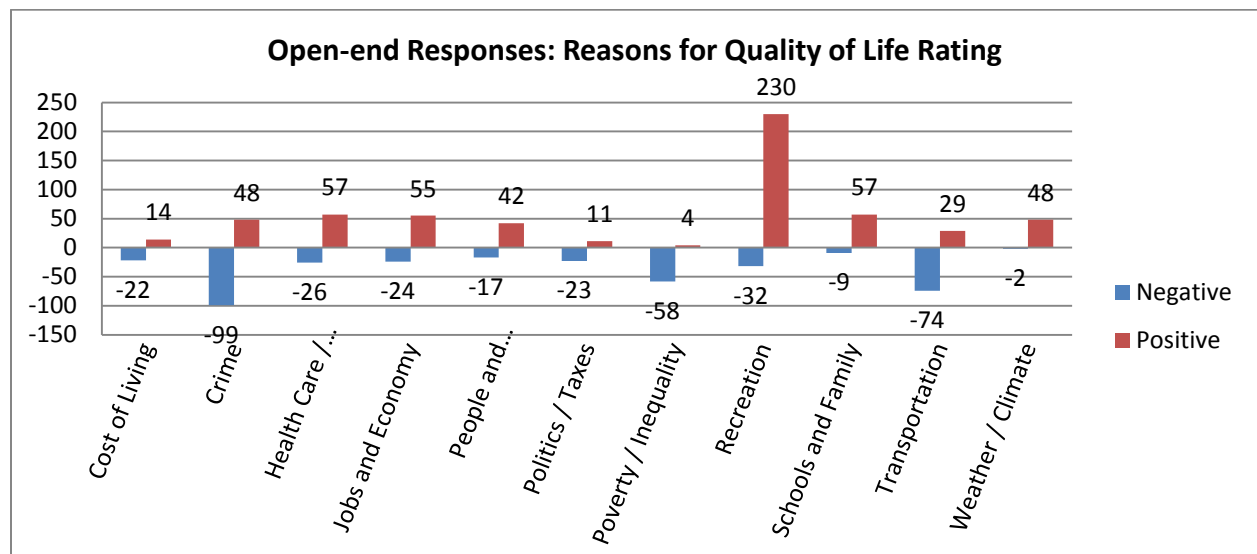
Over the last four years, reported quality of life in Hampton Roads has shown a modest upward trend. In 2012, 12% of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as excellent. Last year (2013) showed a decrease down to 5.7%, but this year's data has bounced back with 12.2% of respondents rating the quality of life in Hampton Roads as excellent. Those that reported the quality of life in Hampton Roads as good increased over the past four years; 2011 (51%), 2012 (56.4%), 2013 (58%), and 2014 (59%). Additionally, only 25.8% of respondents rated the quality of life in Hampton Roads as fair, compared to 36% in 2011, 28% in 2012 and 32.1% in 2013.



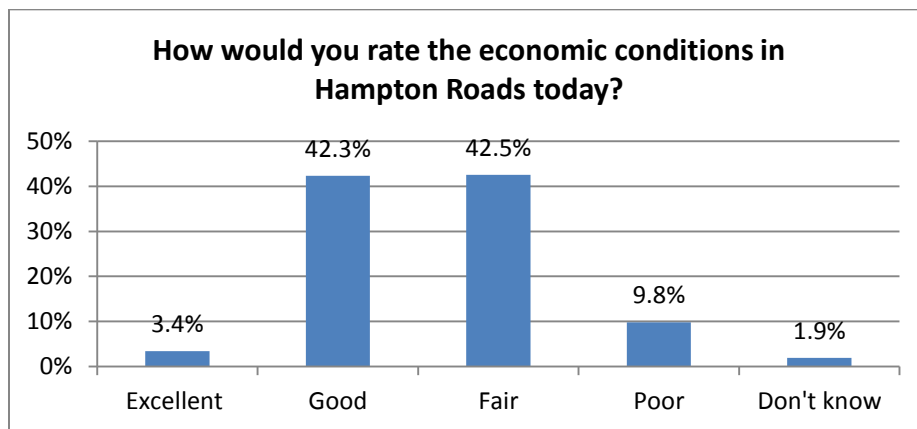
In addition to rating the overall quality of life in Hampton Roads, participants were asked to provide a few words as to why they choose their rating. The respondents (71.2%) who rated the quality of life as good or excellent mentioned several common themes. The most common was access to excellent recreational resources, such as beaches, museums, sports, and parks. Although a few respondents complained about too few such opportunities near them, and a number mentioned a desire for more senior or youth-focused activities, 230 of the survey respondents mentioned this as one of the reasons for giving the region a positive quality of life rating. Several other factors were also frequent positives for the region. The availability of quality schools and health care facilities was often cited. Health and health care resources were mentioned by 57 as a positive, while schools and other family-friendly opportunities were also mentioned by 57. The economic climate in Hampton Roads was also seen as a plus by a number of respondents, with job or economic opportunities mentioned positively by 55. The weather and climate also ranked well, with almost all of those who mentioned the weather

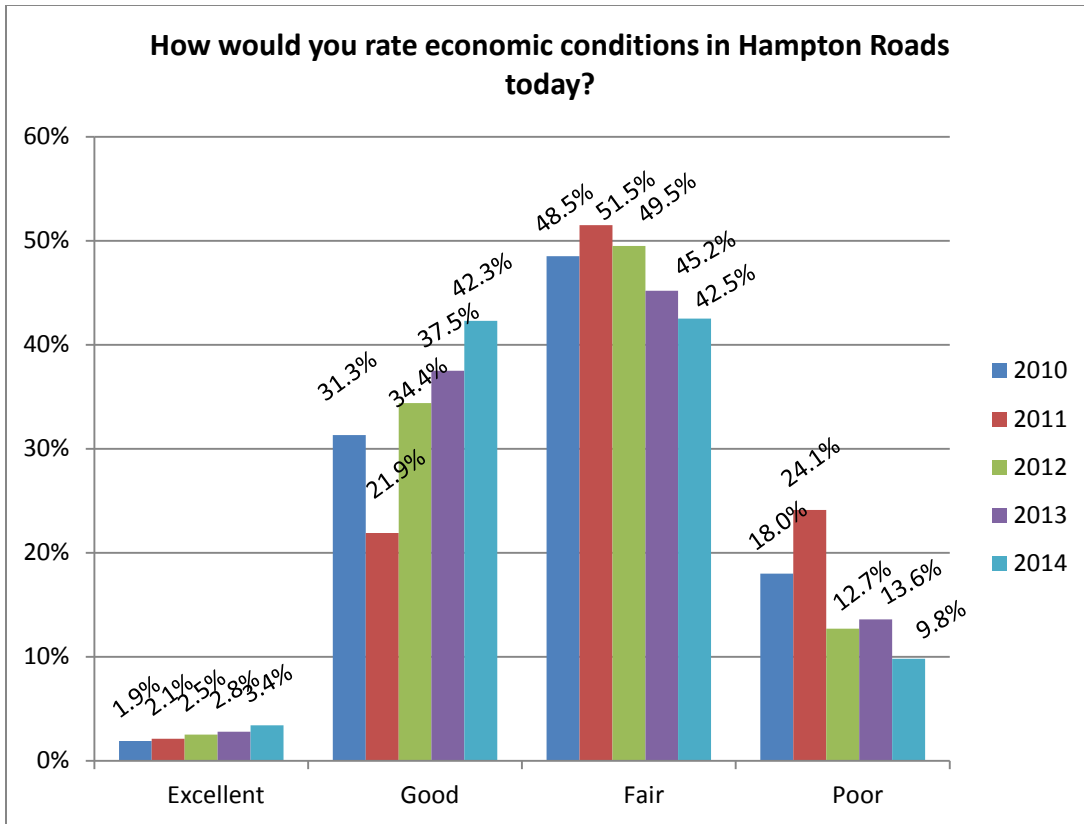
considering it a positive for the region (48 out of 50). Others reported that the military presence in the area provided cultural and economic benefits, though some voiced concern about over-dependence on the military as an economic driver. Even on traffic, perspective matters and a few respondents found a glass half full. One respondent saw traffic as a positive because the area is “not very crowded compared to DC.”

Crime was the most commonly cited reason for giving a fair or poor rating for quality of life in Hampton Roads, with several respondents specifically noting recent high-profile shootings that have eroded their sense of safety. Ninety nine respondents mentioned crime or public safety as a negative factor in the Hampton Roads quality of life. Transportation issues, such as poor road quality, bridges, traffic congestion, public transit limitations, and tolls, were the second most often cited negative, with 74 indicating that transportation problems were degrading their quality of life. Respondents also indicated that economic issues, such as a higher cost of living, inequality, homelessness, and poverty were a negative. Some also mentioned concerns about health issues (especially pollution but also access to care and personal health choices) as causes for a lower quality of life rating. Another concern mentioned by 23 respondents was regional politics, with a common concern the capacity to achieve effective regional cooperation across cities in the face of regional policy challenges.

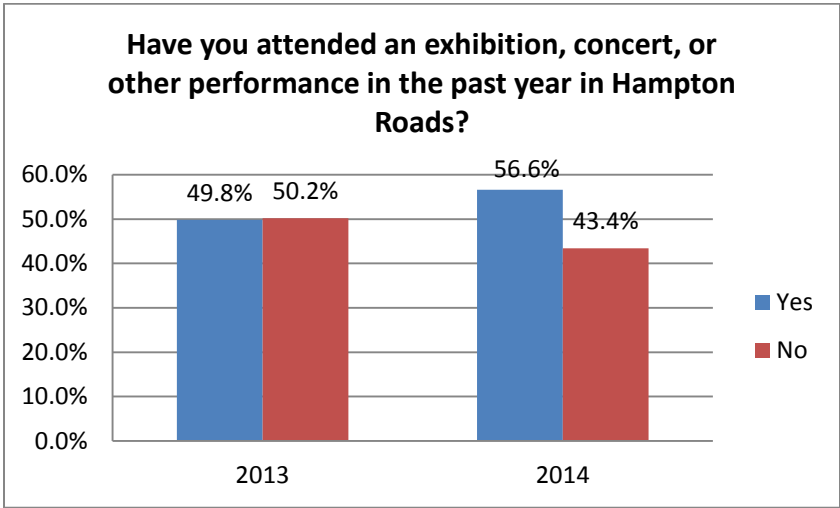
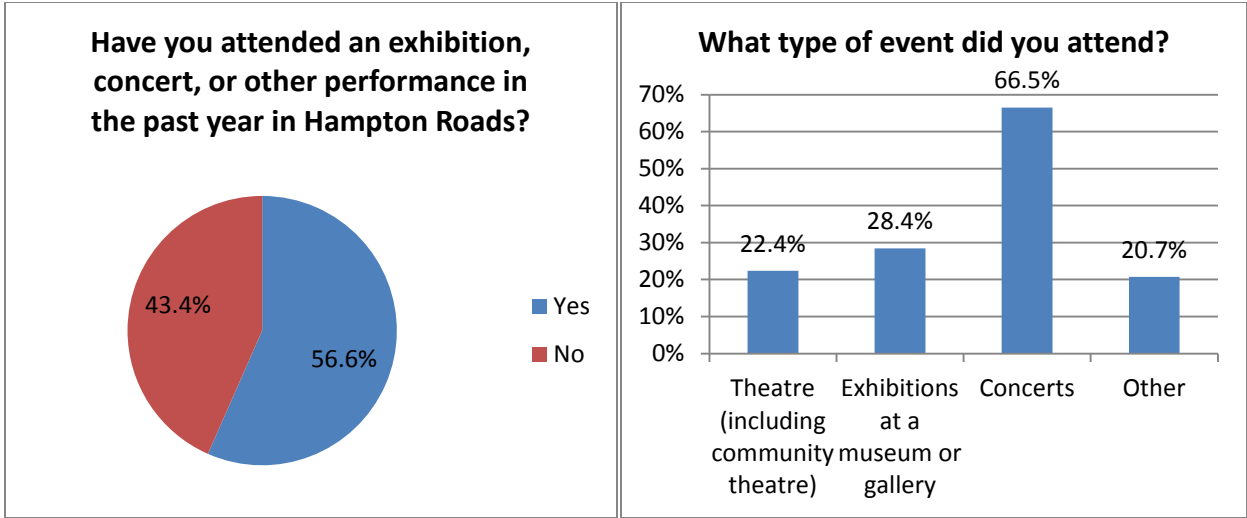


Although still weak, perceptions of the regional economy are on the upswing along with the quality of life indicator. Consistent with the mixed role played by the economy in respondents' evaluation of regional quality of life, ratings of the regional economy remained modest in the 2014 LIHR survey, though they were better than in any previous year of the survey. Less than half (45.7%) of respondents rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as either excellent or good, while 52.3% rated economic conditions as fair or poor. Nonetheless, the portion rating the regional economy as excellent or good was the highest in five years of LIHR surveys, exceeding by more than five percent the previous high set in 2013.

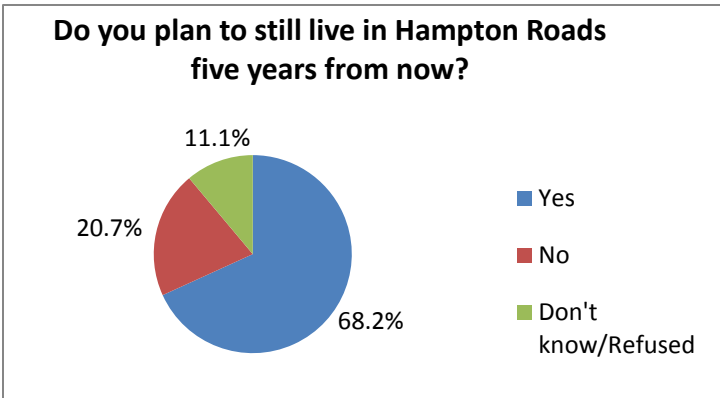


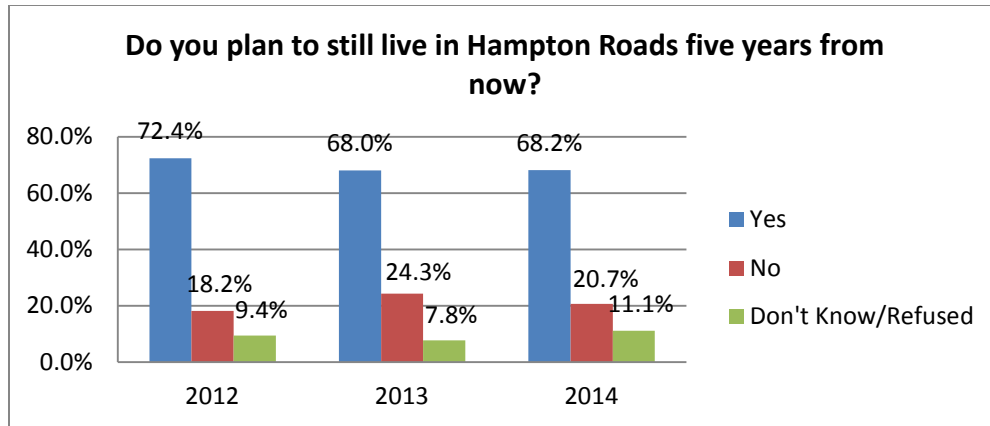


Another LIHR survey question provided an opportunity to specifically assess the mix of recreational activities attended by respondents. When respondents were asked whether or not they had attended an exhibition, concert, or other performance in the past year in Hampton Roads, 56.6% said they had attended and 43.4% said they had not attended. Of those who indicated that they did attend an exhibition, concert, or other performance, 66.5% attended a concert, 22.4% attended a theatre (including community theatre), 28.4% attended an exhibition at a museum or gallery, and 20.7% attended something else. More people reported having attended an exhibition, concert, or other performance in the past year in Hampton Roads in 2014 (56.6%) than in 2013 (49.8%).



A final gauge of regional quality of life is whether individuals plan to stay in the area over the long term. Nearly seventy percent of respondents said that they planned on living in Hampton Roads five years from now (68.2%). The portion planning to stay has remained relatively consistent over the past three years. The majority of respondents (72.4% in 2012, 68% in 2013, and 68.2% in 2014) reported they plan to live in Hampton Roads five years from now.





Neighborhood and City Quality of Life Ratings, LIHR 2014

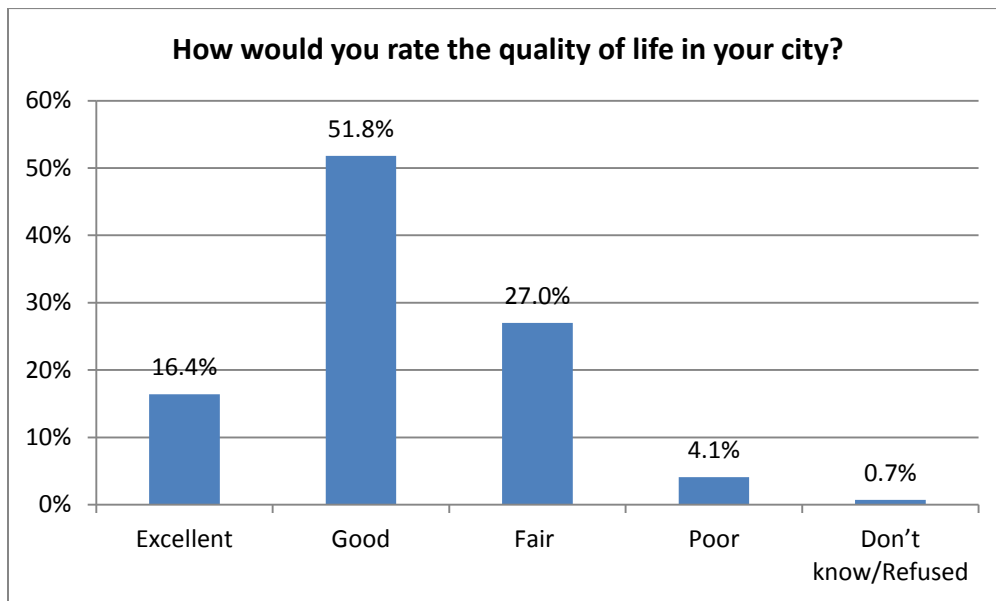
This analysis examines sub-regional measures from the 2014 Life In Hampton Roads survey (LIHR 2014) conducted by the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center. The survey includes a number of questions that are most relevant if analyzed at the sub-regional level. This analysis focusses on these measures, and particularly at measures relevant at the city and neighborhood level. We begin by examining aggregate measures of neighborhood and city quality of life, and then examine the relevant measures at the city and zip code 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 3.7 percent (95 percent confidence level). By contrast, for a subsample of 100, the margin of error is 10.9 percent. Thus, only quite large differences between subsample groups are statistically significant. Even more caution is warranted for analysis of zip codes. If two zip codes have 10 respondents each, and in one zip code 100 percent of respondents rate the quality of life as good or higher, whereas in the other neighborhood only 30 percent do, this difference is statistically significant but much less confidence should be placed in the specific numbers as the difference needed for statistical significance is roughly 32 percent. Responses were weighted by city population, race, age, gender, and phone usage (cell versus

land-line) to be representative of the Hampton Roads region. Details of survey methodology are included in the 2014 LIHR demographics and methodology section (www.odu.edu/ssrc).

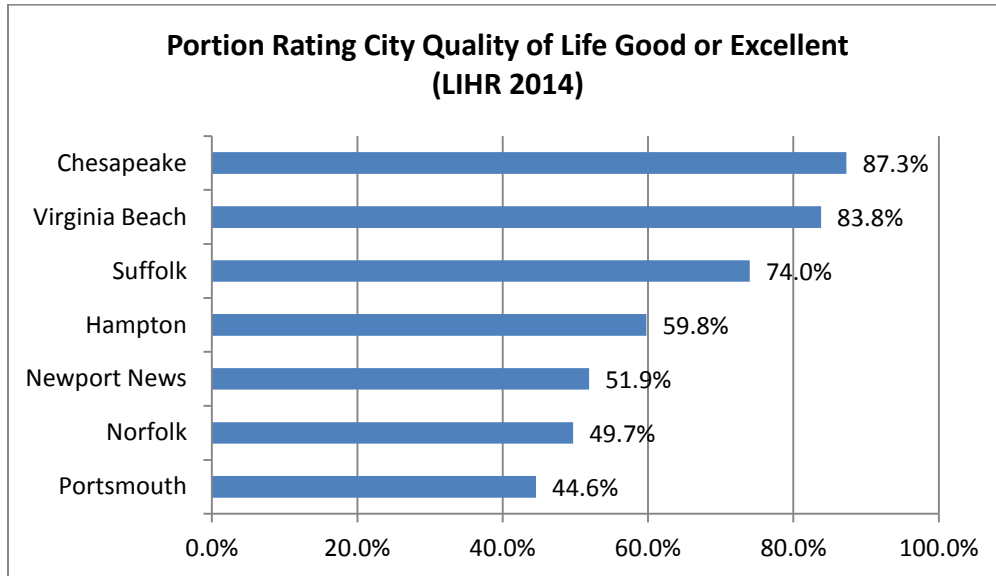
City Quality of Life

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of life for their city of residence. Just under 70% of respondents reported the quality of life in their city as excellent or good (16.4% and 51.8%, respectively). This is up from 2013 when 64 percent rated their city's quality of life as good or excellent (7.4% and 56.6% respectively). Another 31.1% rated the quality of life in their city as fair (27%) or poor (4.1%).



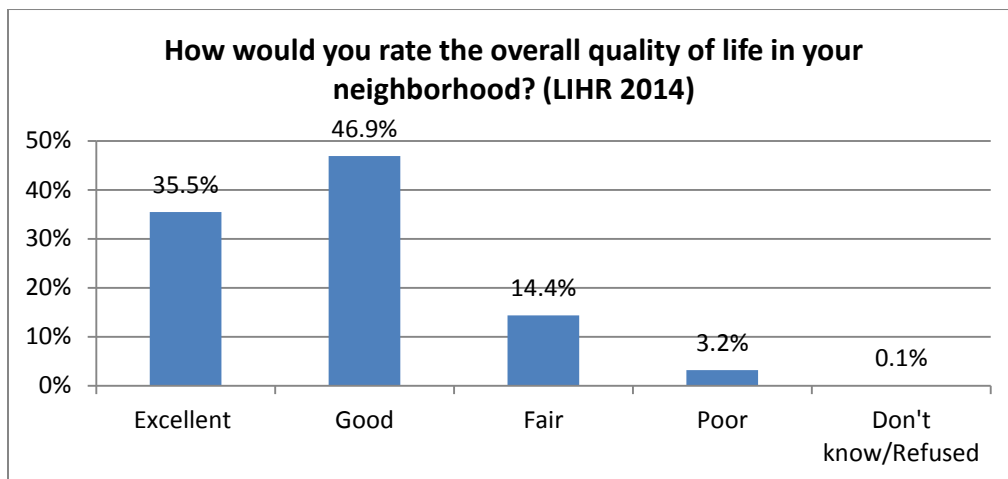
Reported city quality of life varied substantially across the region. At the top end, 87.3 percent of respondents from Chesapeake rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent, as did 83.8 percent of respondents from Virginia Beach. Suffolk was slightly lower, with 74 percent rating city quality of life good or excellent. Hampton and Newport News ranked substantially lower, at 59.8 percent and 51.9 percent respectively. Finally, Norfolk and Portsmouth ranked somewhat lower at 49.7 percent and 44.6 percent. Some cities appear to have a substantially higher quality of life than others. Although the rankings within the top group (Chesapeake, VA 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.

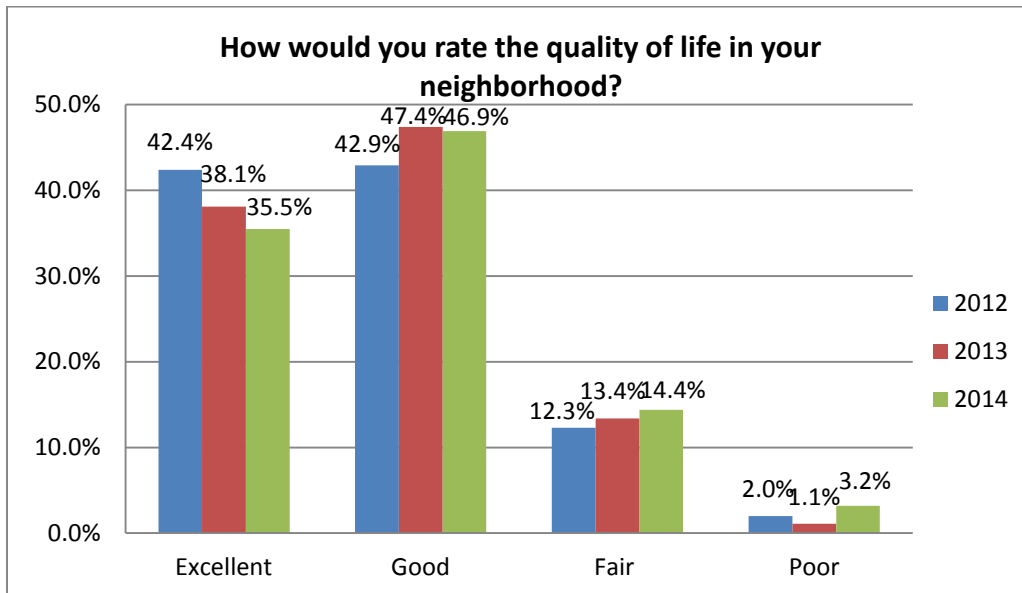


Neighborhood Quality of Life

Overall, respondents reported a very high rating for quality of life in their neighborhood. The majority of respondents (82.4%) rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as either excellent or good. In contrast, only 17.6% of respondents rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as fair or poor.



Ratings neighborhood quality of life have been on the decline for the past several years. In 2012, 42.4percent rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as excellent, but that number decreased to 38.1percent in 2013, and 35.5 percent in 2014. Additionally, this year marked the highest percentage of respondents' ratings of fair (14.4%) and poor (3.2%) in the past three years.



Neighborhood quality of life varies very widely across the region. Among zip codes for which at least five weighted responses were obtained, the lowest average neighborhood quality of life was in the following five zip codes, all of which had less than 1/3 of respondents indicating that their neighborhood quality of life was good or excellent: 23607, 23702, 23661, 23324, 23504. The lowest of these low neighborhoods was 23607 – only one of the nine respondents from this Newport News zip code indicated that the quality of life in the neighborhood was good, and the rest indicated either a fair or poor neighborhood quality of life. These zip codes appear likely to be parts of the region that are distinctly worse off, and they arguably need significant ongoing attention from regional leadership. The five highest ranking zip codes for neighborhood quality of life were 23455, 23707, 23321, 23510, and 23435, with 100 percent of respondents indicating that their neighborhood quality of life was good or excellent. These high quality of life zip codes include a range of different living situations, including the relatively rural 23435 in Suffolk, and the densely urban downtown 23510 in Norfolk.

Neighborhood Quality of Life Rating: Best and Worst Rated Zip Codes				
Zip Code	Percent Fair or Poor	Percent Good or Excellent	Total Responses	
23607	89%	11%	9	
23702	80%	20%	5	
23324	71%	29%	7	
23504	57%	29%	7	
23661	67%	33%	6	
23666	9%	91%	32	
23320	8%	92%	25	
23451	7%	93%	14	
23464	7%	93%	43	
23602	5%	95%	21	
23456	3%	97%	32	
23322	3%	97%	39	
23707	0%	100%	8	
23510	0%	100%	9	
23435	0%	100%	19	
23321	0%	100%	20	
23455	0%	100%	27	

Data users are once again cautioned that all LIHR neighborhood level comparisons should be read very cautiously -- an important caveat to this analysis of quality of life by zip code is the fact that the sample sizes are quite small, and even within particular zip codes there may be widely varying neighborhood conditions and types. Although the difference between the lowest-ranked and highest-ranked zip codes is statistically significant, the level of uncertainty for all estimates is very high due to the small samples.

Overall, the 2014 Life in Hampton Roads survey shows that public perception of the region's quality of life is moving in a modestly positive direction. The rated quality of life is up, and perceptions of the regional economy are also higher. The survey also helps set the agenda for ongoing efforts to

improve the regional quality of life, placing an emphasis on crime and transportation as leading challenges that diminish regional quality of life. City and neighborhood quality of life ratings reveal substantial variation across the Hampton Roads region. Some areas within almost every city (and some cities within Hampton Roads) receive much higher marks from residents than others. These and other issues will be examined in more detail in analyses of additional questions from the LIHR survey.

All Life In Hampton Roads Data Analyses will be placed on the Social Science Research Center website as they are released (www.odu.edu/ssrc). Follow-up questions about the 2014 Life In Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to:

Jesse Richman, PhD
Faculty Director
The Social Science Research Center
Associate Professor of Political Science and Geography
Old Dominion University
757-683-3853 (office) or 757-201-5484 (cell).
jrichman@odu.edu

Or

Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, PhD
Associate Director
The Social Science Research Center
Old Dominion University
757-683-3802 (office)
tvandeca@odu.edu