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How is Life in Hampton Roads?

Social Science Research Center, Old Dominion University

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How is Life in Hampton Roads?

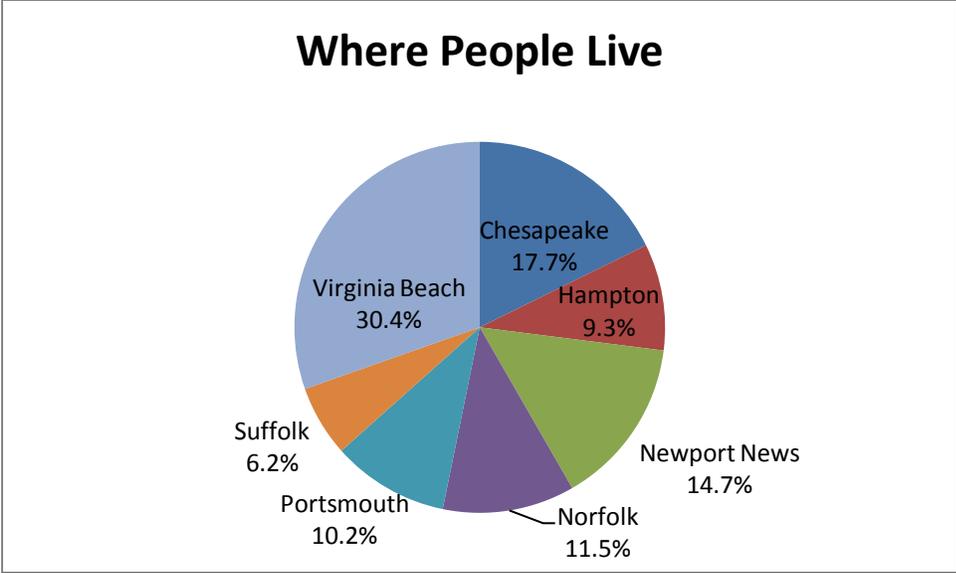
The Social Science and Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University recently conducted a Life in Hampton Roads telephone survey with the purpose of gauging the relative satisfaction regarding life in Hampton Roads. Additional goals of the survey were to determine the attitudes and perceptions of 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 telephone interviewing (CATI) system and telephone interviewers were recruited and trained. Callers were selected for hire based on positive references and a mock telephone interview performed by the applicant using the CATI system. Applicants were expected to have a good telephone demeanor, even pacing, and the ability to multitask between the telephone and the computer. A total of twelve interviewers were selected for hire and trained by SSRC staff.

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 Hampton Roads population. A weight variable was computed and the data file was weighted to correct for discrepancies in age, race, and gender between the survey sample and the general Hampton Roads population. Frequencies were generated for both the weighted and unweighted samples using PASW statistical software version 18. All results used in this report come from the weighted sample in order to present results which are more representative of the Hampton Roads population.

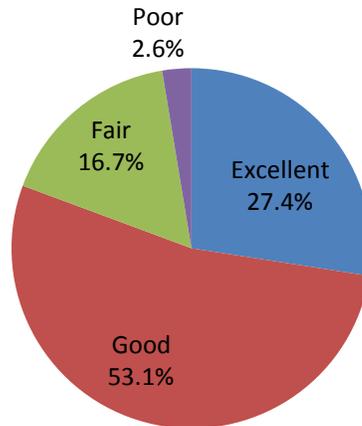
Of the 681 citizens interviewed, 53% were white, 35.2% black or African-American and 11.1% other race/ethnicity. Just over half of the respondents received a high school diploma or attended some college. An additional 31.4% of respondents have completed an undergraduate or graduate degree. The majority of respondents were married and fewer than 15% were divorced, separated, or widowed. Nearly one-quarter (23.8%) of those surveyed were single and not living with a partner while a small portion of single people do report living with a partner. The majority of respondents lived in Virginia Beach (30.4%) and Chesapeake (17.7%) as depicted by the table below. The percentage of survey participants responding from each city is fairly proportional to the population of that city.



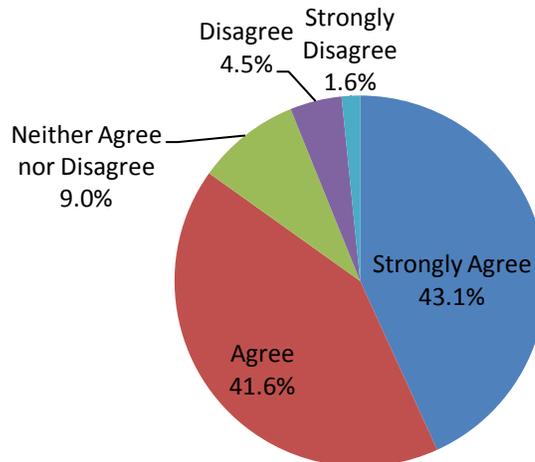
The majority of survey participants, ages 64 and younger, were employed (72.9%); of all respondents who were employed, 18.2% worked part-time while 81.8% worked full-time. Of all respondents, 12.8% were retired. Participants in the survey reported family household income for last year with 17.5% earning \$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 community of Hampton Roads was excellent or good while 19.3% found it to be fair or poor. In addition, the majority of survey respondents (82.6%) reported that they were in excellent or good health. The tables below depict that the greater part of Hampton Roads citizens surveyed (84.7%) replied that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with their lives overall.

How Would You Rate The Overall Quality of Life in Hampton Roads?



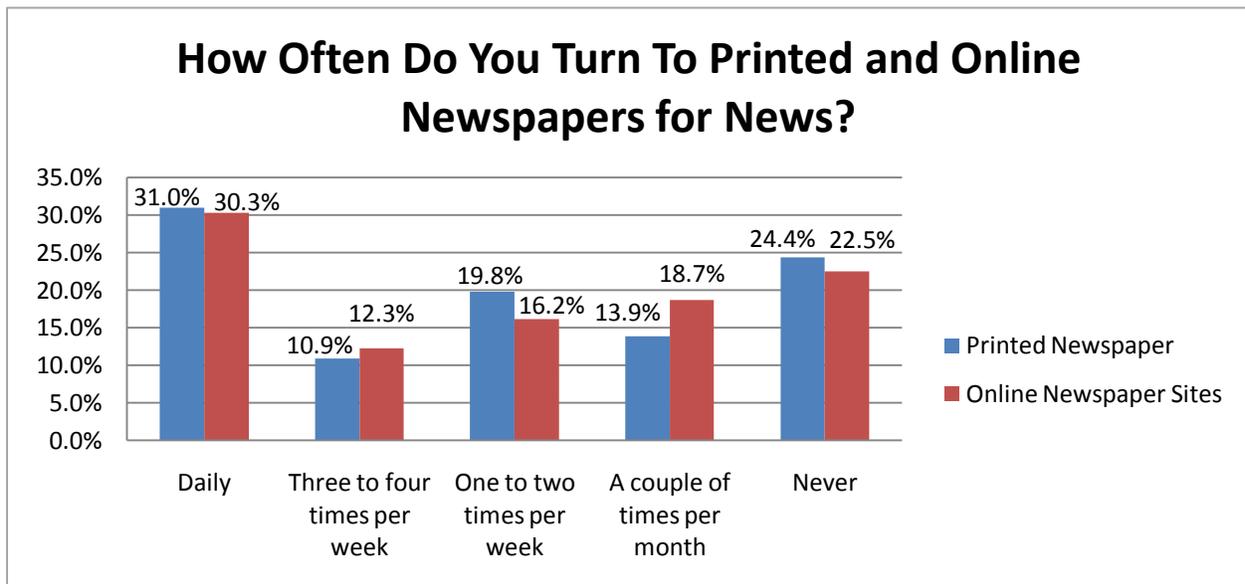
I Am Satisfied With My Life



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

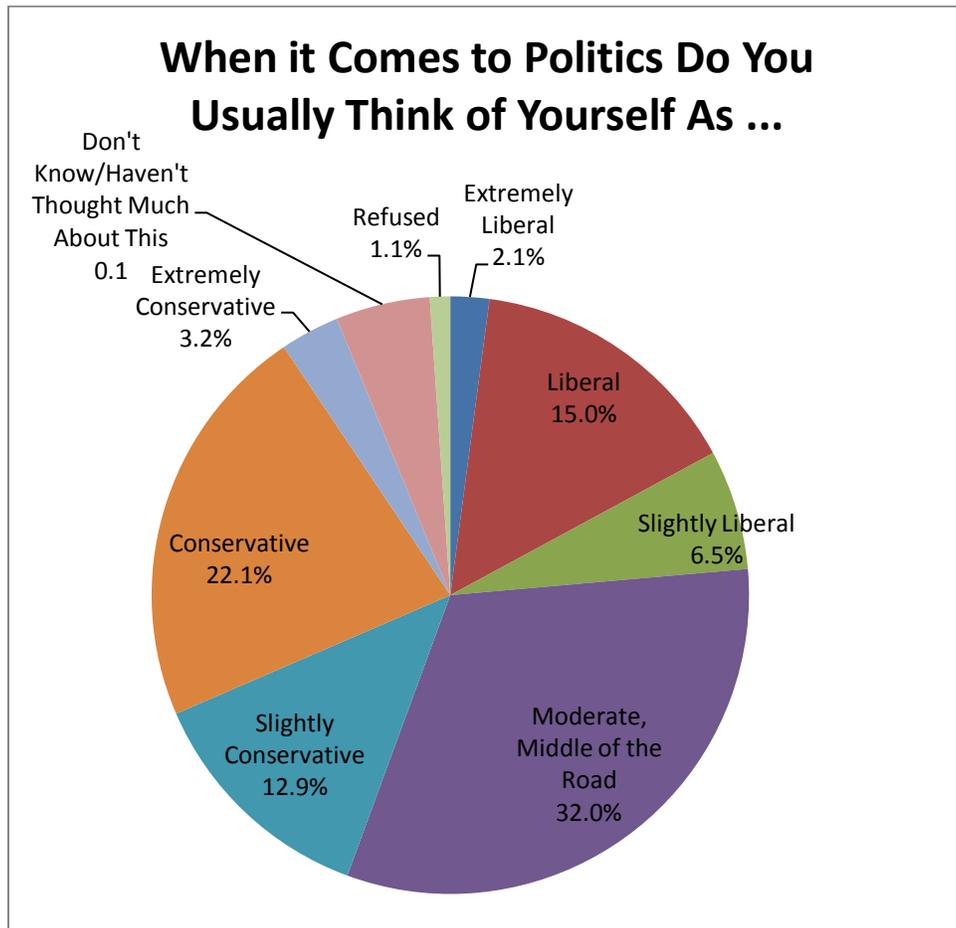
very afraid of being a victim of serious crimes and 12.3% were somewhat afraid. A small 6.5% of respondents stated that in the past 12 months they or a member of their household had been a victim of a serious crime.

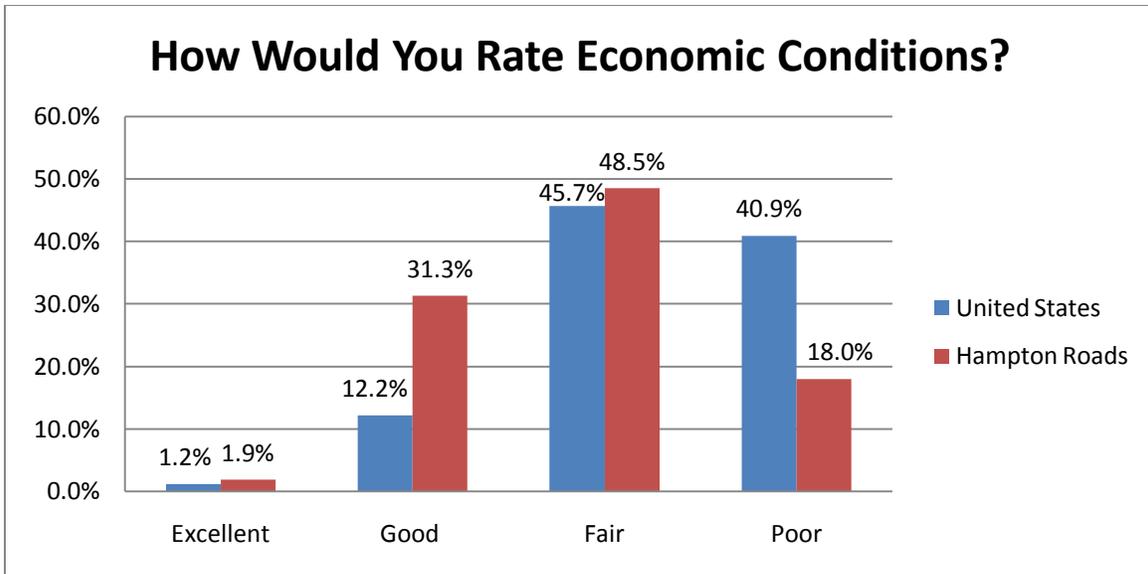
A further set of questions was designed to gather information about how people in Hampton Roads stay informed about local and national events. About one-third of respondents stated that they turned to printed newspaper for news daily and a similar percentage reported daily use of online newspaper sites. Twenty-two and a half percent never use online sources. About 5.1% of those who reported turning to blogs did so daily. Most of those surveyed indicate they never consult blogs (71.1%). Just over half of the respondents stated that they use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace or message boards.



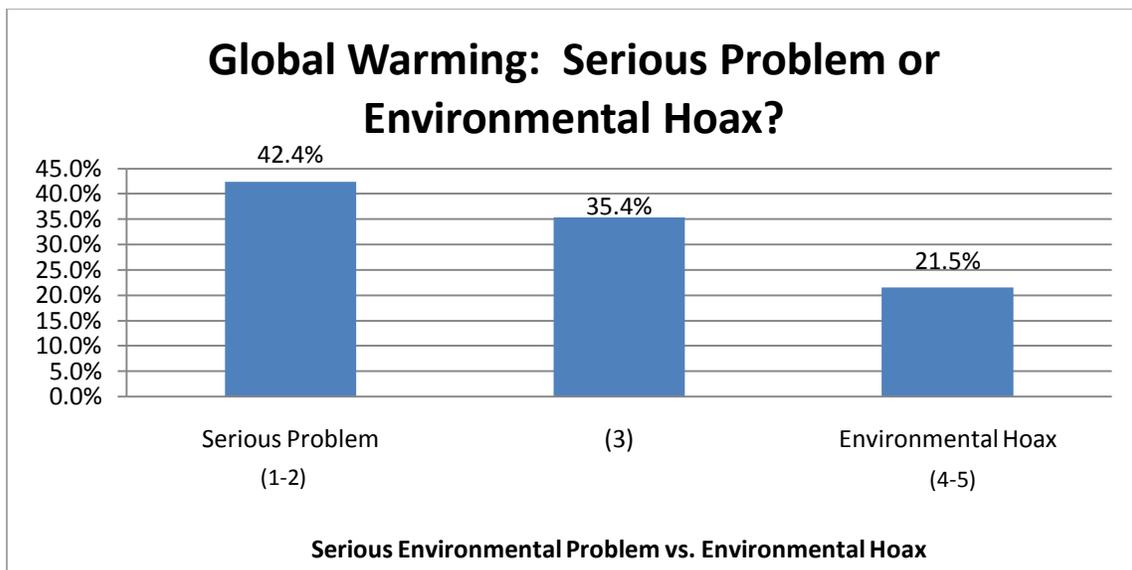
In addition to determining how Hampton Roads residents stay informed, questions were also asked concerning views about the local and state government and other political issues. Almost one-quarter of respondents reported being extremely liberal, liberal, or slightly liberal. Nearly one-third of

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.



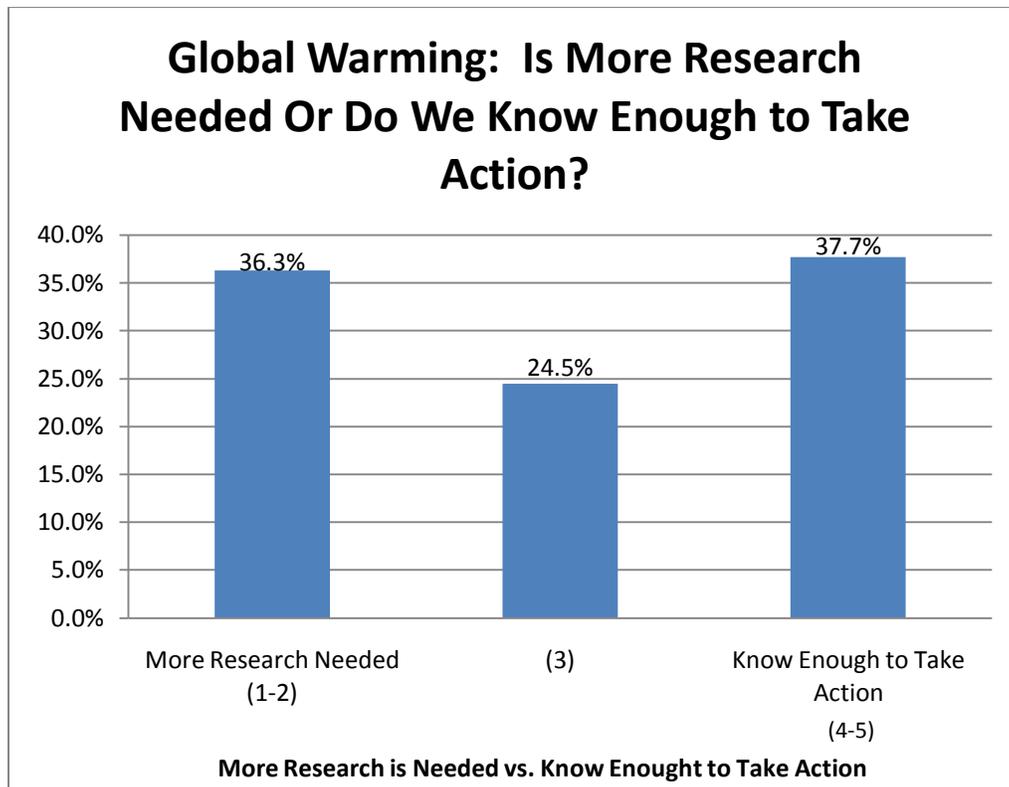


Another section of the survey asked questions to determine how people in Hampton Roads felt about environmental issues. When asked about the effects of global warming, the majority of people surveyed (42.4%) stated they felt the issue to be “a serious environmental problem.” Twenty-one and a half percent gave the opinion that “global warming is an environmental hoax” as seen in the figure below.



When respondents were asked to think about global warming, 36.3% stated “more research is needed before taking action” while 37.7% believe “we know enough about global warming to take

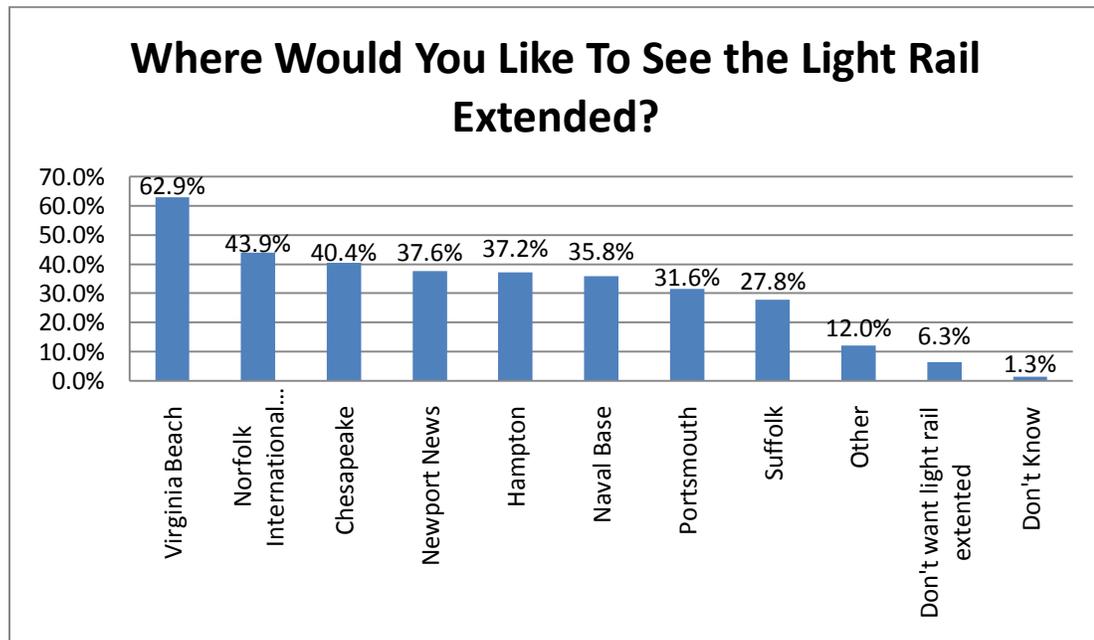
action” (see table below). Moreover, respondents were asked what level of government should be responsible for dealing with global warming and climate change; 72.8% stated the federal government should be responsible for the environmental situation, 54.9% placed responsibility with the state government, 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 an arts function went to a concert, 37.4% attended an exhibition at a museum or gallery, and 29% went to a theatre performance. Of those who did not go to events such as these in the past year most (42.2%) stated that it was because of bad timing or scheduling conflicts. An additional 24.1% of the population stated their reason for not attending included cost issues,

23.9% confessed a lack of interest, 16.4% stated that the Hampton Roads area didn't offer events they 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 where respondents would like to see the light rail extended, only 6.3% stated they didn't want the light 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.



Yet people still commute back and forth, across all area of Hampton Roads, knowing that their trips will be longer than is maybe necessary. Previously, the hope had been that more bridges and tunnels would solve the ever-present traffic dilemma; however, the light rail would be hugely beneficial since almost half (46.5%) of respondents said they have avoided visiting a business in a neighboring city within the past month due to traffic concerns.