

Life in Hampton Roads 2021 Politics & Ethics in Government

Introduction

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University recently completed data collection for the 12th annual Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess the quality of life in Hampton Roads and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other topics of local interest such as perceptions of police, employment and other issues. A total of 796 online and telephone surveys were completed between July 12 and Oct. 3, 2021. It is important to note that the methodology this year differs from previous Life in Hampton Roads surveys. For several reasons, including continued concerns about COVID-19 and labor shortages, we conducted both telephone surveys and online panels. This change limits our ability to confidently generalize the results to the Hampton Roads population as a whole. Nonetheless, we note that an increasing number of surveys have moved online in recent years, and that in many instances useful data has been developed despite the challenges of online survey research. For more detailed information on the methodological changes and potential impacts please see the Methodology section in the full report, or please contact the SSRC directly.

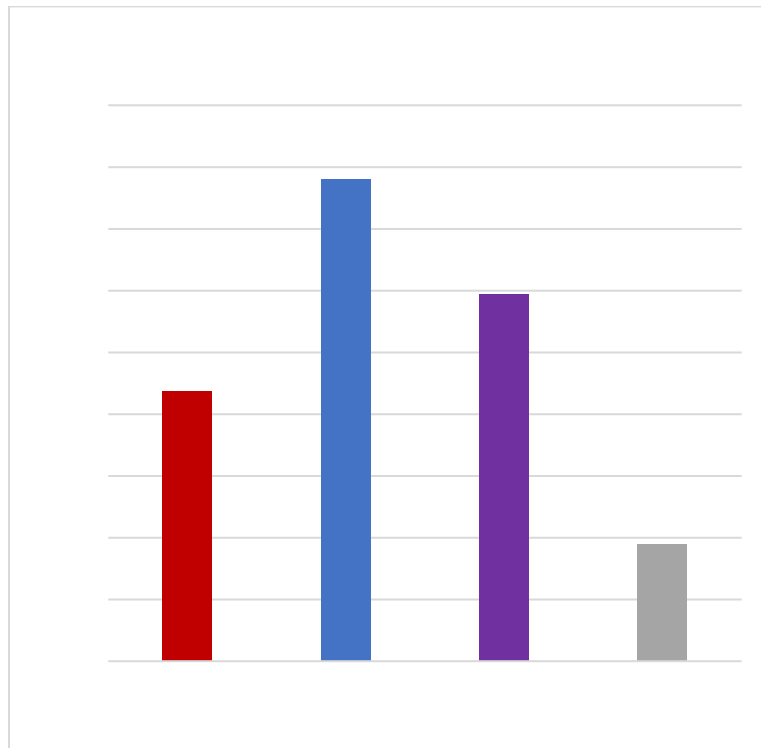
The Life in Hampton Roads survey typically includes a few questions about political attitudes. In 2021, the questions asked included party affiliation, job approval of President Biden and preferences for the 2021 gubernatorial election. The survey also included a set of questions about ethics in local government that have been asked in previous years.

When asked to identify their political party affiliation, approximately 68% of respondents identified themselves as members of the Democratic party when asked. This represents a modest gain for the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, or do you consider yourself to be an independent or other party? Approximately 22% responded Republican Party. This represents a modest gain for the GOP from some previous years. For instance, in 2017 and 2015, less than 20% indicated

that they felt closest to the Republican Party.

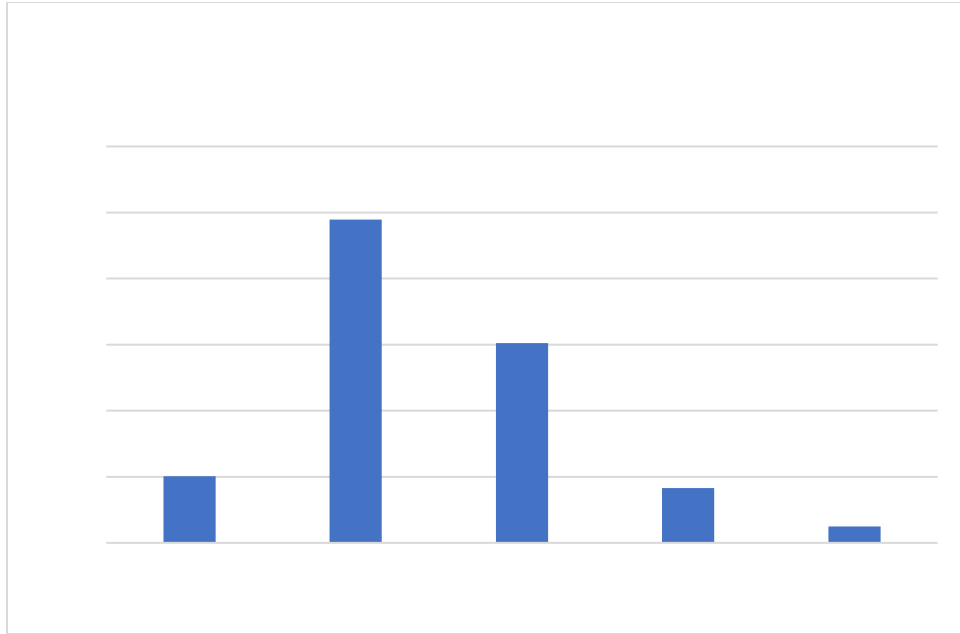
Party

roughly where it was in surveys a decade ago. But it also represents a gain for the Democratic Party relative to nearly all previous years. In 2015 and 2017, only 35% indicated that they felt closest to the Democratic Party. Overall, this seems to indicate a trend toward more individuals responding with a major party they felt closest to, especially on the Democratic side.



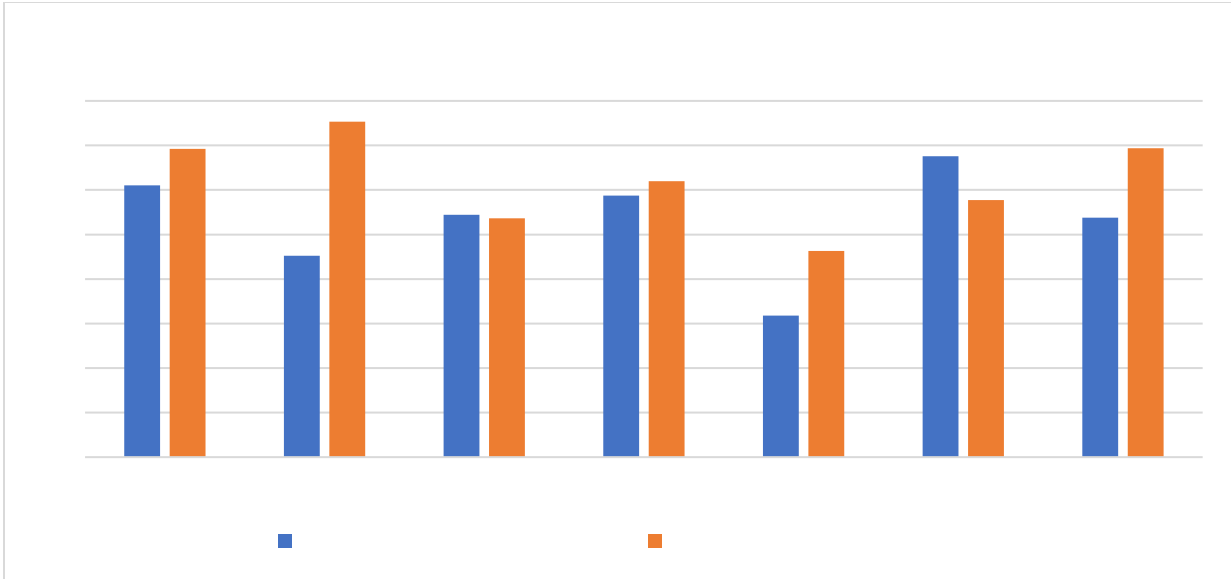
performance, with 14.7% saying that they strongly approve, and another 41% indicating that they approve. Just over 40% selected the disapprove or strongly disapprove option (20.2% and 22.3%).

Two questions were asked about perceptions of ethics in state and local government. Overall,



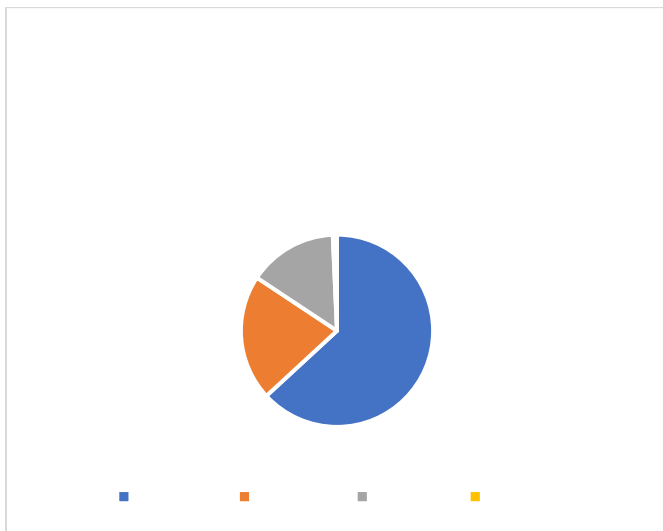
The percent of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that their city elected officials have high ethical standards varied significantly by city. At the highest end were respondents from Hampton (78.6%), Virginia Beach (73.2%), Chesapeake (67.7%) and Norfolk (67.2%). Considerably lower rates of believing that city elected officials have high ethical standards were reported by residents in Suffolk (59.2%), Newport News (54.2%) and Portsmouth (46.2%).

The city and state level results both reflect a substantial improvement in respondent perceptions relative to the last time the survey examined these questions in 2018. In survey,



Support for Marijuana Decriminalization & Casinos

Respondents were asked about their support for two current issues: the decriminalization of marijuana and construction of casinos in Hampton Roads. Just under two-thirds of respondents (63.2%) support the decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use and 15% are unsure. A smaller percentage but still more than half (52.9%) support the construction of casinos in Hampton Roads while 19.2% are unsure.



The Life in Hampton Roads Data report and press releases will be placed on the Social Science Research Center website as they are released ([_____](#)). Follow-up questions about the 2021 Life in Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to: