

Section XII

Quality of Life

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Quality of Life in Hampton Roads

While focused on many of the numbers that have been presented in this study, it is easy to overlook the importance of quality of life to the residents of Hampton Roads. All of these other measures are essentially ways of measuring the happiness and opportunities available in this region, and growth that does not enhance the quality of life of this region's current residents should not be a goal.

Unfortunately, many of the measures of quality of life are difficult to quantify. This includes the quality of amenities and cultural experiences in the region, the sense of community that exists throughout Hampton Roads, and the happiness of its residents.

Other indicators that are related to quality of life have been spread throughout this study, including measures of income and employment, education, and transportation, just to name a few. This section tries to quantify some of the other measures of the region that did not fit in the other sections of this study.

Cost of living is obviously a significant factor in the lives of the citizens of Hampton Roads, and has been used in other graphics to better compare income across metro areas. Hampton Roads' cost of living has now fallen close to the National urban area average, and this has been driven by the decline in housing prices.

The level of crime also impacts life in Hampton Roads, and following the national trend, the level of violent crime in Hampton Roads has been steadily falling for a number of years.

Measures of disability, inequality, and poverty indicate issues that may confront Hampton Roads, and increasingly local government policy choices will include how to support and enable those in the community who are facing an added set of challenges.

Lastly, two measures of air quality attempt to evaluate the environment in the region. The region continues to improve on most environmental indicators.

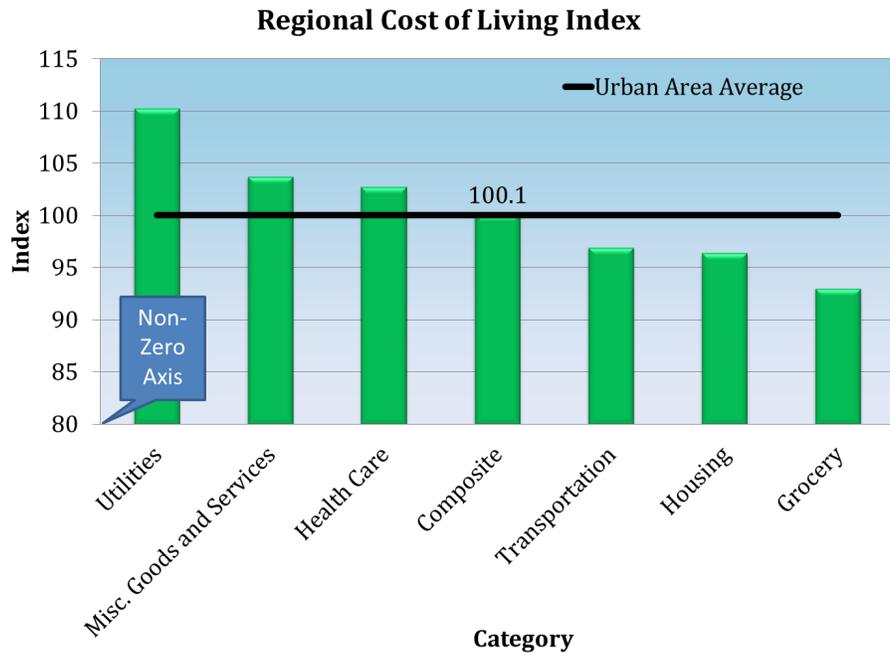
Figure 12.1 Hampton Roads Cost of Living

Why is it important?

Variations in the cost of living are not constant across the country but can vary by commodity from region to region and city to city.

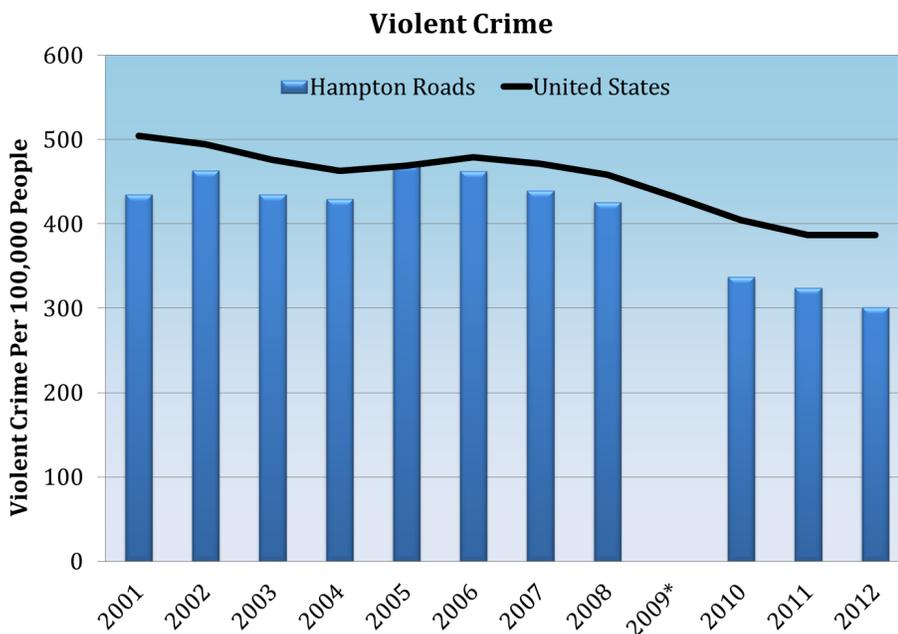
How are we doing?

According to the most recent AC-CRA survey, the cost of living in Hampton Roads is just above the urban average, and the region's costs are above the national urban area average in Utilities, Miscellaneous Goods and Services, and Healthcare.



Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research, HRPDC

Figure 12.2 Violent Crime Rate in the U.S. and Hampton Roads



*The FBI did not report data for Hampton Roads in 2009

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, HRPDC

Why is it important?

Crime statistics are a reflection of social conditions and quality of life. Crime trends reflect underlying social issues, including inequality and lack of opportunity.

How are we doing?

The rate of violent crime in Hampton Roads tends to be below the national average. The crime rate in both Hampton Roads and the Nation have been falling consistently for a number of years.

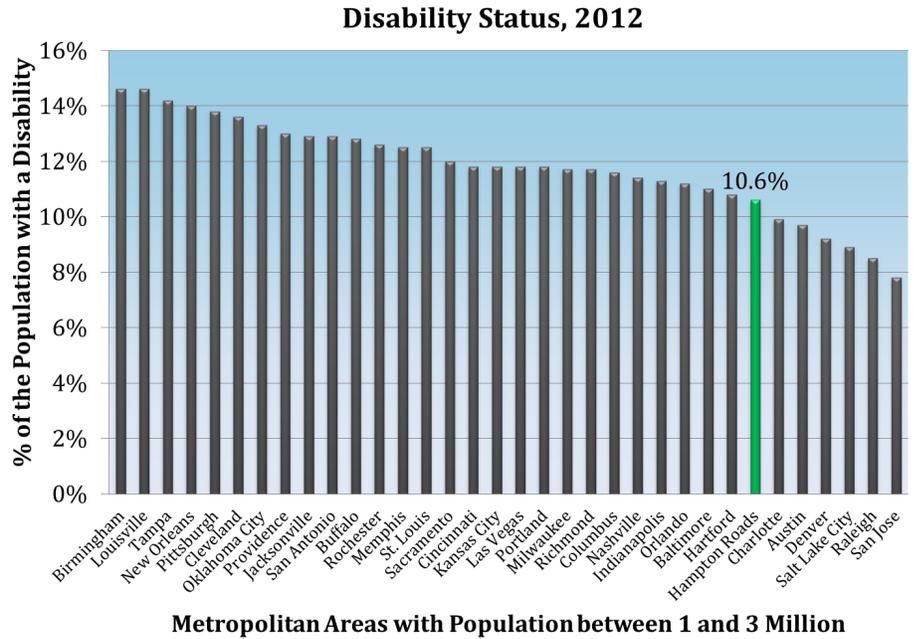
Figure 12.3 Disability Status in Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas

Why is it important?

The disability rate measures the number of persons in a region that have additional challenges that need to be accommodated.

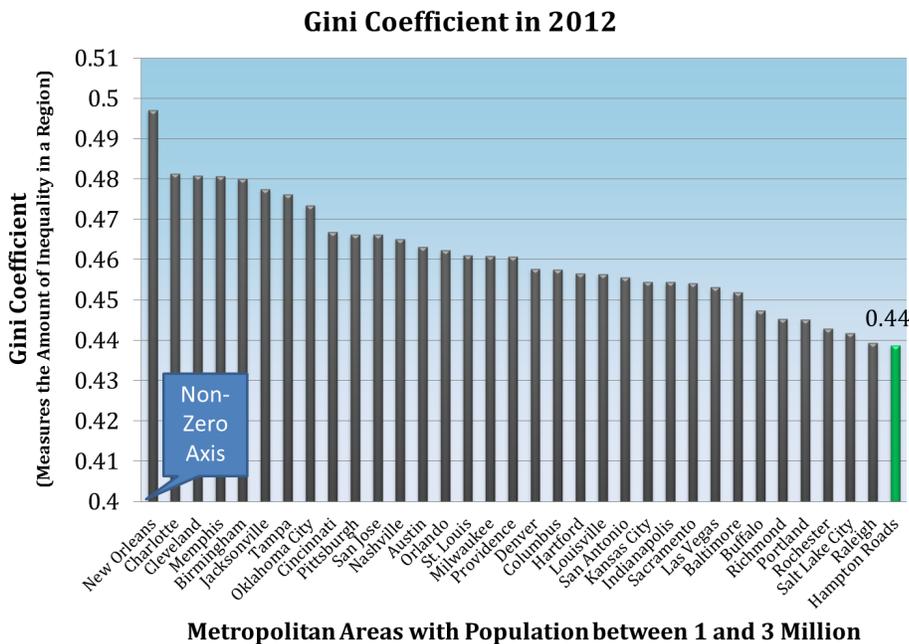
How are we doing?

The civilian disability rate for Hampton Roads was 10.6% in 2012, significantly lower than many of this region’s reference MSAs.



Source: American Community Survey, HRPDC

Figure 12.4 Gini Coefficient in Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas



Source: American Community Survey, HRPDC

Why is it important?

The Gini coefficient measures a region’s inequality by comparing it to a theoretical perfect equality scenario. The greater the inequality in the region, the higher the gini coefficient will be.

How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has an extremely low level of inequality, with the lowest gini coefficient of its reference group of metro areas. The strong opportunities provided to individuals with a high school education likely contributes to the low level of inequality in the region.

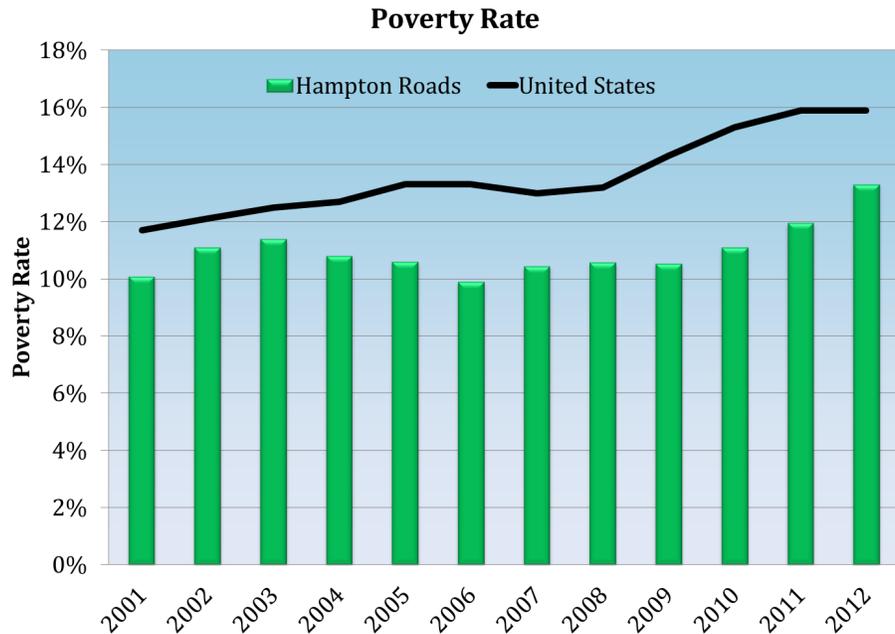
Figure 12.6 Poverty Status in Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas

Why is it important?

Impoverished persons lack the means to acquire adequate food, clothing, and shelter. Poverty rates are indicative of a region's ability to combat the social and economic conditions that result in poverty.

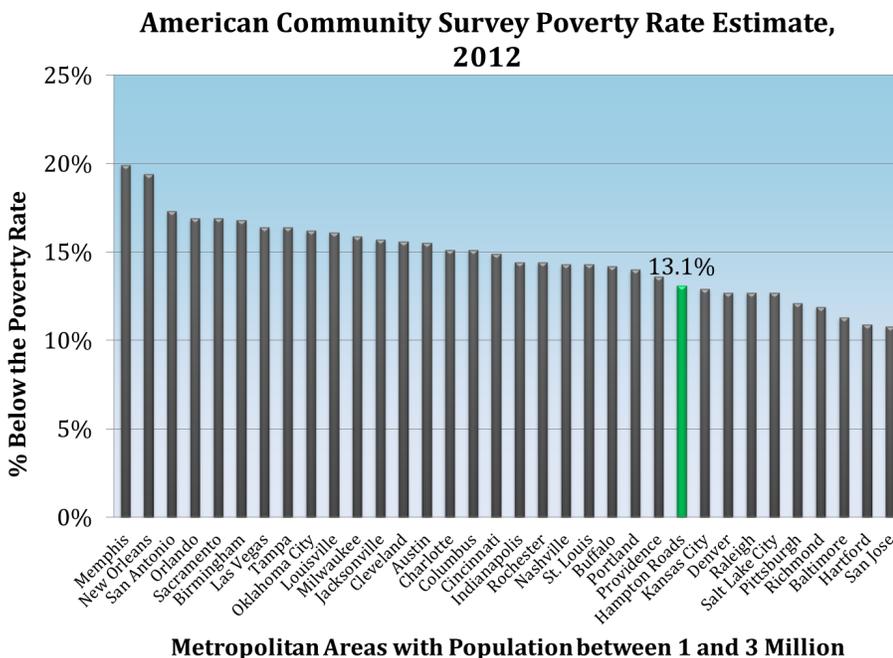
How are we doing?

Historically, poverty rates in Hampton Roads tended to follow the national trend. The region's poverty rate has been below the national average since 1997. The poverty rate had stayed flat in Hampton Roads while it rose nationally, but since 2008 the poverty rate in this region has begun to increase.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Est., HRPDC

Figure 12.6 Poverty Status in Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas



Metropolitan Areas with Population between 1 and 3 Million

Source: American Community Survey, HRPDC

Why is it important?

High levels of poverty creates significant issues for the city, as individuals in poverty contribute less in tax revenue, but consume a higher level of services than an average resident.

How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has a relatively low level of poverty compared to its reference group.

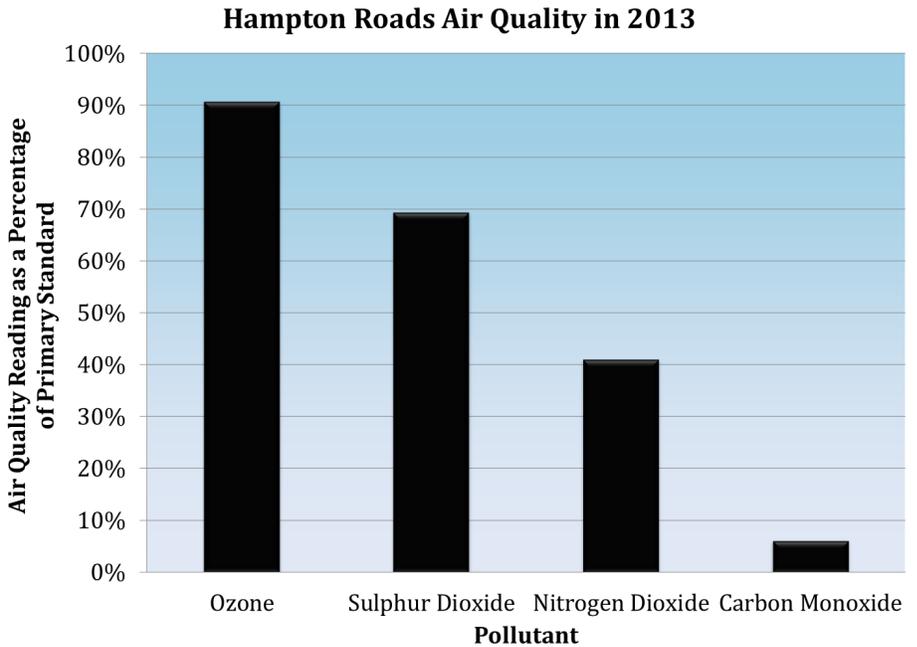
Figure 12.7 Air Pollutants in Hampton Roads

Why is it important?

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) monitor air quality to protect the health and welfare of the public.

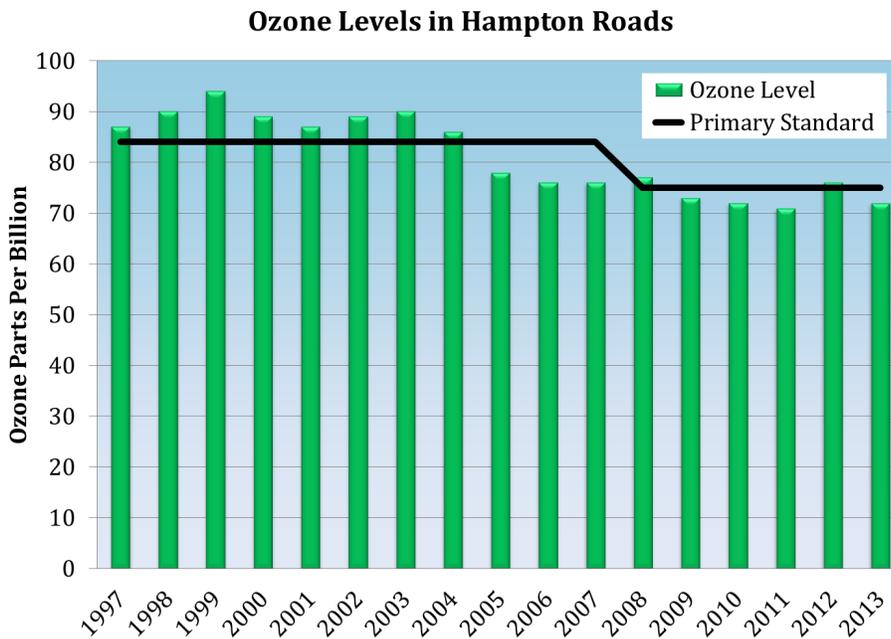
How are we doing?

Hampton Roads is in compliance with all four of the air pollutants that are tracked by the DEQ. The only standard where Hampton Roads has had problems meeting the standard is with ozone, where the summer's weather pattern can significantly impact its formation.



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, HRPDC

Figure 12.8 Ozone Levels in Hampton Roads Compared to the Primary Standard- 3 Year Moving Average



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, HRPDC

Why is it important?

According to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, short-term exposure to ambient ozone can have serious health implications.

How are we doing?

The U.S. increased the air quality standard for ozone, lowering the acceptable level to 75ppb (versus 80ppb); this tighter standard has moved Hampton Roads barely out of compliance in 2008 and again in 2012.