Section XIII

Local Comparisons

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Local Comparisons in Hampton Roads

This section compares the localities of Hampton Roads across a variety of social, economic, and demographic indicators.

Population, population density, and population growth help to determine the character of a locality and shape the challenges that localities will encounter as they engage in planning.

Per capita income, employment, and unemployment provide a basic economic picture to assist in understanding each of the localities. Employment and high per capita income provide resources to a locality, while high levels of unemployment demand a greater level (and different types) of services a locality would otherwise need to provide. The poverty rate indicates the support needs of the local population. The poverty rate and median household income also indicate the financial well-being of residents, as a few high income individuals can skew per capita earnings figures.

Annual retail sales give an excellent indication of the level of economic activity in the region and individual localities.

Assessed value of real estate gives an indication of a locality's housing market, and along with property tax rates, indicate potential revenues for each locality. These indicators, as well as per capita measures of local revenues and total local spending allow us to develop a snapshot of a locality's finances.

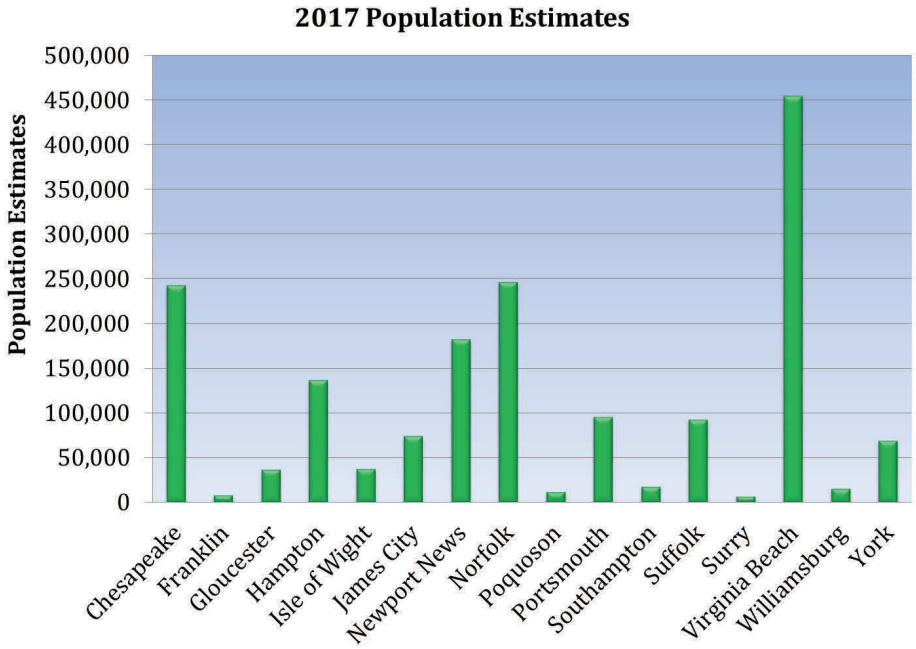
The fiscal stress measure compares a locality's revenue effort to its revenue capacity, and includes relative median income. Cities and counties with fiscal stress above 100 impose a higher burden on their communities than the state average, while those with scores below 100 are imposing a lower burden then the state average.

Lastly, as education remains the area of highest expenditures by localities and the most important role in terms of cultural and economic outcomes, the last graphic compares the on-time graduation rate of each jurisdiction in Hampton Roads.

Figure 13.1 Population Estimates

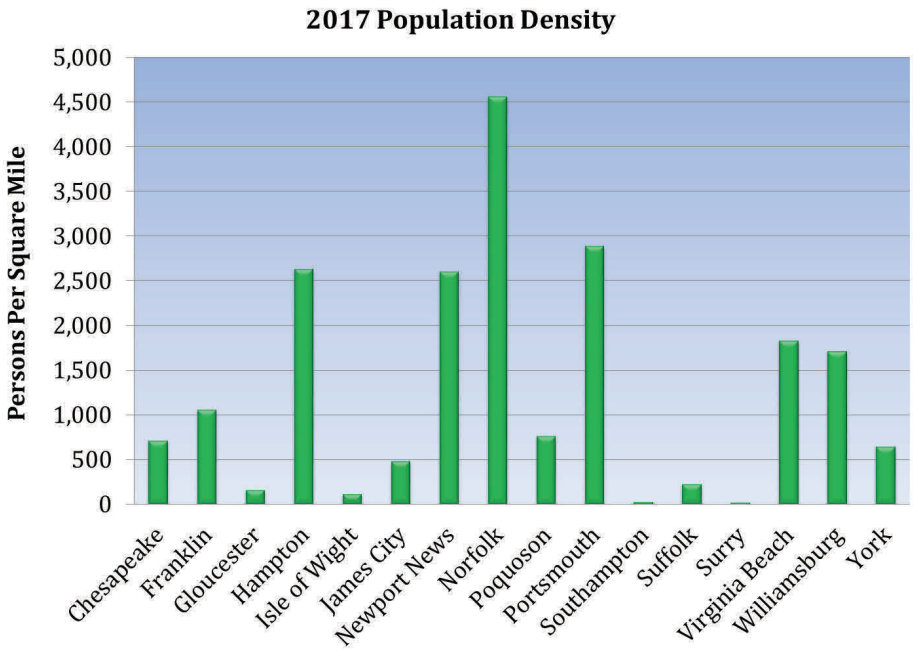
Why is it important?

Higher population allows the cost of government services to be spread across more individuals and can allow for more representation at the General Assembly. High population also demands greater investments.



Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy, HRPDC

Figure 13.2 Population Density Per Square Mile



Why is it important?

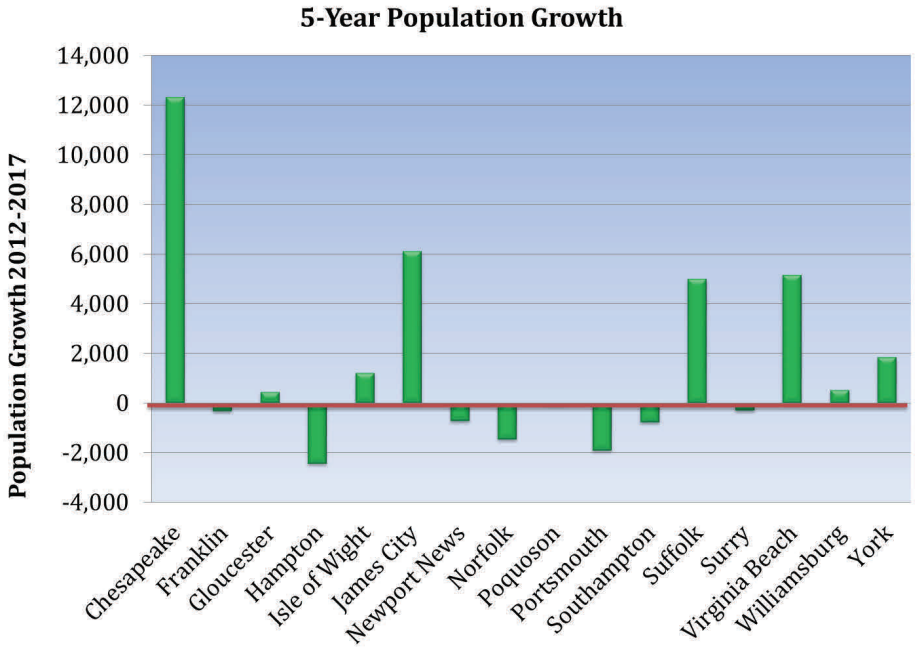
Population density indicates both the room for development within a locality, as well as giving a guide to the type of development that exists currently: urban, suburban, or rural.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy, HRPDC

Figure 13.3 5-Year Net Population Growth

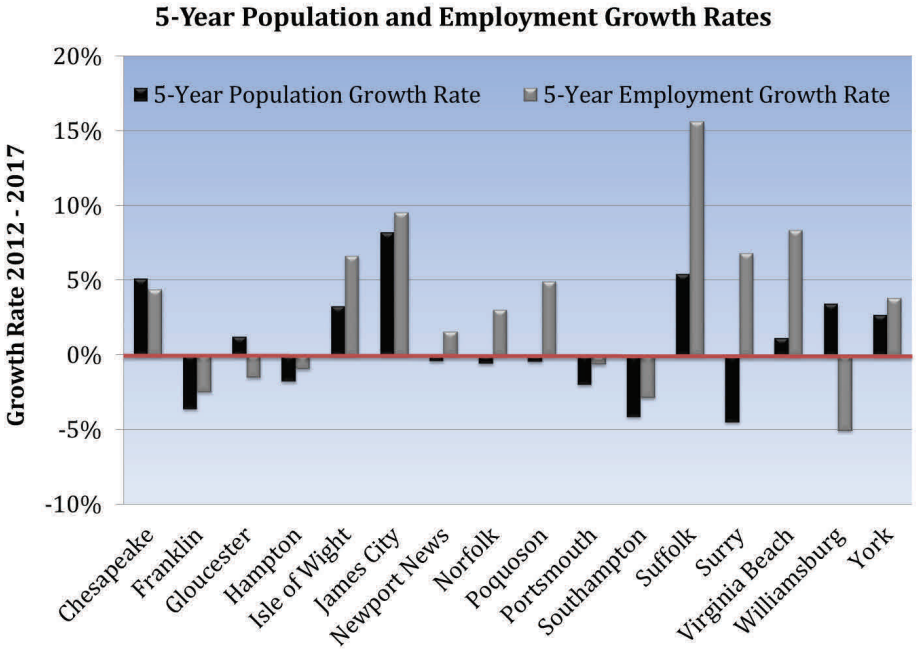
Why is it important?

Raw population growth shows how quickly a locality is growing, which is very important for planning new infrastructure required within the city or county, and the Hampton Roads region overall.



Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy, HRPDC

Figure 13.4 5-year Population and Employment Growth Rate



Why is it important?

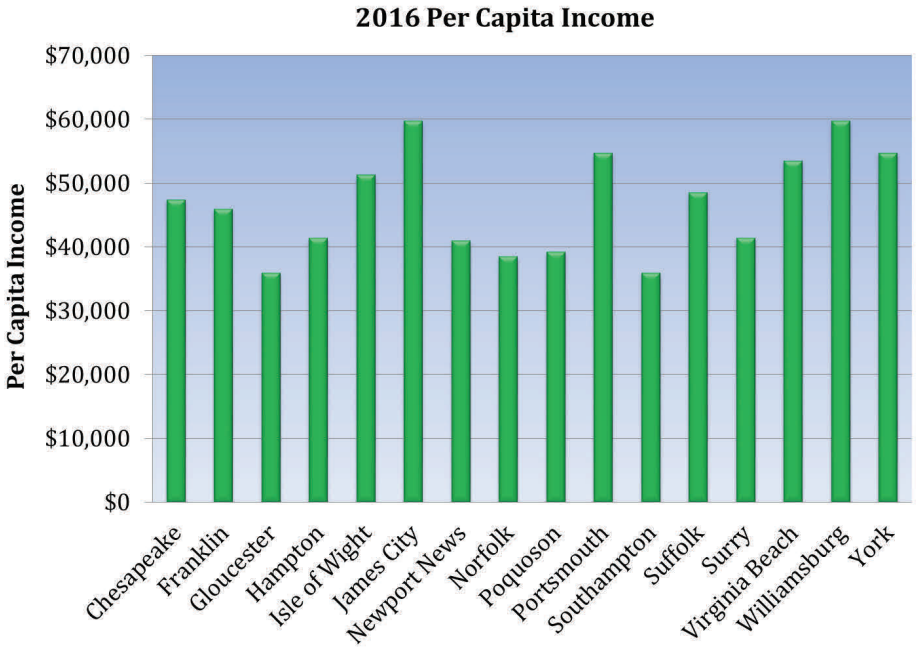
Population growth and employment growth are usually linked within the region and localities. Raw growth is important for calculating immediate infrastructure requirements. Growth rate is important for long-term projections on the changing nature of a locality.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy, Virginia Employment Commission, HRPDC

Figure 13.5 Per Capita Income

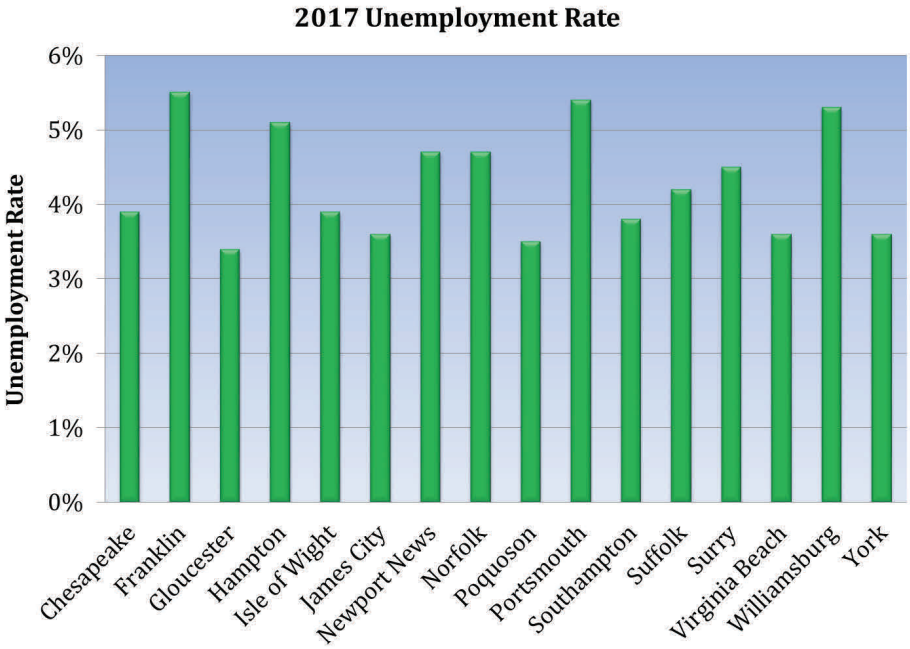
Why is it important?

Per Capita Income is a basic measure of well-being within a locality. As a simple average, a locality could have a higher per capita income while still having a significant number of low-income families.



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Virginia Department of Taxation, HRPDC

Figure 13.6 Unemployment Rate



Why is it important?

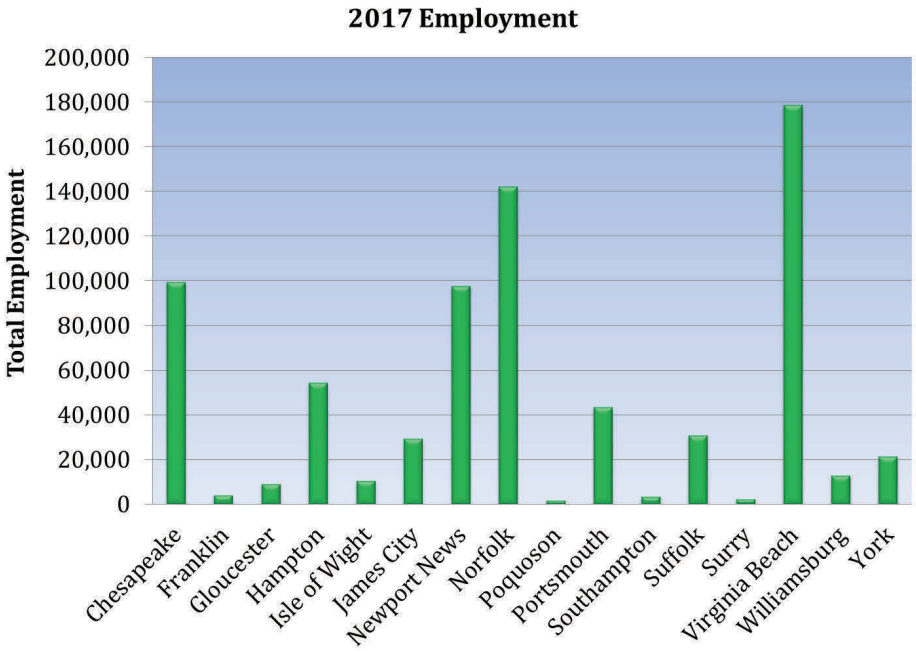
The unemployment rate indicates the number of individuals in a locality who are looking for jobs but unable to find them. This serves as an indicator of the conditions that a local population experiences. Labor market dynamics can vary substantially across jurisdictions and should be considered when making direct comparisons between each individual locality.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, HRPDC

Figure 13.7 Civilian Employment

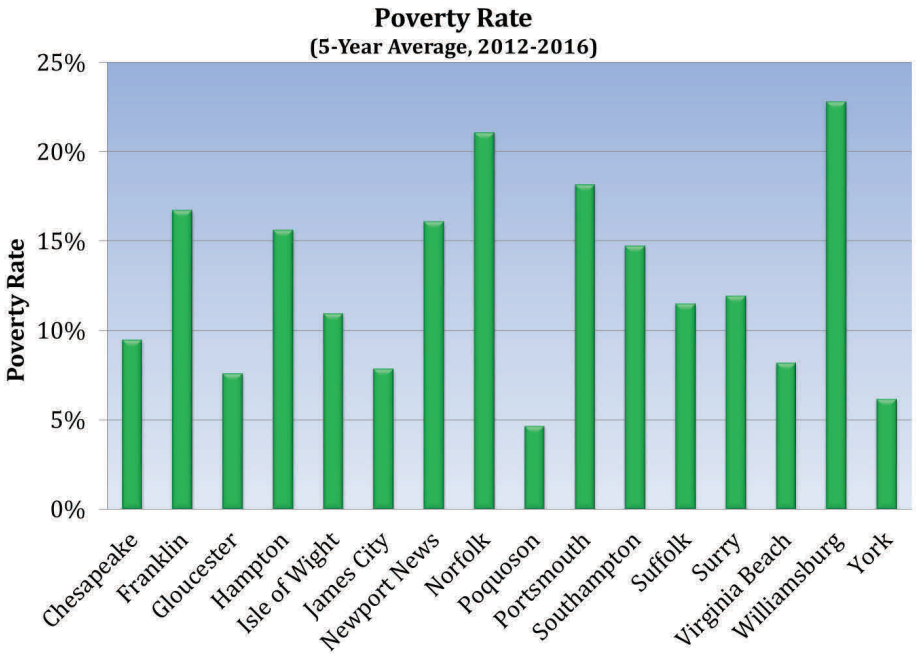
Why is it important?

Employment measures the number of jobs located within a locality, rather than the number of people within the locality who have jobs. This indicator helps to identify the location of job centers.



Source: Virginia Employment Commission, HRPDC

Figure 13.8 Poverty Rate (5-Year Average)



Why is it important?

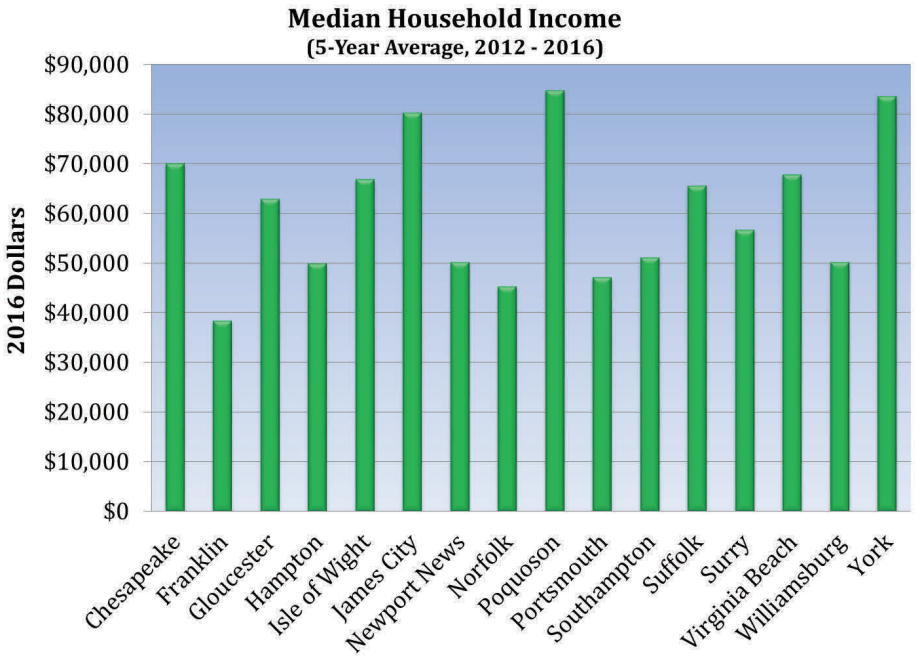
Individuals and families below the poverty line form the most vulnerable part of the region's population, and thus require a high level of support services. A high poverty rate also requires different types of interventions than might be needed in a community with a low poverty rate. In 2013, the poverty line for a family of four was $23,624.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, HRPDC

Figure 13.9 Median Household Income (5-Year Average)

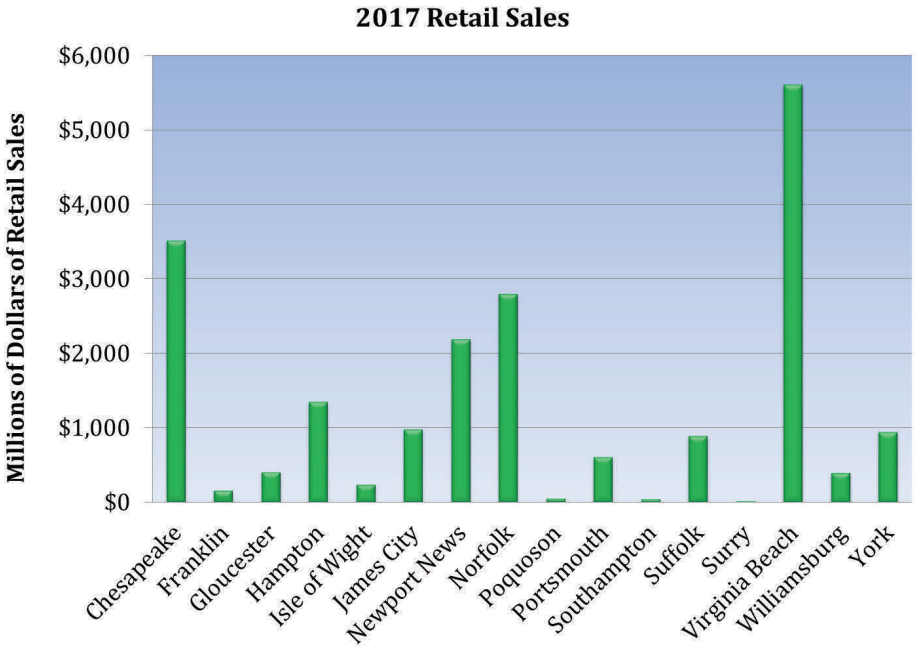
Why is it important?

Median income serves as another measure of the well-being of a community. While per capita incomes will be skewed higher because of high earners, median household income indicates the income level at which half earn more and half earn less.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, HRPDC

Figure 13.10 Annual Retail Sales



Why is it important?

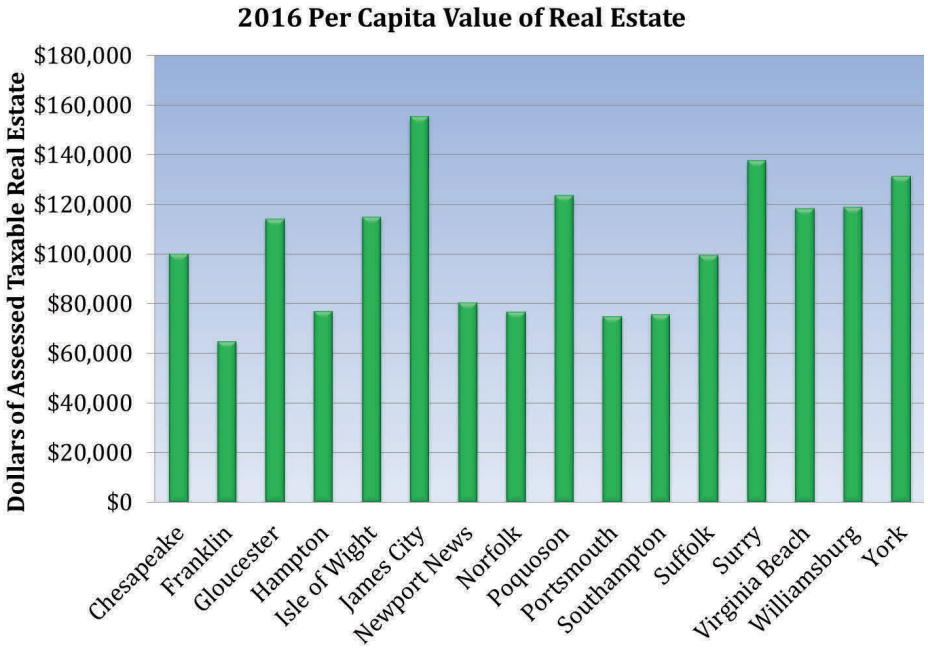
Retail sales indicate the level of economic activity in the region, and include the impacts of not only employment and income, but also residents' confidence about economic opportunities in the future. Retail stores tend to cluster in shopping centers, contributing to the high level of sales in some of the region's localities.

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, HRPDC

Figure 13.11 Per Capita Assessed Fair Market Value of Taxable Real Estate

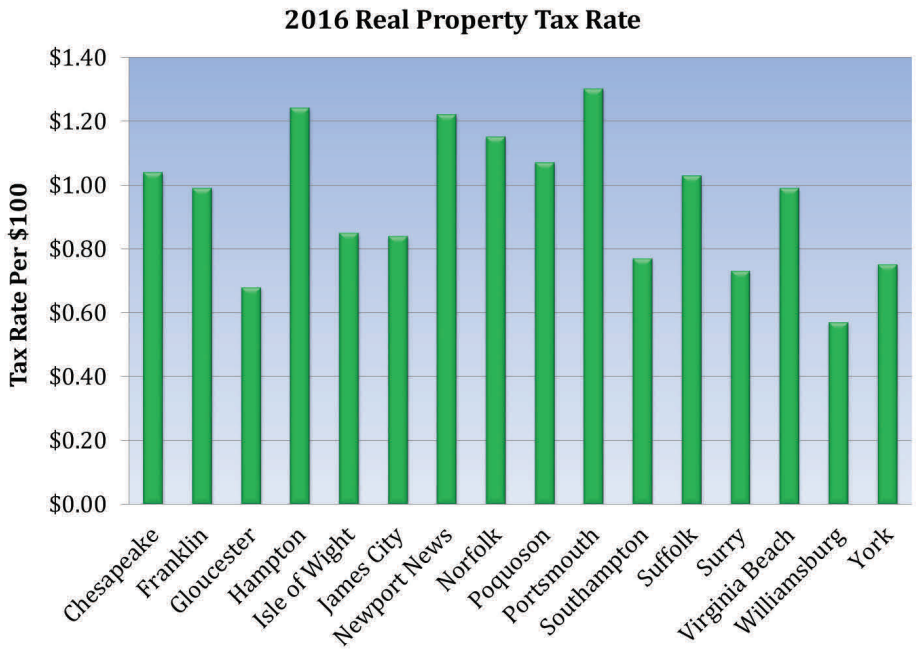
Why is it important?

Taxable real estate includes the fair market value of land and structures within a locality that are not exempt from property taxes. Adjusting this for the population within a locality indicates a combination of the desirability of real estate in that locality, the underlying economic conditions, and the capacity to generate revenue of the locality.



Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, HRPDC

Figure 13.12 Real Property Tax Rate Per $100 of Assessed Value



Why is it important?

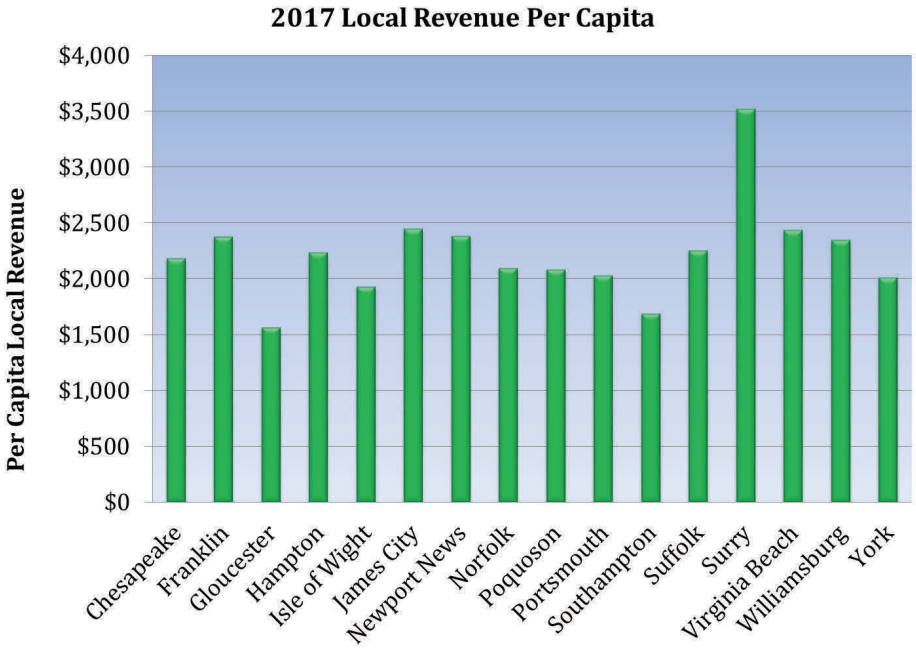
Property owners in Hampton Roads pay a variety of different tax rates depending on the locality in which their property is located. Additionally, a number of localities have special tax districts or additional local levels that pay for a specific service. Generally, the tax rate will be lower in counties than in cities because of the difference in both the level of services offered and the density of infrastructure that requires maintenance.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy, HRPDC

Figure 13.13 Per Capita Local Revenue

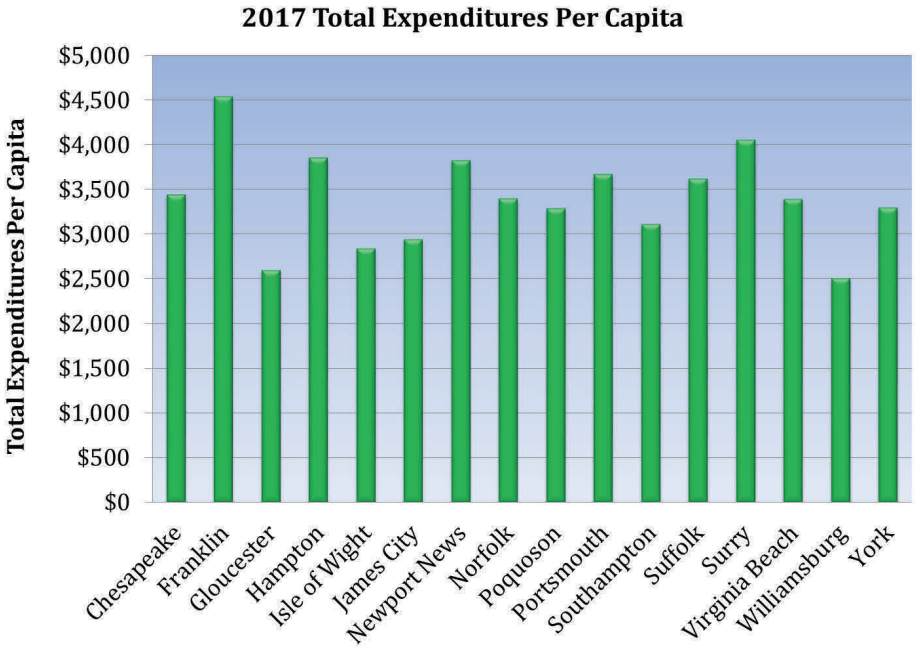
Why is it important?

Local revenues are the direct contributions of regional citizens and businesses to the municipalities. These revenues come from diverse sources including personal property taxes, service fees, retail sales taxes, and public service corporation taxes.



Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, HRPDC

Figure 13.14 Per Capita Total Expenditures by Localities



Why is it important?

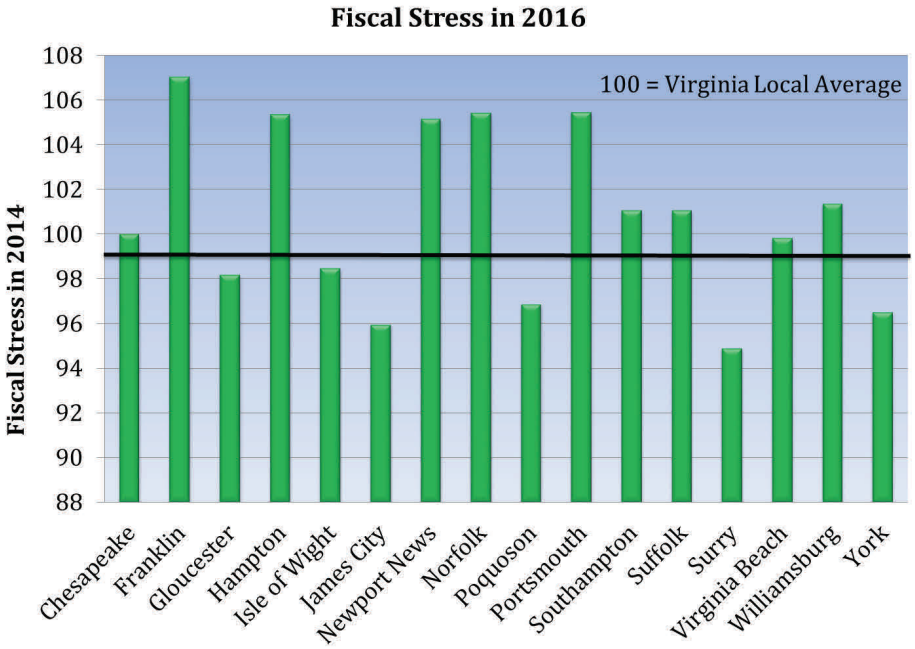
It is important to control expenditures for the size of a locality's population, as more populous cities will spend more because of their population. The funds for these expenditures include transfers from the Commonwealth, direct federal aid, federal pass through funds, and local revenues. Local revenues constitute between 45% (Southampton) and 75% (Surry) of local expenditures.

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, HRPDC

Figure 13.15 Fiscal Stress

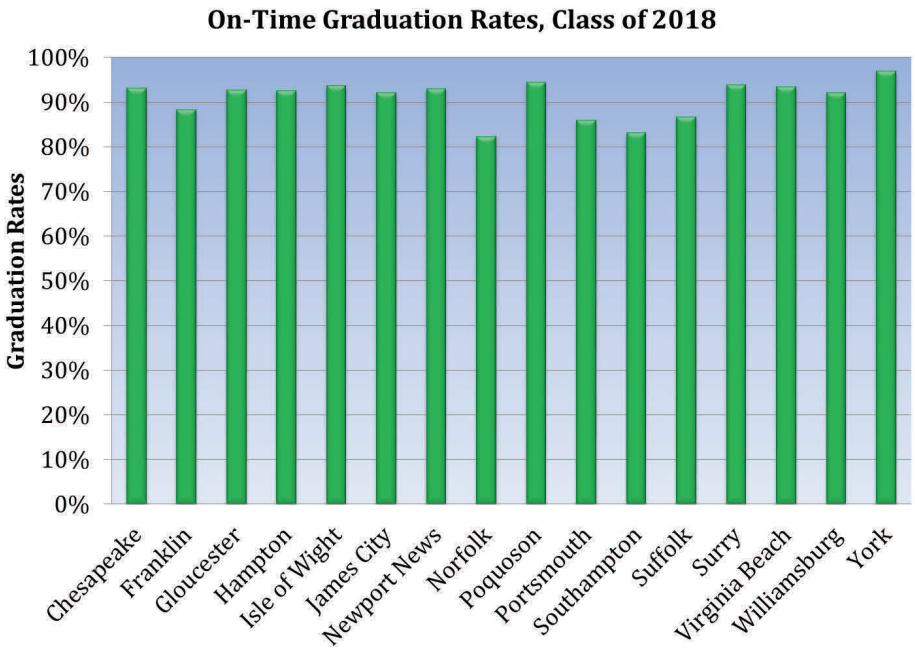
Why is it important?

Fiscal stress indicates the tax burden that a locality has in place, as well as its capacity to raise additional revenue. The average score for Virginia localities is set to 100, and thus localities with scores above that value would be considered burdened. Fiscal stress measures the revenue effort of a locality in relation to its revenue capacity, while also incorporating its median income.



Source: Virginia Commission on Local Government, HRPDC

Figure 13.16 On-Time Graduation Rates



Why is it important?

Education remains the number one priority for most localities, receiving the highest levels of funding, as well as having a significant impact on the quality of life . The on-time graduation rate measures how many freshmen from the region were able to graduate within four years (including other forms of high school equivalency).

Source: Virginia Department of Education, HRPDC