



Foothills Forum Rappahannock County Survey

REPORT OF RESULTS

Prepared by:

Thomas M. Guterbock, Ph.D.
Director

Kathryn F. Wood, Ph.D.
Senior Project Director

Matthew Braswell, M.A.
Graduate Research Assistant

Victoria A. Turner
Research Assistant

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I. Acknowledgements

The Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia would like to thank all those associated with the Foothills Forum--Rappahannock County Survey.

The survey was conceptualized and funded by Foothills Forum, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of Rappahannock County citizens. In working with the Center for Survey Research, Foothills Forum was represented by its chairman, Larry "Bud" Meyer and the hard-working Survey and Research Committee that contributed to project design and questionnaire development. Thanks to the members of the committee: Stephen Brooks, chair; Bette Mahoney, vice chair; Alfred Regnery, Harold Beebout, Matthew Black, Michael Mahoney, and Bud Meyer. These residents put countless hours and effort into creating a survey designed to determine the opinion and concerns of their neighbors. Their commitment to the project, knowledge about surveys, and attention to detail were essential to the success of this project. An early project managed by the Committee was a set of topical focus groups, attended and recorded by volunteers, with the goal of establishing baseline understanding of issues in Rappahannock County.

In addition, thanks goes to Judith DeSarno, Lindsay Sonnett, Rocio Loya, Mary Frances leMat and William M. Dietel at Foothills Forum, for assistance of many kinds.

At the Center for Survey Research, Thomas M. Guterbock, Ph.D., Director, served as principal investigator for this project. He had overall responsibility for all aspects of survey design, production, analysis and reporting. Kathryn F. Wood, Ph.D., acted as project director and was the primary point of contact between CSR and Foothills Forum. In addition, she served as facilitator for the focus group pretest of the questionnaire and managed the report phase of the project. Deborah Rexrode, Ph.D., Senior Project Coordinator at CSR, organized the complex set of mailing tasks required.

Graduate Research Assistant Matthew Braswell, M.A., assisted in questionnaire development, and served as note-taker for Dr. Wood at the focus group. He had primary responsibility for supervising data entry, managed the validation

process, and was responsible for all aspects of data analysis, assisted by Victoria Turner, project assistant. Ms. Turner was also responsible for creating the appendices for the report.

Questionnaire tracking was managed by Ila Crawford, Fiscal Technician and Office Manager at CSR. The data entry team at CSR was managed by Beverly Kerr, lead interviewer at CSR, and Dora Brooks, laboratory supervisors. Supervisor Catherine Payne carried out the validation of data entry.

The success of any survey project ultimately depends on the respondents who bring it to fruition. The Foothills Forum organization and the team at the Center for Survey Research are particularly grateful to the 1358 residents who took the time to complete the survey and add their opinions to the body of knowledge this report represents.

The Center for Survey Research is responsible for any errors or omissions in this report. Questions may be directed to the Center for Survey Research, P.O. Box 400767, Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4767. CSR may also be reached by telephone at 434-243-5222; by electronic mail at surveys@virginia.edu, or via the World Wide Web at: <http://surveys.virginia.edu/>.

II. Introduction and Summary of Methods

In the spring of 2015, the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia entered into an agreement with Foothills Forum, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of citizens in Rappahannock County, Virginia, to design and then conduct a mail-out survey of all households in Rappahannock County, with the goal of determining citizen opinion on issues important to them regarding life in the County.

Foothills Forum was represented by its chairman, Larry “Bud” Meyer, and a survey committee charged with assisting in the development of the questionnaire. At the Center for Survey Research, Kathryn F. Wood, Ph.D., served as project director, with a team including Thomas M. Guterbock, Director of CSR, and Matthew Braswell, senior research analyst.

Summary of Methods

Questionnaire Development

Beginning in January, 2015, the staff at the Center for Survey Research and the survey committee for Foothills Forum discussed the aims of the survey, based on an initial conceptual outline formulated by Foothills Forum. Foothills Forum also conducted a series of focus groups, not designed or assisted by the Center for Survey Research, in order to help them clarify issues to be included in the questionnaire.

A preliminary questionnaire was developed by August, 2015 and was pretested at a focus group in Washington, Virginia, held on September 15, 2015. Foothills Forum was responsible for the recruitment of volunteers for the focus group and for arrangements and set-up of the meeting. The group was facilitated by Kathryn Wood, assisted by Matthew Braswell, who served as recorder. As a result of the focus group, significant modifications were made to the questionnaire. The final questionnaire was approved by the Foothills Forum survey committee on October 9, 2015 and was submitted for review and approval

by the University of Virginia’s Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences. The project, IRB #2015-0397-00 was approved on October 13, 2015.

Sample

CSR obtained a list of all households, including post office boxes, in Rappahannock County from Marketing Systems Group/GENESYS Sampling Systems. A total of 3882 names and addresses were included. Of these, 1126 were post office boxes. Technically, this complete list should not be considered a sample but a list of the entire population of eligible households in Rappahannock County.

Survey launch and production

The project design called for an advance postcard, an initial questionnaire mailing, a thank-you/reminder postcard and a second mailing of the questionnaire. The initial postcard was mailed during the week of October 19, 2015, with the questionnaire following one week later, during the week of October 26. The reminder postcard was mailed on November 5, 2015, and the second questionnaire to non-respondents was mailed on November 23. We announced that formal data collection would close on December 11, but were able to incorporate all questionnaires received by January 8, 2016.

Survey response

Of the 3882, 1117 questionnaires were completed from the first mailing, approximately twenty-nine percent. There were 439 returned because of bad mail addresses, while 13 were deemed ineligible because they were outside the Rappahannock County borders. The second questionnaire mailing yielded an additional 245 completions. After subtracting the bad mail returns, ineligible and redundant addresses from the population, the returned surveys constitute a response rate of 1362/3258 or approximately forty-two percent of the total.

Data entry and analysis

The paper survey responses were entered into an identical Qualtrics instrument for purposes of analysis. Thirteen percent of the questionnaires were selected for validation: supervisors compared

the original questionnaire with the data entered. Any errors found were corrected, however no systematic errors were evident. A preliminary set of frequencies and means on scaled variables was prepared for Foothills Forum in mid-January, 2016.

regarding the survey methodology. Appendix E, bound separately, offers respondents' answers to open-ended questions.

Weighting and margin of error

The data were weighted to ensure accurate representation of the County population. After weighting (and deletion of a few cases with too many missing responses), the final, weighted count of responses used for analysis is 1,346, and the final unweighted count of usable cases is 1,358. A technical description of the weighting scheme will be found in the methods appendix to this report (Appendix D). Weight variables included homeownership, single person households, zip-code, gender, married persons, race (African-American/all other), and respondent age (four categories). The weighted data match US Census Bureau data for Rappahannock County on these characteristics. Taking into account the effect of weighting and the large number of responses relative to the size of the Rappahannock population, the overall margin of error of the survey is ± 3.3 percentage points. (This statistic does not take into account other sources of error, such as non-response or measurement error, that can affect any survey.)

Subgroup Analysis

The responses to the questionnaire were broken out and analyzed by several standard demographic variables. In some cases, answer categories were combined to facilitate comparison. The variables used for break-out comparisons were: Length of time lived in Rappahannock County (Less than 20 years vs. more than 20 years); gender; marital status (including whether cohabiting or not); age; education; income; race; and Hispanic origin.

Report Outline

The main body of this report will present the major overall findings of the survey. A series of appendices will offer additional information. Appendix A provides a copy of the survey questionnaire. Appendix B provides a complete series of response frequencies. Appendix C offers the results of t-tests conducted to determine what differences between subgroups were statistically significant. Appendix D provides details

III. Demographic Summary

The weighted frequencies in Appendix B provide a detailed picture of the demographic characteristics of our respondents. They represented all areas of the County. Ninety percent of respondents were full-time residents of Rappahannock County. Nearly half of them (49%) had lived in the County 20 years or more, while a third had lived in the county between 10 and 20 years, and 18 percent for less than ten years. Eighty-two percent reported owning their own home.

Just slightly less than fifty percent of respondents lived in two-person households.

By gender, our respondents were equally divided between males and females. Two-thirds of were married, and of those who were not married, thirty-nine percent said they were living with a partner. We asked respondents about the year of their birth and then categorized the answers for purposes of analysis. About seventeen percent were in the youngest category: 18-34 years of age. More than a third, thirty-four percent, reported that they were between 35 and 54 years of age, while twenty-two percent were between 55 and 64 years old. Twenty-seven percent of our respondents were 65 years old or older.

Our respondents were highly educated, with seventy-three percent having at least some college, including twenty-eight percent of the total who had earned an advanced degree (master's degree or doctoral degree),

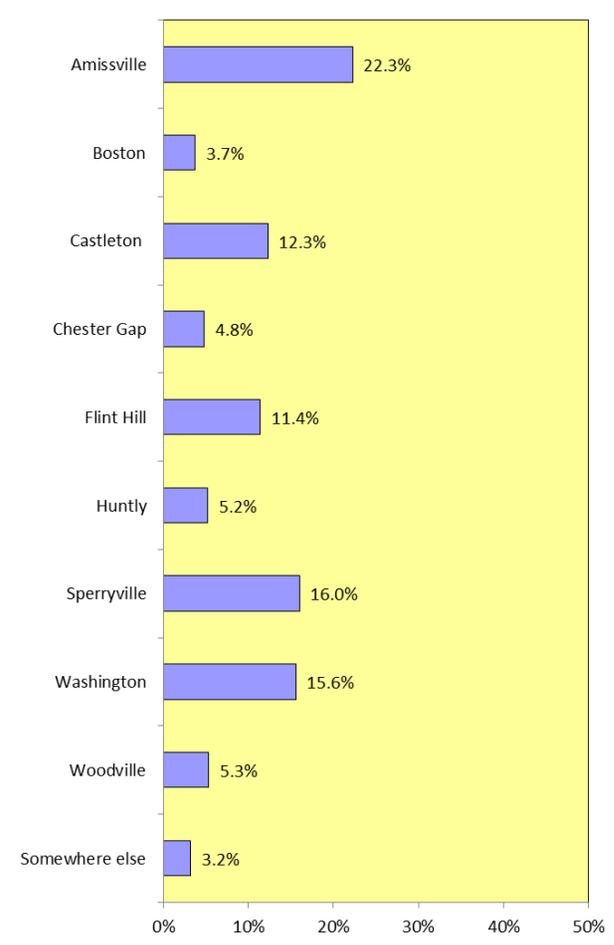
Asked about income, eighteen percent of respondents preferred not to answer. Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported incomes of less than \$50,000; a quarter had incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and thirty percent reported incomes higher than that.

By race, the respondents were eighty-nine percent Caucasian, and six percent African-American. The remaining five percent consisted of other races or preferred not to identify their race. Three percent said they were Hispanic.

IV. Results

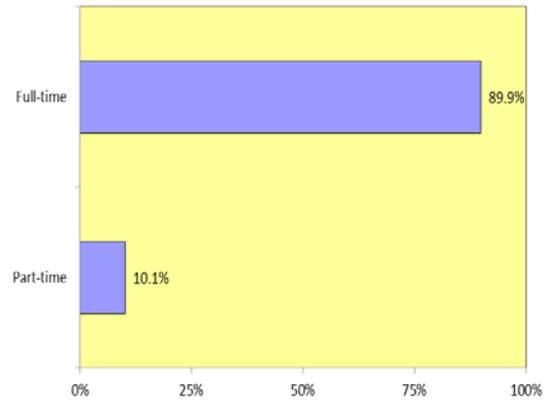
Your Life in Rappahannock County

Figure IV-1: In which part of the County do you live?



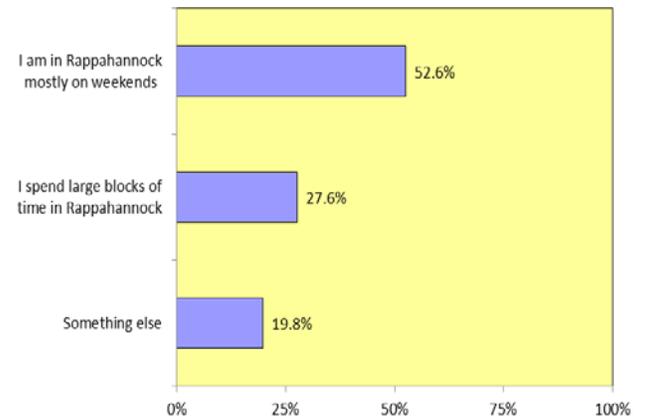
Residents of Amissville make up a plurality of the respondents. Sperryville and Washington rank second and third respectively.

Figure IV-2: Are you a full-time or part-time resident of Rappahannock County?



Nine out of ten respondents are full-time residents of Rappahannock County.

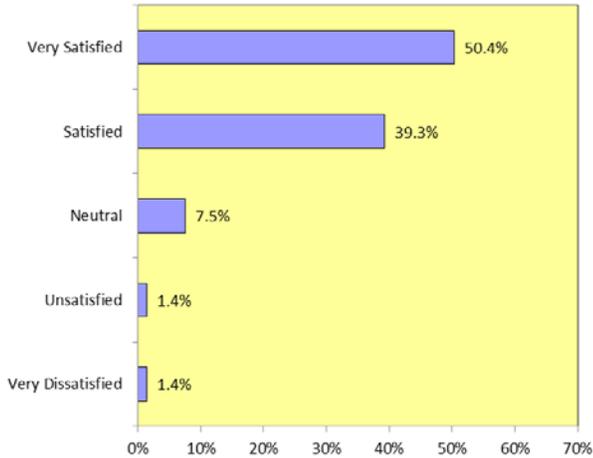
Figure IV-3: Part-time residents: Are you a weekender, or someone who otherwise spends considerable time in the County?



Slightly over half of all respondents reporting part-time residency are in Rappahannock mostly on weekends.

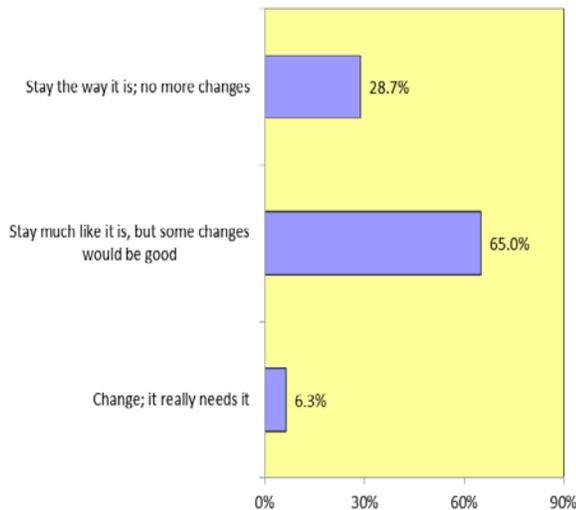
Satisfaction with Rappahannock Life

Figure IV-4: How satisfied are you with living in Rappahannock County?



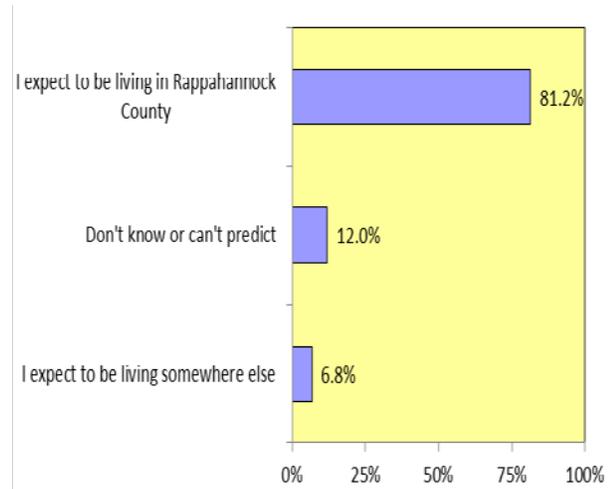
Over half of all respondents are very satisfied with living in Rappahannock County, and only 2.8 percent are either unsatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Figure IV-5: Thinking about overall life in Rappahannock County, would you like to see the County change or stay the same?



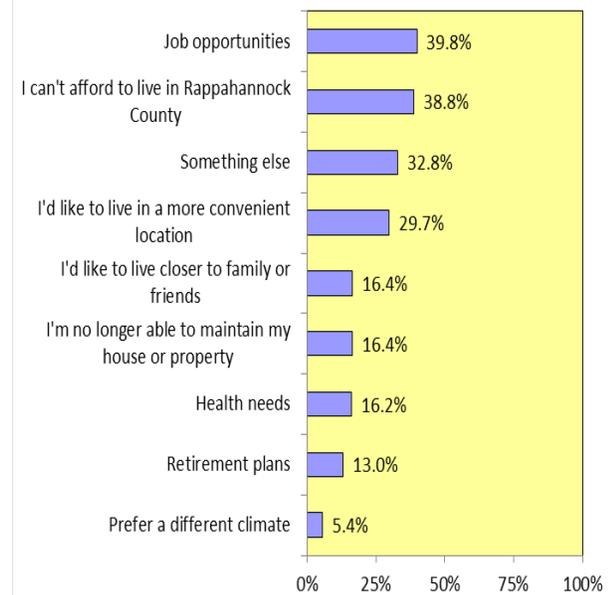
Almost two thirds of all respondents would like for the County to stay much like it is, but believe that some changes would be good. Only 6.3 percent indicate that more drastic changes are needed.

Figure IV-6: Do you expect to be living in Rappahannock County in the next few years?



A large majority (over four fifths) of respondents expect to continue living in Rappahannock County over the next few years.

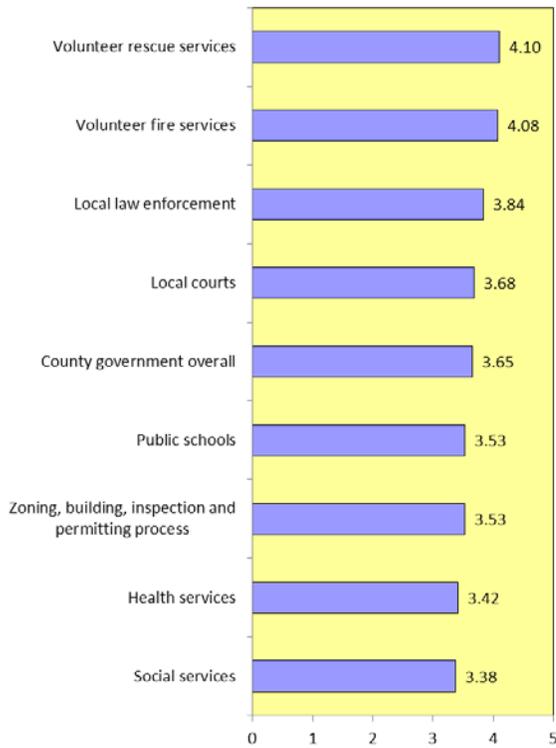
Figure IV-7: If you expect to be living somewhere else in the next few years, why?



Respondents who expect to be living somewhere else in the next few years were asked why that was the case. Job opportunities and the cost of living in

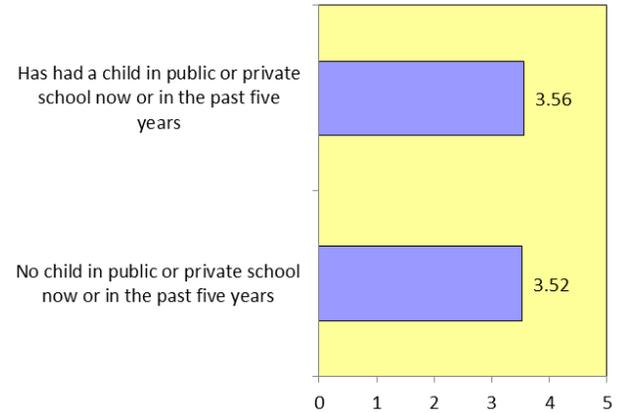
Rappahannock County were most frequently mentioned.

Figure IV-8: Satisfaction with County services



Satisfaction with County government services was rated on a scale of “Very unsatisfied” (1) to “Very satisfied” (5). The average or mean rating for each service is shown in the bar chart. Volunteer rescue services and volunteer fire services receive the highest ratings.

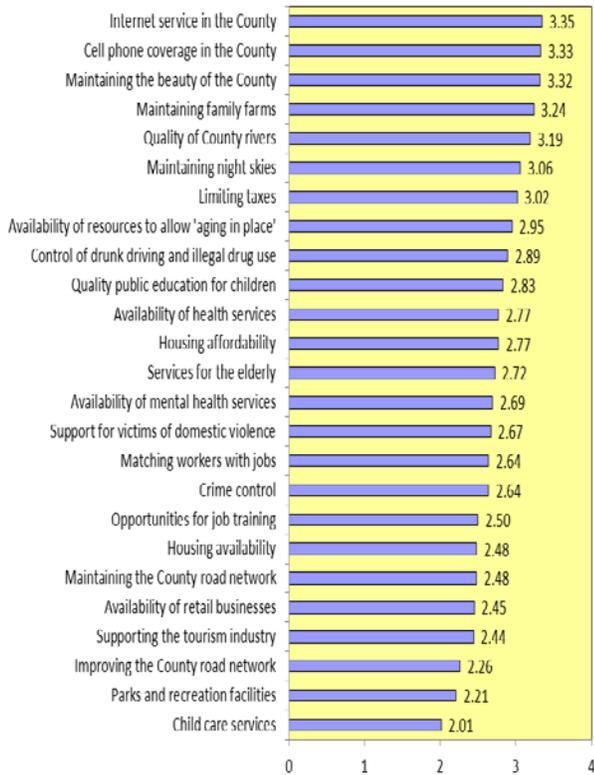
Figure IV-9: Satisfaction with County public schools – Parental status comparison



Respondents with a child who attends public or private school or has done so in the past five years were compared to other respondents with regards to satisfaction with the County public schools. Satisfaction was measured on a five-point scale and the chart displays the mean satisfaction rating given by each group. No significant difference was detected between these two groups.

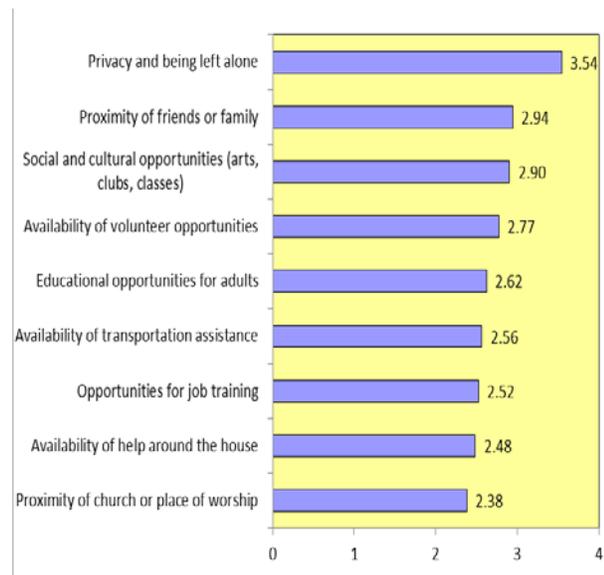
Living in Rappahannock County

Figure IV-10: Thinking about the future of Rappahannock County, how concerned are you about the following issues?



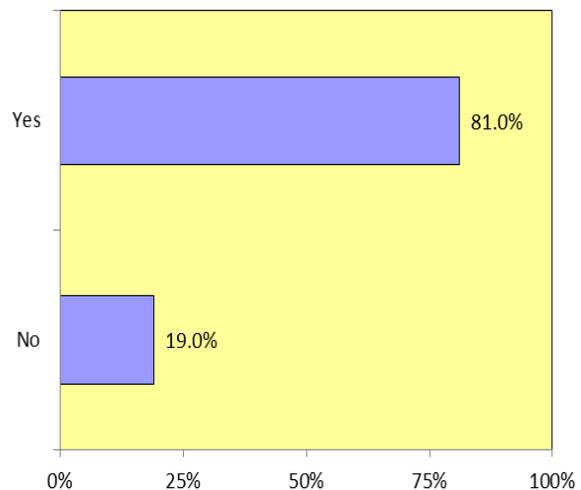
Respondents who asked to rate the extent to which they viewed a series of issues as pressing concerns for the future of the County. Items were rated on a scale of “Not at all concerned” (1) to “Very concerned” (4). The chart displays the average rating given to each concern on this four-point scale. The most important concerns cited were Internet service, cell phone coverage, and maintaining the beauty of the County.

Figure IV-11: How important are these contributions to your quality of life?



Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which a series of factors impacted their quality of life on a scale of “Not important at all” (1) to “Very important” (4). The chart shows the mean rating for each factor. Privacy and being left alone far outpaced all other factors in terms of importance.

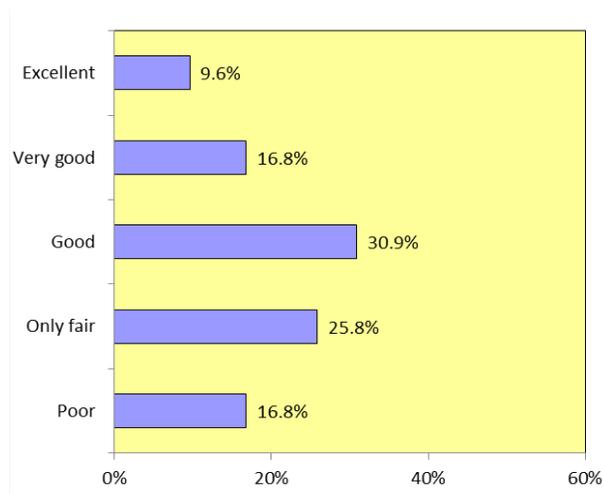
Figure IV-12: Do you have access to the internet at home?



Over four fifths of respondents have access to the internet at their homes. Among those who do not have access, 35.1 percent report that it is not available to them, 39.7 percent say that

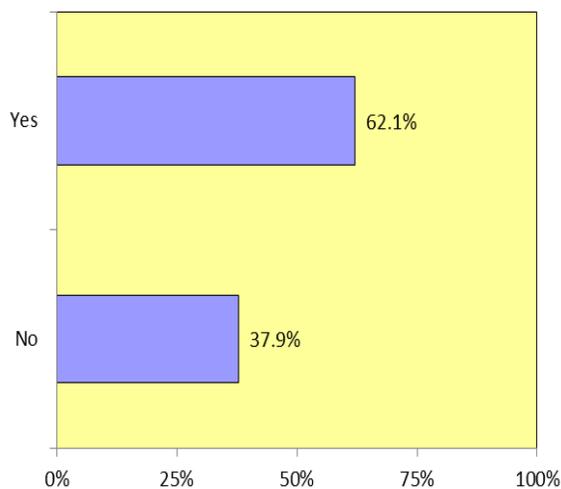
it is too expensive, and 25.2 percent do not need or want it (no bar chart shown; see frequencies in Appendix B).

Figure IV-13: If you do have access to the internet, how would you rate its overall quality?



Among respondents who do have access to the internet, a plurality 30.9 percent rates the quality of their service as “Good,” although a quarter of respondents call it “Only fair” and 16.8 percent call it “Poor.”

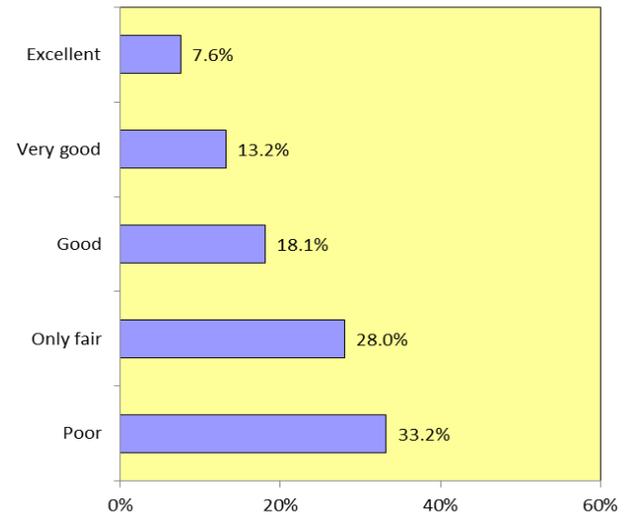
Figure IV-14: Do you have access to cell phone coverage at home?



Slightly more than three fifths of all respondents have access to cell phone coverage at their homes. Among those who

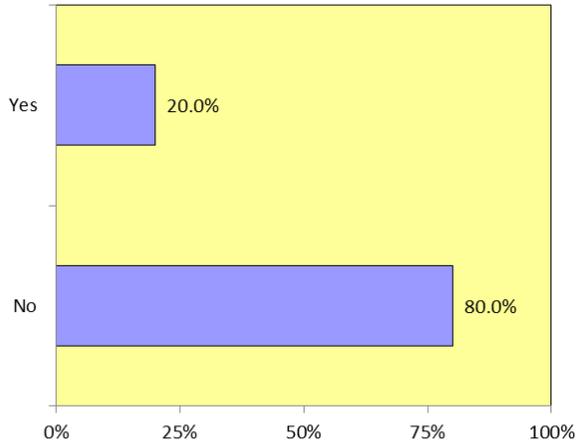
do not have coverage, an overwhelming majority (89.8%) indicate that coverage is not available to them (no bar chart shown; see frequencies in Appendix B).

Figure IV-15: If you do have access to cell phone coverage, how would you rate its overall quality?



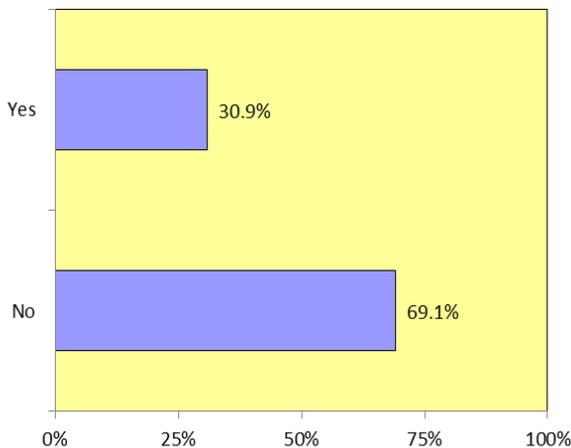
Among respondents who do have cell phone coverage at home, a plurality 33.2 percent rates the quality of the coverage as “Poor.” Only 38.8 percent of respondents rate the quality of their coverage as either “Excellent,” “Very good,” or “Good.”

Figure IV-16: Are you and/or members of your family owners of a farm/agricultural business in Rappahannock County?



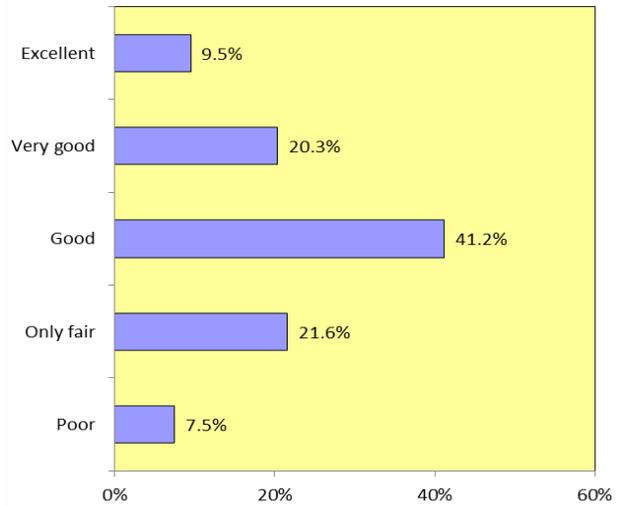
One fifth of respondents indicate that they and/or members of their family are owners of a farm or agricultural business in Rappahannock County.

Figure IV-17: Are you and/or members of your family involved in other kinds of business in Rappahannock County?



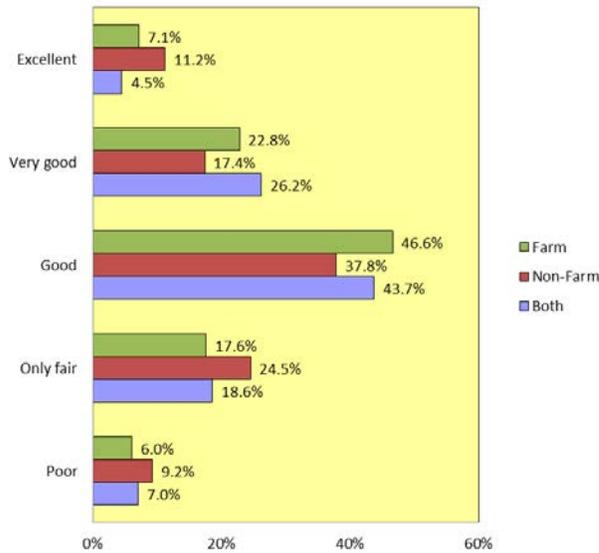
Nearly seven out of ten respondents indicate that they or members of their family are not involved in other kinds of business in Rappahannock County.

Figure IV-18: How good a place do you think Rappahannock County is to do business?



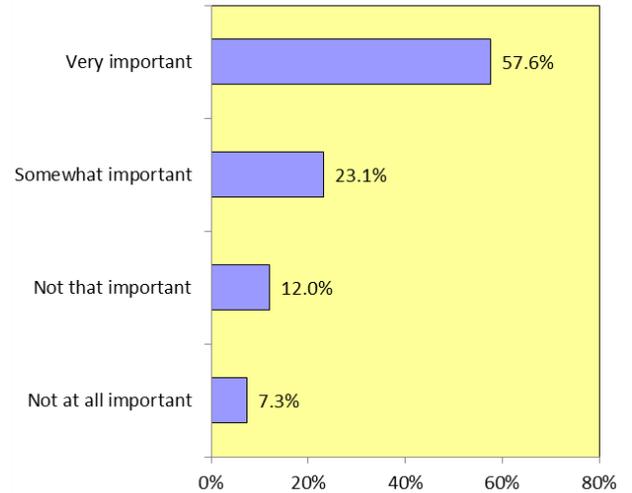
Respondents whose families own a business of some kind were asked to rate Rappahannock County as a place to do business. Ratings followed a bell curve, with a plurality rating the business climate as “Good.”

Figure IV-19: Assessment of business environment – Type of business comparison



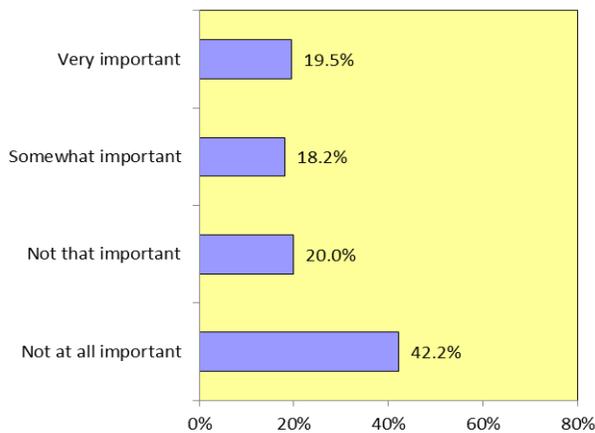
Respondents involved in non-agricultural businesses give the business environment higher ratings than do others.

Figure IV-21: How important is the internet to your business?



A majority of business owners see the internet as “Very important.”

Figure IV-20: How important is tourism to your business?



The relevance of tourism to respondents’ businesses is limited, with a plurality calling it “Not at all important.” But tourism is “very important” to about one business in five.