



# THE METRO POLL

A Poll Conducted for the Virginia Center for Urban Development  
 By the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory  
 Center for Public Policy  
 Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, Virginia 23284-3061

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## RICHMOND AREA RESIDENTS BELIEVE DOWNTOWN RICHMOND IS SAFER

**Richmond, VA** – The City of Richmond has intensified its efforts to draw people to Downtown Richmond with new programs such as Richmond Renaissance’s “Clean and Safe” and new attractions such as the Canal Walk which opened in June. A new Virginia Commonwealth University poll shows that, in general, area residents’ perceptions of downtown crime have improved dramatically over the past year. The Metro Poll, conducted by VCU’s Center for Urban Development, reported that roughly one-third (34 percent) of respondents this year considered crime in Downtown Richmond to be very serious, compared to 57 percent one year ago.

In all jurisdictions, the proportion of respondents indicating that crime in Downtown Richmond is very serious has decreased since last May’s Metro Poll. Corresponding to these positive views on the seriousness of crime in Downtown Richmond, 23 percent of the respondents believe that crime in Downtown has decreased over the past year.

### Rating of Crime Problem in Downtown (May 1998 and May 1999 Metro Polls)

	Very Serious		Somewhat Serious		Not Very Serious		Not at all Serious	
	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
<b>Richmond Area</b>	57%	34%	28%	38%	5%	11%	1%	2%
<b>Chesterfield</b>	62%	37%	29%	41%	3%	7%	0%	1%
<b>Hanover</b>	59%	46%	26%	34%	2%	2%	0%	0%
<b>Henrico</b>	62%	41%	25%	36%	4%	7%	0%	1%
<b>Richmond City</b>	43%	16%	31%	37%	10%	26%	3%	4%

“This is an extremely positive result for the City,” said Dr. Michael D. Pratt, Professor of Economics and Director of the Virginia Center for Urban Development in VCU’s Center for Public Policy. “The perception and reality of serious crime is a barrier that holds people back from visiting many urban areas,” he said. “The economic success of the Canal Walk is inextricably tied to people coming to Downtown Richmond and this is one barrier that is being lifted.”

The Metro Poll was first conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University’s Virginia Center for Urban Development in May 1997. The question concerning crime in Downtown

Richmond was first asked in May 1998. The Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory conducts the Metro Poll for the Center. Interviewing for the poll was conducted by telephone from May 20 – June 23 with 1,131 randomly-selected adult residents of Metropolitan Richmond (the City of Richmond and the Counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico). The poll has a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 3 percent. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher.

### Residents' Opinions on Crime in Their Communities

In the surrounding counties, opinions of residents concerning crime in their jurisdictions have stayed relatively constant since last year's Metro Poll. For the third consecutive year, the proportion of City of Richmond respondents rating crime in the City as very serious has decreased by a statistically significant amount. Just two years ago, 79 percent of respondents said that crime was a very serious problem in the City; today, only about one-half (51 percent) said that crime was at that level.

#### Rating of Crime Problem in Own Jurisdiction (May '97, May '98 and May '99 Metro Polls)

	Very Serious			Somewhat Serious			Not Very Serious			Not at all Serious		
	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>
<b>Richmond Area</b>	34%	23%	22%	39%	48%	46%	19%	21%	22%	4%	4%	5%
<b>Chesterfield</b>	16%	9%	7%	50%	57%	52%	27%	26%	31%	4%	4%	5%
<b>Hanover</b>	6%	1%	9%	44%	35%	33%	36%	47%	31%	8%	11%	14%
<b>Henrico</b>	26%	14%	17%	45%	55%	50%	19%	23%	22%	4%	3%	5%
<b>Richmond City</b>	79%	60%	51%	17%	34%	38%	1%	2%	7%	2%	0%	1%

Residents continue to view their neighborhoods as safer than their jurisdiction as a whole. While 68 percent of respondents rate crime in their *jurisdiction* as at least somewhat serious, only about one-quarter (24 percent) feel that crime in their *neighborhood* is at least somewhat serious. One positive trend that continues this year is the growth in the proportion of respondents who believe that crime in their neighborhood is not at all serious. The percent of respondents rating crime as not at all serious increased again this year to 39 percent, up from 29 percent in 1997 and 34 percent in 1998. In the City of Richmond, the proportion of respondents indicating that crime in their neighborhoods is very serious increased to 15 percent from a May 1998 low of 10 percent. However, the proportion of respondents indicating that crime is a very serious problem is still 10 percentage points below the May 1997 figure.

#### Rating of Crime Problem in Neighborhoods (May '97, May '98 and May '99 Metro Polls)

	Very Serious			Somewhat Serious			Not Very Serious			Not at all Serious		
	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'97</u>	<u>'98</u>	<u>'99</u>
<b>Richmond Area</b>	10%	4%	6%	20%	21%	18%	40%	40%	36%	29%	34%	39%
<b>Chesterfield</b>	4%	2%	2%	18%	15%	13%	46%	42%	37%	31%	41%	45%
<b>Hanover</b>	3%	0%	0%	9%	7%	4%	45%	41%	31%	42%	51%	65%
<b>Henrico</b>	6%	3%	3%	14%	19%	17%	43%	44%	38%	35%	33%	40%
<b>Richmond City</b>	25%	10%	15%	33%	37%	30%	27%	33%	32%	14%	19%	20%

## METHODOLOGY OF THE METRO POLL

Interviewing for the Metro Poll was conducted from the facilities of the Survey Evaluation and Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond from May 20 – June 23, 1999 with a randomly-selected sample of 1,131 Richmond area residents age 18 and older. The sample of telephone numbers was designed so that all residential telephones, including new and unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion. Interviews were obtained with respondents in 41.5 percent of the known or assumed residential households in the sample. The data were weighted on sex, race, and education. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents. Questions answered by the sample of 1,131 respondents are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 3 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 3 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all adult residents with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. At the 95 percent level of confidence, results based on the sample from the City of Richmond (515) are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. Chesterfield County (251), and Henrico County (290) results are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 6 percentage points and results based upon the Hanover County sample (75) are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 12 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Because of nonresponse (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research. Questions reported in this release were worded as follows: In general, would you say that the crime problem in your neighborhood is very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious? In general, would you say that the crime problem in [RESPONDENT'S LOCALITY] as a whole is very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious? And how about crime in Downtown Richmond – the business and entertainment district - such as Shockoe Bottom and the area around the Capitol ... is the crime problem very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?

*Rating of Crime Problem in Downtown Richmond*

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not very serious	Not at all serious	Don't know	No answer	Number of cases
Total.....	34%	38%	11%	2%	14%	1%	1131
Sex of respondent							
Male.....	33%	42%	12%	2%	10%	1%	479
Female.....	34%	34%	11%	1%	19%	1%	652
Education							
No high school diploma.....	36%	29%	14%	2%	19%	1%	111
High school diploma.....	36%	32%	8%	4%	19%	1%	249
Some college.....	34%	39%	12%	2%	12%	1%	331
College graduate.....	30%	48%	11%	1%	10%	0%	421
Race							
White, other.....	39%	39%	7%	1%	14%	1%	719
Black.....	19%	35%	24%	5%	16%	2%	380
City or County							
Richmond City.....	16%	37%	26%	4%	17%	1%	515
Chesterfield County.....	37%	41%	7%	1%	13%	1%	251
Hanover County.....	46%	34%	2%	0%	16%	2%	75
Henrico County.....	41%	36%	7%	1%	14%	1%	290
Age							
18-29.....	23%	41%	17%	3%	14%	2%	255
30-44.....	33%	41%	10%	2%	14%	0%	400
45-64.....	39%	38%	11%	1%	11%	1%	320
65 and older.....	40%	24%	6%	1%	28%	1%	104
Family Income							
Under \$20,000.....	27%	32%	21%	2%	17%	0%	129
\$20,000-\$34,999.....	32%	37%	12%	4%	15%	0%	200
\$35,000-\$49,999.....	33%	40%	14%	3%	10%	1%	199
\$50,000 and above.....	35%	42%	8%	1%	12%	1%	396

*Rating Crime Problem in Own Jurisdiction*

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not very serious	Not at all serious	Don't know	No answer	Number of cases
Total.....	22%	46%	22%	5%	5%	1%	1131
Sex of respondent							
Male.....	18%	48%	24%	7%	3%	0%	479
Female.....	25%	45%	20%	3%	6%	1%	652
Education							
No high school diploma.....	33%	29%	18%	11%	8%	0%	111
High school diploma.....	20%	49%	21%	5%	4%	1%	249
Some college.....	21%	51%	22%	2%	4%	0%	331
College graduate.....	16%	50%	26%	4%	3%	1%	421
Race							
White, other.....	16%	51%	22%	6%	5%	1%	719
Black.....	39%	34%	21%	3%	3%	1%	380
City or County							
Richmond City.....	51%	38%	7%	1%	3%	1%	515
Chesterfield County.....	7%	52%	31%	5%	4%	1%	251
Hanover County.....	9%	33%	31%	14%	8%	4%	75
Henrico County.....	17%	50%	22%	5%	6%	0%	290
Age							
18-29.....	16%	45%	23%	10%	6%	0%	255
30-44.....	22%	48%	23%	3%	3%	1%	400
45-64.....	22%	50%	23%	2%	3%	1%	320
65 and older.....	30%	38%	12%	9%	11%	2%	104
Family Income							
Under \$20,000.....	42%	32%	17%	1%	8%	0%	129
\$20,000-\$34,999.....	23%	48%	22%	4%	2%	1%	200
\$35,000-\$49,999.....	19%	54%	17%	9%	2%	0%	199
\$50,000 and above.....	15%	48%	27%	5%	4%	1%	396

*Rating of Crime Problem in Neighborhoods*

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not very serious	Not at all serious	Don't know	No answer	Number of Cases
Total.....	6%	18%	36%	39%	2%	0%	1131
Sex of respondent							
Male.....	5%	17%	38%	39%	1%	0%	479
Female.....	6%	18%	34%	39%	3%	0%	652
Education							
No high school diploma.....	14%	19%	35%	28%	5%	0%	111
High school diploma.....	4%	17%	36%	41%	2%	0%	249
Some college.....	4%	19%	31%	44%	1%	0%	331
College graduate.....	3%	17%	40%	41%	0%	0%	421
Race							
White, other.....	3%	17%	36%	42%	2%	0%	719
Black.....	12%	21%	34%	31%	2%	0%	380
City or County							
Richmond City.....	15%	30%	32%	20%	2%	0%	515
Chesterfield County.....	2%	13%	37%	45%	2%	0%	251
Hanover County.....	0%	4%	31%	65%	0%	0%	75
Henrico County.....	3%	17%	38%	40%	2%	0%	290
Age							
18-29.....	5%	23%	35%	37%	0%	0%	255
30-44.....	6%	17%	36%	41%	1%	0%	400
45-64.....	6%	16%	37%	39%	3%	0%	320
65 and older.....	6%	15%	35%	40%	5%	0%	104
Family Income							
Under \$20,000.....	18%	26%	31%	23%	2%	0%	129
\$20,000-\$34,999.....	6%	25%	41%	26%	1%	0%	200
\$35,000-\$49,999.....	5%	15%	38%	41%	1%	0%	199
\$50,000 and above.....	3%	15%	32%	48%	2%	0%	396