

**POLICY CONFLICTS AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS: HOW DOES
OFFICIALS' ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL GOVERNANCE RELATE TO
THEIR POSITION DIVERGENCE ON SUSTAINABILITY POLICY?**

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Policy conflicts among local government officials: How does officials' engagement with regional governance relate to their position divergence on sustainability policy?

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ABSTRACT

Policy conflict plays an important role in shaping public policy—both as a process and as a product. The policy conflict framework—a theoretical framework, developed by Christopher Weible and Tanya Heikkila in 2017—considers position divergence among policymakers a key characteristic of policy conflict, which can be affected several factors including organizational and network affiliation of policymakers. This dissertation analyzes position divergence among local and regional officials over community sustainability policy, with a focus on affordable housing, which is a major concern of community sustainability. This research examines if, and how, local government officials' engagement with regional governance can play a role in shaping their policy positions. Understanding what influences officials' policy positions is essential in managing conflicts that arise in the making of sustainability policies in general and affordable housing policies, in particular.

This study argues that local government officials' engagement with regional governance can lower policy position divergence among them by influencing their policy core beliefs and policy relevant knowledge. This analysis includes testing several hypotheses using data from a state-wide survey of local and regional policymakers. Employing cross-tabulation, multivariate regression, and ordered logit analysis, this study finds that (a) policymakers share a wide range of policy positions on community sustainability policies and (b) for local government officials engaged with regional governance, position divergence on community sustainability is lower than that among those who are not engaged with regional governance. Although position divergence on affordable housing among those engaged with regional governance is generally lower than those who are not engaged with regional governance, this finding is not robust. In some regions and localities, the relationship between position divergence and engagement with regional governance does not hold.

Furthermore, this study finds that local government officials' engagement with regional governance is associated with higher levels of policy relevant knowledge, which can influence the policymakers' policy positions. The relationship, if any, between policymakers' core beliefs and their engagement with regional governance is weak and statistically insignificant. This cross-sectional analysis based on limited data suggests that local government officials' policy core beliefs are not related to their engagement with regional governance. However, future studies with better data may yield different results.

Policy conflicts among local government officials: How does officials' engagement with regional governance relate to their position divergence on sustainability policy?

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Policy conflicts can impede the policymaking process; they usually influence and shape policy goals. Metropolitan governance is rife with policy conflicts. Especially in substantive policy areas such as community sustainability and affordable housing, policy conflicts are quite common. Policy conflicts emerge because of policy actors' divergent views, beliefs, priorities, preferences, and aspirations. To ensure a smoother policymaking process, mechanisms to handle conflicts are imperative. Regional governance can offer one such mechanism to handle policy conflicts that arise due to divergent policy positions of local government officials. This dissertation examines policy conflicts focusing on community sustainability policies. Analyzing survey data from Maryland, this study finds that (a) local government officials share a wide range of policy positions on community sustainability policies, (b) local government officials engaged with regional governance take policy positions that are more homogeneous compared to those who are not engaged with regional governance, and (c) officials engaged regional governance tend to have better policy relevant knowledge than others.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father

Maulavi Abdul Mannan Talukdar.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Conflicts can be constructive as well as destructive. While constructive conflicts can have positive consequences, destructive conflicts can destroy human dignity, degrade productive capacity of an ecosystem, or foreclose options for current and future generations (Maser & Pollio, 1995: xix). When conflicts arise in the process of public policymaking, they often influence and shape policy goals and can impede the policymaking process. Policy conflict refers to mutually inconsistent rules, clash of interests, or divergence of policy positions, in which the policy actors are unwilling to make a compromise (Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Debus & Gross, 2016; Li et al., 2017). Policy conflicts emerge because of the policy actors' divergent views, beliefs, interests, and priorities (Ney, 2006: 2; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Metropolitan governance is rife with policy conflicts; especially in policy areas such as community sustainability and affordable housing, policy conflicts are quite common (Downs, 2005: 22; Feiock, 2004, pp. 34 - 48; Heidbreder, Grasse, Ihrke, & Cherry, 2011).

Since the 2000s, several urban areas have undertaken initiatives aimed at socioeconomic empowerment, environmental justice, and tackling the challenges of climate change (Castán Broto & Westman, 2020; Miller & Mössner, 2020; Parida, Van Assche, & Agrawal, 2023). As localities (cities, counties, and municipalities) within a given metropolitan region adopt various policies and programs to promote sustainability, conflicts start to emerge since not all localities have similar priorities or aspirations (Castán Broto & Westman, 2020; Miller & Mössner, 2020). In the United States, as the federal government launched the *Sustainable Communities Initiative* in 2010, dozens of localities began to adopt various types of community sustainability policies and programs (Arias, Draper-Zivetz, & Martin, 2017). In many metropolitan regions, these

initiatives have led to contested positions among localities. The following discussion highlights a few such cases in the state of Maryland.

Sustainability policies span several policy areas such as natural resources, transportation, economy, and social policies. This dissertation considers policy conflicts related to community sustainability policies, with a focus on affordable housing—as it is important for social wellbeing, economic development, and has implications on the environment (Elsinga, Hoekstra, Sedighi, & Taebi, 2020). In Chapter 2, I discuss in detail affordable housing as a concern of sustainability.

Affordable housing has long been a matter of concern in the United States. Although a majority of Americans support the idea that more affordable housing options should exist, there are numerous debates on how additional affordable housing can be made available, who should do what, where should the affordable housing be, and above all, who should benefit from such policies (Bratt, Stone, & Hartman, 2006; Demsas, 2021; Jacobs & Manzi, 2014; Marcuse, 2001). In recent years, the debate around affordable housing has gained momentum, partly fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lately, the debate around housing is drawing more attention as America's homelessness and rental affordability crises are becoming more acute (Brooks, 2022; Demsas, 2021; Malpezzi, 2023). Such debates are not confined to the federal or state governments; often localities and regions in various states experience conflicting views on housing policies.

Examples of policy conflict from Maryland demonstrate how policy conflicts can affect the policy process and policy outputs at the local and regional levels. The Montgomery County Council (in Maryland) voted on the final version of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, a general plan for the county that has been in the pipeline since 2018. This plan is expected to guide the county's decision-making on housing development, transit, environmental resilience in the coming

decades (Scheitzer, 2021). But a specific item outlined in the plan—which would allow creating multifamily housing units in single family neighborhoods—faced a strong opposition from neighborhood associations, homeowners, and some local politicians who claim that such a move would raise taxes, increase traffic congestions, and wipe out single family homes only to be replaced with low-income apartments (Montgomery County Civic Federation, 2021; Bartram, 2021). While the county planners, led by the director of planning, are trying to clarify misinformation around the proposal, the County Executive is supporting the opposition (Scheitzer, 2021). Situations like this are not isolated.

In 2019, the Anne Arundel County Council launched an affordable housing program. Faced with opposition from various groups, the city council passed workforce housing legislation in 2019 but postponed the fair housing bill (Harris, 2019). Anne Arundel County Executive, along with four County Council cosponsors, introduced two bills—Bill 54-19 and Bill 55-19—as part of a major housing initiative. Whereas Bill 54-19 was aimed at expanding opportunities to create workforce housing in the county, Bill 55-19 was expected to prohibit housing discrimination based on “age, ancestry, citizenship, color, creed, disability, familial status, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, occupation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or source of income.” (Pruski, et al., 2019:2). While Bill 54-19 was passed by the Council, three members opposed Bill 55-19, which emphasized fair housing, resulting in its postponement at that time. Despite five council members supporting the bill, members of the public along with three council members opposed the bill aimed at ensuring fair housing for all in the county. Those who supported the bill believed that housing is “a human right” (ACDS, 2021). Those who opposed the bill argued that this could overcrowd schools or make the roads even busier (Harris, 2019). Due to the efforts of many fair housing advocates and

council members supporting the idea, the bill was later passed by the County Council and signed into law (Anne Arundel County, 2019).

In 2018, the City of Baltimore passed a ban on housing discrimination in all forms (Guthrie, 2018). However, the policy faced strong opposition from various groups including builders and real estate developers. As a result of the opposition, the City had to pass another piece of legislation (Bill 18-0308) in 2019 with a significantly modified non-discrimination clause (Hodges & Little, 2019). These examples demonstrate that, in Maryland, policy conflicts *do exist* in the area of affordable housing. Policy conflicts can exist in other states and also in other policy domains such as environmental protection, sustainability and climate change, or transportation planning, to name a few. Policy conflicts can arise due to policymakers holding different views about policy goals, policy implementation mechanism, or budgetary considerations (Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2017).

As illustrated by the above examples, policy conflicts can and do affect the policymaking process—by slowing down the progress—and even altering the policy objectives in some cases. However, so far, little scholarship exists on policy conflicts related to affordable housing or community sustainability in local and regional policymaking. This dissertation examines policy conflict related to community sustainability policies in Maryland with a focus on affordable housing. Furthermore, affordable housing is not an issue that affects only individual localities; rather, it affects multiple jurisdictions, often spanning entire metropolitan areas and even nearby localities. Scholars argue that the issue of affordable housing should be addressed at the regional level (Behrens, 2010; Longworth, 2011; Mayer, 2007). Similarly, issues such as environmental sustainability, transportation, affordable housing, and economic development can be handled effectively at the regional level (Artibise & Meligrana, 2016; Balsiger & VanDeveer, 2010;

Morgan, 2004; Wolman, 2019). In many U.S. metropolitan areas, like elsewhere, several sustainability initiatives are planned at the regional level (Chapple, 2014: 24; Frick, Chapple, Mattiuzzi, & Zuk, 2015; Mattiuzzi, 2017). In many cases, implementation of such policies also take place at the regional level with collaboration from different localities. However, governance of sustainability related policies at the regional level is likely to attract policy conflicts arising from disparate views, beliefs, interests, and priorities of policymakers from different localities within a region. Here a question arises: *does local government officials' engagement with regional governance have any effect on their policy positions? If yes, how so?*

Another pertinent observation is that hundreds of regional governance organizations exist covering urban as well as rural areas to solve regional problems and provide services spanning multiple jurisdictions (Abousleman, 2008; Miller & Nelles, 2020; Miller, Nelles, Dougherty, & Rickabaugh, 2018). Do these regional organizations have any special significance in shaping policy positions of local government officials who participate in these organizations? This study examines if and how regional governance organizations (RGO) can play any role in managing conflicts—by influencing local government officials' policy positions—that arise in the making of affordable housing policies in particular, and sustainability policies, in general.

1.1. Rationale for the topic and the policy setting

Sustainability—most commonly understood as the successful balancing of physical, environmental, social, and economic well-being over both the short and long terms (Campbell, 1996; Agyeman, Bullard, & Evans, 2002; Krueger & Agyeman, 2005)—has become an increasingly common feature in policy processes, from a goal used to guide policy adoption, to a multidimensional criterion of policy evaluation, to a general principle of good governance (Fiorino, 2010; Hajkowicz, 2008; Hezri & Dovers, 2006; Wakin, Leuenberger, & White, 2007).

The literature on sustainability is well-developed across multiple disciplines, myriad policy domains, and across many scales of governing, with ample research focusing at the local (e.g., county, municipal), state, and national levels (Briassoulis, 2017, 2019; Heinrichs & Biermann, 2016; Heinrichs & Laws, 2014). However, literature on sustainability at the regional level in the U.S. is relatively thin.

Within the broad domain of sustainability, affordable housing policy is an important public policy area because housing is a basic human need (Lund, 2017). Housing is a foremost concern of social sustainability as it attempts to address problems such as homelessness, shelter deficiencies, neighborhood quality, and housing cost burden (Buckley & Schwartz, 2011; Henry et al., 2018; Fernald, 2017). Major concerns of modern housing policy include ending residential ghettoization, promoting equity, environmental justice, and diversity (Bolt, Phillips, & Van Kempen, 2010; Bullard & Wright, 2009). Housing is also important to economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, as it plays an important role in determining residents' health, employment prospects, and children's education (Olsen & Zabel, 2015). The price and location of housing decides how much people will have to drive to work, which is one of the major concerns of environmental sustainability. Sustainability policies—including policies intended to promote affordable housing, environmental protection, and economic well-being—constitute an important policy domain.

In the last decades, a number of cities in the United States, like in many other countries, have adopted sustainability initiatives. In several European countries, regional efforts to promote sustainability have also received widespread attention both from practitioners as well as scholars (Hopton et al., 2010; Wells et al., 2009). Following the federal government's *Sustainable*

Communities Initiative,¹ the state of Maryland passed the (Maryland) *Sustainable Communities Act of 2010*. Consequently, a number of localities—cities, counties and towns—in the state also initiated their own community sustainability initiatives, which included affordable housing (also referred to as low-income or workforce housing, at times) policies and programs.² However, we know relatively little about the pursuit of sustainability at the regional level the U.S. This is surprising, since many scholars and policymakers have argued that sustainability is particularly resonant at the regional scale because of its consistency with the geographies of major economic, environmental, and social problems arising, for example, within a labor market, a public services market, a commuter shed, a watershed, or a housing market (Alexander, 2010; Chapple, 2014; Gibbs, 1998; Haughton & Counsell, 2004; Homsy & Warner, 2015; Wheeler, 2000).

In the absence of unitary, general-purpose governments at the metropolitan scale in the U.S., the typical metropolitan area still governed by dozens of local governments. Thus, the pursuit of sustainability in metropolitan policymaking—and the form it takes—is primarily left to the efforts of regional intergovernmental organizations such as metropolitan planning organizations and planning district commissions that must coordinate among the competing tensions and varied interests of the local governments they represent. Metropolitan sustainability—which will be discussed later in detail—is susceptible to conflict over how it is defined and used in the policy process; it would need to be pursued through reconciliation, negotiation, and collaboration. While scholars have explored how some aspects of sustainability can attain prominence and priority at the expense of others (Chapin, Corrine, & Knapp, 2015;

¹ In 2009, the federal government formed the *Partnership for Sustainable Communities*, which included the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency, which launched the *Sustainable Communities Initiative*.

² Appendix I records many community sustainability and affordable housing initiatives in Maryland since 2010.

Moran & Rau, 2016; Been et al., 2010; Campbell, 1996), examining local government officials' policy positions on sustainability in general and on affordable housing, in particular, provides an opportunity to better understand the nature of conflict over sustainability and if and how it gets resolved at the regional level, a scale at which such resolution is especially important.

This study focuses on the divergence of policy positions (position divergence, in short) of local and regional policymakers in sustainability policy in general, and housing policies in particular, in the state of Maryland. Position divergence is defined as multiple and mutually inconsistent policy positions adopted by policymakers on the adoption or implementation of specific policies (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Position divergence is the key characteristic of any policy conflict because it determines whether there will be a conflict (Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). In a sense, position divergences can be considered as creating the potential for policy conflict, since the absence of position divergence implies there can be no conflict.

1.2. Why Maryland?

Maryland provides a good setting for studying policy conflicts for several reasons. Firstly, the state of Maryland has a history of pursuing sustainability policies. For instance, the Smart Growth policy started in 1997 (Moeckel & Lewis, 2017); the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) was established in 2001 and was codified into law in 2003 (Rehr, Wilson, & Hood, 2013); and the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which was launched in 2010 (Department of Housing and Community Development, 2010). Secondly, Maryland is a coastal state with 7,719 miles of shoreline (Department of Natural Resources, 2013). Thus, results and conclusions regarding sustainability policy from Maryland can inform similar studies in other similar states.

Thirdly, a large fraction of Maryland's population experiences poverty, which is a concern of sustainability. Prevalence of poverty and inequality are also relevant to affordable housing. Though the overall poverty level in Maryland (9.4%) is lower than the U.S. national average (12.2%), in several counties and in Baltimore City, the poverty levels are much higher than the national average. For example, the poverty rate in Baltimore City is 21.8%, in Somerset County is 20.4%, in Allegany County is 16.4%, in Dorchester County 15.8%, and in Wicomico County is 15.2%, all of which are much higher than the national average of 12.2% (Maryland Matters 2020). Between 1990 and 2019, Maryland's poverty level has increased by nearly 19% (Klingenmaier & Mersky, 2018; United Health Foundation, 2020). While Maryland has a low overall poverty level, the state has the second highest income inequality in the nation (Shreve, 2020). Also, the income inequality in Maryland is increasing at a faster rate than the national trend (United Health Foundation, 2020).

Fourthly, Maryland has one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation. According to America's Health Rankings (2020), Maryland is one of the states with most severe housing problems; it has more crowded housing and housing with lead-risk than most other states. Also, Maryland has one of the highest levels of residential segregation by race (United Health Foundation, 2020). In addition to these, in Maryland, the supply of housing—affordable for middle income and low-income residents—is not increasing proportionately to housing demand. Additionally, the state of Maryland has had discriminatory housing policies since the early 1900s (Delaney, 2003). These issues make social sustainability in general and housing policy in particular important policy concerns in the state of Maryland. Finally, I expect a single-state study would allow me to control for the overall regulatory and institutional environment, the constraints on local and regional policymaking, and structure of local governments.

1.3. Main findings and contributions of the study

This study tests a number of hypotheses using data from a state-wide survey of local and regional policymakers. Employing cross-tabulation, multivariate regression, and ordered logit analysis, this study finds that local government officials' engagement with regional governance is associated with lower levels of position divergence in community sustainability policy. However, in the case of affordable housing, this finding is not robust. The evidence also shows that engagement in regional governance is associated with higher levels of policy-relevant knowledge among local government officials. The analysis suggests that local government officials' policy core beliefs may not be affected by their engagement with regional governance.

This research is poised to make several contributions beyond expanding the scholarship on sustainability at the regional scale. First, policy conflicts relating to sustainability in general and housing as a concern of it have not been explored using the policy conflict framework, even though this framework is particularly well suited to both. This study employs this relatively novel theoretical framework to examine policy conflicts in sustainability policy with a focus on affordable housing. Second, treating engagement with regional governance as a tool for reducing policy conflicts can open many new avenues for research in different policy domains and in many geographical regions. Third, regional governance organizations (RGOs) remain a rare target of scholarship in public administration and policy. These organizations collectively employ over 10,000 staff, engage over 21,000 board members (Center for Metropolitan Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2022), and are responsible for the flow of billions of dollars annually in intergovernmental transfers (Bryan & Wolf, 2010; Gerber & Gibson, 2009; Sciara, 2017), and their capacity to effectively govern reflects directly on the public choice perspective about the flexible regionalization that can occur in highly fragmented metropolitan areas. In addition,

while RGOs have been studied with regard to their role in transportation policy and land use, especially because of the prominence of MPOs as a type of RGO, less explored is their role in housing policy. Finally, the research will resonate in any of the many policy settings with decision-making authority fragmented among multiple individual and organizational actors.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized as follows. Chapter 2 briefly describes several concepts germane to this research and includes a review of literature on related topics. Chapter 3 first describes the theoretical framework, how it has been used by other scholars, and how the framework is helpful for this research. This is followed by a discussion of how the dependent variable (policy position divergence) may be related to the independent variable (engagement with regional governance). To explore the relationship between policy position divergence and policymakers' engagement with regional governance, two intermediate concepts—policy relevant knowledge and policy core beliefs—are also explored. Several propositions suggesting possible relationships between the dependent and independent variables are introduced. In Chapter 4, I briefly discuss the research design, followed by a brief description of methods of data collection and data analysis. Testable hypotheses are formulated using operationalized variables. The research design also discusses how the research question was explored, including the key variables and the data sources for each variable to test the hypotheses. In Chapter 5, I describe the values for each variable. Chapter 6 discusses the results, organized by the hypotheses. Chapter 7 briefly summarizes the findings and turns to a discussion of the usefulness of this research for public affairs and regional governance scholarship, how the study can be extended, and its limitations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As Chapter 1 elaborated, the study aims to examine policy conflicts related to sustainability policy with a focus on affordable housing. This chapter begins by examining the concept of sustainability, affordable housing as an important policy arena and as a concern of sustainability, and housing and sustainability as conflict-prone policy domains. Next, I will briefly describe local and regional approaches to pursuing metropolitan sustainability. This leads to a review of local governance structures in the United States and various types and forms of local governments, followed by an overview of the system of regional governance in the U.S., various types of regional governance organizations, and their structures and activities. Then I discuss existing scholarship on the pursuit of sustainability at the regional level. In doing so, I identify a gap: the lack of scholarship on the relationship between policymakers' engagement with regional governance and their policy positions, which animates the analysis that follows.

2.1. Sustainability

Sustainability is a multi-dimensional concept. Early conceptualizations of sustainability emphasized continuity of a specific level of utility or welfare across generations (Howarth, 1995; Barry 1997), often with environmental and social justice as key goals (Dobson, 1999). Such conceptualizations have often emphasized multiple, potentially competing goals. For example, sustainability is described as ensuring “a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” (Agyeman & Evans, 2003: 5). Similarly, Leuenberger and Wakin (2007: 1) consider sustainability “a philosophy associated with the long-run maintenance or improvement of human welfare and the preservation of natural capital and environmental integrity.” Table 1 shows how different scholars have conceptualized sustainability.

Table 1: Dimensions of sustainability

Author(s), Year	Dimensions of Sustainability
Yunlong and Smit (1994); Hansen (1996); Herremans and Reid (2002); O'Riordan (2004); Krajnc and Glavič (2005); Voinov and Smith (2008); Chapple (2015)	Environment, Society, and Economy
European Commission (2002)	Planet, People, and Prosperity
Kohler (1999)	Environmental, Cultural (Social), and Economic
Howe (1997); Valentin and Spangenberg (2000); Spangenberg (2004); Singh et al., (2009); Scheyvens (2011)	Environmental, Social, Economic, and Institutional Dimensions
Budd et al., (2008)	Environment, Public Health, Economic Utility, Local Government (Institutional), and Sprawl
Seghezze (2009)	Place (Physical), Place (Geographical), Place (Socio-Cultural), Persons, and Permanence
Vucetich and Nelson (2010)	State and Nature of Ecosystems, Human Cultures, Human Needs, Ethics (Justice and other Normative Concerns), and Efficient Technology
Hanss and Böhm (2012)	Environmental, Social, Economic, Temporal, and Developmental
Penzenstadler, Femmer, and Richardson (2013)	Environmental, Social, Economic, Individual, and Technical
Joung et al., (2013)	Environmental Stewardship, Social Well-Being, Economic Growth, Technological Advancement, and Performance Management
Galli et al., (2015)	Environmental, Social, Economic, Ethical, and Health
United Nations (2015)	Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership
Ashford and Hall (2018)	Environment, Economy, and Employment
Talukdar (2018)	Environmental, Physical, Social, and Economic

Viewing Table 1 as a whole, one can see that many scholars treat sustainability as a three dimensional concept with environmental, social, and economic dimensions. This is consistent

with how scholars of metropolitan and regional planning and governance view it; they frame sustainability as a balancing act among environmental protection, economic development, and social justice (Campbell, 1996; Wheeler, 2000; Agyeman, Bullard, & Evans, 2002; Agyeman & Evans, 2003). This three-dimensional conceptualization is also supported by evidence. In the case of medium-sized U.S. cities, Saha and Paterson (2008) found that sustainability is conceptualized as including environment, economy, and equity. In the implementation of the federally supported Community Sustainability Initiative, nearly 30% of regional organizations defined sustainability as the “long-term balance of social, economic, and environmental components” (Chapple & Mattiuzzi, 2013; Chapple, 2014: 43).

Major concerns of environmental sustainability include high levels of pollution, poor air and water quality, ecological imbalance, and ecological impacts (Van den Bergh & Verbruggen, 1999); anthropogenic climate change, unsustainable use of land and natural resources (Corson, 1994); and unsustainable infrastructure systems (Mirza, 2006; Dentinho, 2011; Banai, 2016). Ashford and Hall (2018) summarize the major emphases of environmental sustainability as those about depletion of non-renewable resources, toxic pollution, climate change, and ecosystem disruption (pp. 13-15). These concerns can all arise, of course, at the regional level (Banai, 2013).

Economic sustainability focuses on prosperity (European Commission, 2002), sustained growth (Singh et al., 2009), and smart economic growth that addresses equity and environmental concerns (Krueger & Agyeman, 2005). Economic sustainability is concerned with improving the quality of people’s lives rather than merely increasing the quantity of goods and services (Corson, 1994). Stability of production, consumption, and income is also considered indicative of economic sustainability (Hopton et al., 2010). With business organizations joining the

sustainability discourse, concerns of profits and financial sustainability have also become pertinent to economic sustainability (Elkington, 1997).

Social sustainability includes concerns about persistent poverty and high levels of inequality (Campbell, 1996; Seghezze, 2009; Singh et al., 2009), social and environmental justice problems (Berke & Conroy, 2000; Krueger & Savage, 2007), health and well-being challenges (Budd et al., 2008; Galli et al., 2015), and concerns about affordable housing and education (Wheeler, 2000; Ward & Jonas, 2004; Mori & Christodoulou, 2012). Another important focus of social sustainability is quality of life. Improving the quality of life is one of the main emphases of sustainability and sustainable development (Allen, 1980; Mori & Christodoulou, 2012). In the context of U.S. metropolitan regions, community sustainability policies frequently include affordable housing policy (Arman, Zuo, Wilson, Zillante, & Pullen, 2009; Johnson & Heinz, 2006; Wakely, 2020). Although this dissertation considers sustainability policies broadly, it focuses on a specific aspect of sustainability: affordable housing.

2.2. Housing policy in the context of sustainability

Housing policy refers to government actions—including legislation and programs—that have direct or indirect impact on housing supply and availability, housing standards, and planning (Institute of Global Homelessness, 2017). Housing policy includes a set of statements, legislation, and programs that can impact house prices and affordability as well as the availability of an adequate supply of rental housing with the help of resource allocation (Marsolais, 2017). Housing policy highlights the process of government intervention in the housing market (Lund, 2017).

Housing policy is an important public policy area in large part because housing “is a basic human need” (Lund, 2017: 1). Housing is a foremost a concern of social sustainability as it attempts to address problems such as homelessness, shelter deficiencies, neighborhood quality, and housing cost burden (Buckley & Schwartz, 2011; Henry et al., 2018; Fernald, 2017; Dewilde & De Keulenaer, 2003). The main concerns of contemporary housing policy include ending residential ghettoization and promoting equity, environmental justice, and diversity (Bolt, Phillips, & Van Kempen, 2010; Pastor, Sadd, & Hipp, 2001; Bullard & Wright, 2009). Many scholars emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusivity (Mitlin, 2001; Geismer, 2013), focusing on who is targeted through both demand-side and supply-side housing policies. Housing regulations can address the needs of the workforce, of those who are aging or disabled, of the poor, of structurally disadvantaged minorities, and of households that are lower-income. The spatiality of housing also matters, particularly with regard to where lower-income populations reside.

Housing is also germane to economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Housing plays an important role in determining residents’ health, employment prospects, and children’s education (Olsen & Zabel, 2015). Many scholars offer economic arguments in favor of affordable housing initiatives. Housing can improve economic outcomes by overall creating improved health, education, and employment opportunities in the future (Poortinga, 2019: 1; Mueller & Tighe, 2007; Malpass, 1999). Housing is an important concern for macroeconomic stability and growth (Arnott, 2015). Research shows that investing in affordable housing leads to the creation of jobs in the construction industry and in the long-run boosts the local economy (Wardrip, Williams, & Hague, 2011; Arik, 2006).

Housing becomes significant as an environmental concern, as it determines where people live and how people commute to their places of work. The development of low-density residential areas is associated with (sub)urban sprawl, which has a negative impact on the environment as people travel longer distances to reach their workplaces (The Sierra Club, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Emadodin, Taravat, & Rajaei, 2016). When residential areas include mixed income housing, workers can reside closer to their workplaces and will have to drive or travel less. This can help reduce traffic congestion, driving duration, energy consumption, and hence reduce pollution (Jenks et al., 2000: p. 245; Chen, Jia, & Lau, 2008). Inclusive housing can promote equitable housing choices in suburbs and reduce environmental degradation associated with low-density urbanization (Liberty, 2002).

2.3. Housing, sustainability, and policy conflicts

For housing to be an appropriate focus for a dissertation that speaks to conflict in sustainability policymaking more broadly, it must be a policy domain that embodies the many dimensions and tensions of sustainability. Earlier I discussed housing as a concern of social sustainability, while highlighting its significance to economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. The following discussion explores housing as a policy domain that embodies many of the tensions of sustainability and why housing policy, like other sustainability policies, has the potential for engendering conflict among stakeholders.

While a decent home in a suitable living environment is central to U.S. housing policy and similar ideals are found throughout global housing policy, the role of government in regulating how these goals are met is highly contested. Many economists and others who generally prefer free market policies advocate for less government intervention, whereas planners and advocates of social equity tend to prefer more government intervention in housing

policy (Arnott, 2015; Lund, 2017). A lively debate exists over the issue of concentration versus dispersion, with the former a way to address supply deficits and the latter emphasizing housing as an access point to public services and social capital in a neighborhood (Holloway et al., 1998a; DeKeseredy et al., 2003; Curley, 2005; Squires & Kubrin, 2005). In metropolitan regions, when policymakers and activists take one or the other position, policy conflicts arise.

Divergent views exist regarding how to address certain housing problems as well. Attempts to provide housing for the marginalized include initiatives that facilitate moving to higher opportunity and less segregated areas or that incentivize developers to build in neighborhoods with access to key amenities (Ludwig et al., 2013; Sanbonmatsu et al., 2011). However, many local governments have been highly resistant to these efforts (Tighe, 2012; Tighe, 2010; Pendall, 1999; Iglesias, 2002; Davison et al., 2013). Housing regulation can also generate conflict over whether it focuses on providing equal opportunity or on achieving equal outcomes (Gianos, 1999; Gilens, 2012). For example, fair housing initiatives tend to focus on the former by working to end discriminatory sales and rental practices, and by allowing mobility to higher-opportunity and less segregated areas (Goetz 2015; Karuppappan & Sivam 2009; Dalglish et al., 1997; Prebble, 2012). The problem arises when housing is viewed as an end itself. For example, those who view housing as an end product may resort to “Not in My Back Yard” (NIMBY) protests.

Whether one supports or opposes a particular housing policy also depends on their ideology. A 2019 study conducted by Data for Progress (DFP) notes that over 60% of American voters wanted a public option for housing (among other amenities), whereas 32% opposed such an option (Winter, 2021). While 76% of Democrats favored public options for housing, 54% Republicans opposed the idea; although 39% of Republicans favored providing tax credits to

private developers, only 26% Democrats supported the idea (Winter, 2021; Demas, 2021). Quite often policy positions diverge along party and ideological lines, but both liberals and conservatives often respond “NIMBY” when it comes to developing affordable housing in their own neighborhoods (Manville, 2021; Demas, 2021; Badger, 2018). Scholars have found that elected local government officials typically adopt popular policy positions or refrain from taking unpopular policy positions (Adams, 2004; Tausanovitch & Warshaw, 2014), which implies that there are chances of policy conflicts among Democratic and Republican local government officials. In a metro region, when local government officials encounter policymakers who hold a view opposite to their own, the chances of policy conflicts are high.

Thus, housing policy has the potential to engender conflicts that can be deeply ideological as well as focused on shallower disputes over implementation. Conflicts can also arise within a locality and among policymakers and among local governments in a region. Like housing policies, there is potential for conflicts in other sustainability related policy areas. When there are competing interests and values in a region, conflicts among localities arise (Heikkila & Weible, 2018). These conflicts can take many forms, such as disagreements over land use, resource management, environmental regulations, and economic development (Lambin, 2008; Godschalk, 2004; Humphreys, 2005; Youm, 2013; Cox, 2017). One common source of conflict is the tension between economic development and environmental protection. Some local governments prioritize economic growth and job creation, while others advocate for stronger environmental regulations to protect natural resources and wildlife habitats.

2.4. Local governance and the pursuit of sustainability

Local governance in the U.S. refers to systems of government at the county, city, and town levels. Local governments are the bodies responsible for administering and delivering

services to the residents of a particular geographic area, such as a city, county, or town. There are over 90,000 local governments in the United States, which vary in size, structure, and responsibilities (White House, 2023). Local government plays an important role in shaping the quality of life in American communities. Through provision of services and programs, local governments can enhance public safety, promote economic growth, and create a sense of community among residents.

Local governments rely on a mix of revenue sources to fund their operations, including property taxes, sales taxes, fees, and federal and state funds (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). One of the main sources of revenue for local governments is property taxes from real estate and other properties. Local governments also collect sales taxes on goods and services sold within their jurisdiction (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). In addition, local governments may charge fees for specific services, such as building permits or park entry. They may also receive intergovernmental transfers from state and federal governments to fund specific programs or initiatives.

Local government spending in the U.S. typically goes towards areas such as K-12 education, welfare, hospitals and health, utilities, public works, and police protection. Local governments also often contribute to regional and state-wide initiatives, such as transportation and environmental projects. Local governments are responsible for providing essential services to their residents, such as parks and recreation, police and fire departments, housing, emergency medical services, municipal courts, transportation, and public works, which includes streets, sewers, snow removal, and signage (Grant, 2022). In addition, local governments are often responsible for economic development, land use planning, zoning, and environmental regulation.

They may also work closely with state and federal governments on issues such as transportation, education, and public health (Grant, 2022).

The structure of local government varies depending on the state and the size of the community. In some states, local government is organized as a strong mayor system, where the mayor has significant executive authority over the administration of the city (ICMA, 2019). In other states, many local governments have council-manager systems, where an elected city council appoints a professional city manager to oversee day-to-day operations (Grant, 2022; ICMA, 2019). Local government officials are elected by the residents of the community they serve. Local elections typically occur every two to four years and may be held on a partisan or nonpartisan basis, depending on the state and the type of local government. Because of the direct connection between the populace and elected local governments, elected local government officials often take policy positions that their constituents favor.

Following the United Nation's Agenda 21, several cities and municipalities have joined hands to promote sustainability and address challenges such as climate change (Berry & Portney, 2017; Saha, 2008; Portney, 2003). While this bottom-up approach to pursuing sustainability is desirable, it has its own challenges. In the U.S., reflecting factors like federalism and metropolitan fragmentation, the pursuit of sustainability policies often is difficult. Due to divergent needs, aspirations, priorities, and policy preferences of different localities, policy conflicts can arise, which can stifle policy development and meaningful environmental and social change. Many scholars and practitioners argue that a regional, interlocal cooperation to promote sustainability may be more desirable (Talukdar, 2018; Banai, 2013; Calthorpe & Fulton, 2001; Wheeler, 2000). In what follows, I consider multiple arguments that make a case for

addressing metropolitan sustainability and housing issues through regional or interlocal governance mechanisms.

2.5. Regional approach to pursuing metropolitan sustainability

Several scholars argue that regions can provide the most effective geographical scale to promote, analyze, and evaluate sustainability (Wheeler, 2000; Calthorpe & Fulton, 2001; Banai, 2013), and they can be more efficient and effective at promoting sustainability than locality-based approaches (Healey, 1997; Kübler & Schwab, 2007; Frank & Marsden, 2016; Bush, 2012). Regional approaches can be employed for problems that require the attention of multiple jurisdictions (Keeney et al., 2015). Regional approaches can be efficient because at this level, there is often a strong connection and fit among “physical functions, social identity, economic units and political territories” (McEvoy & Ravetz, 2001: 90). A regional approach to policymaking can benefit from coordination and cooperation in planning and implementation of economic development policies and programs (Olberding, 2002; Bush, 2012). Regional approaches can be especially useful for reducing policy conflicts: such approaches allow localities to come together to advance shared interests and address common concerns such as achieving economic competitiveness, addressing urban poverty, or environmental concerns (Gibbs, 1998; Briffault, 2000; Crowder, 2014; Frank and Marsden, 2016).

Many regional organizations use sustainability either as a policy goal or as a standard for their initiatives. A preliminary analysis of the largest 36 metropolitan areas in the U.S. in 2017 suggests that a vast majority used sustainability either as a goal or as a bottom line for policy evaluation. Some prior empirical studies examine the adoption or implementation of sustainability policies at the regional level, with most focused on the Sustainable Communities Initiative - Regional Planning Grant (SCI-RPG) program launched in 2010 by the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development in collaboration with a number of other federal departments (Alexander, 2010; Chapple & Mattiuzzi, 2013). The Sustainable Communities Initiative was designed to promote “the incorporation of social equity frameworks and metrics into economic and environmental sustainability-related activities” and “increase cooperation between regional actors” (Frick et al., 2015: 1). While a few studies investigate different dimensions of regional sustainability such as climate change and environment (Shi, 2017; Bryan, 2016), most studies related to the SCI-RPG focus on social equity (Chapple & Mattiuzzi, 2013; Frick et al., 2015; Mattiuzzi, 2017). A few studies also examine the planning and implementation of the SCI-RPG.

Chapple and Mattiuzzi (2013) analyzed 144 applications submitted for the SCI-RPG. Based on their content analysis, they find that only about 20% of the councils of government (COGs) define sustainability in terms of the three E’s (economy, environment, and equity), livability, location efficiency, or climate change. Over 85% of the applicants mentioned environment; more than 80% talked about economic development; and over 60% emphasized a participatory, two-way approach over top-down policymaking for achieving regional sustainability. Chapple and Mattiuzzi note that 26 of the applications focused more on setting goals for equity than on framing strategies for implementation. Although over 85% of the applications addressed some environmental themes, there were significant variation in the themes, and in most cases, those themes were narrowly discussed. Similarly, from a subsequent analysis of 150 SCI-RPG proposals and sustainability plans of 74 MSAs that participated in the program, Chapple (2015) found that the regional organizations varied considerably in their understanding of sustainability as well as in their approach to implementing sustainability. Frick and colleagues (2015) conducted case studies of three California regions—San Francisco Bay Area, Fresno, and Sacramento—to understand

how the SCI-RPG has facilitated social equity planning in those regions, among other objectives. The study finds that although in some regions “social equity has played a central role in the sustainability processes,” in other regions, it was less prominent (Frick et al., 2015: 17).

Mattiuzzi (2017) analyzed how 74 MSAs participating in the SCI-RPG program have implemented their respective sustainability plans. Based on a nationwide survey as well as interviews with federal officials, Mattiuzzi found that nearly half of the respondents reported increased focus of existing policies or programs on affordable housing; job access/development or transportation; and an increased awareness of social equity needs among the public, leadership, or policymakers. Nearly one-third believed that the initiatives increased the capacity and influence of underrepresented communities as well as capacity in the region to constructively engage topics related to poverty, race, or immigration. Nearly a quarter of the regional organizations were reported to have strengthened integration of fair housing into their plans and policies (Mattiuzzi, 2017).

Shi (2017), looking beyond the SCI-RPG initiative, studied adaptation mechanisms in regions across the U.S. that sought to respond to climate change. Analyzing initiatives to adapt to climate change by five regional coalitions from California, Massachusetts, and Florida, Shi found that champions of adaptation “have helped overcome limited local adaptation, even where states are antagonistic to climate action, by sharing knowledge, providing technical assistance, and fostering political support” (2017: 3). Examining the adoption of climate change policies in 25 regional organizations, including councils of governments, associations of governments, and regional planning councils, Bryan (2016) reported that only three had actually started to implement such policies at the end of his study.

Lubin (2020) examined how the adoption of sustainability initiatives by cities are influenced by their engagement with regional governance organizations. Lubin notes that these regional organizations can be thought of as a mitigation tool to assuage metropolitan fragmentation. Analyzing over 400 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Lubin (2020) found that MPO membership has a positive relationship with the adoption of certain sustainability initiatives. The study also found that in many cases regional coordination faces similar constraints as localities face and that sustainability policy goals and objectives are affected by institutional and organizational pressures.

2.6. Regional governance in the U.S.

Metropolitan regions in the United States do not have unitary general-purpose governments and instead rely on a variety of governance modes to address large-scale problems that span beyond the boundaries of a single general-purpose or special-purpose local government (Norris, 2016: 1; Frug, 2002). UNESCO defines governance as “structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation.”³ In the context of the United States, Norris defines metropolitan governance as follows:

The formal association of governments, non-governmental organizations and/or residents in a metropolitan area for the purpose of controlling or regulating behavior and/or performing functions or services within the metropolitan area. Governance is areawide, governing decisions are binding, and participants can be compelled to comply with them (Norris 2016: 2).

³ This definition appears on the UNESCO website. Retrieved on 10/13/2021 from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/geqaf/technical-notes/concept-governance>

Governance refers to structures and processes for setting policy and mobilizing action; it often requires working across sectoral boundaries, and it can involve informal as well as formal institutions (Wallis 1994). Governance also can encompass “a much larger universe of discourse than do units of government as such” (Ostrom, Bish, and Ostrom ,1988: 212). Metropolitan governance occurs through a variety of partnerships, coordination, and collaboration (Feiock, 2007). Regional governance in the U.S. involves both vertical and horizontal collaboration, and it can arise through activities among existing state and local governments (Hamilton, Miller, and Paytas, 2004). Regional governance organizations (RGOs) include different types of organizations that carry out a wide range of functions and are known by various names (Miller et al., 2018). While not all RGOs are the same, they share some basic characteristics.

According to the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), regional councils are “non-profit, public agencies dedicated to serving local governments. They seek to solve regional problems or provide services, beyond a single jurisdiction, that cannot be addressed at the local level” (Abousleman, 2008: 3). Many of them carry out specific tasks and are accordingly labelled as “Regional Planning Commissions, Regional Development Organizations, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Councils of Governments, Regional Service Districts, and Rural Planning Organizations, among others” (Abousleman, 2008: 3).

Just as their nomenclature varies, the exact number of regional organizations is also a matter of debate. While NARC maintains that between 1950 and 2008, over 500 regional councils were formed, other studies have reported different numbers. A 2013 study estimated that there were roughly 700 regional organizations operating at that time (Whitman, 2013). In 2017, the Center for Metropolitan Studies at the University of Pittsburgh developed a database of

477 organizations, which it labelled *Regional Intergovernmental Organizations* or RIGOs (Miller and Nelles, 2020; Miller et al., 2018).

Although most of the regional organizations in the U.S. are nonprofit organizations, they can be federally mandated (e.g., metropolitan planning organizations) or supported (e.g., economic development districts); about 95 percent have local government representatives as the core of their decision-making bodies (Whisman, 2013). Their defining qualities include being constituted by general-purpose local governments (counties and municipalities); having a public agenda that covers a broad number of policy areas; and having a high degree of intergovernmental legitimacy (Miller & Nelles, 2018). Among the policy activities of regional governance organizations are managing federal and state planning and review requirements, identifying regional issues, operating as a data gathering and analysis resource, providing technical and planning consulting services, providing legislative monitoring and lobbying, and operating regional programs (Bryan & Wolf, 2010).

For this study, regional planning councils (RPCs) or councils of governments (COGs) are the type of regional organizations that are most relevant. They have a wide policy focus that regularly includes housing issues among a broad suite of issues that touch on economic, social, and environmental concerns (Miller & Nelles, 2018; Whisman, 2013). Most of these organizations have some influence over local governments, as billions of dollars of federal and state government funds are channeled through them. A number of scholars have considered these organizations suitable candidates for adoption or implementation of climate change policies, affordable housing policies, and community sustainability initiatives (Bryan, 2015; Chapple, 2015; Mattiuzzi, 2017). Thus, RPCs/COGs are a logical subset of RIGOs for studying conflict in sustainability policymaking through housing.

2.7. Regional governance and policy conflict

Conflict in metropolitan areas served by RPCs can arise for multiple reasons including competing local economic interests (Oakerson, 2004), disparate natural resource allocation and distribution (Zetland, 2008), and ethnic, racial, and class heterogeneity (Bollens, 2004). Metropolitan governance involves resolving conflicts among member governments (Matland, 1995). Regional organizations such as RPCs encounter and try to resolve these conflicts as “conflict resolution is one important dimension of governance, and metropolitan governance must be able to provide for it” (Oakerson, 2004: 40). Analyzing over 500 regional organizations in the U.S., Miller and Nelles (2018) conclude that over 90 percent act as regional arbiters in resolving cross-jurisdictional issues. Despite possibilities of policy conflicts, regional organizations routinely develop plans and engage in the implementation of those plans, involving them to some extent in resolving policy conflicts.

Before detailing how regional organizations may or may not influence the management of metropolitan policy conflicts, it makes sense to first discuss what the public policy process is and how policy conflicts can occur. Understanding the policy process is important to learn the stages in which policy conflicts can arise.

2.8. Conflict in the policy process

This subsection begins by briefly discussing the policy process to better situate the role of conflict. Although scholars debate how to best analyze the U.S. public policy process, many view it as consisting of a few stages: agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation, and evaluation (Schlager, 2007; Jann & Wegrich, 2007; Matland, 1995; Altman and Petkus, 1994; de Leon and Brewer, 1983). However, many policy scholars do not agree with

the stages approach, and criticize it for inappropriately viewing stages as being linear, sequential, and discrete (Schofield, 2001; Sutton, 1999; Nakamura, 1987; Grindle & Thomas, 1991). For example, some scholars describe policymaking as a disjointed incremental process in which “problems are tackled a bit at a time in the process of muddling through” (Nutley & Webb 2000: 27). Another criticism is the tendency to treat policy formulation as a political process and implementation as an administrative process (Matland, 1995). A more common formulation posits the policy process as a cycle, which at least acknowledges the interaction among the stages (Dunn, 2015; John, 2015; Pülzl & Treib, 2017; Wenzelburger, König, and Wolf, 2019).

According to Heikkila and Weible (2017), policy conflicts can arise at any stage—policy formulation, decision making, implementation, and evaluation—in the policy process. Policy conflict refers to mutually inconsistent rules, clash of interests, or divergence of policy positions (Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Debus & Gross, 2016; Li et al., 2017). In the policymaking process, conflicts can arise due to (a) conflicts of interest among those involved in the process of policymaking (b) clashes of ideas among stakeholders over policy goals and how to achieve them; and (c) inconsistent and conflicting policy prescriptions (Davy, Jennings, & Strassner, 2008; Ney, 2006; Matland, 1995; Quirk, 1989; Brehmer, 1969). Some policy conflicts can be avoided or at least somewhat resolved by manipulating the policy so that most or all stakeholders agree, but others are impossible to overcome due to a fundamental incompatibility of values (Matland, 1995). Although policymaking in any policy area with multiple actors can provide grounds for policy conflicts, sustainability policies are frequently more contentious, often invoke strong reactions from policymakers, and are likely to be more prone to conflicts (Hemmati, 2012; Buckles, 1999; Wondolleck, 2013). Housing policy, like sustainability policies, attracts a lot of

conflicts because policymakers, builders, community members, and those representing voices of the neighborhood in which the housing would be constructed all may have different views on it.

At the regional level, policymakers from different localities with different backgrounds and aspirations come together. Elected local government officials are likely to take policy positions that their constituents would want them to. Appointed officials, on the other hand, may take policy positions that they prefer personally or those that they think would be in the best interest of their respective localities. Due to the multiplicity of viewpoints, aspirations, local needs, and concerns, policy conflicts are likely to occur at the regional level as policymakers try to come up with policies and programs that serve their interests and their constituents.

In regional governance, policy conflicts can arise due to concerns about loss of local autonomy (Fürst & Rudolph, 2003: 156), concerns about redistribution or loss of employment, growth or economic development (Hårsman & Olsson, 2002), differences in political views of constituents (Gerber & Gibson, 2009), ethnic and cultural differences (Bollens, 2004), and different priorities over environmental issues (Tudor et al., 2014). As Lee and colleagues note, “An increasing concern among regional growth policymakers who aim to promote balanced growth is the widening economic disparity among the communities in metropolitan areas” (Lee, Choi, & Im, 2013: 1).

As regional governance often involves interventions by regional organizations, these organizations are also likely to face policy conflicts, because of perceived discrepancies or incompatible wishes or desires among members. In a typical organization, two types of conflict arise between members: task-related and relation-based (Simons & Peterson, 2000). While task related conflicts refer to disagreements among members about the nature of the task, importance of task goals, key decision areas, and procedures, relation-based conflicts involve interpersonal

incompatibilities among group members, including tension, animosity, and annoyance (Chuang, Church, & Zikic, 2004). Conflicts can exist both at the individual level and the group or coalition levels in an organization. Policy conflicts can also arise between different organizations. This study focuses on policy conflicts that arise between local government officials within or outside of regional governance organizations.

2.9. Managing policy conflicts at the regional level

Conflicts are neither always good nor always bad. While traditionally the word conflict is associated with something undesirable, many scholars and practitioners argue that conflict is healthy and desirable in many situations (Rahim, 2017; Verma, 1998). The contemporary view of conflict is that it is “natural and inevitable in all organizations and that it may have either a positive or a negative effect, depending on how the conflict is handled” (Verma, 1998: 1). Rahim (2017) observes that the absence of conflict can encourage stagnancy, mediocracy, and groupthink but too much conflict can also be detrimental to any organization. For developing creative solutions to the right problems, a “moderate amount of conflict, handled in a constructive manner, is essential” (Rahim, 2017: 11). This implies that at the regional level, to ensure smooth governance conflicts need to be at least quasi-resolved or its potential minimized, for if left unchecked these conflicts can impede the process of governance and policy making.

Conflicts can be handled in many ways such as contending (forcing conflicting parties to agree to a solution), conceding (when some of the conflicting parties yield to others), avoiding (which implies inaction and withdrawal by some of the conflicting parties), and collaborating (when conflicting parties work together to solve the problem) (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). When a conflict cannot be resolved by any of these strategies, intervention by third-party experts may also be employed to resolve many conflicts (Zikmann, 1992). At the metropolitan regional

level, several of these strategies can be employed to effectively manage policy conflicts. Regional organizations can influence policymakers' positions, views, and even some policy-related beliefs by exposing them to different viewpoints and educating them on policy-related matters. Chapter 3 discusses how policy conflicts among policymakers can be reduced via engagement with regional governance.

2.10. Gap in the literature

Although there are some studies about regional organizations and sustainability efforts, largely missing in existing scholarship is an exploration of what happens in regional organizations to amplify or diminish underlying conflicts about sustainability that are likely to arise among local government representatives and other stakeholders. Such research, which is the focus in this dissertation, would afford insights about policy interventions at the organizational level that could make regional organizations more effective proponents of sustainability policy at the metropolitan scale. A first step in this direction involves identifying the potential for policy conflicts in local and regional policymaking and examining whether regional organizations play a role in preventing or minimizing them. This study considers the following question: *Is local government officials' engagement with regional governance related to divergence in policy positions among them? If so, how?*

The next chapter introduces a theoretical framework with which I analyze policy conflicts and examine the relationships between policy conflicts and policymakers' participation in regional governance.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

This study explores possible policy conflicts that result from divergent policy positions of local government officials and other stakeholders. In doing so, it introduces and applies a theoretical framework that examines the nature of policy conflicts. The theoretical framework I employ is based on three broad strands of scholarship: the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF) developed by Christopher Weible and Tanya Heikkila (2017), the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) introduced by Paul A. Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith (1993), and several governance learning theories (for example, see Newig, Günther, & Pahl-Wostl, 2010; Rządca & Strumińska-Kutra, 2016; Vitry & Chia, 2015). This study uses concepts of position divergence and policy relevant knowledge from PCF, policy core beliefs from ACF,⁴ and social learning as a mechanism of governance learning. The following section details these ideas. Based on PCF and other relevant literature, I then introduce several propositions that guide the study.

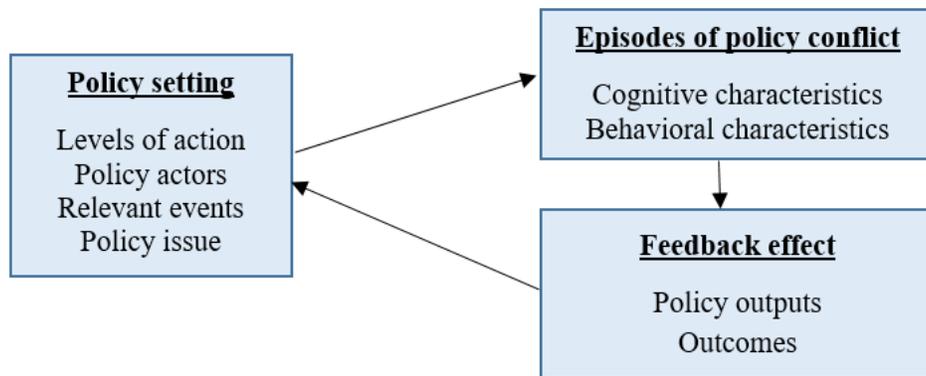
Policy Conflict Framework

This dissertation draws extensively from the policy conflict framework (PCF), which provides a “guide to theoretical, practical, and empirical research on policy conflicts” (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 25). PCF examines how policy conflicts emerge, endure, and subside; it also looks at the consequences of particular types of conflict. Figure 1 depicts the dynamics of the framework, which involves three broad elements: the policy setting, episodes of policy conflict, and the feedback effect of the policy conflict. The framework posits that episodes of policy conflict are shaped by the policy setting, which consists of different levels of action, policy actors, policy relevant events, and the focal policy issue. Episodes of policy conflict shape the

⁴ I borrow the concept of policy core belief, as it is relevant for understanding policy actors’ positions as PCF mentions PCF (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 28). Weible and Heikkila, however, do not discuss the concept in detail.

outputs and outcomes of the policymaking process, which can have a feedback effect on the policy setting in the form of deliberative changes, continuation of public policies, or changing the roles different actors play in the policymaking process (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Possible feedback effects of policy conflict include changes in or deliberate continuation of public policies and changes among policy actors due the policy conflict (Weible & Heikkila, 2017).

Figure 1: Policy conflict framework – flow diagram



Source: Weible and Heikkila (2017: 27)

The policy setting

PCF notes that policy conflicts may arise “across three polycentric levels of action: political system, policy subsystem, and policy action situations” (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 25). The political system refers to the national and sub-national levels of government in federal systems, whereas the policy subsystem focuses on a policy topic, a geographical area, and the actors involved. For example, the U.S. political system may refer to the federal or any state or local government(s), a subsystem may refer to a specific policy domain (such as housing, transportation, or public health) in a given city, county, or metropolitan region and to the actors involved in the policymaking process. Attributes of the levels of action include institutional, socioeconomic, and physical conditions. Policy action situations are “formal and informal

venues where policy actors engage, debate, and attempt to address problems around policy issues” (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 26).

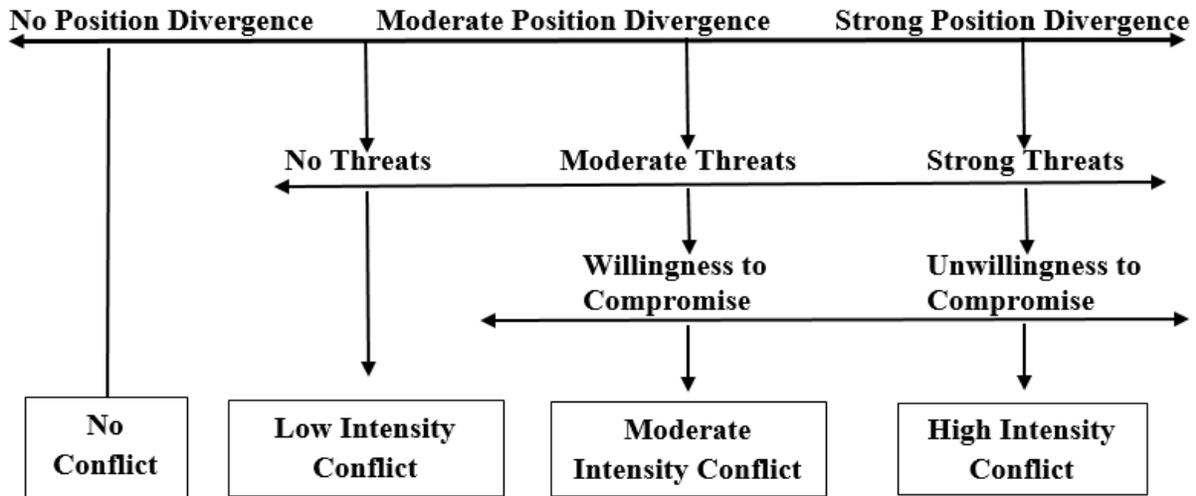
The framework further notes that policy actors—defined here as individuals involved in various stages of the policymaking process—face cognitive constraints and can exhibit different cognitive and behavioral traits depending on the policy setting. The cognitive characteristics of policy conflict include divergence in policy positions (“position divergence”) among two or more actors, perceived threats from opponents’ policy positions, and unwillingness to compromise. The behavioral characteristics of conflict include policy actors’ use of strategies and tactics to pursue their objectives: how they respond to members of their own group as well as those belonging to other groups (Weible & Heikkila, 2017).

Episodes of policy conflict

Episodes of policy conflict are shaped by the behavioral and cognitive characteristics of policy actors. Behavioral characteristics refer to the political strategies or tactics adopted by individual policy actors. Such characteristics include direct or indirect efforts by individuals to influence policy outputs and outcomes and how those efforts are conducted (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Cognitive characteristics are associated with the intensity of policy conflicts, and they include (1) divergence in policy positions (i.e., policy position divergence), (2) policy actor’s perception of threat from other actors’ policy positions, and (3) unwillingness among actors to compromise on policy issues (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). PCF defines policy position divergence as the “degree to which actors express differences on the formation, adoption, or implementation of public policies” (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 29). According to PCF, if a policy action situation has only position divergences and no threats from actors’ policy positions, it is a low intensity conflict; if policy actors perceive threats to themselves, their personal interests, or their

constituents’ interests from other actors’ policy positions, the situation is considered one of moderate intensity conflict; and if the situation includes actors who are unwilling to make compromises in their positions, such a scenario is characterized as a high intensity conflict. Figure 2 shows how the cognitive characteristics contribute to the intensity of policy conflict.

Figure 2: Intensity spectrum of policy conflicts



Source: Weible & Heikkila (2017: 30)

For this study, I focus on *position divergence* among policy actors, the individuals involved in policy making. Position divergence is one of the fundamental characteristics of policy conflict, as the absence of position divergence implies there is no conflict (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Although I consider elements of the political system such as state government policies, my focus is on policy subsystems, which include a locale, a policy topic, and policy actors (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). For the locale, I consider localities in Maryland;⁵ for the policy actors, I consider local government officials in Maryland; and for the policy topic, I examine community sustainability policies in the state with a focus on affordability housing. By applying PCF to regional policymaking, this research examines (1) the nature of conflict, (2)

⁵ In this study, the term locality refers to either a county or a municipality (e.g., city, town).

possible factors that contribute to policy conflict, and (3) a potential mechanism for reducing conflict. Although I rely mostly on PCF, I also make use of a construct—policy core beliefs—from the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).⁶ In the following section, I discuss how different elements of PCF and ACF help explain position divergences among policy actors.

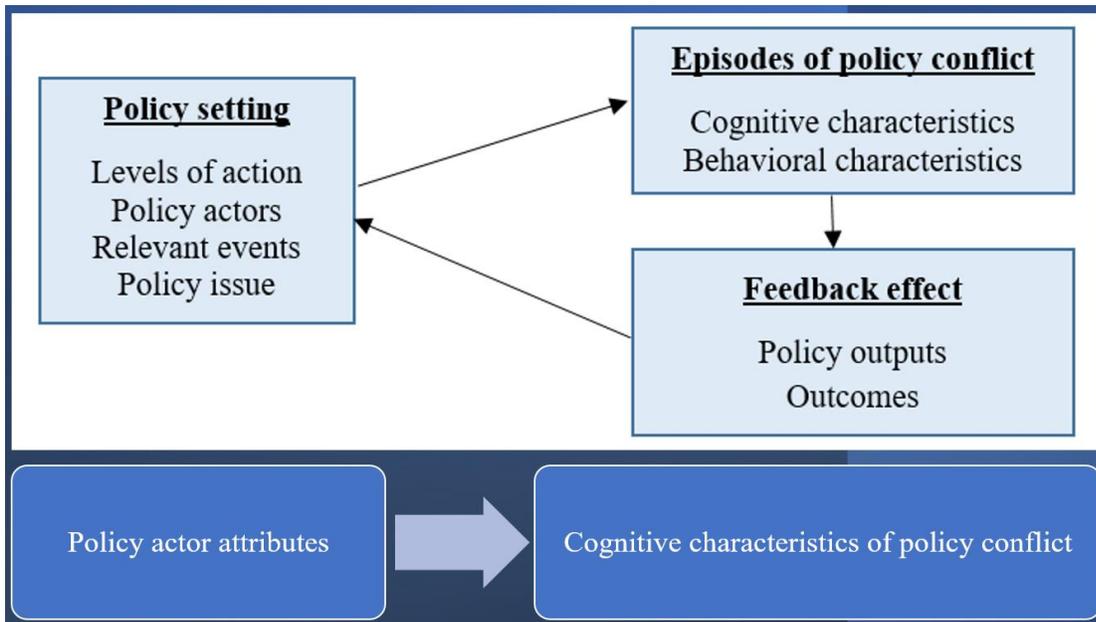
Expectations: Position divergence and engagement with regional governance

According to PCF, attributes of the policy setting—levels of action, policy actors, policy issue, and relevant events—can affect the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of policy conflicts. Policy actor attributes—including intrapersonal and interpersonal attributes—can influence cognitive characteristics of policy conflicts such as policy position divergence. Intrapersonal attributes refer to the attributes of individual policy actors, including deep core beliefs, policy-relevant knowledge, and policy issues (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Deep core beliefs are fundamental normative or ontological orientations that can influence people’s policy positions and their willingness to compromise on a policy position. Policy-relevant knowledge may be based on a policy actor’s experience, expertise, or training on the policy issue. Policy knowledge helps shape the cognitive lenses through which actors view a policy issue. Policy issues involve potential societal benefits or risks. PCF argues that perceptions of risks and benefits associated with a particular policy issue can shape policy conflict characteristics (Weible & Heikkila, 2017).

⁶ Although PCF borrows a number of ideas and constructs from ACF such as “deep core beliefs” and “devil shift,” the former does not explicitly discuss “policy core beliefs,” another construct of ACF. In this study, I use policy core beliefs in one of the hypotheses, which allows me to examine whether and how policy actors’ engagement in regional governance is associated with reduced levels of position divergence.

Policy position divergence is closely related to policy core policy preferences, which are shaped by policy core beliefs (Weible & Heikkila, 2017; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Here, I include another intrapersonal actor attribute, policy core belief, which is an ACF construct.

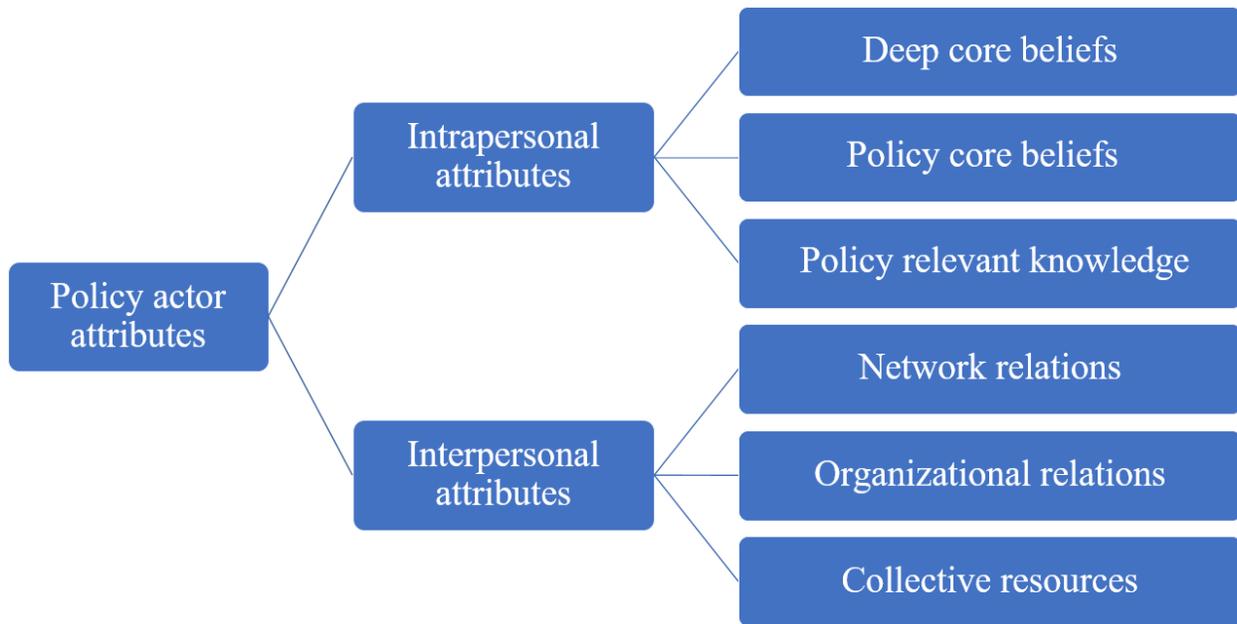
Figure 3: Actor attributes and cognitive characteristics of conflict



The advocacy coalition framework maintains that policy core beliefs lie in the middle of a tripartite belief system with deep core beliefs at the center and secondary aspects at the periphery (Sabatier, 1998; Valman, 2016). Policy core beliefs are actors’ “basic normative commitments and causal perceptions across an entire policy domain or subsystem” (Sabatier, 1998: 104). Policy core beliefs include “shared values, perceptions of causes and effects, seriousness of the problem, and basic policy preferences” (Valman, 2016: 3). These beliefs can influence policymakers’ positions on a certain policy. Whereas deep core beliefs are resistant to change, policy core beliefs shift actors’ as normative and empirical commitments change over time (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Zafonte & Sabatier, 1998; Weible & Sabatier, 2009). Policy actors’ policy-relevant knowledge about policy issues is another major source of policy

conflict (Luskin, 1990; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Differing levels of knowledge of policy-related matters leads policy actors to develop different views on the issue, which ultimately causes their policy positions to be different and sometimes inconsistent. Figure 4 shows the policy actor attributes relevant to this study.

Figure 4: Attributes of policy actors

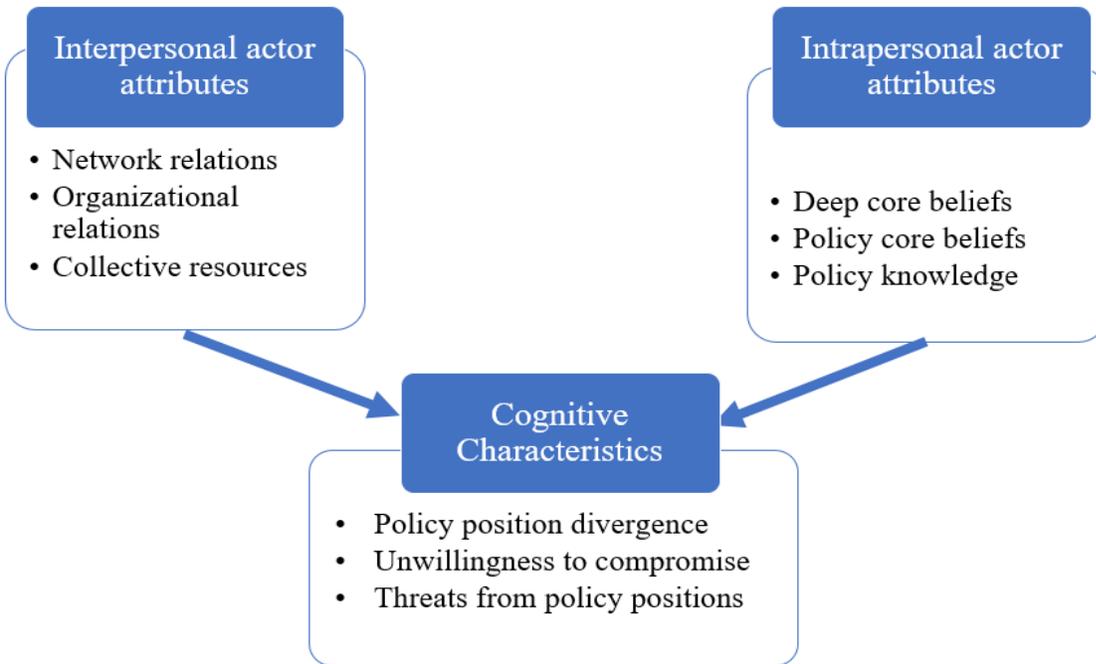


The PCF argues that policy actor attributes—both intrapersonal and interpersonal—can influence the cognitive characteristics of policy conflict (see Figure 5).⁷ The interpersonal attributes of policy actors refer to the interconnections among people and organizations, such as their organizational affiliations, base network relations, and political resources (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). In the framework, base network relations are the network contacts of policy actors that can be used for coalitions, and political resources refer to the means by which policy actors try to influence public policies (Weible & Heikkila, 2017; Dahl, 2006).

⁷ This study focuses on whether and how interpersonal attributes affect position divergence directly or indirectly.

The organizational relations of policy actors influence both the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of policy conflicts (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). This implies that organizational affiliation can shape the policy beliefs, views, and policy positions of members. In organizations, members are encouraged to share information and knowledge (Yang & Maxwell, 2011; Zhang, Dawes, & Sarkis, 2005). Policy actors with the same organizational affiliation frequently identify with policy positions “in similar and sometimes overlapping ways” (Bailey, 2021: 17). Thus, affiliation with the same organization or participation in a common network are likely to instill shared beliefs on policy matters among individuals. For example, Bailey (2021) finds that local government officials tend to emphasize legislation, regulation, and rulemaking as influential factors in policy conflicts. Social relations coupled with formal and informal rules in an organization help develop trust among members (Cairney & Wellstead, 2019). Policy actors with different organizational affiliations, on the other hand, may take divergent actions and strategies to influence the conflict (Bailey, 2021).

Figure 5: Relationship between actor attributes and cognitive characteristics



Network relations of policy actors also can shape cognitive and behavioral characteristics of policy conflict (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Networks facilitate learning and help develop social capital (Poocharoen & Tign, 2015; Newig et al., 2010). Networks provide a platform for learning by transmitting information among members; networks also facilitate deliberation (Newig et al., 2010). Networks help develop legitimacy and mutual trust among their members. Trust and resource dependence drive coordination in networks (Calanni et al., 2015). Shared learning and mutual trust developed within a network are likely to inculcate some shared understanding among members, which can lower the level of position divergence among them.

Thus, the interpersonal attributes of policy actors may be associated in different ways with their policy relevant knowledge, views, beliefs, and policy positions. The next section details how these actors' engagement with regional governance (an interpersonal attribute) might influence their intrapersonal attributes (such as policy core beliefs and policy relevant knowledge), which in turn influence the cognitive characteristics of policy conflict (such as

policy position divergence). To this end, I briefly discuss relevant concepts such as regional governance, engagement, governance learning, and social learning.

Engagement with regional governance

Regional governance can be described as a process in which policymakers—local government officials, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, and officials of regional governance organizations—discuss regional problems and priorities, undertake regional planning, and formulate policies that serve an entire region or multiple localities within a region. Engagement refers to connection, participation, and involvement (Johnston, 2018: 20). Johnson (2018) notes that engagement is a social process, where actors participate in something to which they have a connection, or they are involved in the process. Engagement with regional governance can take place in many ways. In some cases, engagement with regional governance implies participation in regional governance organizations; in other cases, policymakers can engage with regional governance by contributing to regional planning or development efforts without being directly involved in regional organizations (Kwon et al., 2014).

Engagement with regional governance organizations can occur in different ways: serving on the executive board of a regional organizations as a member or director, serving on a general policy council, serving as an adviser or expert on a committee or subcommittee, serving as a professional staffer, or serving as an outside consultant (Bryan & Wolf, 2010, pp. 194-196; Miller & Nelles, 2018, pp. 194-196). Membership in these regional governance organizations is one way for policymakers to engage with regional governance (Whisman, 2013a, pp. 51-53). Regional organizations' members include representatives of counties and municipalities, Native American tribes, nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce, and state governments; even individual private citizens may be members (Whisman, 2013a, pp. 51-52).

Local government officials (both elected and appointed) may participate in the activities of regional organizations as general policy council members, executive board members, and members of various committees. While each local government is represented by one or more representatives in the general policy council, their voting power in the executive board is determined by factors such as the type of local government (county, city, or municipality), population, and state government policies (Miller & Nelles, 2018, pp. 195-198). For this study, engagement with regional governance is defined as *participating in the activities of regional governance organizations either as a staff member or a representative of a locality, being involved with regional planning or development efforts, or participating in a formal or informal initiative aimed at identifying or solving a regional problem.*

Relationships between engagement with regional governance and position divergence

As noted earlier, engagement with regional governance often involves working with or working in a regional governance organization. Thurmaier and Wood (2002) consider a regional council a broker for interlocal cooperation. According to Kwon and Park (2014), “regional organizations have centralized impacts on interlocal cooperation efforts in land development issues” (p. 938). With an adequate amount of resources, these organizations “can substitute for or crowd out voluntary cooperation by playing a proactive role in regional governance” (Kwon & Park 2014: 938). As local government officials engage in regional governance, they often work with other local government officials or professional staff of these regional organizations. The former’s interactions with others involved in regional governance can shape their policy positions. However, it should be noted that regional governance can take place outside regional organizations such as metropolitan planning councils or councils of governments. This study, therefore, considers engagement with regional governance in broad sense of the term.

By engaging in regional governance, an individual may forge connections with others involved in regional governance. I argue that policy actors' engagement with regional governance can shape their policy positions in certain ways and hence contribute to their policy positions becoming more homogeneous with those of actors similarly involved. As a result, position divergence among those engaged in regional governance will be lower than that among those who are not engaged in regional governance.

Engagement in regional governance provides opportunities for learning for all who are involved in such governance.⁸ It allows policymakers to interact with other policymakers and subject matter experts and to study information related to regional governance (Willi, Pütz, & Müller, 2018; Morrison, 2014). Based on traditional learning theories from the field of education, one can argue that such engagement offers policymakers many opportunities for learning from peer-to-peer interaction, analyzing data, and other pertinent information.⁹ Thus, engagement in regional governance can lead to changes in understanding about problems, challenges, and issues. Scholars have identified a number of ways (many of which share similar characteristics) in which one's understanding of policy issues and policy beliefs can change: governance learning, policy learning, epistemic learning, and belief reinforcement. In what follows, I elaborate on a mechanism of governance learning ("social learning") that describes how engagement with regional governance may be associated with more homogeneous policy knowledge, beliefs, views and policy positions (that is, with lower position divergence).

⁸ In these learning theories, learning takes place through three distinct modes of interaction: student-student; student-teacher; student-content (see Anderson, 2006, p. 141; Borokhovski, Tamim, Bernard, Abrami, & Sokolovskaya, 2012; Joksimović, Gašević, Loughin, Kovanović, & Hatala, 2015).

⁹ Engagement with regional governance offers learning opportunities similar to traditional learning opportunities; policymakers' interaction with other policymakers is similar to student-student interactions, interaction with experts is similar to student-teacher interaction, and their interaction with the data and literature on regional governance is similar to student-content interaction.

Governance learning takes place when participants in the governance process learn from each other's past experiences via a co-production of knowledge (Newig, Kochskämper, Challies, & Jager, 2016). A related concept is policy learning: adjustments to actors' understandings and beliefs related to existing or proposed public policy (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013). Policy learning implies policymakers' acquisition of new values, beliefs, interpretations of a policy problem, or technical knowledge about how policy should be made (Trein, 2015). Policy learning can converge with policy beliefs and help build consensus around certain ideas and issues (Leach, Weible, Vince, Siddiki, & Calanni, 2014).

In the United States, metropolitan or regional organizations provide a mechanism for regional governance. Regional governance organizations (RGOs) operate as formal networks (mandated and recognized by state government) in most states and informal networks in some states including Maryland (Richgels, 2005).¹⁰ Regional organizations develop and disseminate information about regional interests and priorities; they often form committees to work on specific topics/issues (Hoon, 2007; Bryan & Wolf, 2010; Growe & Jemming, 2019). Leaders in these organizations may influence members (Heimovics, Herman, & Coughlin, 1993; Sotarauta, 2009; Kriesberg, 1997), and professionals in the regional organization can clarify and help remove doubts from members' minds on policy issues (Sharma, 1997; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2001; Adler, Kwon, & Heckscher, 2008).

Members of regional organizations also participate in formal meetings and events. As a result of such interactions, local government officials affiliated with one or more regional

¹⁰ According to the National Association of Development Organizations, 39 U.S. states have formal organizational structures and recognized networks of regional development organizations, which include regional planning councils. Maryland is considered as having an informal network, although local governments and existing regional organizations in the state have been trying to develop a statewide association of regional organizations.

organizations may hold similar policy positions and show reduced position divergence. As policymakers engage in planning, development, and policymaking in general, they are likely to learn from each other, and this learning can render their ideas, aspirations, and beliefs relatively more homogeneous. The next section focuses on a particular mechanism of governance learning: social learning.¹¹

Social learning

Social learning is a process in which a group of people with diverse but common interests “come together to reach agreement on collective action to solve a mutual problem” (Webler et al., 1995: 445). Other scholars define social learning as “learning that occurs when people engage one another, sharing diverse perspectives and experiences to develop a common framework of understanding and basis for joint action” (Schusler et al., 2003: 312). Armitage et al., (2008) define social learning as a process of iterative reflection that takes place when individuals share their experiences, ideas, and environments with others.

Scholars have identified a number of components of social learning. Interactions among stakeholders are critical parts of the social learning process (Benhangi et al., 2020). Face-to-face interactions provide a starting point for social learning (Anderies et al., 2011), which occurs as “individuals interact with each other in an environment by direct observation of one another’s actions” (Benhangi et al., 2020:: 1). The key features of social learning include “learning from others through interactions, learning from past experiences to confront changes, and devising

¹¹ In the field of education, several theories—including Cognitive Learning Theory, Behaviorism Learning Theory, Constructivism Learning Theory, Humanism Learning Theory, Connectivism Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Social Learning Theory—have been employed to describe the process of learning. Governance learning can be explained with the help of social learning theory, which highlights learning that takes place because of mutual interactions among learners, observation of each other’s attitudes and behavior, and internal reflections among learners.

responses to adapt to changes” (Benhangi et al., 2020: 2). Social learning can shape various aspects of the social environment including stakeholders’ knowledge, awareness, and mutual trust. Social learning helps to create new knowledge, develop shared understanding, grow mutual trust, and facilitate collective actions (Benhangi et al., 2020). Social learning can result in the development of “a shared vision by the stakeholders as a basis for collective actions” (Benhangi et al., 2020: 2). As a result of social learning, awareness of relevant issues increases, and individuals are better able to see how their private interests are linked with the interests of others (McCarthy, 2006; Webler et al., 1995).

Benhangi et al., (2020) analyze different dimensions of social learning including its depth, width, direction, and orientation. In order to tap social learning, it is important to consider the level and depth of interaction among various stakeholders (Benhangi et al., 2020). The dimensions of depth and direction are germane to this research. *Depth* refers to whether learning leads to questioning individuals’ preconceived notions and assumptions about something, re-shaping actors’ attitudes and decision rules and changing actors’ understanding, values, and worldviews or their decisions and actions (Benhangi et al., 2020). *Direction* focuses on whether social learning contributes to the convergence or divergence of actors’ views, interests, and opinions (Benhangi et al., 2020). In the past, scholars have studied social learning in the context of multi-level governance (see Armitage, 2008), collaborative environmental management and water governance (e.g., Benhangi et al., 2020; Armitage et al., 2008; Pahl-Wostl, 2002), and regional policymaking and planning (Davidson & Lockwood, 2008; McCarthy, 2006).¹²

Sustainability, regional governance, and social learning

¹² These articles are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Governance in general, and regional governance in particular, involve interactions among participants (Kemp et al., 2005: 17; Cappellin, 2007; Wessner & Shivakumar, 2012). Interaction among various actors is the key to policy initiatives and to governance learning, which are essential in promoting knowledge-based regional economies (Cappellin, 2007). In the case of regional development, federal, state, and local governments seek to promote high levels of interaction among stakeholders involved in the process (Wessner & Shivakumar, 2012). This interaction allows for social learning. Regional governance involves cooperation between actors in a region, which allows them to learn from each other (Hassink, 2005). Regional governance—frequently involving participants from state and local governments, nonprofits, and the business sector—is by nature multi-level governance. Many contend that engagement with multi-level governance results in social learning (Armitage, 2008; Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2020).

Engagement in regional governance is associated with governance learning. Drawing from examples of regional development policies and initiatives in Europe, Legendjik (1999) observed that localities are engaged in learning by doing, which often permits better policy intervention. Engagement in regional governance requires certain social capital such as mutual trust and a collaborative attitude. Bürcher and Mayer (2017) highlight the role of inclusive social capital, which enables regional collaboration to facilitate joint learning and knowledge spillovers, based upon trusting relationships between actors. In the context of sustainability and sustainable development, governance often takes place via partnerships among governments, corporate entities, and nonprofit organizations (Benn, 2010). Such partnerships offer social learning opportunities for the stakeholders involved in the governance process (Benn, 2010; Strand, 2009). Social learning is essential for facilitating sustainable development (Stagl, 2007).

Engagement with regional governance, then, involves social interactions and involvement in multi-level governance, both of which provide opportunities for social learning. Potential outcomes of social learning for those engaged in regional governance include changes in attitudes, behavior, or norms. Social learning also can result in building trust and respect among learners and in highlighting shared goals (Ison et al., 2007; Stagl, 2007). More generally, engagement with regional governance may result in governance learning, which implies that those engaged in regional governance are likely to be influenced by developing a common body of knowledge, shared goals, and mutual trust. In turn, those engaged in regional governance may have similar policy beliefs and policy positions.

Proposition 1: *Local government officials engaged in regional governance will show lower levels of position divergence in a given policy area compared to those who are not engaged with regional governance.*

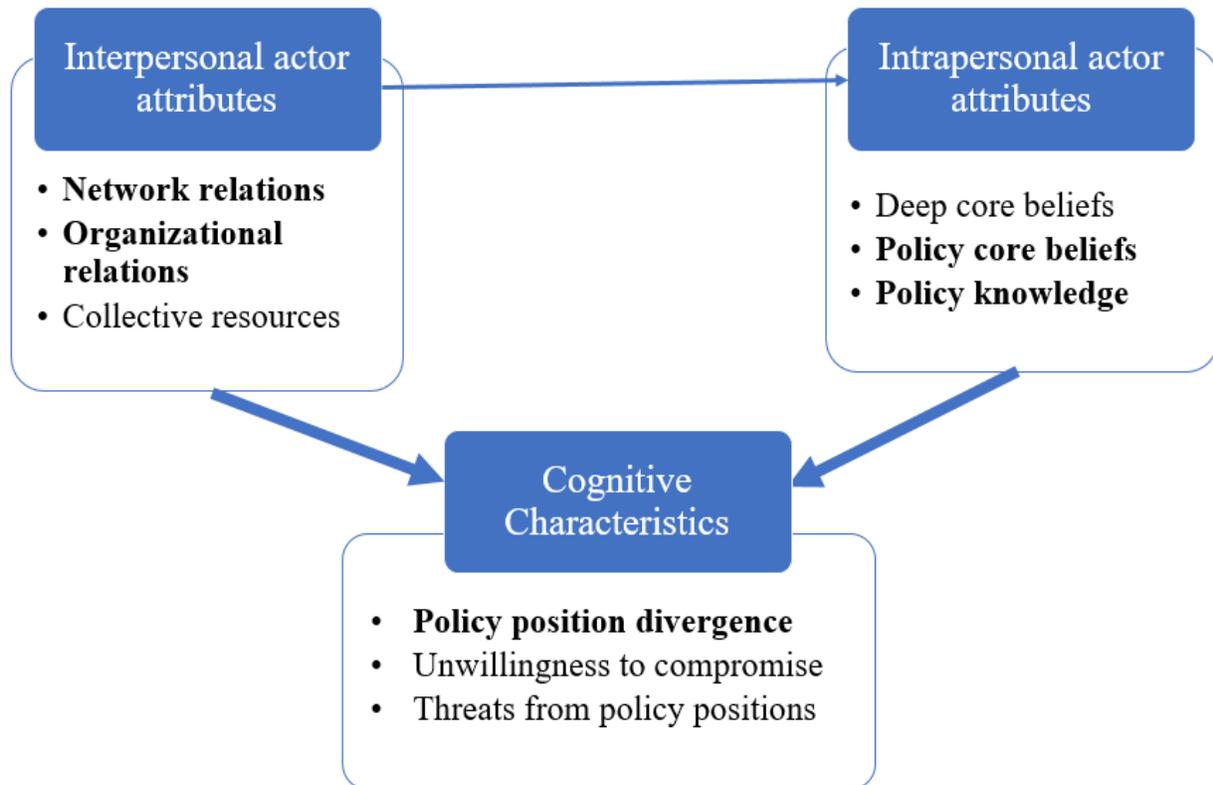
It should be noted, of course, that engagement in regional governance may not always produce social learning or reports of shared goals or common views on policy-related matters (Reed et al., 2010). One needs to demonstrate empirically both whether social learning is associated with engagement in regional governance and whether learning is related to shared beliefs and views on policy-related matters.

Earlier, I examined how intrapersonal and interpersonal attributes of policy actors can influence the cognitive characteristics of policy conflicts (see Figure 4). This study focuses specifically on how *interpersonal attributes* of policy actors can influence *policy position divergence*, which is a cognitive characteristic of policy conflict. Interpersonal attributes of policy actors can have two types of influence on cognitive characteristics—*direct influence*

(shown by bold arrows in Figure 6) and *indirect influence* (shown by the thin arrow connecting interpersonal and intrapersonal attributes).

Figure 6 demonstrates two potential ways in which actor attributes can shape position divergence. In what follows, I argue that the *interpersonal attributes of actors can also influence cognitive characteristics of policy conflict indirectly via intrapersonal characteristics*. That is, interpersonal attributes can influence intrapersonal attributes, which in turn can influence cognitive characteristics.

Figure 6: Actor attributes and cognitive characteristics of policy conflicts



For local government officials engaging in regional governance, exposure to other policymakers' beliefs, views, and policy positions, coupled with discussion, deliberation, and opportunities for self-reflection, is likely to facilitate two kinds of changes: (1) changes in

officials' *policy relevant knowledge* and (2) changes in their *policy core beliefs*.¹³ As policymakers work toward solving problems, managing resources, and promoting regional interests, they may develop similar views on policy-related matters. Thus, one can reasonably expect that *local government officials engaged with regional governance will show more homogeneity in their level of policy relevant knowledge and policy core beliefs than those who do not engage with regional governance*. Since policy knowledge and policy core beliefs are actor attributes, changes in these two are likely to induce changes in cognitive characteristics (policy position divergence). In PCF parlance, *interpersonal attributes of policy actors can influence their intrapersonal attributes, which in turn can influence the cognitive characteristics of policy conflict such as policy position divergence*.¹⁴

Engagement with regional governance allows actors to strengthen their network relations and organizational relations and to have greater access to information, fiscal resources, and gain public support.¹⁵ For these policy actors, stronger relations with each other and greater access to information and having public support can influence policy position divergence. Furthermore, as local government officials engage with regional governance, they get exposed to new knowledge (through reports published by regional organizations, regional planning documents, and data about the region), and as they interact with each other, they learn about the beliefs, views, and

¹³ Note that according to the PCF, the main attributes of policy actors are their (1) deep core beliefs and (2) policy-relevant knowledge. A third attribute (which PCF mentions but does not elaborate on) is policy core beliefs. A number of scholars argue that deep core beliefs are more deeply rooted and unlikely to change because of social learning; hence this study focuses on policy core beliefs and policy relevant knowledge.

¹⁴ The reverse of this proposition may also be true, since the intrapersonal attributes of policy actors can to a large extent affect what kind of organizational affiliation they form, what network relationships they participate in, and what kind of political/collective resources they can access. This study, however, focuses on the potential influence of interpersonal attributes on the intrapersonal attributes of policy actors, which has not yet been explored in this context.

¹⁵ However, note that in the case of unpopular policy issues, LGOs may face public opposition, which may shift their policy positions. Consequently, they may express views and adopt policy positions that do not necessarily align with regional priorities or priorities of other localities. This can increase position divergence, rather than reducing it.

policy positions of other policymakers. This exposure and interaction are likely to result in social learning. The level of interaction in a group is a strong predictor of learning (Barron, 2006; Slavin, 1996; Webb, 1989). In peer-to-peer interactions, the degree of interaction is related to learning; more frequent interaction with regional governance is likely to be associated with more interactions among peers, which can result in greater learning (Kimbrough, McGee, & Shigeoka, 2022). This interaction can be formal, in the context of organizational rules and procedures, as well as informal, outside of the organization. Those engaged with regional governance are likely to be engaged in social learning from information about the region and interaction with other policymakers. As regional policymaking often involves dealing with sustainability policies in general and affordable housing in particular, those engaged in regional governance are likely to acquire knowledge about sustainability policies via social learning opportunities. This social learning should allow their policy-relevant knowledge to be more accurate and uniform than that of those that are not engaged in regional governance.

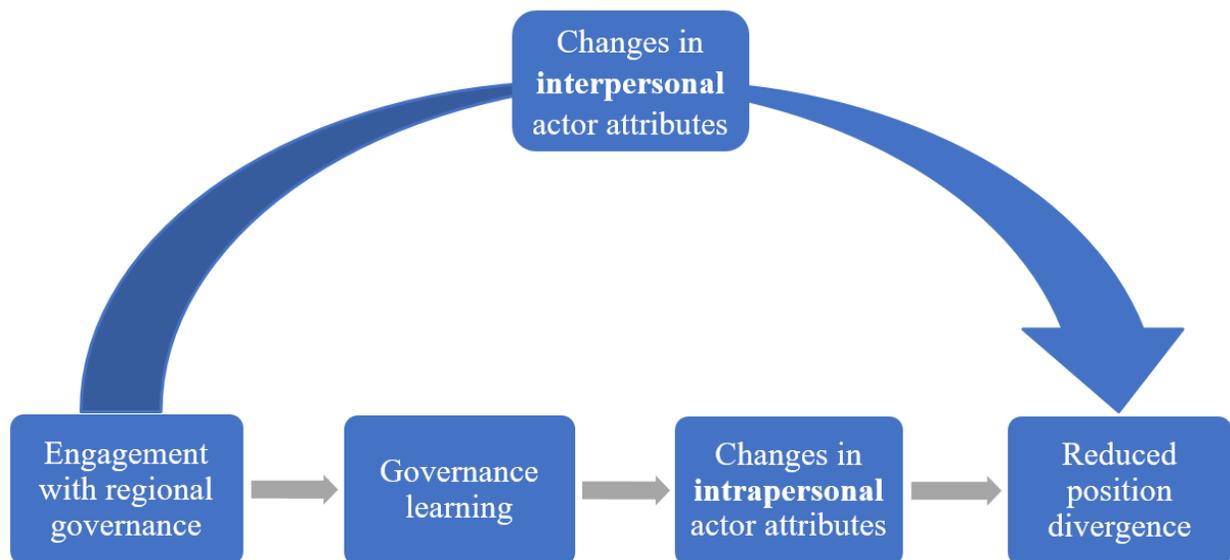
Proposition 2. *Local government officials engaged with regional governance will have better knowledge of regionally relevant policies than those who are not engaged with regional governance.*

At the same time, local government officials who come from different social, cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds are likely to have heterogeneous policy core beliefs. Engagement with regional governance, however, is likely to induce social learning in local government officials, which can shift their policy beliefs. Since engagement with regional governance involves learning from similar information sources, dealing with similar issues, working under similar resource constraints, and similar regional leaderships, it seems likely to shift their policy beliefs in similar directions and hence make those beliefs more homogeneous.

Proposition 3. *Local government officials engaged with regional governance will show more homogeneity in their core beliefs about sustainability policy in general and affordable housing policy in particular than those not engaged with regional governance.*

In summary, the theoretical framework includes several components (see Figure 7).¹⁶ Engagement with regional governance (ERG) can influence both intrapersonal and interpersonal actor attributes, which in turn can influence cognitive characteristics of policy conflicts. Interpersonal attributes such as organizational and network relations also can affect a policy actor's intrapersonal attributes such as policy core beliefs and policy-relevant knowledge. This can influence the actor's policy-related views and policy positions. As policy actors engaged in regional governance work together on similar problems and face similar challenges, they interact with each other, learn from each other, and share a common knowledgebase.

Figure 7: Engagement with regional governance and position divergence



¹⁶ This summarizes the theoretical arguments that lead to the claim that policy actors' engagement with regional governance can be expected to reduce position divergence. Yet, this study does not fully examine the framework empirically; causal analysis is limited in part by the cross-sectional research design.

Thus, engagement with regional governance may be likely to shape policy actors' views on policy-related matters and homogenize their policy positions. These potential influences on actors' views on policy-related matters are likely to reduce position divergence among those engaged in regional governance. Thus, policy actors engaged with regional governance are expected to show lower policy position divergence compared to those that are not engaged in regional governance.

This expectation comes with a caveat. Although it is reasonable to expect that engagement in regional governance may increase homogeneity in actors' policy core beliefs, this may not always be true. Since engagement with regional governance is likely to strengthen one's network relations (which include exposure to like-minded policymakers) and political resources (which include public support for or opposition to a policy), different policymakers may take different positions, and their beliefs may consolidate in different directions rather than shifting in a single direction. This can result in an increase in heterogeneity in policy actors' core beliefs. Only empirical analysis can reveal whether the salience of or support for a policy can dominate the influence that engagement with regional governance may have on the policymakers' core beliefs. Chapter 4 turns to the research design employed for exploring these propositions further.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter examines the study’s research design. First, it describes the policy setting—regional metropolitan governance, followed by explaining why Maryland is a particularly good state for studying policy conflicts. This is followed by an overview of relevant policy developments that took place between 2010 and 2020—the time-frame in which the study examines policy conflict. Then, attention turns to the strategy used for data collection before returning to the research questions, propositions, and hypotheses. Position divergence, the key dependent variable, is examined in two ways—descriptive and formal. This is followed by a discussion of the operationalization of variables and examination of the hypotheses. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the methods of data analysis.

4.1 Research Setting

Regional governance involves planning and program implementation on a wide variety of issues including transportation, housing, economic development, energy, and the environment (Higgins, 2018). Regional governance involves elected and appointed local government officials, business leaders, and civil society leaders. As these policy actors come from a wide variety of backgrounds with diverse interests and aspirations, their views and positions on policy-related matters often diverge, which can result in policy conflicts.

Policymaking at the regional level—especially policies that address social and environmental concerns—is prone to conflicts due to both the multiplicity of interests and ideological heterogeneity (Clayton, 2018; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Provo, 2009). Brenner (2002) noted that “regionalist projects in the USA are extremely heterogeneous, both institutionally and politically, and are permeated by significant internal conflicts and

contradictions” (p. 1). Nevertheless, policies on transportation, economic development, and housing often are made at the regional level and they involve multiple jurisdictions. This implies that regional governance includes some mechanisms for managing conflicts. As this dissertation probes policy conflict, it makes sense to examine policy position divergence among local government officials and whether and how engagement with regional governance might reduce the divergence.

This study considers community sustainability as a broad policy domain, and in that domain it focuses on affordable housing. Affordable housing policy is an area that is mostly a concern of social sustainability but it is also relevant to economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, influencing health, employment prospects, and education (Olsen & Zabel, 2015). The price and location of housing affect the distances people travel to work, a major concern of environmental sustainability. At the regional level, sustainability policies, in general, and affordable housing policy, in particular, are highly susceptible to policy conflicts for numerous reasons, including local governments’ priorities, budgetary constraints, and the ideological orientations of elected leaders and their constituents. This policy focus allows me to examine the position divergence of policymakers on a set of related topics.

By considering community sustainability and housing policies in Maryland, I am able to control for many features of the policy setting. At the state government level, local and regional policymakers face a similar set of policy priorities, regulatory environment, and fiscal support; local-regional relationships also are likely to be similar. Controlling for the nature of relationships between local jurisdictions and regional governance entities is important because such relationships may shape how different localities deal with regional governance. In states such as California, New York, and Oregon, for example, state governments strongly encourage

regional collaboration and have state associations of regional councils, whereas in states like Delaware, Hawaii, Nevada, and Maryland, state associations do not actively facilitate regional governance.¹⁷ Furthermore, as a coastal state, Maryland places high priority on sustainability, which is reflected in its adoption of smart-growth policies and the Maryland Sustainable Communities Initiative.

Maryland also is racially and socioeconomically diverse. Table 2, for example, shows that Maryland has a larger percentage of non-Whites than the U.S. national average.

Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics - Maryland and the United States, 2020

	Socioeconomic Characteristics	Maryland	United States
ETHNICITY, RACE	White alone, percent	58.50%	76.30%
	Black or African American alone, percent	31.10%	13.40%
	Asian alone, percent	6.70%	5.90%
	Hispanic or Latino, percent	10.60%	18.50%
HOUSING	Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$314,800	\$217,500
	Median selected monthly owner costs -with mortgage	\$2,017	\$1,595
	Median selected monthly owner costs -without mortgage	\$627	\$500
	Median gross monthly rent	\$1,392	\$1,062
INCOME, POVERTY	Median household income (in 2019 dollars)	\$84,805	\$62,843
	Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2019 dollars)	\$42,122	\$34,103
	Persons in poverty, percent	9.00%	11.40%

Data source: U.S. Census QuickFacts, 2020.

In Maryland, African-Americans constitute over 31% of the population, whereas the national average is 13.4%. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Maryland was 45% higher than the national average. It not only costs more to own a house in Maryland, but renting also is notably significantly costlier in Maryland than in many other parts of the country. The median gross monthly rate for a housing unit in Maryland is 31% higher than the national average.

¹⁷ This is not a comprehensive list; the National Association of Regional Councils lists over 40 states with state associations of regional councils. Although Maryland does not have a state association of regional councils, it has an association of county governments: the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo).

At the state level, the median household income in Maryland is higher than the national average. In different jurisdictions, however, income is lower, and poverty is considerably higher than the national averages. According to 2019 U.S. Census data, eleven out of 24 jurisdictions had median household incomes that were less than the national average. Census data also show that while the percentage of people living in poverty in Maryland is less than the U.S. national average, in eight jurisdictions including Baltimore City, the poverty rates are higher than the national average.

Figure 8: Variation in median household income by locality

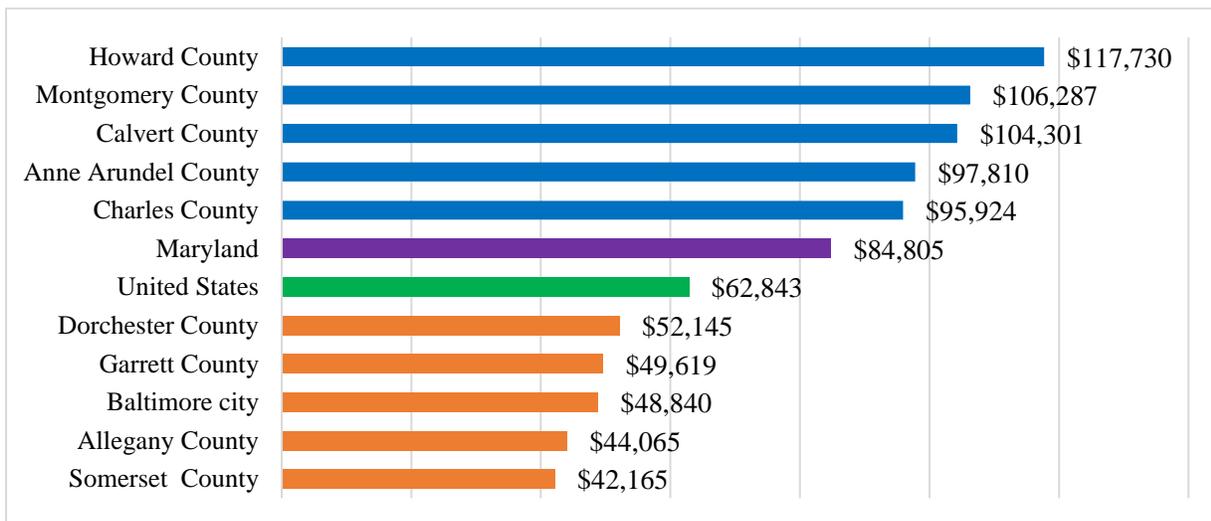
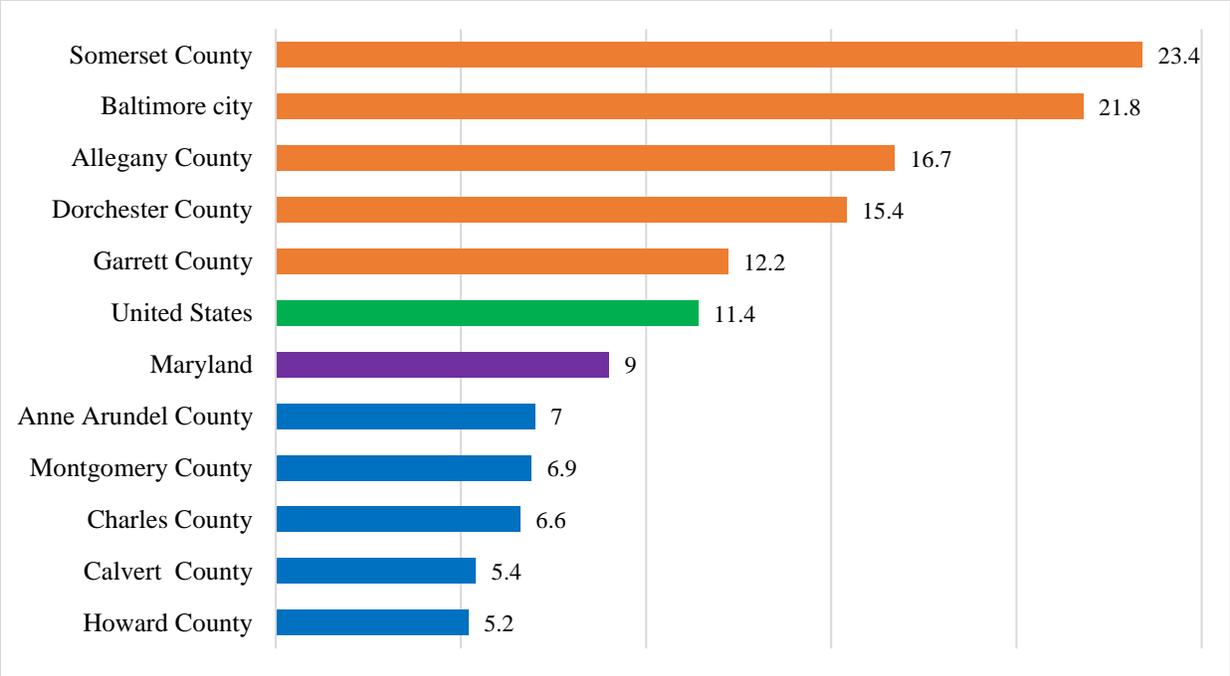


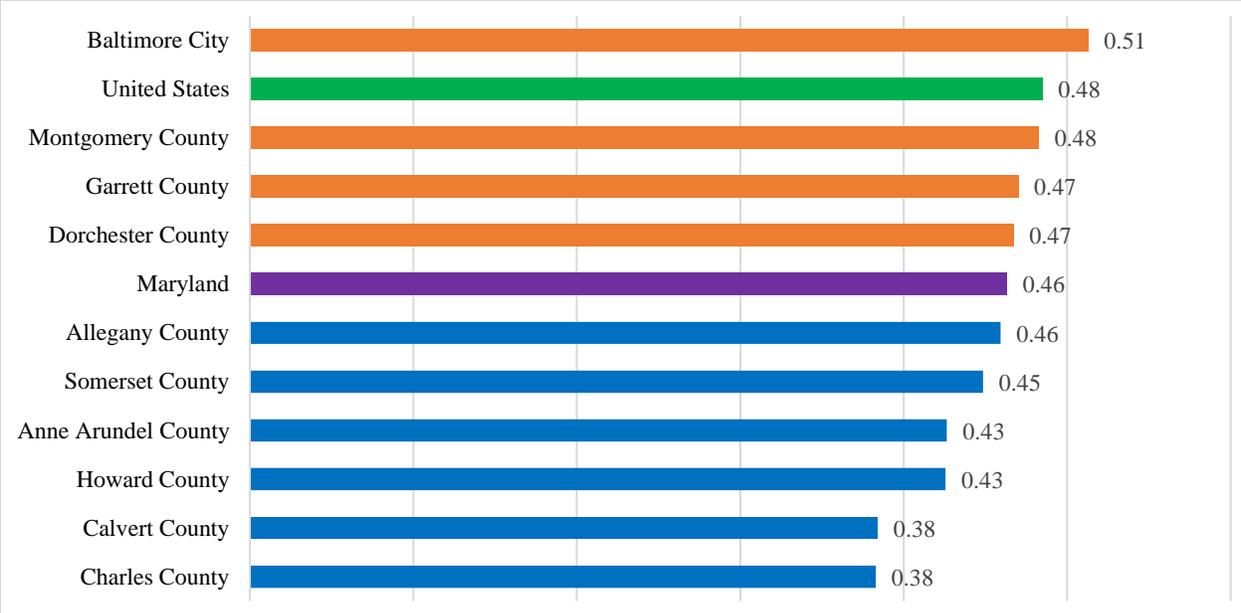
Figure 8 shows several Maryland counties and Baltimore City with varying levels of income. The income disparity between different localities in Maryland is critical. For instance, Howard County has a median household income exceeding \$117,000, whereas Somerset County’s median household income is slightly more than \$42,000. Meanwhile, Figure 9 shows the varying levels of poverty in several counties and in Baltimore City. For instance, more than 23% residents of Somerset County live in poverty, compared to only about 5% of Howard County residents.

Figure 9: Percentage of people living in poverty by locality



Income inequality in Maryland is another area of concern. Although, overall income inequality in the state is lower than the U.S. national average, localities like Baltimore City have higher income inequality than the national average. Studies have found that income inequality is increasing in the state (Goldstein, 2003). The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities finds that between 1990s and 2000’s, the average household income dropped by 6.4% for the poorest 20% of the population, whereas the household income for the middle 20% dropped by 1.8%, although, the household income did not change for the richest 20%. Starting from the 1970s, the average household income had increased by 5.9% for the poorest 20%, by 31.6% for the middle 20%, and by 77.5% for the richest 20%. Figure 10 shows the Gini index (a measure of income inequality) by county. Recent data on income inequality between 2001 and 2021 also show a similar trend. Another noteworthy point is that localities with higher income typically have higher inequality, with the exception of Baltimore City.

Figure 10: Income inequality (Gini Index) by jurisdiction



Social and economic data show that Maryland has relatively high levels of socioeconomic diversity and varying levels of need for addressing poverty across localities. These needs coupled with housing markets characterized by high prices indicate that Maryland jurisdictions are likely to have different social and economic priorities, which might lead local government officials to take divergent policy positions in areas such as community sustainability and affordable housing. Maryland, then, is a state with the potential for policy conflicts in community sustainability policies in general and in affordable housing policies in particular.

This research considers policy developments between 2010 and 2020. During this period, several policies aimed at community sustainability and affordable housing were adopted and implemented at the state level as well as in many localities across the United States. In 2009, the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a joint-partnership to improve access to affordable housing, offer residents better low cost transportation options, and help protect the environment. This partnership launched the Sustainable Communities Initiative–Regional

Planning Grants (SCI-RPG) program. Following this federal initiative, Maryland took a number of related steps, beginning with passage of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act in 2010. Table 3 lists major developments in Maryland related to sustainability and affordable housing between 2010 and 2019.

Table 3: Select community sustainability policies in Maryland, 2010-2019

Year	Policy/Initiative
2010	The state of Maryland passed the Sustainable Communities Act of 2010
2010	The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) was awarded the federal government's SCI-RPG grant
2012	BMC conducted analysis of Impediments to Regional Fair Housing.
2014	The Baltimore Regional Housing Plan was developed and Fair Housing Equity Assessment was conducted
2014	Howard County passed the Affordable/Fair Housing Bill
2015	BMC developed the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development
2016	Queen Anne's County conducted an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment
2018	The City of Baltimore passed a ban on housing discrimination based on the source of income
2019	The City of Baltimore passed Bill 18-0308, which would allow discrimination based on the source of income (with a 20% cap)
2019	The Baltimore County Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act was passed
2019	Anne Arundel County Council passed workforce housing legislation, but postpones anti-discrimination bill
2019	BMC conducted an Analysis of Impediments to Regional Fair Housing

4.2 Elaboration Model

This study uses the logic of the elaboration model to examine relationships between local government officials' engagement in regional governance and divergence in their policy positions. The elaboration model focuses on understanding the relationship between two variables by introducing additional variable(s), typically referred to as control or test variables (Babbie, 2007: 386-88; Aneshensel, 2012: 9-11). Introduction of control variables can help demonstrate that a hypothesized relationship between two variables is possible, rule out spurious associations, and suggest support or lack of support for additive, interactive, and other relationships involving the two focal variables (Aneshensel, 2012: 10). The elaboration model can be used to explore the relationship between two focal variables through four stages: (1) observation— establishing the original (zero-order) relationship, (2) replication—replicating the relationship in the presence of a third variable, (3) explanation—explaining away the initial relationship with the help of the third variable, and (4) specification—specifying the relationship under which the original relationship remains valid (Babbie, 2007, pp. 402-403).

This study examines whether and how the policy positions of local and regional policymakers on affordable housing varied and the relationship between engagement in regional governance and policymakers' position divergence. The research uses elements of both descriptive and correlational research designs. A descriptive design provides a snapshot of a particular, time-bound state of affairs, and correlational designs allow researchers to examine relationships between two or more variables (Stangor, 2015). Descriptive analysis can reveal what happened in a single event or in a few situations (Johnson, Reynolds, & Mycoff, 2015: 198), while correlational designs allow examination of expected relationships between and among variables and aid in making predictions (Stangor & Walinga, 2014).

I relied on description to better understand the policy-relevant knowledge, policy core beliefs, and policy positions of the focal policy actors. This allows initial understanding of how policymakers view different aspects of both sustainability policy and affordable housing policy. Then using the logic of the elaboration model, the relationship between officials' engagement with regional governance and policy position divergence is examined by introducing various control variables. Finally, multinomial logit regression is used to analyze the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy position divergence incorporating several explanatory variables. In addition, relationships between engagement with regional governance and (a) policy-relevant knowledge and (b) policy core beliefs are analyzed using cross-tabular and regression analyses. This provides ways of probing how engagement in regional governance might have shaped policy positions and hence divergence in policy positions.

Although this study considers community sustainability policies in Maryland between 2010 and 2020 for the research context, it employs a cross-sectional correlational design using data from a state-wide survey data to examine policymakers' views on related matters, their policy positions and position divergences, and how, if at all, these are associated with policymakers' engagement with regional governance. In the past, several studies in public administration and policy have used cross-sectional survey data to analyze position divergence and other aspects of the policy conflict framework (for example, see Lubell, Mewhirter, & Berardo, 2020; Weible, Heikkila, & Pierce, 2018; Katz, 2018; Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Olofsson, 2018). Since survey data can be used to both describe variables of interest and analyze relationships among the variables (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010; Stangor, 2015), using a cross-sectional design allows me to examine different aspects of policy position divergence as well as

whether and how position divergence is related with other individual, organizational, and socioeconomic factors. What it cannot do, of course, is track possible changes over time and in turn provide much evidence about causal relationships.

4.3 Data Collection

For this study, data were collected from multiple sources: (1) published documents and reports, (2) published data from the U.S. Census Bureau, (3) websites of local governments and regional (interlocal) organizations in Maryland, and (4) survey data from an original state-wide survey of local government and regional policymakers.

Reviewing published materials (such as planning and policy documents and annual reports) of various local governments along with those from regional organizations in Maryland helps in understanding recent policy developments and the policy landscape in the state in the early 2020s. A brief review of articles published in newspapers, magazines, and various web-portals on sustainability policy and affordable housing in Maryland offers evidence of different local governments' positions in particular policy areas. These articles also highlight the views and policy positions of local government officials on relevant topics.

Government data on socioeconomic factors aid in understanding several elements of the policy context: the possible strengths and weaknesses of different localities, needs and concerns of each locality, and budgetary opportunities and constraints. Some of these data are also used to tap control variables when examining the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy position divergence. Social, economic, demographic, and some housing-related data for Maryland localities were collected from the American Community Survey's

(ACS) 5-year estimate.¹⁸ Estimates of homelessness and housing inventory data come from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.¹⁹ Data on the political ideology of cities and counties, estimated by Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2018), are used to tap ideological preferences in each jurisdiction.²⁰ Data on voter registration by party affiliation were collected from Maryland elections data.²¹ Data on local government characteristics such as annual budget revenues and expenditures and the number of paid employees of each locality were obtained from the *Maryland Manual*.²²

The survey data help in understanding (1) whether and how policymakers' views, beliefs, and positions with respect to specific policy areas diverge, (2) if and how a respondent is engaged with regional governance, and (3) if and how engagement with regional governance is related to policy position divergence. In addition, the survey collected information on how the respondents' perceptions of other factors—such as the state government's sustainability policy—were related to their policy positions.

4.3.1 Survey details

I conducted a state-wide survey of local government officials and a number of professionals working in various regional organizations in Maryland using an emailed questionnaire distributed via Qualtrics. To identify survey participants, basic information (name, position, and contact details) was collected from the Maryland State Archives. This was

¹⁸ 2015-2019 Multi-Year ACS 5-year Estimates for All Geographies. Accessed on 9/11/2022 from https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/american_community_survey/2015-2019ACS.aspx

¹⁹ 2019 AHAR: Part 1 - PIT Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S. Accessed on 9/11/2022 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5948/2019-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>

²⁰ The American Ideology Project. Accessed on 9/11/2020 from <https://americanideologyproject.com/>

²¹ Voter registration data. Accessed on 9/11/2021 from https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/stats.html

²² *Maryland Manual*. Accessed on 9/11/2020 from <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/locgov.html>

supplemented by information collected directly from the websites of local governments and regional organizations.

4.6.2 Sampling Frame

Potential survey respondents included Maryland local government officials (elected as well as appointed), board members and staff of regional organizations in Maryland, and members of the Opportunity Collaborative.²³ The state of Maryland has 23 counties, one large city (Baltimore City), and 157 other cities and towns, which are served by seven regional councils (Maryland Municipal League 2019). Table 4 enumerates the localities along with the regional councils they belong to.

Table 4: Maryland localities and regional organizations

County/City	Regional/Intercounty Council
Harford County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Anne Arundel County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Baltimore County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Baltimore City	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Carroll County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Queen Anne's County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Howard County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Queen Anne's County	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Montgomery County	National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County	National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Washington County	National Capital Park and Planning Commission

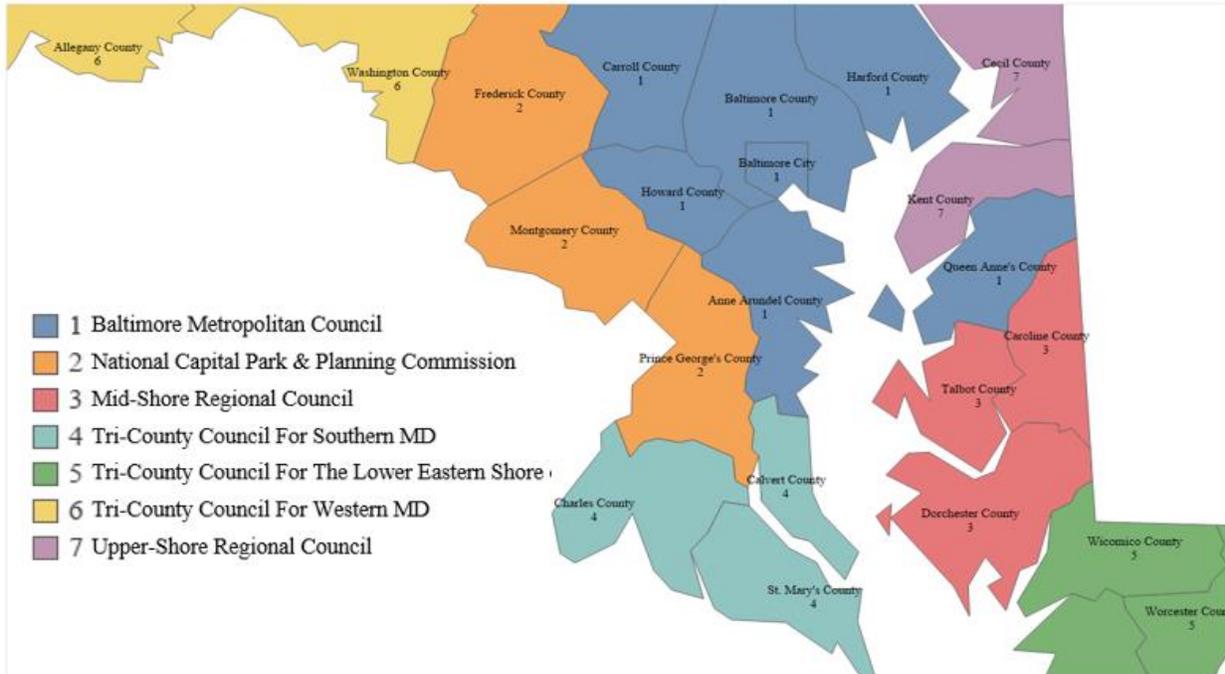
²³ The Opportunity Collaborative was the consortium charged with developing a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development for the Baltimore region. Funded by a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, the Collaborative began in 2010 and released the plan in 2015.

Frederick County	National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Dorchester County	Mid-Shore Regional Council
Caroline County	Mid-Shore Regional Council
Talbot County	Mid-Shore Regional Council
Calvert County	Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
Charles County	Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
St. Mary's County	Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
Somerset County	Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Wicomico County	Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Worcester County	Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Allegany County	Tri-County Council for Western Maryland
Washington County	Tri-County Council for Western Maryland
Garrett County	Tri-County Council for Western Maryland
Kent County	Upper-Shore Regional Council
Cecil County	Upper-Shore Regional Council
Queen Anne's County	Upper-Shore Regional Council

Table 4 suggests that the regional councils in Maryland serve at least three or more localities. A few localities are members of multiple regional councils. For example, parts of Washington County are served by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, while other parts are served by the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland. Likewise, Queen Anne's County is partially served by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council partially by the Upper-Shore Regional Council. Figure 11 shows the seven regional councils in Maryland and the localities. It should be noted that like other states, Maryland has other types of regional entities, such as economic development districts (EDDs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and transportation

planning organizations (TPOs). Some regional councils also operate as EDDs, MPOs, and TPOs in their respective regions.

Figure 11: Map of localities and regional organizations in Maryland



Sources: Maryland State Archives and shape files from the Maryland iMAP Data Catalog

To ensure reasonable variation among actors' beliefs, views, awareness, and positions on policy-related matters pertaining to community sustainability and affordable housing, the survey was sent to policy makers in differing positions: officials involved with local governments, regional governance organizations, and a regional collaborative. Whereas a small number of survey recipients were affiliated only with regional organizations or other civil society organizations, most of the potential respondents were local government officials.

The survey was sent to officials working in Maryland localities that include municipalities of varying land areas, population size, income, and affordable housing needs. The survey was sent to both elected representatives and appointed officials engaged in a wide range of activities. In

total, the survey was distributed to 2745 potential respondents. Table 5 details the type of officials who were contacted.

Table 5: Characteristics of survey recipients by type of official and organization

Officials	Local governments	Regional organizations	Total
Appointed officials	2082	29	2111
Elected representatives	634	0	634
Total recipients	2716	29	2745

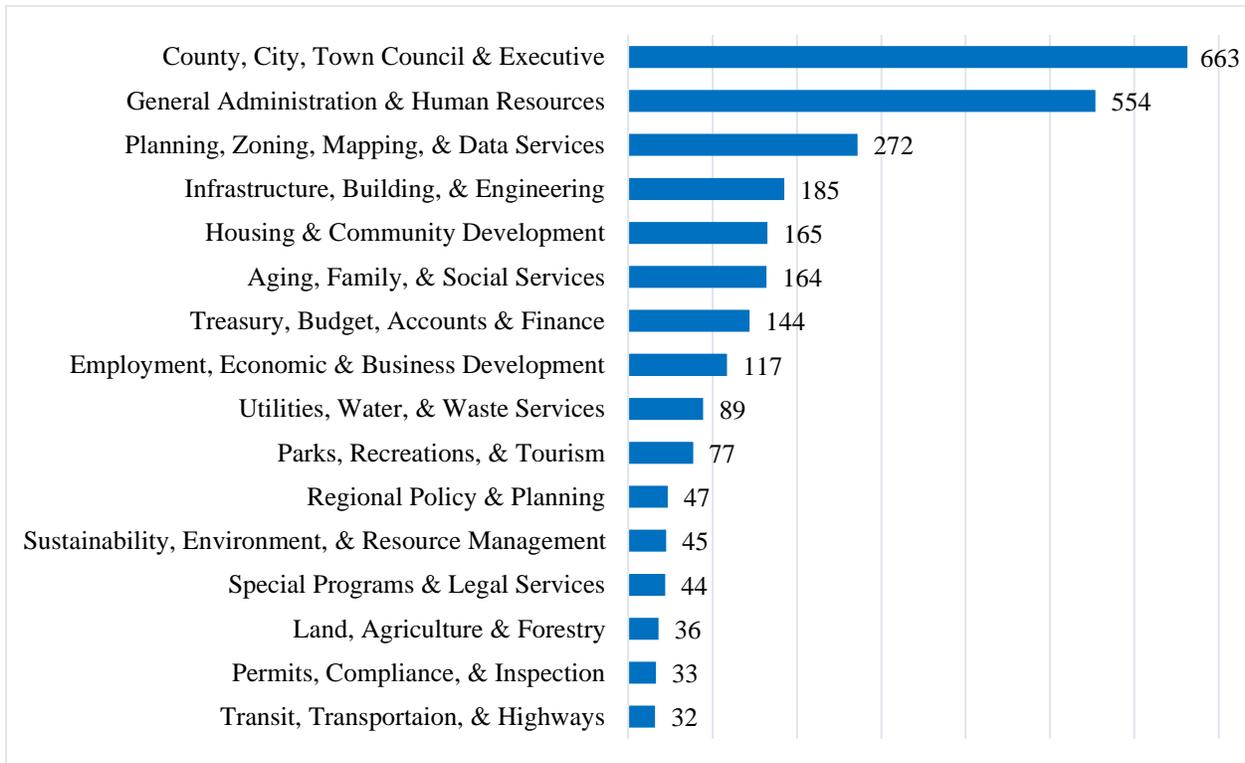
Although the study focuses on analyzing policy position divergence among local government officials, it made sense to gather information from all who are engaged in regional sustainability/housing policymaking in the state. The survey recipients included policymakers who work for civil society organizations (for example, Baltimore Opportunities Collaboratives) or regional governance organizations but who are not directly affiliated with local governments. This allows some examination of whether there are systematic differences between types of respondents in their views, beliefs, or policy positions on community sustainability and affordable housing.²⁴ The data analysis here, however, is restricted to local government officials. Some local government officials are involved in regional governance in various capacities, and some only work for local governments.

In order to increase the likely variation in policy positions, the survey was sent to policy makers engaged in a wide range of activities in various departments, including housing and

²⁴ I plan to conduct such broader analyses in the future. This dissertation, however, focuses only on local government officials.

community development, economic development, workforce development, environmental protection, transportation, and general management (i.e., operations, human resources, and finance/accounts). Figure 12 offers a breakdown of officials by the units in which they worked.

Figure 12: Survey pool, by recipient area of engagement



At the regional level, sustainability policy includes issues such as housing and community development, transportation and transit, environment and resource management. Matters such as aging, family, and social services are related to the social and economic sustainability of any locality, making input from those working in these areas important. Officials lodged in executive divisions and general administration units are likely to be associated with policymaking in general and in sustainability policies in particular. Treasury, finance, accounts, and budget departments control the financial resources for every policy area, so staffers may have relevant views on particular policy areas.

Planning, zoning, infrastructure and building departments also often engage in sustainability and affordable housing policy making. Similarly, those working in departments such as parks, recreations, and tourism usually are concerned about the overall environment of their localities, highlighting their perspectives on community sustainability. Departments like utilities, water, permits, and inspection focus on the location and types of houses, population density, and quality of the housing stock. As a result, officials working in these areas may share views on affordable housing and community sustainability. Some departments such as special programs and legal services are linked with other departments. In some cases, officials are involved in two different departments—for example, finance and housing, yielding possibly distinctive perspectives.

Officials working exclusively in law enforcement, health and medical services, and education were excluded, since these departments typically operate separately from other local government units. Such officials may not have much exposure to sustainability policy making or affordable housing, unless they also work in other areas that are pertinent to community sustainability. However, in some cases, certain officials are engaged in multiple departments at the same time. In such instances, respondents were included if they were affiliated with at least one of the departments mentioned earlier.

4.6.4 Survey Instrument

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire and distributed via Qualtrics. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech approved the survey (see Appendix III for details). The survey consists of a consent form, followed by 24 questions aimed at obtaining

information about respondents' social and cultural backgrounds, training and expertise, and views of different policies.

The questionnaire included five questions (Q. 4–8) about respondents' views of housing policy in general and affordable housing in particular; four questions (Q. 9–12) asked about respondents' views of specific policies in Maryland; six others (Q. 13–18) examined respondents' engagement with regional governance; and one question (Q. 19) probed whether and how participation in regional governance might influence policymakers' positions.²⁵

Furthermore, the survey included two questions (Q. 20–21) to better understand respondents' professional training and experience and two demographic questions (Q. 22–23) to capture social backgrounds. Finally, Q. 24 asked respondents to describe their overall political ideology. (See Appendix II for the complete survey instrument.)

4.6.5. Respondents

The survey was sent to 2,745 potential respondents on December 1, 2020. It generated 157 responses in the first two weeks.²⁶ As a follow-up, a reminder was sent on December 14, which produced 87 additional responses. The next reminder was sent on January 6 (2021), generating another 46 responses. Finally, on February 4, a final email thanked all respondents; this elicited 18 additional responses. Altogether, the survey yielded 308 responses, including 125 incomplete responses and 183 completed responses, as reported by Qualtrics.

²⁵ These six questions about regional governance and RGO-engagement were directed only to those who reported they participated in regional governance; others had the option to skip these questions and to complete the rest of the survey. The survey responses were considered complete even if a respondent did not answer these questions.

²⁶ Before sending the survey to potential respondents, I did a pilot with 19 participants in Virginia.

Many respondents answered some questions, but not all. Among those who started the survey, the majority (59%) completed it. While a few respondents skipped questions but completed the rest of the survey, some simply left the survey incomplete after answering one or more questions. As noted earlier, the survey included six questions about respondents’ engagement with regional governance, which were designed only for those who participated in regional governance; others had the option to skip these questions and complete the rest of the survey. As a result, not all questions had similar levels of response.

For calculating the survey response rate, I consider both incomplete and completed surveys. A response was considered “incomplete” if the respondent initiated the survey and completed one or more questions but did not respond to all of the questions and did not submit the survey. A response is considered complete when the respondent completed most of the questions and submitted the survey.

4.6.6 Survey response rate

Table 6 shows that the response rate for the survey is slightly above 11% but the completion rate is around 6.7%. The low response rate can be attributed to a number of factors including the timing of the survey and potential issues with the sampling frame.

Table 6: Survey response and completion

Response Status	Frequency	Percent of Surveys
Responses received	308	11.2%
Complete responses	183	6.7%
Incomplete responses	125	4.6%

No response	2,437	88.8%
Total	2,745	100%

The timing of the survey may have affected the number of responses received. In the second half of December, many officials might have taken leave for the holidays and hence did not respond to the survey. Although the 2020 U.S. presidential election was over at the time the survey was sent, vote counting was ongoing, and many local government officials were involved in election and counting-related activities. On the day the second reminder was sent (January 6), violence took place at the U.S. Capitol,²⁷ which may have distracted officials from responding to the survey. The COVID-19 pandemic also may have affected the number of responses. In late 2020 and early 2021, almost all public offices were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, officials were working from home, which may have resulted in respondents viewing the survey as yet another activity that involved working on a computer or phone via the internet.

Finally, there may have been some problems with the sampling frame. The pool of potential respondents included officials who are not directly related to sustainability or affordable housing policy. Such individuals might have refrained from taking the survey thinking that they did not have adequate exposure to the pertinent policy areas.²⁸ Even among those who started the survey, some might not have completed it if they did not believe their input was relevant. Only those who viewed the survey as being relevant to their areas of engagement may have completed the survey.²⁹

²⁷ “Capitol riots timeline: What happened on 6 January 2021?” Retrieved on 10/04/2022 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56004916>

²⁸ Respondents’ area(s) of engagement is (are) important because those who were related to areas such as sustainability and environment or housing and community development had initiated responses at higher rates (17.8% and 15.2%) than the average (11.4%).

²⁹ For example, 12.1% respondents working in housing and community development completed the survey, compared to 1.1% of those in utilities, water, and waste services.

Survey Response by Department/Division

Figure 13 shows while officials engaged in *permits, compliance, and highways* had the highest response initiation rate (“response rate”), their survey completion rate (“completion rate”) was similar to the average. Officials working in *housing and community development* had the highest survey completion rate. Officials in *sustainability, environment, and resources* positions initiated responding at a much higher rate than the average but their completion rate was similar to others. The lowest response rate was among those in *utilities, water, and waste services*. Table 7 details the broad department/division in which the respondents were engaged at the time of the survey.

Figure 13: Survey response rate by respondent department/division

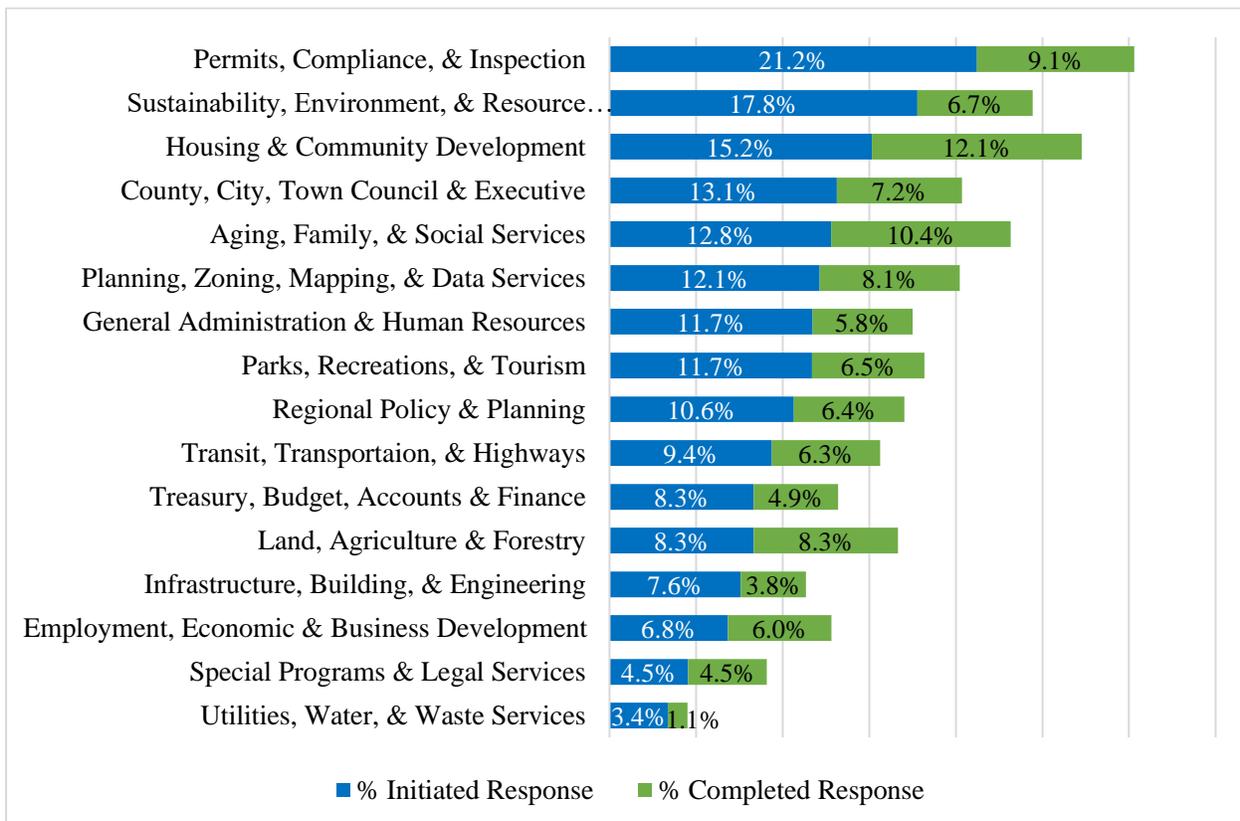


Table 7: Respondents’ primary areas/fields of engagement

Department/Division	# Complete Response	# Incomplete Response	# Non-Response	Total # Contacted
Transit, transportation, and highways	2	1	29	32
Permits, compliance, and inspection	3	4	26	33
Land, agriculture and forestry	3	0	33	36
Special programs and legal services	2	0	42	44
Sustainability, environment, and resource management	3	5	37	45
Regional policy and planning	3	2	42	47
Parks, recreations, and tourism related services	5	4	68	77
Utilities, water, and waste services	1	2	86	89
Employment, economic and business development	7	1	109	117
Treasury, budget, accounts and finance	7	5	132	144
Aging, family, and social services	17	4	143	164
Housing and community development	20	5	140	165
Infrastructure, building, and engineering	7	7	171	185
Planning, zoning, mapping, and data services	22	11	239	272
General administration and human resources	32	33	489	554
County, city, town council and executive	48	39	576	663

Survey Response by Type of Affiliation

Table 8 shows the survey completion rates and the type of organization respondents were primarily affiliated with. Likely because the survey mentioned regional governance and policymaking, those associated with regional organizations had a much higher survey completion rate. Here, however, this difference in completion is less relevant, because the analysis here considers only respondents primarily affiliated with local governments.

Table 8: Survey response by type of affiliation

Affiliation type	Total # Contacted	# Completed Survey	# Started, but not completed survey	Completion Rate (%)
Local government organization (LGO)	2,716	163	121	6.0%
Regional governance organization (RGO)	29	5	1	17.2%
Total	2,745	183	125	6.7%

Survey response rates by electoral status of recipient

Table 9 shows that the survey response rate among elected representatives was slightly higher than that among appointed officials. However, the difference in completion rate between the two groups is relatively small. Given overall low response rates, this suggests that differences between elected and appointed likely neither add to an alternative explanation for differences nor suggest over/under-representation of elected or appointed officials in the sample.

Table 9: Survey response by electoral status of respondents

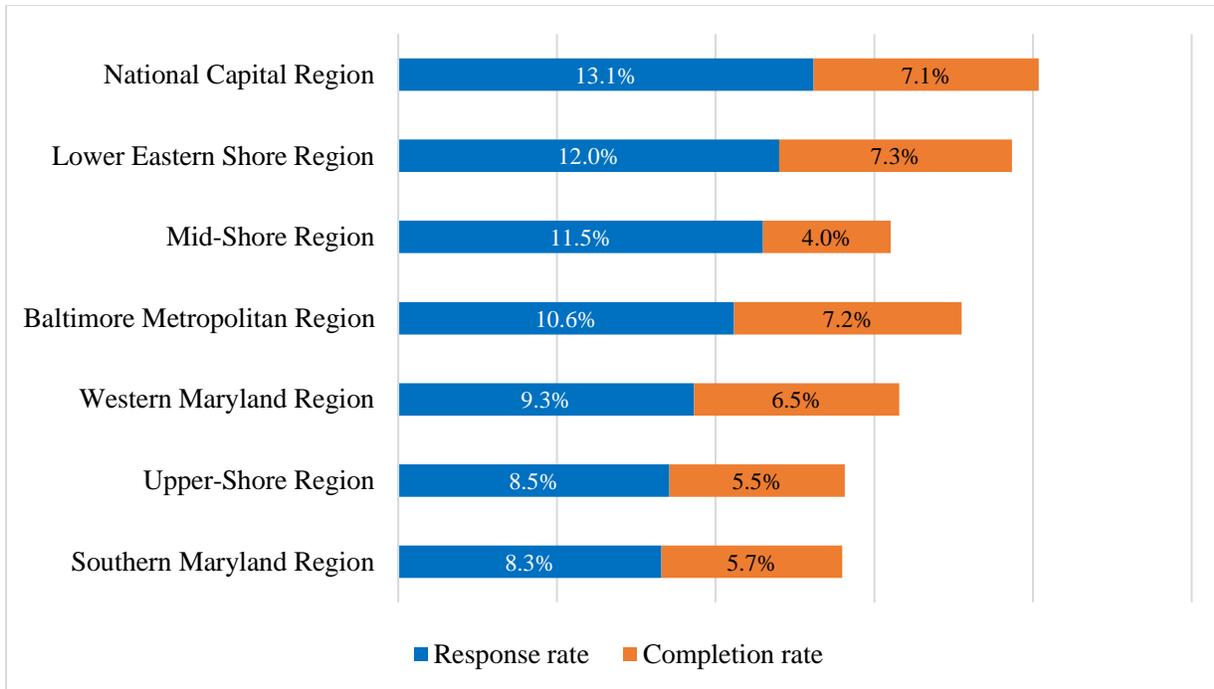
Elected or Appointed	Complete	Incomplete	Total responses	Total Contacts	Response rate	Completion rate
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Appointed	135	86	221	2111	10.47%	6.40%
Elected	48	39	87	634	13.72%	7.57%
Total	183	125	308	2745	11.22%	6.67%

Survey response rates by region

The state of Maryland is divided into seven regions: (1) Baltimore Metro Region, served by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, (2) Lower Eastern Shore Region, served by the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, (3) Mid-Shore Region, served by the Mid-Shore Regional Council, (4) National Capital Region, served by the Maryland - National Capital Park and Planning Commission, (5) Southern Maryland Region, served by the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, (6) Upper-Shore Region, served by the Upper-Shore Regional Council, and (7) Western Maryland Region, served by the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland. Figure 14 shows the survey completion rates for each region.

Figure 14: Survey completion rate by region



The survey response rate varies somewhat by region, with the National Capital Region having the highest response rate and the Southern Maryland Region, the lowest. In the National Capita Region, 86.9% of those contacted did not respond; 13.1% responded at least partially; and 7.1% of the respondents completed the survey. Table 10 details survey completion by region.

Table 10: Survey completion by region

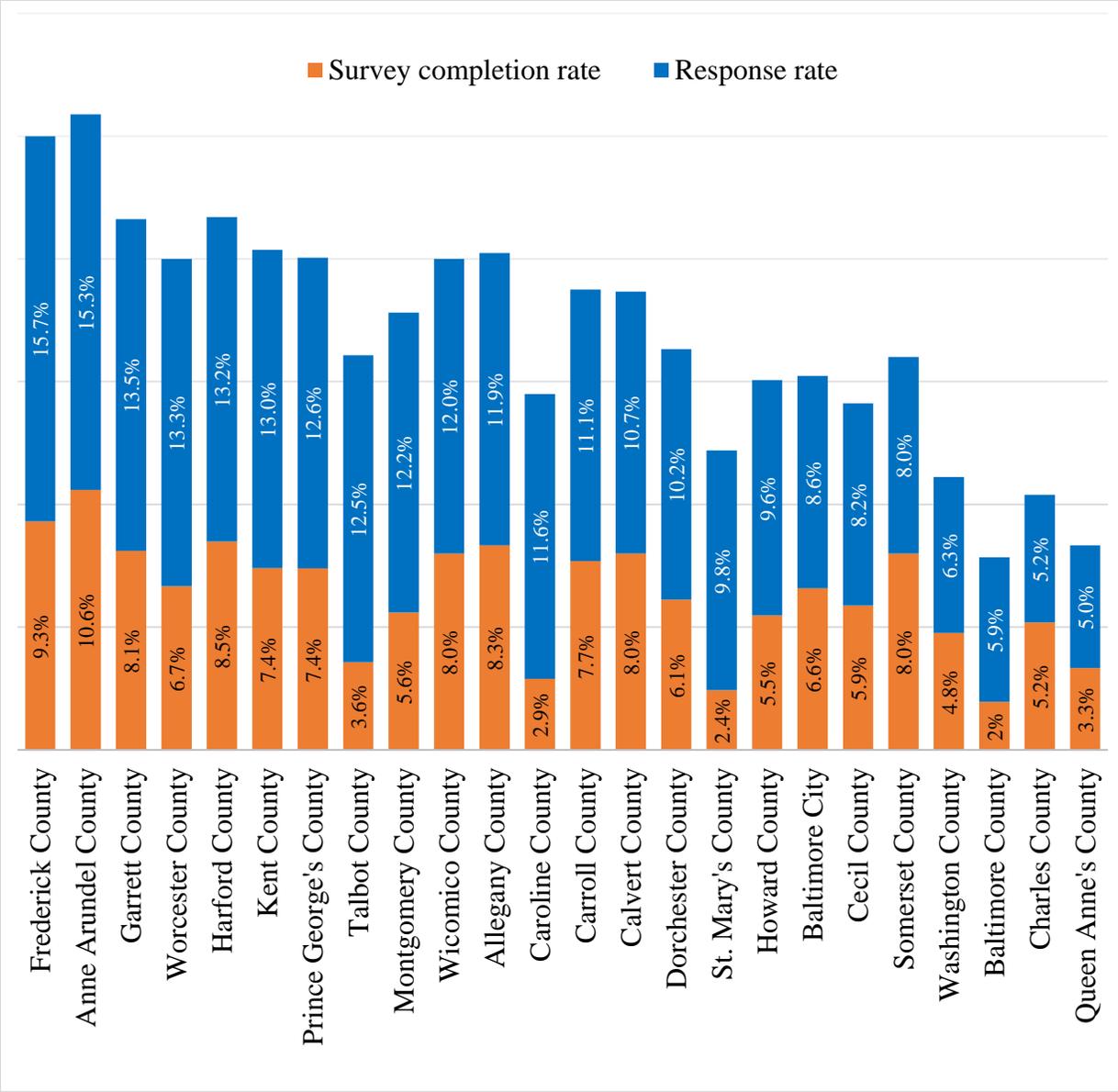
Region	Complete	Incomplete	No Response	Total contacted
Baltimore Metro Region	57	27	751	835
Lower Eastern Shore Region	11	7	132	150
Mid-Shore Region	7	13	150	170
National Capital Region	70	58	861	989
Southern Maryland Region	11	5	177	193
Upper-Shore Region	9	5	125	139

Washington Suburban Region	2	3	19	24
Western Maryland Region	16	7	222	245
Total	183	125	2,437	2,745

In the Baltimore Region, 10.6% started taking the survey and 7.2% completed the survey, whereas more than 89% did not respond to the survey at all. In the Southern Maryland Region, almost 92% did not respond to the survey; 8.3% started taking the survey and only 5.7% completed it. Although the variations in response and non-response rates by region are notable, the survey completion rates are similar among regions. Thus, it does not appear that the differences in response rate among different regions are likely to have much impact on the findings of the study.

Figure 15 shows that the survey response rate varies as well by county/city of the respondent. Frederick County had the highest response initiation rate (15.7%), whereas Queen Anne’s County had the lowest (5%). Among all localities, Anne Arundel County had the highest survey completion rate (10.6%). (See Appendix IV for details on survey response by county/city.)

Figure 15: Survey response by city/county



Explaining response rate variation across localities

In order to check if the variation in response rate by locality is due to any systematic error, I considered several factors for each locality. Pairwise correlation and multiple regression analyses of relationships between response rate and other factors show few notable relationships between response rate and county characteristics (see Table 11). Variables across the columns are the same as those in rows.

Table 11: Relationships between response rates and locality characteristics (Pearson's r)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Response Initiation Rate (A)	1.00										
Log Population (B)	-0.15	1.00									
Log Population Density (C)	0.08	-0.04	1.00								
Unemployment Rate (D)	-0.02	0.02	0.36	1.00							
Log Median Household Income (E)	0.22	0.04	-0.04	-0.50	1.00						
Percent Voted for Democrat Presidential Candidate 2016 (F)	-0.02	0.24	0.60	0.33	0.09	1.00					
Percentage Of Household Leaving Below Poverty Line (G)	-0.30	0.02	0.20	0.53	-0.77	0.03	1.00				
Log Median Housing Price (H)	0.26	0.00	0.06	-0.48	0.90	0.11	-0.73	1.00			
Percentage Of Non-White Minority Population (I)	-0.07	0.29	0.56	0.51	-0.18	0.83	0.24	-0.14	1.00		
Percentage Of Households with Children Below 18 Years (J)	0.18	-0.08	-0.14	-0.48	0.78	-0.16	-0.60	0.70	-0.33	1.00	
Percentage Of Households with Elderly Population Above 65 Years (K)	0.09	-0.23	-0.28	-0.11	-0.03	-0.21	-0.08	0.05	-0.32	-0.25	1.00

The shaded column shows that correlations between the response initiation rate and different community characteristics are less than or equal to 0.30. Similarly, Table 12 shows that

correlations between the survey completion rate and social, economic, and demographic factors are weak (varying between -0.007 and 0.13).

Table 12: Relationship between completion rate and locality characteristics (Pearson's r)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Response Completion Rate (A)	1.00										
Log Population (B)	0.00	1.00									
Log Population Density (C)	0.13	-0.04	1.00								
Unemployment Rate (D)	0.11	0.02	0.36	1.00							
Log Median Household Income (E)	0.03	0.04	-0.04	-0.50	1.00						
Percent Voted for Democrat Presidential Candidate 2016 (F)	-0.07	0.24	0.60	0.33	0.09	1.00					
Percentage Of Household Leaving Below Poverty Line (G)	-0.07	0.02	0.20	0.53	-0.77	0.03	1.00				
Log Median Housing Price (H)	-0.05	0.00	0.06	-0.48	0.90	0.11	-0.73	1.00			
Percentage Of Non-White Minority Population (I)	-0.04	0.29	0.56	0.51	-0.18	0.83	0.24	-0.14	1.00		
Percentage Of Households with Children Below 18 Years (J)	-0.04	-0.08	-0.14	-0.48	0.78	-0.16	-0.60	0.70	-0.33	1.00	
Percentage Of Households with Elderly Population Above 65 Years (K)	-0.04	-0.23	-0.28	-0.11	-0.03	-0.21	-0.08	0.05	-0.32	-0.25	1.00

Correlation Matrix	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Response Completion Rate (A)	1.00										
Log Population (B)	0.00	1.00									
Log Population Density ©	0.13	-0.04	1.00								
Unemployment Rate (D)	0.11	0.02	0.36	1.00							
Log Median Household Income (E)	0.03	0.04	-0.04	-0.50	1.00						
Percent Voted For Democrat Presidential Candidate 2016 (F)	-0.07	0.24	0.60	0.33	0.09	1.00					
Percentage Of Household Leaving Below Poverty Line (G)	-0.07	0.02	0.20	0.53	-0.77	0.03	1.00				
Log Median Housing Price (H)	-0.05	0.00	0.06	-0.48	0.90	0.11	-0.73	1.00			
Percentage Of Non-White Minority Population (I)	-0.04	0.29	0.56	0.51	-0.18	0.83	0.24	-0.14	1.00		
Percentage Of Households With Children Below 18 Years (J)	-0.04	-0.08	-0.14	-0.48	0.78	-0.16	-0.60	0.70	-0.33	1.00	
Percentage Of Households With Elderly Population Above 65 Years (K)	-0.04	-0.23	-0.28	-0.11	-0.03	-0.21	-0.08	0.05	-0.32	-0.25	1.00

Furthermore, multivariate regression analyses of the relationships between response rates and characteristics of localities (Table 13) and between survey completion rate and local characteristics (Table 14) show that the relationships are not statistically significant at the 0.10 level.

Table 13: Differences in response rates by locality characteristics

Response Initiation Rate	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Log Population	0.008	0.001	5.850	0.000	0.005	0.010
Log Population Density	0.004	0.001	6.220	0.000	0.002	0.005
Unemployment Rate	0.004	0.000	9.660	0.000	0.003	0.005
Log Median Household Income	-0.012	0.004	-3.090	0.002	-0.020	-0.004
Log Annual Revenues	-0.007	0.001	-6.730	0.000	-0.009	-0.005
Percent Voted For Democrat Presidential Candidate 2016	-0.023	0.005	-4.280	0.000	-0.034	-0.013
Percentage Of Household Leaving Below Poverty Line	-0.002	0.000	-12.240	0.000	-0.002	-0.001
Log Median Housing Price	0.012	0.003	4.490	0.000	0.007	0.018
Percentage Of Non-White Minority Population	0.000	0.000	-0.360	0.719	0.000	0.000
Percentage Of Households With Children Below 18 Years	0.000	0.000	1.350	0.177	0.000	0.000
Percentage Of Households With Elderly Population Above 65 Years	0.001	0.000	5.670	0.000	0.000	0.001
Constant	0.099	0.032	3.110	0.002	0.037	0.161

Table 14: Relationship between survey completion rate and locality characteristics

Response Completion Rate	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Log Population	0.00	0.00	-2.93	0.00	0.00	0.00
Log Population Density	0.01	0.00	16.20	0.00	0.01	0.01

Unemployment Rate	0.00	0.00	7.85	0.00	0.00	0.00
Log Median Household Income	0.03	0.00	13.34	0.00	0.03	0.04
Log Annual Revenues	0.00	0.00	3.74	0.00	0.00	0.00
Percent Voted For Democrat Presidential Candidate 2016	-0.04	0.00	-10.04	0.00	-0.04	-0.03
Percentage Of Household Leaving Below Poverty Line	0.00	0.00	-10.29	0.00	0.00	0.00
Log Median Housing Price	-0.03	0.00	-13.45	0.00	-0.03	-0.02
Percentage Of Non-White Minority Population	0.00	0.00	-1.49	0.14	0.00	0.00
Percentage Of Households With Children Below 18 Years	0.00	0.00	-7.17	0.00	0.00	0.00
Percentage Of Households With Elderly Population Above 65 Years	0.00	0.00	-1.97	0.05	0.00	0.00
Constant	-0.04	0.02	-1.96	0.05	-0.08	0.00

Although survey response rates and survey completion rate varied by locality, these variations appear to be random and provide little evidence of possible bias by respondents' locality.

4.7. Operationalizing Key Variables

The next steps involved operationalizing the variables, including the dependent variable, policy position divergence; the key independent variable, engagement with regional governance; and two intermediate variables, policy core beliefs and policy relevant knowledge. Also discussed are measures for respondent characteristics (political ideology, education and training, and primary field of expertise) and several demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the localities of the respondents.

4.7.1. Policy Position Divergence

As Chapter 3 discussed, *position divergence* refers to any difference among policy actors in their beliefs about what government should or should not do regarding a societal issue (Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Such divergence can exist about a specific policy, a set of policies, or a general policy area. Weible and Heikkila (2017) note that policy position divergence can emerge at different stages of the policy process.

I define position divergence as the *difference in views among policymakers about community sustainability in general and affordable housing in particular*. Operationalizing position divergence involves two steps: (1) tapping the position of each respondent in a given policy area and (2) measuring the difference between the positions of two or more policy actors (Katz, 2018). To tap respondents' views on different policy areas, several survey questions (Q5, Q10, and Q12) are used. Q12 asked respondents to indicate what they thought of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and the "Sustainable Communities" that the Act envisioned.³⁰ Q10 offered respondents six options that reflected their views about the affordable housing plan that Maryland adopted in 2017.³¹ For Q12, responses indicating that the respondent *did not agree with the policy goals* were assigned 0, and those who selected "*I agree with the policy goals*" were assigned 1. In addition, responses to Q12 included other statements that elaborated on these positions, such as "*These have no influence on my policy position,*" "*Sustainability should be a policy priority for me and my locality,*" "*My locality (county/city/municipality) already has one or more designated Sustainable Communities,*" and

³⁰ Q12. How do you think the passage of Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and subsequent initiatives often labeled "Sustainable Communities" might have influenced your position on sustainability policies? Indicate which option(s) apply to you.

³¹ Q9 introduced a pledge made by the government of Maryland: "In October 2017, the state of Maryland pledged to create 1,500 new affordable housing opportunities in high-opportunity parts of the Baltimore region. Are you aware of this pledge?" As a follow-up to this question, Q10 asks respondents: "Assume that this pledge applies to your area. What is your view of such a pledge by the state government?"

“Sustainability is a policy priority for me.” Using principal components analysis (PCA), these responses produced factors that either supported or did not support the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act and Sustainable Communities Initiative (see Appendix VIII). Based on the factor analysis, I created a binary variable SUPPORT_SCA (1=response in support; 0 otherwise). For example, options such as *“I agree with the policy goals but don’t agree with the way those goals are being addressed,”* *“Sustainability should be a policy priority for me and my locality,”* *“My locality already has one or more designated Sustainable Communities,”* and *“Sustainability is a policy priority for me”* were considered to be in support of the SCA policies and coded 1. In contrast, responses *“These have no influence on my policy position”* or *“I don’t agree with the policy goals”* were coded 0. Similarly, based on Q10, a binary variable SUPPORT_AHP was created. Respondents who selected *“I don’t agree with such a plan of the state government,”* or *“I don’t want any more low-income households in my locality”* were coded 0, while those answering *“I agree with this idea, and I support this initiative to create new affordable housing units”* were coded 1.³²

Position divergence, then, was computed following the Weible/Heikkila method (e.g., Heikkila & Weible, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2020). Position divergence is calculated by taking the absolute value of the difference between the mean position score for all respondents and each respondent’s position score. Thus, higher values suggest a respondent’s beliefs differ from the average respondent. The position divergence of individual respondent i on policy goal j is $PD_{ij} = |x_{ij} - m_j|$, where m_j is the mean score for all respondents on policy goal j (see Table 15).

³² Q10 also included other choices, but only responses that included choices showing clear agreement (or disagreement) with the affordable housing plan were coded for this purpose. Two respondents made seemingly conflicting choices that included both *“I don’t want any more low-income households in my locality”* and *“I would like to see more affordable housing units built in my locality”* were not coded.

Table 15: Operationalization of policy position divergence

Survey item	Variable name	Explanation
Q12	SUPPORT_SCA	Support for the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and subsequent Sustainable Communities Initiative
Q12	PD_SCA	Position divergence regarding the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and subsequent Sustainable Communities Initiative
Q10	SUPPORT_AHP	Support for the affordable housing plan by the state of Maryland
Q10	PD_AHP	Position divergence regarding the affordable housing plan by the state of Maryland

Next, policy core beliefs about affordable housing were assessed using survey items Q4, Q5, and Q8.

4.7.2. Policy Core Beliefs

Policy core beliefs include shared values, perceptions of causes and effects, and basic policy preferences (Valman, 2016: 3). To tap respondents' basic policy values, Q4 asked participants to identify and rank aspects of housing they found most important.³³ Respondents selected among six options: (A) *building wealth through ownership*, (B) *basic shelter*, (C) *place to raise a family*, (D) *access to a good neighborhood*, (E) *means of transferring wealth across generations*, and (F) *other*. Respondents could choose any (or all) of the options and ranked them from 1 (most important) through 6 (least important). In order to check for overlap between options, I examined the zero-order correlations (Table 16).

Table 16: Question 4 responses - bivariate correlations

Correlation	Q4A	Q4B	Q4C	Q4D	Q4E	Q4F
Q4A	1.000					
Q4B	-0.325	1.000				
Q4C	-0.324	0.244	1.000			

³³ Q4. Which aspects of housing do you find most important? [Rank order the following options by assigning a score to each of the following items: 1 = most important and 6 = least important].

Q4D	-0.244	-0.032	0.205	1.000		
Q4E	0.300	-0.681	-0.456	-0.186	1.000	
Q4F	-0.146	-0.429	-0.552	-0.421	0.202	1.000

Table 16 shows that Q4E is strongly related to Q4B as is Q4F with Q4C. As a result, I dropped options Q4E and Q4F from the analysis. Since options A, B, and C had correlations higher than 0.3, they were converted to a new variable SWF (which includes aspects such as shelter, wealth, and family). Q4D, which captured respondents' position on housing as a means of getting access to a good neighborhood, was renamed NGHBR. I then generated variables DIV_SWF and DIV_NGHBR as measures of deviation from their respective mean values.

Question 5 asks respondents to indicate the level of priority their locality should give to each policy goal (with eleven options and the possibility of adding their own responses). Respondents then were asked to rank the options, from *very high priority* (4), *high priority* (3), *low priority* (2), and *very low priority* (1). To understand the underlying structure, if any, among the different response options, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Based on Pearson correlations and PCA, the responses were grouped into three broader categories (Table 17).

Table 17: Grouping Question 5 response choices

Original response choice	Interpretation
Reducing the concentration of poorer households Increasing home-ownership Ensuring a fair share of affordable housing in each county/city Reducing the number of families living in segregated communities Ending source-of-income-based discrimination Improving access to quality education for families with children	Promoting equity (EQUITY)
Increasing the stock of housing available for households earning 60-100% of area's median income Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning 20-60% of area median income	Ensuring housing affordability (AFFORDABILITY)

Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning less than 20% of the median income	
Better matching the location of housing to the location of jobs Reducing travel time between workplaces and residences	Ensuring the ease of commute (COMMUTE)

The variables EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY, and COMMUTE sum the scores of the responses for each group. Divergence on these (DIV_EQUITY, DIV_AFFORDABILITY, and DIV_COMMUTE) was calculated by taking the absolute value of the difference between the mean and each respondent’s score.

Finally, Q8 asked respondents to identify the most influential factors that shaped their positions on affordable housing.³⁴ For each of the ten factors, they reported the level of influence the factor had in shaping their position on affordable housing policy. The responses were coded *not influential/uninfluential* = 0, *somewhat influential* = 1, *influential* = 2, *highly influential* = 3, *extremely influential* = 4. Following an EFA (see appendix VI), the factors were grouped into four categories (see Table 18).

Table 18: Grouping Question 8 responses

Original response choice	Interpretation
Concern for local businesses	Business and tourism (BUS_TOUR)
Concern for tourism	
Concern for unemployment	Employment and crime (UNEMP_CRIME)
Concern about crime rates	
Concern for low-income households	Diversity and inclusion (INCLUSION)
Concern for racial and ethnic minorities	
To contribute to creating more diverse communities	
To minimize the travel distance between residences and workplaces	

³⁴ Q8. Of factors listed below, which do you think are most influential in shaping your position on affordable (moderate and low-income) housing policy [Indicate the level of influence by choosing appropriate options]?

To allow many important workers (e.g., nurses, police officers, K-12 teachers, younger residents) to live closer to where they work	Commute distance (COMMUT_DIST)
---	--------------------------------

The variables BUS_TOUR, UNEMP_CRIME, INCLUSION, and COMMUT_DIST sum the scores of the responses to the respective groups. Again, divergence on each (DIV_BUS_TOUR, DIV_UNEMP_CRIME, DIV_INCLUSION, DIV_COMMUT_DIST) was calculated by taking the absolute value of the difference between the mean and each respondent's score. The new variables constructed after an EFA highlight that choices such as EQUITY and COMMUTE from Q5 are similar to choices from Q8 (INCLUSION and COMMUT_DIST). To avoid redundancy, I dropped two variables (INCLUSION and COMMUT_DIST) from Q8. This produced a set of seven variables that tapped the policy core beliefs of respondents (see Table 19).

Table 19: Operationalizing policy core beliefs

Survey item	Variable name	Explanation
Q4	SWF	Housing as basic shelter, generational wealth, and place to raise a family
	NGHBR	Housing as a means to access a good neighborhood
Q5	EQUITY	Promoting equity through affordable housing
	AFFORDABILITY	Increasing stock of affordable housing
	COMMUTE	Reducing distance between residence and workplace
Q8	UNEMP_CRIME	Concerns about unemployment and crime rates
	BUS_TOUR	Concern for local businesses and tourism

4.7.3. Policy Relevant Knowledge

Policy relevant knowledge is operationalized using survey items Q6, Q9, and Q11. Q6 asks respondents to indicate the level of housing cost that is unaffordable given a household's

gross monthly income.³⁵ Scholars and practitioners generally consider affordable housing expenditure to be 30% or less of a household's gross monthly income (Wallace 1995; 2007; Hamidi, Ewing, and Renne, 2016). For example, with a gross monthly income of \$7000, unaffordable housing is any monthly expenditure above \$2100.

To operationalize policy-relevant knowledge on affordable housing expenditure (AHE), I created three new variables: (1) AHE_CORRECT, (2) LOA_AHE, and (3) DIV_AHE. The first is a binary variable that takes the value 1 when a respondent reported affordable housing expenditure as being \$2100 (30% of the gross monthly income of \$7000); otherwise, it is coded 0. Level of awareness of lower housing expenditure (LOA_AHE) was coded "high" (1), when responses were between \$1400, 20% of the gross monthly income, and \$2800, 40% of the gross monthly income); otherwise, it was coded 0. Finally, DIV_AHE, divergence in affordable housing expenditure, was transformed into log (DIV_AHE).

Question 9 examines respondents' level of awareness of a Maryland affordable housing initiative.³⁶ Responses to LOA_AHP were placed in three categories: no awareness (0), somewhat/low level of awareness (1), and high level of awareness (2).³⁷ A new variable, LOA_SCA, captures responses to question 11, which asked respondents to indicate their level of awareness of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 and the subsequent Sustainable Communities Initiatives.³⁸ "I am not aware" was coded 0; "I am somewhat aware" 1;

³⁵ Q6. Assume a household's monthly gross income is \$7,000. At what dollar amount would their monthly housing costs (e.g., mortgage payment or rent) become unaffordable? (Responses ranged from \$700- to \$4200.)

³⁶ Q9. In October 2017, the state of Maryland pledged to create 1,500 new affordable housing opportunities in high-opportunity parts of the Baltimore region. Are you aware of this pledge?

³⁷ If the response to Q9 is "I don't know anything about this pledge," LOA_AHP = 0; if the respondent indicated "I don't know much about this pledge" or "I am somewhat aware of this pledge," LOA_AHP = 1; and if the response is "I know a great deal about this pledge," LOA_AHP = 2.

³⁸ Q11. In 2010, Governor O'Malley signed into law the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act of 2010. How aware are you of the "Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010" and the subsequent "Sustainable Communities" initiatives?

and “I am well-aware of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Initiatives” or “I am well-aware of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act (2010)” were coded 2.

Table 20 enumerates variables used to examine policy relevant knowledge of the respondents in topics areas: affordable housing expenditure (AHE), the Maryland affordable housing plan (AHP), and the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act including the subsequent community sustainability initiatives (SCA).

Table 20: Operationalizing policy relevant knowledge

Survey item	Variable name	Interpretation
Q6	LOA_AHE	Level of awareness of affordable housing expenditure
Q9	LOA_AHP	Level of awareness of affordable housing plan by state of Maryland
Q11	LOA_SCA	Level of awareness of Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010

4.7.4. Engagement with Regional Governance

To operationalize the key independent variable, *engagement with regional governance*, different survey items (items 13 through 18) are used. Respondents who indicated that they were engaged in regional governance in response to question 13 had the option to answer questions 14 through 18; others were directed to answer questions 20 through 24.

First, I examine whether and how a respondent reported being engaged with regional governance. Question 13 asks respondents to indicate their level of *engagement with regional (metropolitan or inter-county) policy making and governance* by choosing among three options: (1) *somewhat involved with regional policy making and governance*, (2) *engaged with one or more regional organizations*, or (3) *not involved with regional policy making or governance, at all*. Two new variables, ERG2 and ERG3, were created from this question. The former, ERG2, is

binary, coded 0 if respondents reported *not involved with regional policy making or governance* and 1, otherwise. Similarly, ERG3 has three categories: 0 for *not involved with regional policy making or governance*; 1 *somewhat involved with regional policy making and governance*, and 2 *engaged with one or more regional organizations*.

Questions 14 and 15 probed how respondents were involved in regional governance. The first asks respondents which regional organization he/she is primarily engaged with. A dummy variable was created for each regional organization. Question 15 asked respondents how they were involved in regional governance.³⁹ Possible responses included serving as *a voting member in one or more regional organizations*, as a *non-voting member (or staffer) in one or more regional organizations*, *in a committee for regional policy*, *occasionally participating in regional policy making or governance in an advisory role*, or *as a consultant for one or more regional organizations*. A binary dummy variable was created for each response choice.

Engagement with regional governance is further examined by asking about respondents' *tenure of engagement* and *frequency of interaction*. Existing scholarship suggests that in a multi-actor environment, the experience of working together over a longer period of time helps transfer of knowledge among actors and influences their beliefs and values (see Anand & Khanna, 2000; Sennet 2002; Lui, 2009). Length of tenure in regional organizations (which I treat as a proxy for experience in regional governance), then, should matter: more experience would be expected to be related with greater homogeneity of information and perspectives. Moreover, in peer-to-peer interactions, the level of interaction is related to learning; more frequent interaction with regional

³⁹ Q15. Please indicate how you are involved in regional organization(s) or policy making (select all that apply).

governance is likely to be associated with more interactions among peers, which results in greater learning (Kimbrough, McGee, & Shigeoka, 2022).

Question 16 asks how long respondents have been members or staffers of regional organizations.⁴⁰ The variable ERG TENURE has values ranging from 2 through 12.⁴¹ Question 17 tapped the frequency of reported *formal interactions* (FORMAL INT) with those engaged in regional governance.⁴² Question 18 turned to *informal interactions* (INFORMAL INT) with those engaged in regional governance.⁴³ The values of INFORMAL INT ranged from 0 (“Not very often” or “I usually don’t interact with regional policymakers outside of the formal settings”); 1 (“at least once in a year”), 4 (“at least once in 3 months”) to 12 (“at least once a month”). Finally, ERG INTERACTION is the sum of INFORMAL INT and FORMAL INT. (See Table CFT.)

Table 21: Operationalizing engagement with regional governance

Survey item	Variable name	Explanation
Q13	ERG2	Engagement with regional governance, as a binary concept: ERG2= 0 => No involvement with regional governance ERG2= 1 => At least some involvement with regional governance
Q12	ERG3	Engagement with regional governance, in terms of the level of involvement:

⁴⁰ Q16. Approximately how many years have you served on the board or staff of a regional organization in Maryland?

⁴¹ For responses 0-4 years (ERG TENURE = 2), 4-8 years (6), 8-12 years (10), and more than 12 years (14). The values assigned to each tenure-length are the median values of the range.

⁴² Q17. How often do you have formal meetings with other elected/appointed leaders in relation to regional planning or policy making? FORMAL INT ranged from “not very often” (0), “at least once in a year” (1), “at least once in 3 months” (4), to “at least once a month” (12).

⁴³ Q18. Do you also interact with regional policymakers outside of the formal meetings? If yes, how often do you informally interact with other local/regional officials in relation to these regional organization(s)?

		ERG3= 0 => No involvement with regional governance ERG1= 1 => Some involvement with regional governance, directly or indirectly ERG1= 2 => Engagement with regional governance organization(s)
Q15	RGO_VOTE	A binary variable created to indicate whether a respondent is a voting member in a regional governance organization
Q16	ERG_TENURE	Length of respondents' engagement with regional governance organization(s)
Q17,Q18	ERG_INTERACTION	Level of respondent's interaction with other regional policymakers, expressed as a sum of the frequencies of formal and informal interactions

4.7.5. Respondent characteristics

In addition to engagement with regional governance, the study controls for several other variables, including respondents' political ideology, educational background, and area of expertise. RESP_IDEOL captures respondents' reported ideology on a five-point scale, ranging from very conservative (-2) to very liberal (2).⁴⁴

Question 20 tapped respondents' highest level of education, with RESP_EDU ranging from 1 for those with a high school diploma, associate degree, or some college; 2 for those with college degrees; and 3 for graduate/professional degrees. Using Q21, three new dummy variables (PPP_FIELD, STEMR_field, and ASSHL_field) capture respondents' primary field of education or training: PPP_FIELD is 1 for degrees in public policy, urban planning, politics, or related fields; STEMR_FIELD 1 for degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or a related field; all others are classified as ASSHL_FIELD (see Table 22).

Table 22: Respondent background variables

⁴⁴ Q24 asked "How would you describe your own general outlook: as being more conservative, more liberal, or more middle-of-the road?"

Survey item	Variable name	Explanation
Q24	RESP_IDEOL	Respondent's political outlook/ideology from <i>very liberal</i> through <i>very conservative</i>
Q20	RESP_EDU	Respondent's highest level of educational attainment
Q21	PPP_FIELD	Indicates if the respondent's area of expertise/professional training is in <i>policy, planning, or politics</i>

4.7.5. Other explanatory variables: characteristics of localities

To control for socioeconomic factors in each locality, a number of factors were considered. Yet, several of the variables are correlated with each other, so an exploratory factor analysis was conducted (see Appendix VII). Following correlation analysis and principal components analysis, seven factors appear to represent the socioeconomic variables in localities.

Table 23: Maryland socioeconomic variables

Variable name	Description
LOG_POP	Log of total population in thousands
PCP	Percent change in population (2010-2020)
H65PLUS	Percentage of households with elderly
PNWP	Percentage of non-white population
LOG_HHINCOME	Log of household income
UNEMPRATE	Unemployment rate
VACANT_HOUSE	Percentage of housing units that are vacant

4.7.6. Testable hypotheses

With these operationalized variables, the propositions formulated in Chapter 3 are turned into the following testable hypotheses (Table 24).

Table 24: Hypotheses

Hypothesis
<i>H1: Local government officials' engagement with regional governance will be negatively related to their position divergence in a given policy area</i>
<i>H2: Local government officials' engagement with regional governance will be positively related to their level of policy relevant knowledge.</i>
<i>H3: Local government officials' engagement with regional governance will be negatively related to the divergence in their policy core beliefs.</i>

Summary

Chapter 4 discussed the operationalization of the variables: the key dependent variable (policy position divergence), the key independent variable (engagement with regional governance), and multiple controls for relevant characteristics of respondents and localities. This chapter also introduced and justified the research design and discussed the survey questions. Finally, the propositions stated in Chapter 3 are transformed into testable hypotheses. The next chapter provides details of each variable and discusses data collected from primary and secondary sources.

CHAPTER 5: DATA DESCRIPTION

This chapter overviews the values for each variable as a prelude to examining the hypotheses in Chapter 6. First, responses on the dependent variables—policy position divergence on the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA) of Maryland and on the Maryland affordable housing plan (AHP)—are discussed, followed by descriptions of two intermediate variables—policy relevant knowledge (PRK) and policy core beliefs (PCB). Next, attention turns to the independent variables including policy actors’ engagement with regional governance, professional and ideological backgrounds, and community characteristics that might be associated with policymakers’ positions.

5.1. Policy position and position divergence on community sustainability (SCA)

Table 25 reports respondents’ support for the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA) and the extent of policy position divergence on SCA. An overwhelming majority (71%) of local government officials in Maryland reported policy positions that agreed with the goals of the Act and favored subsequent community sustainability initiatives. Position divergence on SCA varied between 0.292 (those who did not agree with the policy) and 0.708 (those that agreed with the policy goals). For nearly 71% of the respondents, position divergence was 0.292 and for the remaining 29%, it was 0.708.

Table 25: Policy positions on community sustainability (SCA)

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
SUPPORT_SCA	171	0.708	1	1	0.456	0	1
Position Divergence	171	0.414	0.292	0.292	0.189	0.292	0.708

This means that the vast majority of the respondents agreed with the policy and hence showed low position divergence, whereas a minority (less than 30%) did not agree and hence showed higher position divergence. Among those who supported SCA, 74 reported that sustainability *should* be a policy priority for them, 49 indicated that sustainability *was* a policy priority, and 60 responded that their locality had one or more state-designated Sustainable Communities. Although most respondents supported the SCA, fifteen reported that they agreed with its policy goals but did not agree with the way those goals were being addressed. Only five respondents indicated that they did not agree with the policy goals SCA espoused.

5.2. Policy position and position divergence on affordable housing plan (AHP)

Table 26 describes respondents’ policy positions on the Maryland affordable housing plan. An overwhelming majority (over 82%) of officials supported the affordable housing plan, with fewer than 18% not supporting it. Position divergence varied between 0.179 and 0.821. Most respondents agreed with the policy and had shown low position divergence and those that did not agree with the policy goals had shown high position divergence.

Table 26: Policy position and position divergence on affordable housing plan (AHP)

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
SUPPORT_AHP	112	0.821	1	1	0.385	0	1
Position Divergence	112	0.293	0.179	0.179	0.247	0.179	0.821

Among those who supported AHP, 86 respondents indicated that they would like to see more affordable housing units built in their respective localities. Over 21% (38) respondents reported that they thought such a policy would place undue pressure on localities, and 10 believed that such a policy would increase crime and drive away businesses. Seven respondents who did not agree with AHP thought such policies place undue pressure on localities; five

respondents indicated that although they supported AHP, they thought that such policies placed undue pressure on counties and cities.

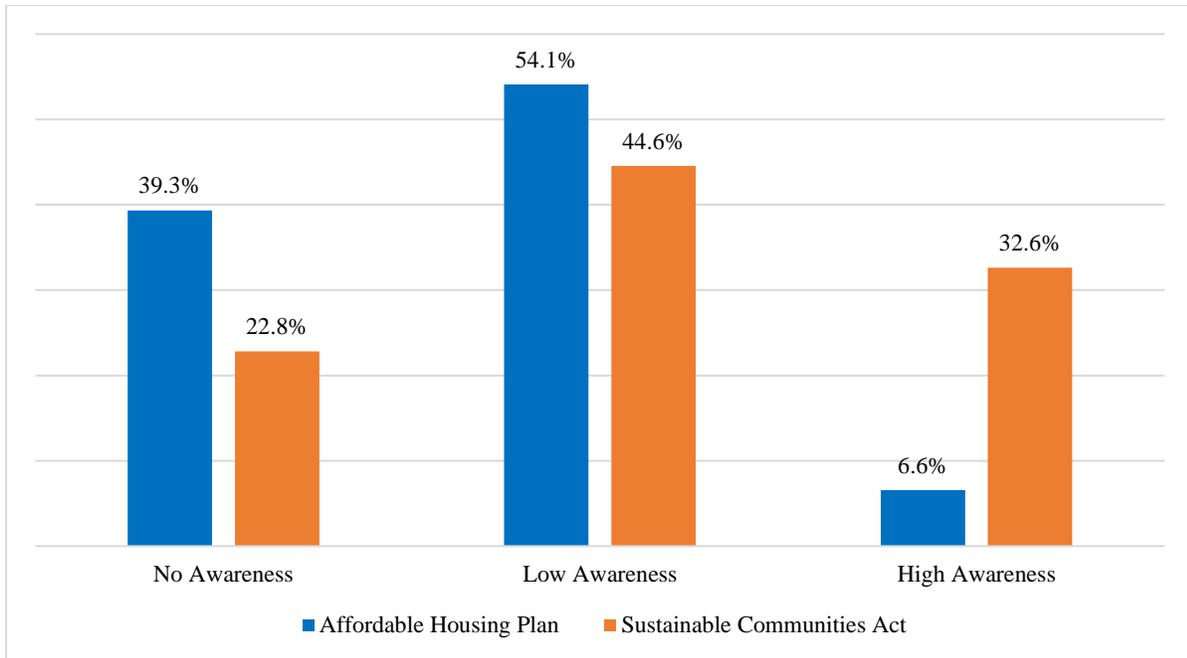
5.3. Policy relevant knowledge

In discussing policy relevant knowledge, I focus on SCA and AHP, as they are similar in nature (see Table 27). Respondents had relatively low levels of awareness of both, although more reported being aware of the SCA. Nearly one-quarter (23%) responded that they were not aware of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act or the subsequent sustainable communities initiative, but almost 45% reported some awareness and 33% called themselves “well aware.” Meanwhile, of 183 respondents, more than 39% indicated that they were not aware of the affordable housing plan, with almost 55% reporting some awareness, and 6.6% stating they were well-aware (see Table 27 and Figure 16).

Table 27: Awareness of SCA and AHP

Level of Awareness	Sustainable Communities Act		Affordable Housing Plan	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
No awareness (= 0)	42	22.8%	72	39.3%
Low/some awareness (= 1)	82	44.6%	99	54.1%
High awareness (= 2)	60	32.6%	12	6.6%
Total	184	100.0%	183	100.0%

Figure 16: Respondents’ levels of awareness of SCA and AHP

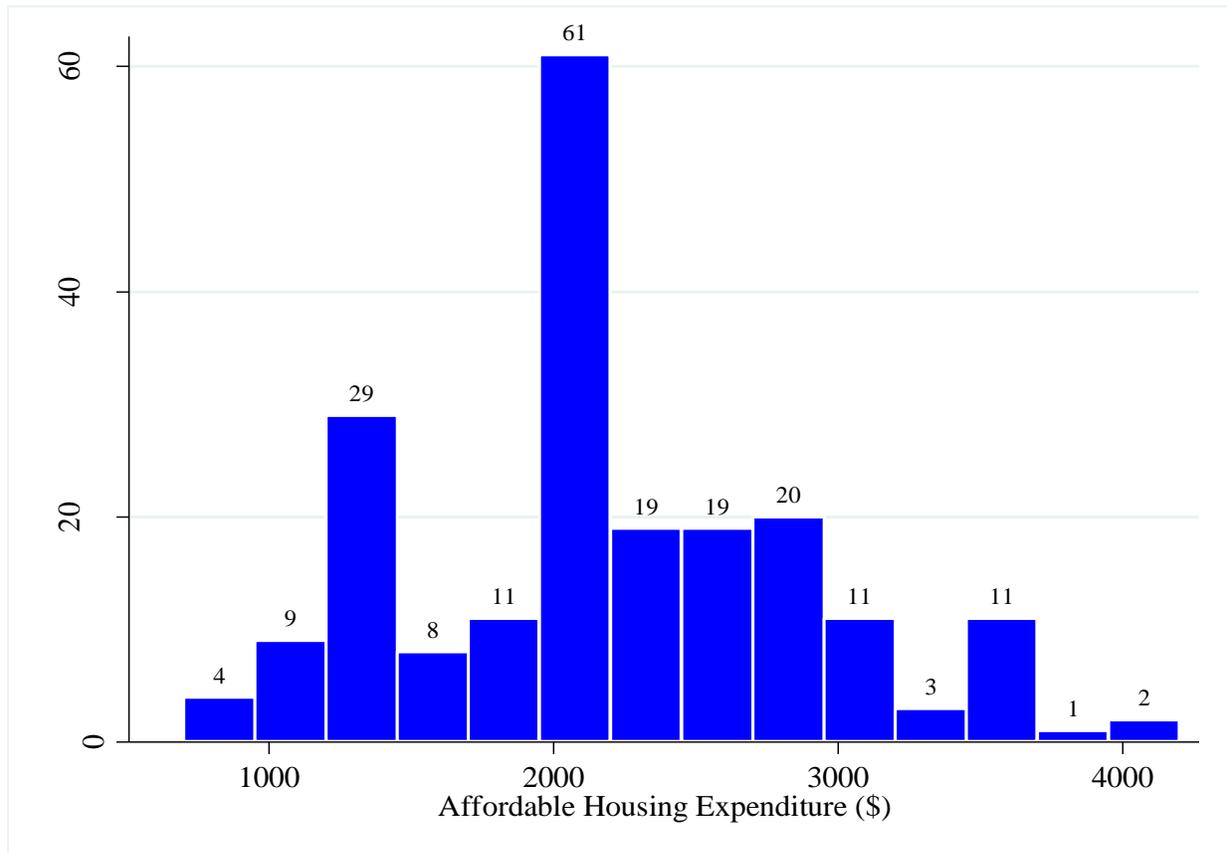


Awareness of affordable housing expenditure

Affordable housing expenditure (AHE) refers to monthly expenditures (as a percentage of gross monthly household income) above which housing is considered unaffordable. Many scholars and practitioners consider a housing expenditure “affordable” if it does not exceed 30% of gross monthly income.⁴⁵ For a household with a gross monthly income of \$7,000, the estimated maximum affordable housing expenditure would be \$2,100. Respondents indicated the expenditure above which they thought housing costs were unaffordable (see Figure 17). Estimates ranged from \$700 through \$4,200, with a mean of \$2,181 and median and mode of \$2,100. Although most respondents reported that AHE differed from 30% of gross monthly income, \$2,100 was the modal response.

⁴⁵ This has become the norm among most scholars and practitioners following the U.S. federal government’s recognition of such an expenditure level. For example, HUD defines AHE as 30% of monthly income (<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-081417.html>).

Figure 17: Affordable housing expenditure



Moreover, if the definition of affordable housing is modified to include a range of responses, those that were closer to being correct increase considerably (see Table 28).⁴⁶

Table 28: Affordable housing expenditures (AHE)

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
AHE	208	2180.76	2100	2100	673.52	700	4200
AHE_CORRECT	208	0.077	0	0	0.27	0	1
LOA_AHE	208	0.736	1	1	0.44	0	1

5.4. Policy core beliefs

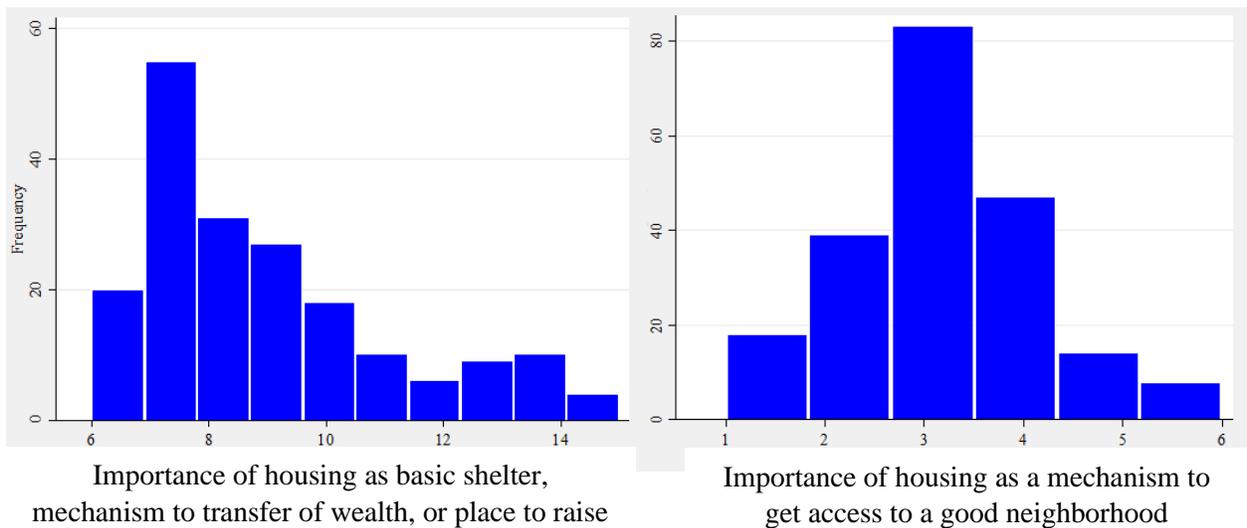
⁴⁶ I created a binary variable (AHE_CORRECT) that takes the value 1 when a respondent correctly reported the AHE (i.e., \$2,100); 0 otherwise. Another binary variable (LOA_AHE) was coded 1 when a respondent reported an AHE between \$1,395 and \$2,810—a range that captured nearly 75% the responses.

The variable SWF captures respondents’ core beliefs about housing as basic shelter, a means of transferring wealth across generations, and a place to raise families. A second variable, NGHBR, taps views of housing as a means to secure access to a good neighborhood. DIV_SWF and DIV_NGHBR tap respondents’ position divergence on each variable (see Table 29 and Figure 18).

Table 29: Policy core beliefs: Housing, Neighborhoods, and Policy Divergence

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
SWF	190	8.816	8	7	2.384	6	15
NGHBR	209	3.115	3	3	1.167	1	6
DIV_SWF	190	1.910	1.816	1.816	1.420	0.184	6.184
DIV_NGHBR	209	5.701	5.816	5.816	1.167	2.816	7.816

Figure 18: Priorities of select policy core beliefs



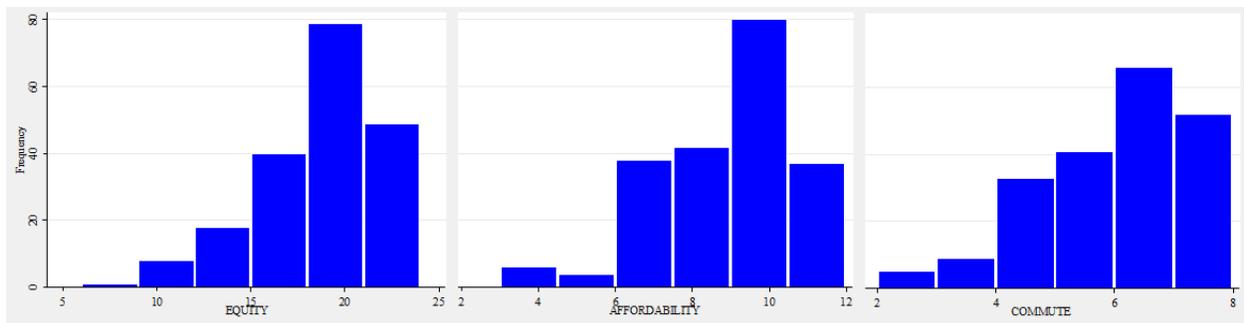
Another core belief revolves around housing goals aimed at promoting equity through affordable housing, measured here by EQUITY. AFFORDABILITY tapped respondents’ policy positions on improving housing affordability by increasing the stock of affordable housing, and COMMUTE measured respondents’ position on housing as a means to reduce commuting the

distance between residence and workplace (see Table 30 and Figures 19 and 20). For these variables, higher scores reflect responses of higher priorities.

Table 30: Policy priorities: Equity, Affordability, and Commute

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
EQUITY	195	18.256	19	20	3.300	6	24
AFFORDABILITY	207	8.686	9	9	1.922	3	12
COMMUTE	206	5.597	6	6	1.413	2	8
DIV_EQUITY	195	2.591	1.744	1.744	2.036	0.256	12.256
DIV_AFFORD	207	1.476	1.314	0.314	1.226	0.314	5.686
DIV_COMMUT	206	1.151	0.597	0.403	0.817	0.403	3.597

Figure 19: Priorities of housing policy goals



Several variables examined respondents’ concerns about local business, unemployment, and crime. Again, lower scores suggest lower priorities. Figure 20 shows that most respondents saw concerns about business and tourism as being of lower priority, and more respondents assigned higher priorities on addressing unemployment and crime rates (see Figure 20, Table 31).

Figure 20: Priorities of select housing policy goals

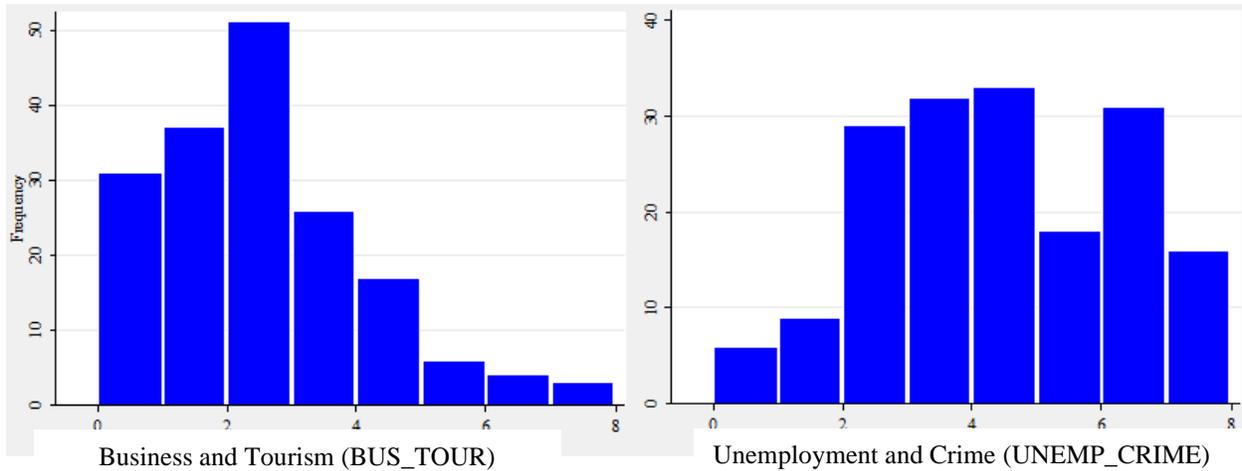
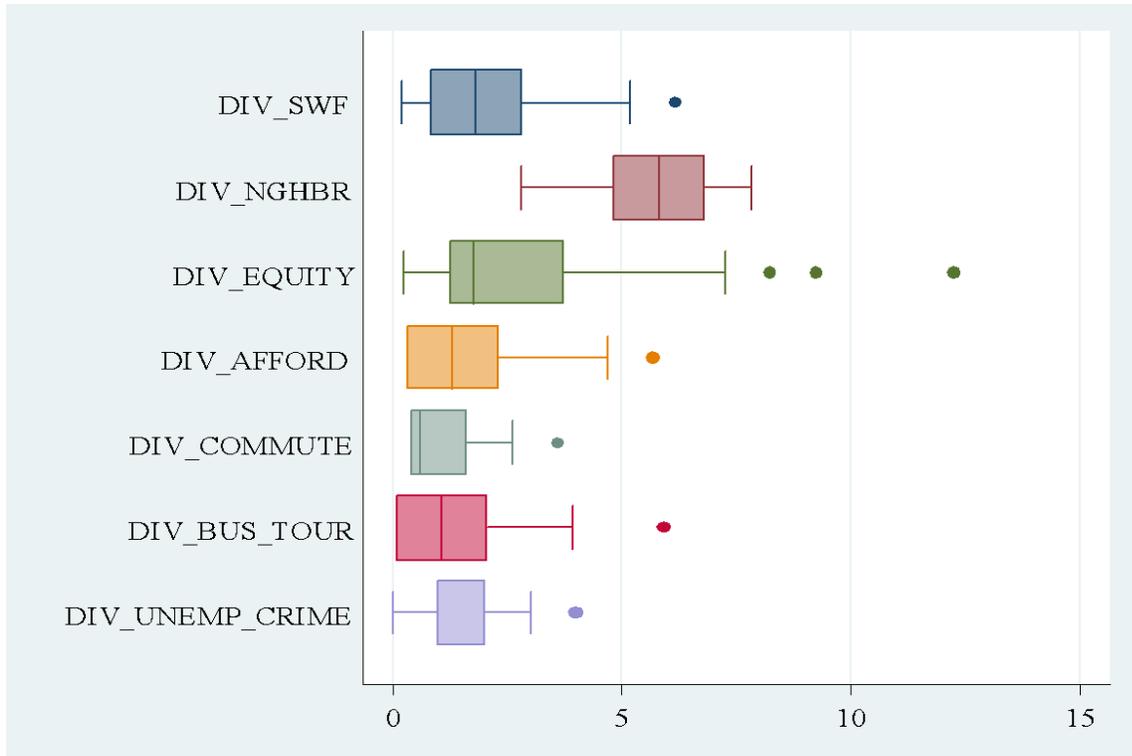


Table 31: Priorities of select housing policy goals

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
BUS_TOUR	175	2.074	2	2	1.661	0	8
UNEMP_CRIME	174	4.017	4	4	2.044	0	8
DIV_BUS_TOUR	175	1.232	1.074	1.074	1.110	0.074	5.926
DIV_UNEMP_CRIME	174	1.642	1.983	0.017	1.211	0.017	4.017

Finally, position divergence in differing aspects of policy core beliefs varied widely (see Figure 21). Among the dimensions of policy core beliefs, beliefs about neighborhoods (DIV_NGHBR) had the largest mean (5.7), varying between 7.816 and 2.816; DIV_COMMUTE, on the other hand, had the lowest mean (1.151) and ranged from 3.597 to 0.403. This shows that policymakers' positions widely vary on different policy core beliefs; while policymakers have relatively more homogeneous beliefs on some of these, other policy core beliefs experience much higher levels of heterogeneity.

Figure 21: Divergence in policy core beliefs by dimension



5.5. Engagement with regional governance

Out of the 178 respondents who answered questions about their engagement with regional governance, almost half (88) indicated they were not involved (see Table 32). Of those who did report at least some degree of engagement, about 28% were involved with one or more regional governance organization(s), with fewer than 10% of all respondents (17) serving as voting members in RGOs (see Table 32). Meanwhile, nearly 70% of the involved respondents had been engaged with regional governance for fewer than eight years (see Table 32 and Figure 22).

Table 32: Respondents’ engagement with regional governance

Engage- ment Level	At least some engagement		No, Some, or High Engagement		Vote in RGO	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
0 (None)	88	49.4%	88	49.4%	161	90.4%

1 (Some)	90	50.6%	41	23.0%	17	9.6%
2 (High, RGOs)	N/A	N/A	49	27.5%	N/A	N/A

Figure 22: Engagement with regional governance

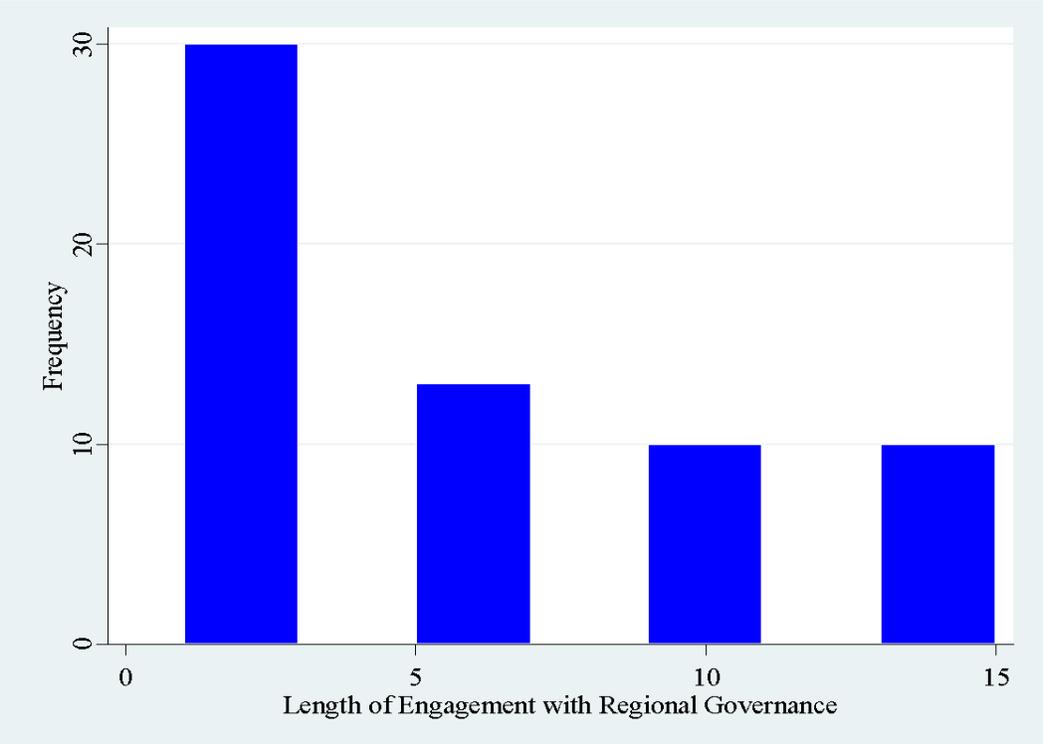


Table 33: Local officials' engagement with regional governance

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
ERG2	178	0.506	1	1	0.501	0	1
ERG3	178	0.781	1	0	0.852	0	2
RGO_VOTE	307	0.055	0	0	0.229	0	1
ERG_TENURE	63	6.000	6	2	4.003	2	14
ERG_INTERACTION ⁴⁷	67	10.045	5	24	8.724	0	24

⁴⁷ ERG_INTERACTION includes both formal and informal interactions with other regional policymakers.

Table 33 and Figure 23 show the level of interaction that respondents reported with others engaged in regional governance. ERG_INTERACTION includes both formal and informal interactions. Although the median level of interactions is about five times a year, seven respondents reported that they did not meet often with other regional policymakers, and 13 others interacted with other regional policymakers up to 24 times a year (see Table 34). Interactions also differed in their formality (see Table 34). Overall, respondents had slightly more informal interactions with other regional policymakers than formal ones, though close to 30% of respondents reported no informal interaction.

Figure 23: Interaction with other regional policymakers

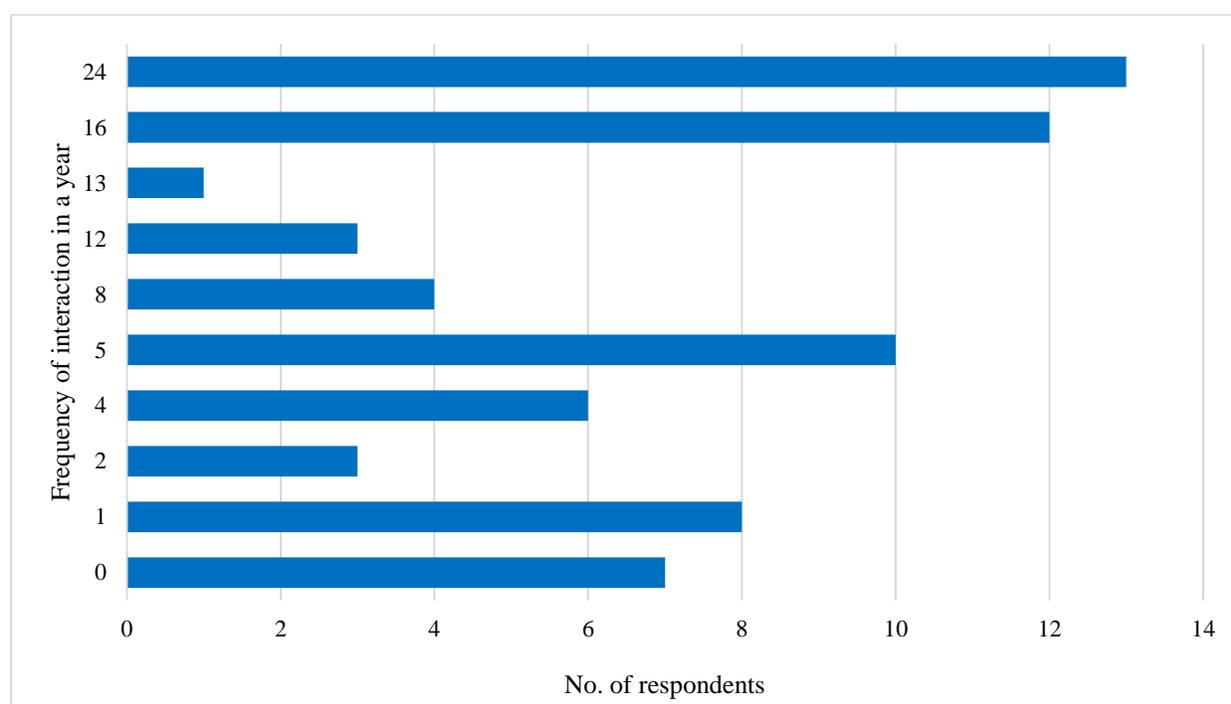


Table 34: Interactions with other regional policymakers

No. of interactions (per year)	Formal interaction	Informal interaction
	N (%)	N (%)
0	11 (16.2%)	21 (29.6%)
1	18 (26.5%)	8 (11.2%)
4	18 (26.5%)	18 (25.4%)

12	21 (30.9%)	24 (33.8%)
TOTAL	68	71

5.6. Expertise and ideology

The survey also collected information about the characteristics of the respondents. Most (62%) had graduate or professional degrees, with another 30% having college degrees (see Table 35). Fewer than 8% had high school diplomas or associate degrees.

Table 35: Highest level of education attained by the respondents

Highest degree/diploma attained	N (%)
High school diploma, associate degree, or some college	14 (7.8%)
College/undergraduate degree	54 (30.2%)
Graduate/professional degree	111 (62.0%)

Among degree holders, more than 33% studied politics, public policy, or urban planning, and another 12% respondents reported degrees in STEM, medicine, or related fields. More than half studied arts, business, humanities, or other social sciences (see Table 36).

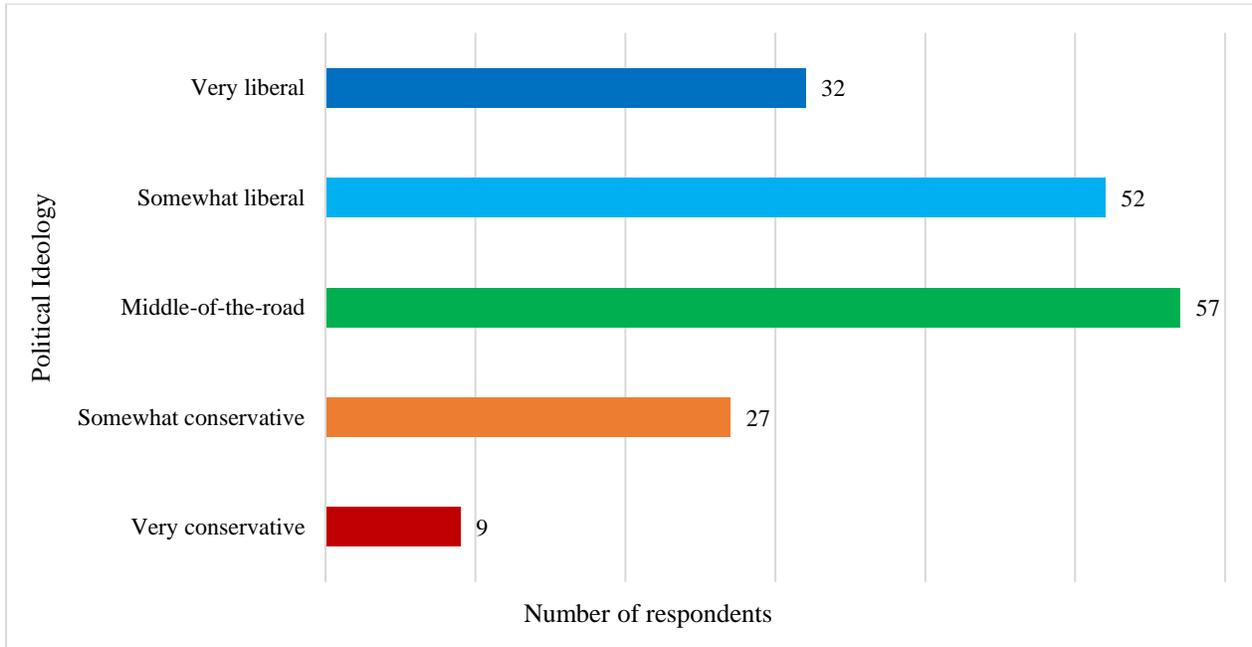
Table 36: Respondents' field of training

Field	Coded (Field)	Freq.
Degree in STEM related field	STEMR_FIELD	21 (12.3%)
Degree in politics, public policy, urban planning	PPP_FIELD	57 (33.3%)
Degree in arts, business, humanities, or other social sciences	ASSHL_FIELD	87 (50.9%)
No degree (other fields)	Other	6 (3.5%)

Ideologically, the respondents were diverse, with self-reported ideologies ranging from “very liberal” (over 18%) to “very conservative (about 5%). About one-third of respondents

considered themselves “middle-of-the-road,” and nearly 30% reported they were somewhat liberal (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Self-reported ideology of the respondents



5.7. Characteristics of localities

Maryland localities vary widely by demographic, social, and economic characteristics (see Table 37). First, they have different population sizes. The largest, Montgomery County, exceeded one million people in 2020, while the smallest, Port Tobacco Village, had two households and a total population of six individuals.⁴⁸ The City of Baltimore, the largest city in the state, had a population of more than 600,000. To reduce the variation in population, statistical analyses relied on the log of total population. Some localities saw their populations decline between 2010 and 2020, with the maximum drop of -0.2%; others experienced increases of up to 1.4%.

⁴⁸ All six are at older than 65. Across localities, the percentage of population above 65 years of age (H65PLUS) ranges between 10.9% and 100%.

Table 37: Demographic and economic characteristics of localities

Variable name	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Log of population	LOG_POP	2745	10.436	2.196	1.792	13.858
Percent change in population (2010-20)	PCP	2744	0.123	0.154	-0.213	1.395
Percentage of population above 65 years of age	H65PLUS	2745	28.734	6.786	10.900	100.00
Percentage of non-white population	PNWP	2745	37.725	25.743	0.000	98.00
Log of median household income	LOG_HHINCOME	2744	11.228	0.376	10.081	12.429
Unemployment rate	UNEMPRATE	2745	3.564	1.614	0.000	21.900
Percentage of vacant housing units	VACANT_HOUSE	2745	10.646	10.984	0.000	87.900

Second, localities vary in racial-ethnic makeup. Whereas localities such as Port Tobacco Village, Galestown, and Hillsboro have 100% white populations, others, like Fairmount Heights and District Heights, have up to 98% nonwhite populations. Third, median household incomes also differ widely. For example, in Martin’s Additions and Somerset median household incomes exceed \$250,000, while Galestown has a median household income of less than \$25,000. Fourth and relatedly, unemployment rates vary. In several localities unemployment rates are close to 0%, but unemployment in Luke Town (in Allegany County) is nearly 22%. Finally, although many localities have no vacant housing units, nearly 88% of the units in Ocean City (a small town in Worcester County) are vacant.

5.8 Summary

This chapter described the findings for each variable with the help of descriptive statistics and visuals. Data show that policymakers’ positions on both policy domains—community sustainability and affordable housing—vary widely. Whereas the position divergence relating to

community sustainability varies between 0.292 and 0.708, position divergence on affordable housing ranges between 0.179 and 0.821. Chapter 6 turns to testing the hypotheses.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explores how the *hypotheses* fared. It is divided into several sections; each section considers one of the hypotheses and the policy area it is applied to. First, hypothesis H1 is reintroduced. This section begins by discussing the relationship between policymakers' positions on the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act (SCA) and their engagement with regional governance. This is followed by analysis of the relationship between policy position divergence among actors and their engagement with regional governance. Focus then turns to H2 and a specific area of community sustainability—affordable housing policy (AHP). This includes an analysis of the relationship between policy positions on AHP in Maryland and policymakers' engagement with regional governance. To provide a more substantive explanation of the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy position divergence, this study examines H3, looking at whether and how engagement with regional governance is related to policy relevant knowledge. Finally, the relationship between policy actors' policy core beliefs and engagement in regional governance is examined.

6.1. Hypothesis H1 and the Sustainable Communities Act

The first hypothesis (H1) predicted that *local government officials' engagement with regional governance will be negatively related to their position divergence on SCA*. That is, I expect to find relatively lower levels of position divergence among local government officials who are engaged with regional governance and relatively higher levels of position divergence among those who are not engaged with regional governance in any way. Before introducing the evidence on position divergence, it is pertinent to review local government officials' policy positions regarding SCA and the factors that shape those positions.

6.1.1. Policy positions on SCA

Table 38 shows that statewide 71.5% respondents supported SCA. Among those engaged with regional governance, the support for SCA was the highest (79.3%). Support for SCA was lower than average (62.8%) among those not engaged with regional governance in any way. Among those who reported not being engaged in regional governance, 37.2% showed *no support* for SCA, compared to 21% among those engaged in regional governance. The p-value (= 0.019) shows that the relationship between engagement with regional governance and support for SCA is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. According to Cramer’s V (= 0.1824), the effect size of engagement with regional governance on the support for SCA is small.

Table 38: Summary of policy positions on SCA

	No Support SCA	Support SCA	Total
Not Engaged in Regional Governance (NERG)	29 (37.2%)	49 (62.8%)	78
Engaged with Regional Governance (ERG2)	18 (20.7%)	69 (79.3%)	87
Total	47 (28.48%)	118 (71.52%)	165 (100%)
Pearson chi2(1) =	5.4897	p = 0.019	
Cramer’s V =	0.1824		
Kendall's tau-b =	0.1824	ASE = 0.076	
Fisher's exact =		0.025	
1-sided Fisher's exact =		0.015	

6.1.2. Support for SCA by region

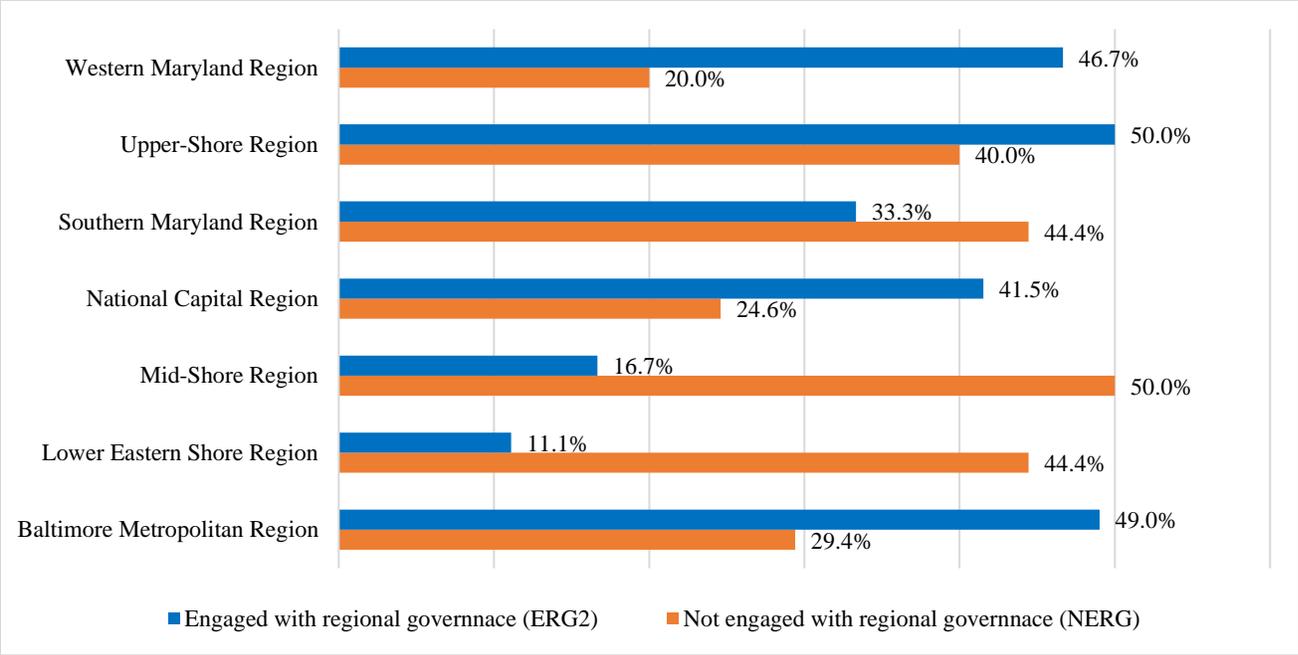
To understand whether there is an association between the regions officials serve and their support for SCA, I analyzed the survey data for different regions in Maryland. The analysis helps identify if the policy position local government officials took is related to the needs, priorities, and aspirations of the region they serve. Support for SCA varies widely by region (see Table 39).

Table 39: Support for community sustainability (SCA) by region and engagement in regional governance

Maryland regions	N	Support for SCA	Support for SCA by Engagement	
			Not engaged	Engaged
Baltimore Metropolitan Region	51	78.4%	29.4%	49.0%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	9	55.6%	44.4%	11.1%
Mid-Shore Region	6	66.7%	50.0%	16.7%
National Capital Region	65	66.2%	24.6%	41.5%
Southern Maryland Region	9	77.8%	44.4%	33.3%
Upper-Shore Region	10	90.0%	40.0%	50.0%
Western Maryland Region	15	66.7%	20.0%	46.7%

Although 90% of the respondents from the Upper-Shore Region supported SCA, fewer than 56% of those from the Lower Eastern Shore Region supported it. Although overall support for SCA among those engaged in regional governance is higher, in some regions those not engaged in regional governance were more supportive than those who were engaged (see Figure 39).

Figure 25: Support for SCA by region and engagement in regional governance



6.1.3. Support for SCA by Locality

Support for SCA also varies by locality. For instance, 17 respondents from Prince George’s County (65%) supported SCA, whereas no respondent from Somerset County supported it. Although in most localities support for SCA exceeded *no support*, in counties such as Washington, Worcester, Dorchester, and Garrett, more respondents reported they did not support SCA than indicated support. Since five localities—Baltimore City, Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, Frederick County, and Carroll County—accounted for nearly 57% of all the completed responses, findings for these localities are discussed in greater detail. Figure CF shows that in all five localities support for SCA by among those engaged with regional governance (ERG2) is higher than among those that are not in regional governance (NERG).

Figure 26: Difference in support for community sustainability by locality

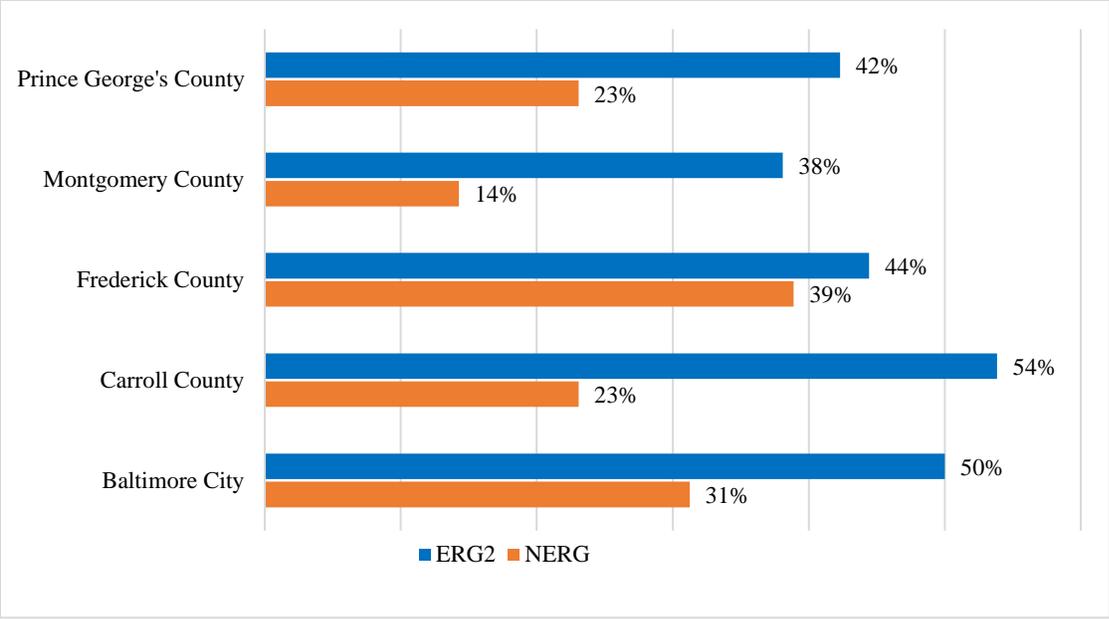


Table 40: Difference in support for community sustainability (SCA) by locality

County or City	No. of responses	No support for SCA		Support for SCA	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2
Baltimore City	16	19%	NA	31%	50%
Carroll County	13	8%	15%	23%	54%
Frederick County	18	11%	6%	39%	44%
Montgomery County	21	29%	19%	14%	38%
Prince George's County	26	27%	8%	23%	42%

Table 40 shows that instances of no support for community sustainability are higher among respondents not engaged with regional governance. Having developed some understanding of the policymakers’ position on community sustainability policies, attention now turns to policy position divergence.

6.2. Policy position divergence on SCA

The first hypothesis predicts that policy position divergence on community sustainability (PD_SCA) will be lower among those who are engaged with regional governance compared to those that are not engaged. Here, PD_SCA has two values 0.292 (lower position divergence or

LPD) and 0.708 (higher position divergence or HPD). Among local government officials engaged in regional governance (ERG2 = 1), over 79% had lower position divergence and among those not engaged in regional governance (ERG2 = 0), about 63% demonstrated lower position divergence (see Figure 27 and Table 41). Conversely, among local government officials engaged with regional governance, only 11% showed higher policy position divergence, compared to 21% of those not engaged with regional governance. The p-value (= 0.019) shows that the relationship between engagement with regional governance and support for SCA is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. According to Cramer’s V (= 0.1824), the effect size of engagement with regional governance on the support for SCA is small. This implies that the data provide a weak support for the first hypothesis (H1).

Figure 27: Policy position divergence on SCA

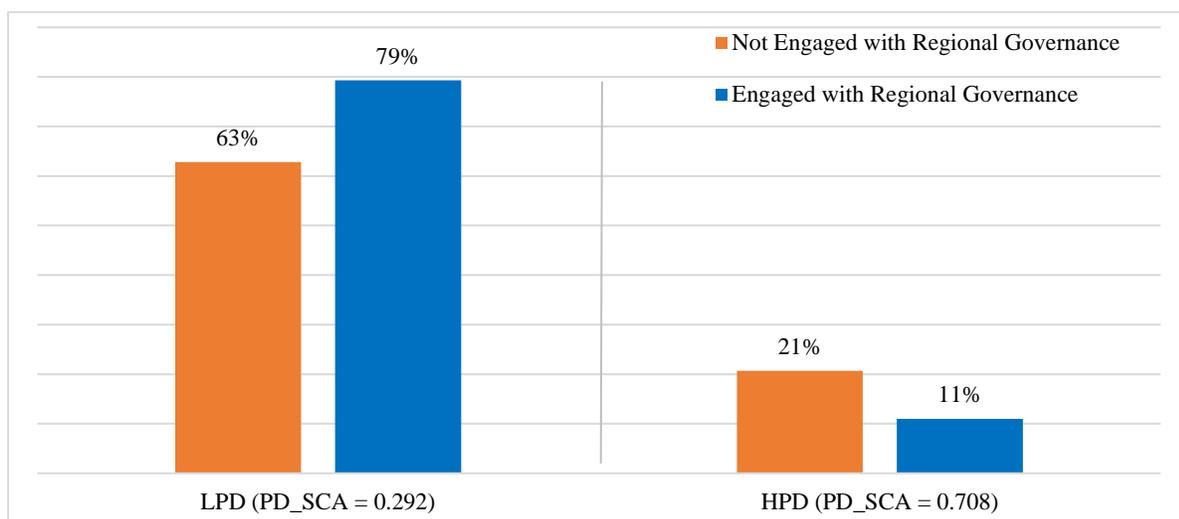


Table 41: Engagement with regional governance and position divergence on SCA

Position Divergence on SCA	Lower (0.292)	Higher (0.708)	Total
Not engaged with regional governance (NERG)	49 (62.82%)	29 (37.18%)	78
Overall percentage	29.70%	17.58%	47.27%
Engaged with regional governance (ERG2)	69 (79.31%)	18 (20.69%)	87

Overall percentage		41.82%	10.91%	52.73%
Total (%)		118 (71.52%)	47 (28.48%)	165 (100%)
Pearson chi2(1)	=	5.4897	p =	0.019
Cramer's V	=	-0.1824		
Kendall's tau-b	=	-0.1824	ASE =	0.076
Fisher's exact	=			0.025
1-sided Fisher's exact	=			0.015

6.2.1. Position divergence on SCA by region

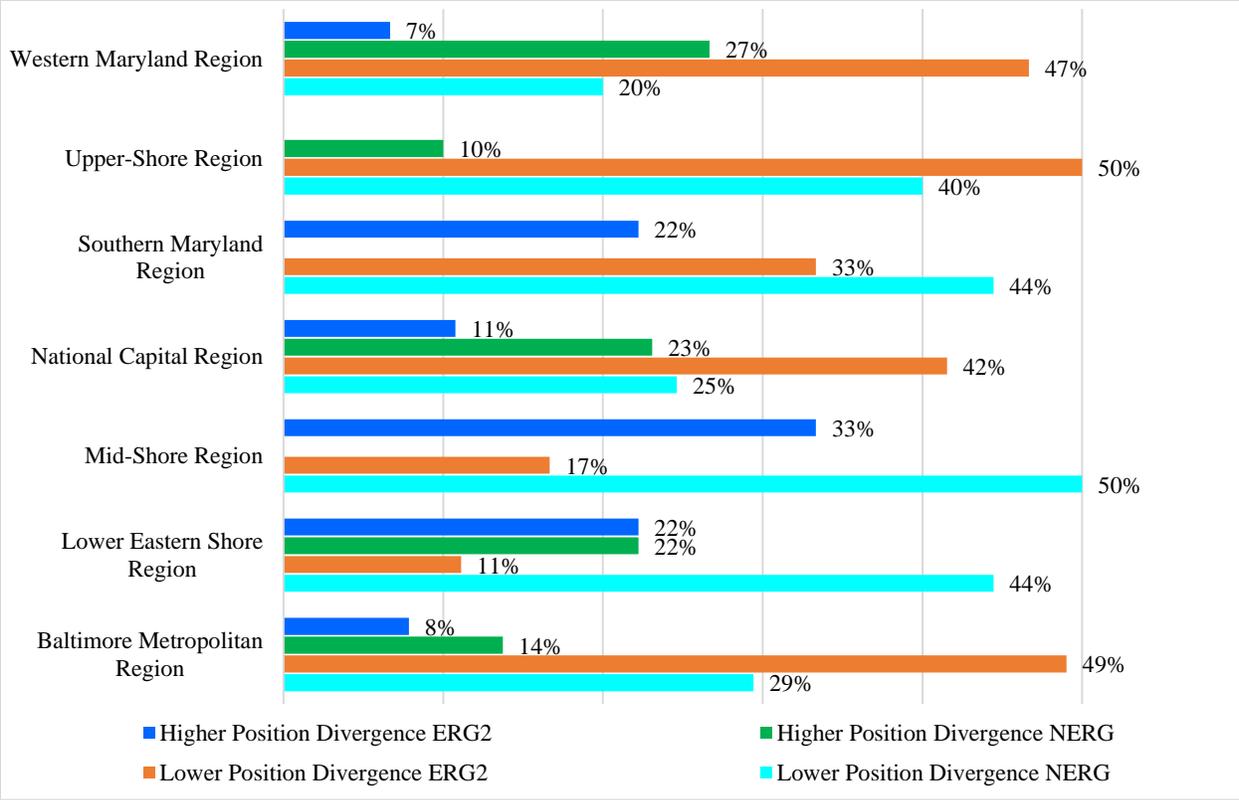
Table 42 shows that in four out of seven regions, greater percentages of those engaged with regional governance had lower position divergence scores than those not engaged with regional governance. In addition, greater percentages of those with higher position divergence scores were not engaged in regional governance.

Table 42: Position divergence on community sustainability by region

Engagement with regional governance	No. of responses	Lower Position Divergence (0.292)		Higher Position Divergence (0.708)	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2
Baltimore Metropolitan Region	51	29%	49%	14%	8%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	9	44%	11%	22%	22%
Mid-Shore Region	6	50%	17%	X	33%
National Capital Region	65	25%	42%	23%	11%
Southern Maryland Region	9	44%	33%	X	22%
Upper-Shore Region	10	40%	50%	10%	X
Western Maryland Region	15	20%	47%	27%	7%

The region-level analysis shows that *in most cases, local government officials engaged with regional governance are more likely to demonstrate lower policy position divergence than those who are not engaged in regional governance.*

Figure 28: Comparing position divergence on SCA by region



This analysis also shows that *local government officials who are not engaged with regional governance are more likely to show a higher policy position divergence than those who are engaged with regional governance.*

6.2.2. Position divergence on community sustainability (SCA) by locality

Position divergence differs as well by locality. In each locality, respondents engaged with regional governance are more likely to show lower position divergence (see Table 43).

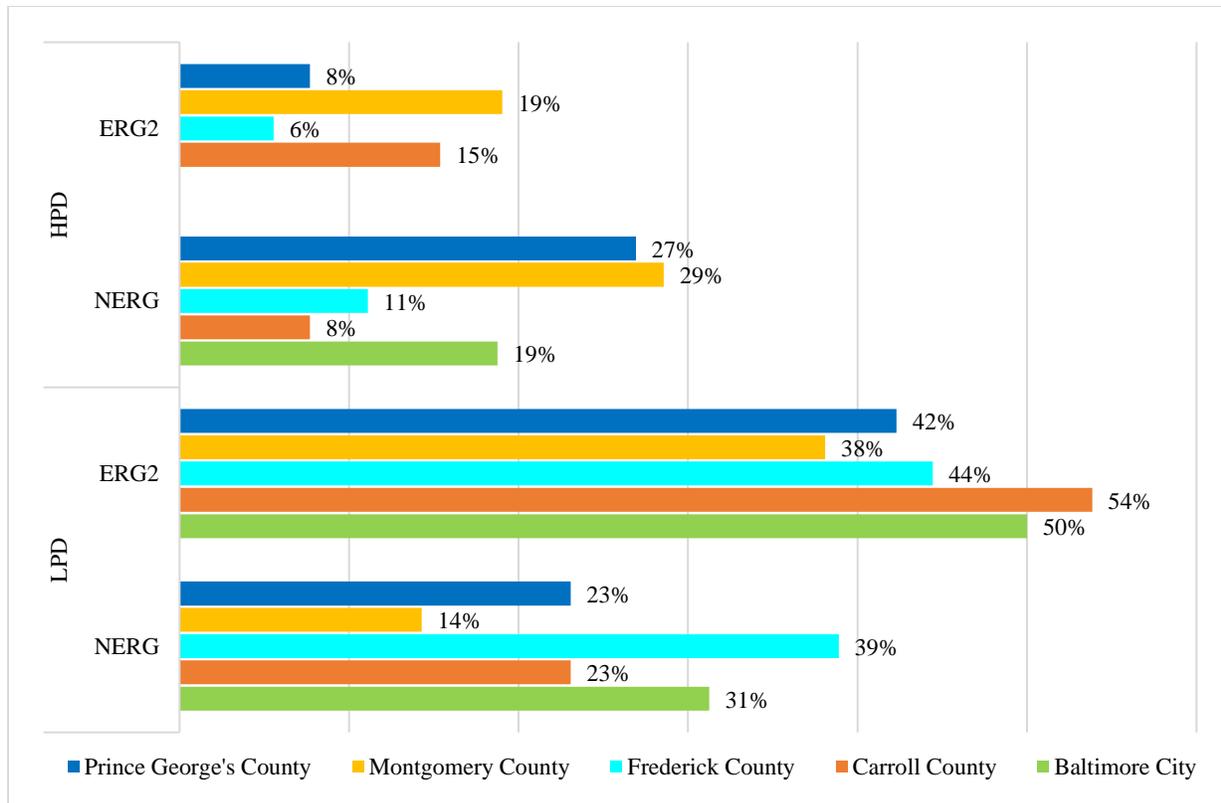
Table 43: Position divergence on community sustainability (SCA) by locality

Locality	No. of responses	LPD		HPD	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2
Baltimore City	16	31%	50%	19%	X
Carroll County	13	23%	54%	8%	15%
Frederick County	18	39%	44%	11%	6%
Montgomery County	21	14%	38%	29%	19%

Prince George's County	26	23%	42%	27%	8%
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Figure 29 shows that in three out of five localities, respondents who are not engaged in regional governance are more likely to show higher position divergence.

Figure 29: Position divergence on community sustainability (SCA) by locality



This section’s analyses—at the state, regional, and local levels—show that higher policy position divergence on community sustainability is more prevalent among those who are not engaged in regional governance, whereas among those engaged in regional governance, lower position divergence is more prevalent. Thus, the first hypothesis applied to the SCA is supported.

As the first hypothesis relates policy position divergence with policymakers’ engagement with regional governance, it is pertinent to examine different features of such engagement. So, I examine the relationship between position divergence and several features of regional

engagement including the nature of engagement, its length, and the frequency of interaction. Only ERG2 and ERG3 are negatively related to position divergence as expected; all other coefficients are consistent in sign (negative) but small in magnitude and are statistically insignificant (see Table 44). In subsequent analyses only these two measures of community engagement are used.

Table 44: Position divergence on community sustainability (SCA) and regional engagement

	PD_SCA	PD_SCA	PD_SCA	PD_SCA	PD_SCA	PD_SCA
ERG2 Std. Error	-0.819* (-2.32)					
ERG3 Std. Error		-0.501* (-2.32)				
ERG_TENURE Std. Error			-0.019 (0.25)			
FORMAL_INT Std. Error				-0.092 (-1.18)		
INFORMAL_INT Std. Error					-0.0454 (-0.74)	
ERG_INTERACTION Std. Error						-0.0407 (-0.97)
_cons Std. Error	0.525* (2.24)	0.548* (2.42)	1.747* (2.98)	1.199* (2.69)	1.142* (2.76)	1.211* (2.5)
N	165	165	61	66	69	65

Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

6.2.3. Factors associated with position divergence on community sustainability

To examine factors that may be related to policymakers' position divergence on community sustainability (SCA), a few variables—respondents' ideological and professional backgrounds and the socioeconomic characteristics of the communities they represent—are introduced. As Table 45 shows, in all of the specifications the relationship between engagement

with regional governance and position divergence on SCA is statistically significant and negative, as Hypothesis 1 predicted.

Table 45: Respondent and community characteristics and position divergence on community sustainability (SCA)—results from ordered logit regression analysis

	Position Divergence on SCA					
ERG2 Std. Error	-0.819* (-2.32)	-0.852* (-2.36)	-0.809* (-2.22)	-0.790* (-2.15)	-0.699+ (-1.85)	-0.667+ (-1.70)
RESP_EDU Std. Error		0.000 (-0.00)	0.069 (0.24)	0.045 (0.16)	0.123 (0.41)	0.225 (0.73)
PPP_FIELD Std. Error			-0.403 (-0.99)	-0.322 (-0.78)	-0.280 (-0.66)	-0.339 (-0.76)
APPOINTED Std. Error				0.673 (1.34)	0.695 (1.38)	1.291* (2.14)
RESP3IDEOL Std. Error					-0.38 (-1.57)	-0.435+ (-1.69)
LOG_POP Std. Error						-0.245* (-2.31)
PCP Std. Error						0.889 (0.48)
H65PLUS Std. Error						0.028 (0.65)
PNWP Std. Error						0.012 (1.39)
LOG_HHINCOME Std. Error						0.601 (0.84)
UNEMPRATE Std. Error						0.223 (1.18)
VACANT_HOUSE Std. Error						0.002 (0.07)
_cons Std. Error	0.525* (2.24)	0.503 (0.69)	0.573 (0.78)	1.097 (1.3)	1.266 (1.48)	8.403 (0.98)
N	165	160	160	160	159	159

Statistical significance: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 45 records results from ordered logit regression analysis of the relationships between position divergence and community sustainability (PD_SCA) and other variables. In each case, the coefficient on engagement with regional governance (ERG2) is negative and statistically significant. This implies that local government officials (LGOs) who are engaged with regional governance are less likely to show higher position divergence than those that are not engaged with regional governance. Conversely, LGOs engaged with regional governance are more likely to be among those showing lower position divergence than their non-engaged (with regional governance) counterparts.

The relationship holds even controlling for a range of other variables. In addition, with engagement in regional governance held constant, appointed officials are more likely to show higher position divergence than their elected counterparts. Meanwhile, respondents who identified as liberal are more likely to have similar policy preferences (lesser position divergence on SCA) than those who are conservative or middle of the road. The findings suggest as well that respondents from larger localities are likely to have more homogeneous policy positions than those from smaller localities.⁴⁹

Next, I examine the nature of engagement with regional governance. The main independent variable, ERG3, distinguishes between engagement with regional governance (in any way) and engagement in regional governance as a local government representative in a regional governance organization such as regional planning council. When $ERG3 = 0$, the

⁴⁹ In Maryland, it may be understandable that those coming from larger areas (for example, Baltimore City) might have more homogeneous policy positions on SCA. Cross tabulations show that over 81% respondents from Baltimore City support the SCA. Those from less populous areas may have more diverse policy positions on SCA and higher policy position divergence.

respondent reported no involvement with regional governance, ERG3 = 1 implies some engagement, and ERG3 = 2 taps the respondent's involvement in a regional governance organization (such as a regional planning council) as a local government representative.

Table 46: Engagement with regional governance organizations and position divergence

	Position Divergence on SCA					
ERG3	-0.501* (-2.32)	-0.499* (-2.26)	-0.477* (-2.16)	-0.459* (-2.06)	-0.391+ (-1.68)	-0.330 (-1.34)
RESP_EDU		0.006 (0.02)	0.080 (0.28)	0.058 (0.2)	0.131 (0.44)	0.227 (0.74)
PPP_FIELD			-0.434 (-1.07)	-0.349 (-0.85)	-0.308 (-0.73)	-0.380 (-0.86)
APPOINTED				0.643 (1.28)	0.671 (1.33)	1.267* (2.09)
RESP3IDEOL					-0.362 (-1.48)	-0.427 (-1.64)
LOG_POP						-0.235* (-2.23)
PCP						0.936 (0.5)
H65PLUS						0.028 (0.66)
PNWP						0.012 (1.33)
LOG_HHINCOME						0.629 (0.89)
UNEMPRATE						0.223 (1.19)
VACANT_HOUSE						0.001 (0.05)
_cons	0.548* (2.42)	0.557 (0.77)	0.624 (0.86)	1.134 (1.35)	1.307 (1.53)	8.848 (1.04)

N	165	160	160	160	159	159
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Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

The results (see Table 46) indicate the relationship between engagement as tapped by ERG3 and position divergence on SCA is negative and statistically significant in all but one of the models. Local government officials engaged with regional governance are more likely to show lower position divergence on SCA than those not engaged in regional governance. Among the other variables, only whether one is an appointed or an elected official and the size of the locality one represents are significantly related to position divergence.

The evidence discussed in this section points to a negative and statistically significant relationship (in almost all cases) between local government officials’ engagement with regional governance and the position divergence of local government officials on community sustainability policies (SCA). The following section explores the relationship in a more specific policy context—affordable housing policy.

6.3. Policy position on affordable housing among local government officials

In the context of affordable housing policy, hypothesis H1 can be restated as: *Local government officials’ engagement with regional governance will be negatively related to their position divergence on affordable housing policy.* Before probing the relationship between policy actors’ engagement with regional governance and their policy position divergence, it is important to examine first the actors’ policy positions on affordable housing and how these are shaped by factors other than engagement in regional governance.

The Maryland state government’s plan to build 1,500 affordable housing units around high employment opportunity areas in the state received overwhelming support from local

government officials, with over 83% supporting the affordable housing plan (AHP). Those engaged with regional governance showed higher levels of support than those who were not engaged: 90% of respondents engaged with regional governance supported AHP, as did 76% of those not engaged with regional governance (see Table 47). The p-value (= 0.058) shows that the relationship between engagement with regional governance and support for AHP is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. According to Cramer’s V (= 0.1827), the effect size of engagement with regional governance on the support for AHP is small. This implies that the data provide a weak support for the first hypothesis (H1) applied to affordable housing.

Table 47: Position on Affordable Housing Policy

ERG2/SUPPORT_AHP				No support	Support	Total
Not engaged with regional governance (NERG)				12 (24%)	38 (76%)	50
Engaged with regional governance (ERG2)				6 (10.3%)	52 (89.7%)	58
Total				18	90	108
Percentage				16.7%	83.3%	100%
Pearson chi2(1)	=	3.605	p =	0.058		
Cramer’s V	=	0.1827				
Kendall's tau-b	=	0.1827	ASE =	0.093		
Fisher's exact	=			0.072		
1-sided Fisher's exact	=			0.05		

To understand whether the support for AHP was related to the region officials serve, I analyzed the survey data for different regions in Maryland.

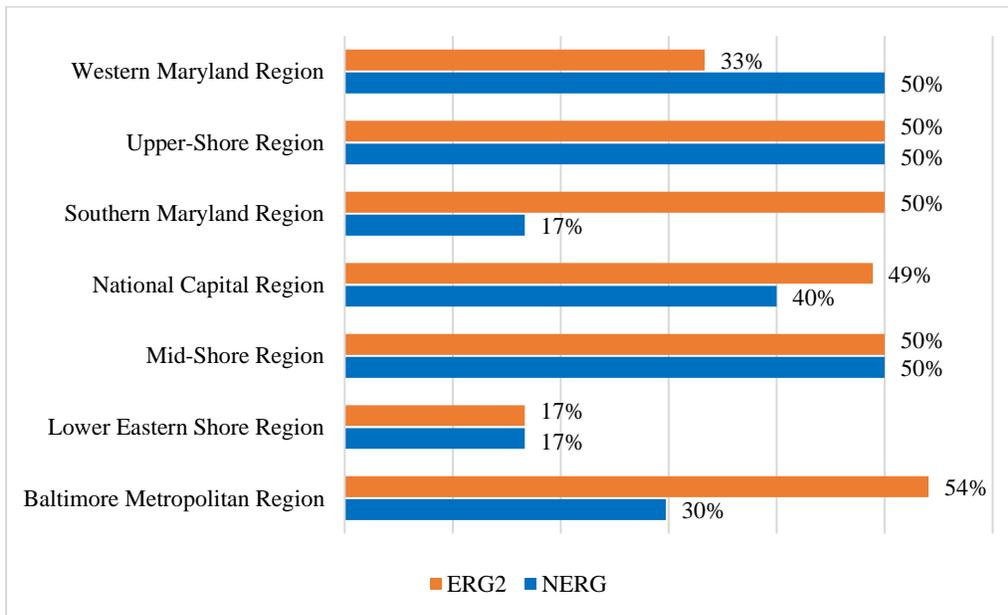
6.3.1. Support for affordable housing by region

Among survey respondents, the support for the affordable housing plan (AHP) varies widely by region. In many regions, more officials supported AHP than opposed it. There were, however, notable differences among regions. In the Upper-Shore and Mid-Shore regions, for instance, all respondents supported AHP, whereas in the Lower Eastern Shore region, only

33.3% respondents supported it (see Table 48 and Figure 30). Table 48: Support for AHP by region

Maryland regions	No. of responses	No support for AHP	Support for AHP
Baltimore Metropolitan Region	37	16.2%	83.8%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	6	66.7%	33.3%
Mid-Shore Region	4	0.0%	100.0%
National Capital Region	45	11.1%	88.9%
Southern Maryland Region	6	33.3%	66.7%
Upper-Shore Region	4	0.0%	100.0%
Western Maryland Region	6	16.7%	83.3%

Figure 30: Support for AHP by region



In three regions (Baltimore Metro, NCR, and Southern Maryland), greater percentages of officials engaged in regional governance showed support for AHP than those that did not engage with regional governance. In the Lower Eastern Shore Region, Mid-Shore Region, and Upper-Shore Region, support for AHP was similar among officials regardless of their engagement with regional governance. In the Western Maryland Region, three of the five respondents who

supported AHP were not engaged with regional governance and the other two engaged with regional governance.

Table 49 shows a considerable difference in AHP support between those who are engaged with regional governance and those who are not. In several regions, officials engaged with regional governance are more likely to support AHP than those not engaged. In addition, in three regions, greater percentages of those who did not engage with regional governance did not support AHP.

Table 49: Support for AHP by region and engagement with regional governance

Maryland regions	No. of responses	Support for AHP		No support for AHP	
		Not engaged	Engaged	Not engaged	Engaged
Baltimore Metropolitan Region	37	30%	54%	10.8%	5.4%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	6	17%	17%	50.0%	16.7%
Mid-Shore Region	4	50%	50%	NA	NA
National Capital Region	45	40%	49%	8.9%	2.2%
Southern Maryland Region	6	17%	50%	NA	33.3%
Upper-Shore Region	4	50%	50%	NA	NA
Western Maryland Region	6	50%	33%	16.7%	NA

6.3.2. Policy position on affordable housing plan (AHP) by locality

Support for AHP also varies by locality (see Table 50). In the five localities from where most responses were received, nearly 87% supported the policy, including all respondents from Carroll and Frederick counties. Over 30% respondents from the City of Baltimore did not support AHP.

Table 50: Policy position on AHP by locality

County	Responses	Support for AHP		No support for AHP	
Baltimore City	13	9	69.2%	4	30.8%

Carroll County	10	10	100.0%	0	0.0%
Frederick County	15	15	100.0%	0	0.0%
Montgomery County	13	12	92.3%	1	7.7%
Prince George's County	17	13	76.5%	4	23.5%
Total	68	59	86.8%	9	13.2%

In three of the five localities, greater percentages of officials who supported AHP were engaged with regional governance, and in three localities, greater percentages of officials who did not support AHP were not engaged with regional governance (see Figure 31 and Table 51). From Carroll and Frederick counties there were no respondents who did not support the policy. This suggests that support for AHP among local government officials is positively correlated with their engagement in regional governance.

Figure 31: Policy position on AHP by locality

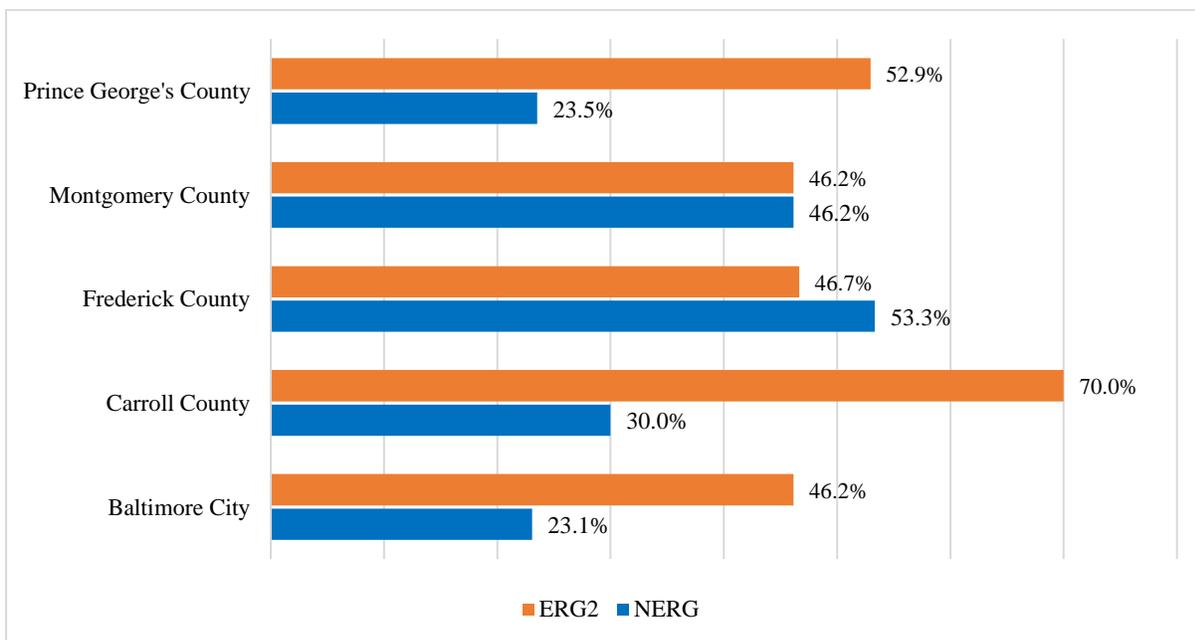


Table 51: Policy position on AHP by locality and engagement with regional governance

County	No. of responses	No support for AHP		Support for AHP	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2

Baltimore City	13	23.1%	7.7%	23.1%	46.2%
Carroll County	10	0	0	30.0%	70.0%
Frederick County	15	0	0	53.3%	46.7%
Montgomery County	13	7.7%	X	46.2%	46.2%
Prince George's County	17	17.6%	5.9%	23.5%	52.9%
Total	68	10.3%	2.9%	35.3%	51.5%

6.4. Position divergence on affordable housing policy among local government officials

The first hypothesis predicted that local government officials’ engagement with regional governance would be negatively related to position divergence on AHP. Table 52 shows that over 83% respondents had lower position divergence (.179) compared to about 17% respondents with higher position divergence on AHP (.821). Close to 90% of those who engaged in regional governance had lower position divergence, whereas 76% of those that did not engage in regional governance also had lower position divergence (see Figure 32). Although position divergence on AHP among those engaged with regional governance is lower than that among those not engaged with regional governance, support for AHP is widespread.

Figure 32: Position divergence on AHP

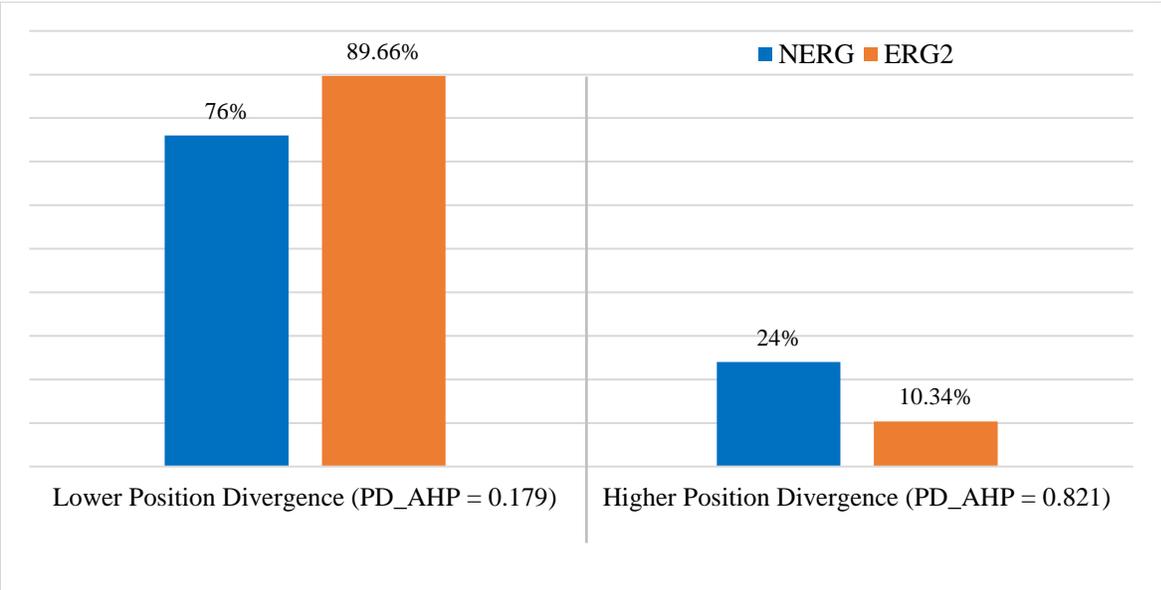


Table 52: Position divergence on AHP

ERG2	Position Divergence		Total
	LPD (PD_AHP = 0.179)	HPD (PD_AHP = 0.821)	
Not Engaged with Regional Governance (NERG)	38 (76%)	12 (24%)	50
Engaged with Regional Governance (ERG2)	52 (66.6%)	6 (10.34%)	58
Total	90 (83.33%)	18 (16.67%)	108
Pearson chi2(1)	=	3.605	p= 0.058
Cramer's V	=	-0.1827	
Kendall's tau-b	=	-0.1827	ASE= 0.093
Fisher's exact	=		0.072
1-sided Fisher's exact	=		0.05

6.4.1. Position divergence on AHP by region

In three out of seven regions, greater percentages of those who engaged with regional governance showed lower position divergence (.179) than those who were not engaged. In two regions, lower position divergence appears in among both groups. An unexpected finding appeared in the Western Maryland region: those who are not engaged with regional governance showed lower position divergence than those engaged in regional governance (see Figure 33 and Table 53).

Figure 33: Lower position divergence on AHP by region⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Data for higher position divergence (.821) were not available for some regions, and it is excluded from the figure.

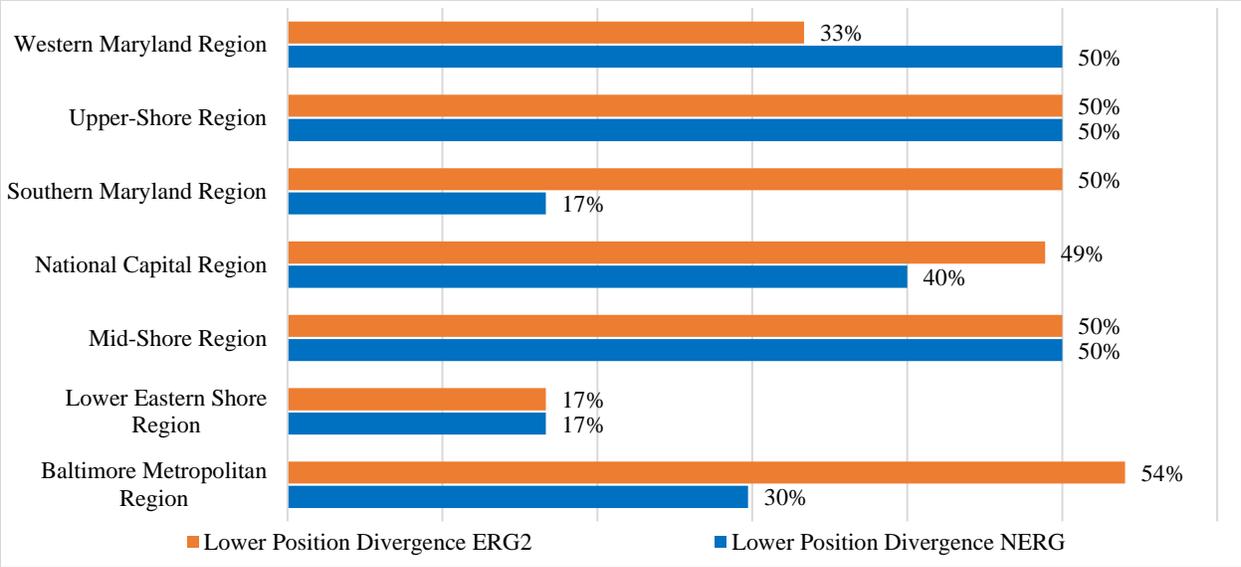


Table 53: Position divergence on AHP be region

Position Divergence on AHP by Region	No. of responses	Lower Position Divergence		Higher Position Divergence	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2
Baltimore Metropolitan Region	37	30%	54%	11%	5%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	6	17%	17%	50%	17%
Mid-Shore Region	4	50%	50%	X	X
National Capital Region	45	40%	49%	9%	2%
Southern Maryland Region	6	17%	50%	X	33%
Upper-Shore Region	4	50%	50%	X	X
Western Maryland Region	6	50%	33%	17%	X

6.4.2. Position Divergence on AHP by locality

Position divergence on AHP varies as well by locality. In most localities, higher position divergence is more prevalent among those engaged with regional governance and less prevalent among those not engaged with regional governance. This finding was not expected (see Figure 34 and Table 54). In only one locality (Prince George’s County) was lower position divergence more prevalent among those engaged with regional governance. Meanwhile, also consistent with the hypothesis, in Frederick County, higher policy divergence is more prevalent among those that did not engage in regional governance.

According to the theory, local government officials engaged in regional governance will show lower levels of position divergence on a given policy area. However, in most localities the evidence contradicts the expectation.

Figure 34: Higher position divergence on AHP by locality⁵¹

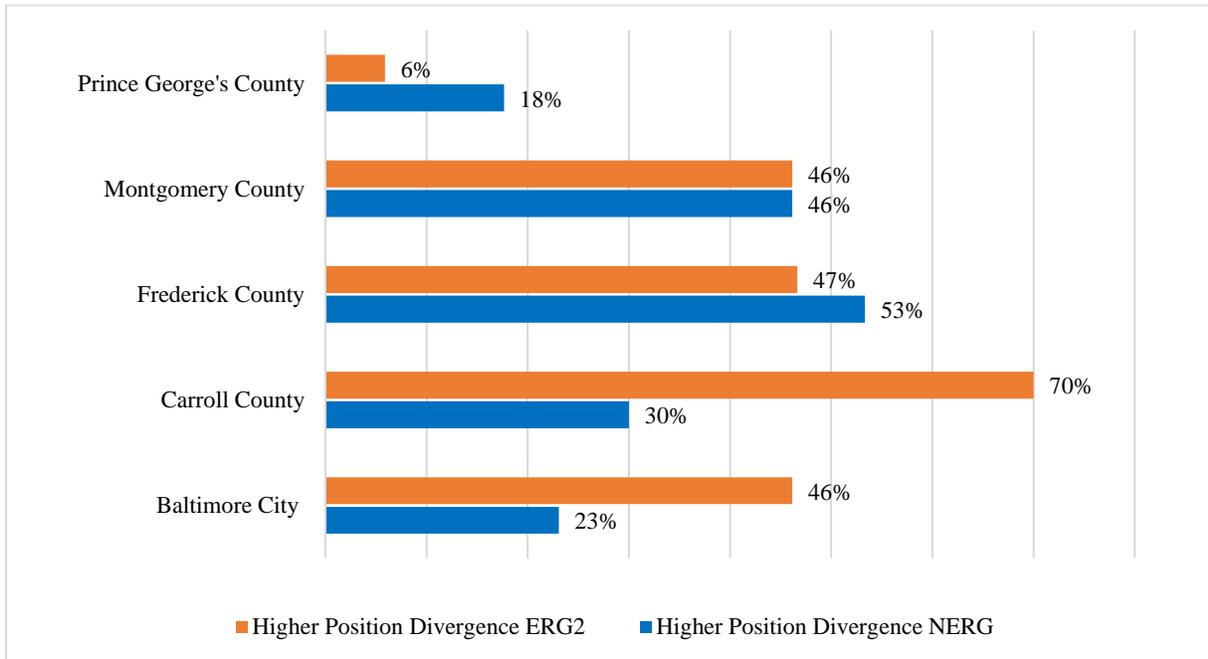


Table 54: Position divergence on AHP by locality

Position Divergence on AHP by locality	Total	Lower Position Divergence		Higher Position Divergence	
		NERG	ERG2	NERG	ERG2
Baltimore City	13	23%	8%	23%	46%
Carroll County	10	X	X	30%	70%
Frederick County	15	X	X	53%	47%
Montgomery County	13	8%	X	46%	46%
Prince George's County	17	24%	53%	18%	6%

⁵¹ Figure TC shows only higher AHP position divergence by locality, since data on lower position divergence are not available for some localities.

In the case of position divergence on AHP, then, the evidence so far is mixed. Statewide and in most regions, the survey data supports the hypothesis. However, in some local jurisdictions, the evidence contradicts the hypothesis.

This may suggest that in some localities, local government officials’ policy positions and hence their position divergence on the affordable housing plan (AHP) may reflect local interests and priorities. This in turn may indicate that position divergence on AHP depends on factors other than local government officials’ engagement with regional governance. To better understand other factors that may be associated with respondents’ position divergence on AHP, I turn to ordered logit regression analysis of the relationships between position divergence and AHP and several other independent variables.

6.4.3. Position Divergence on affordable housing plan and potential explanatory variables

First, I examine bivariate relationships between position divergence on the affordable housing plan (AHP) and specific aspects of their engagement with regional governance. Bivariate logit regression (see Table 55) indicates that, as expected, each of the aspects is negatively related to position divergence. However, except for the two engagement in regional governance variables, other features are not statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Table 55: Position divergence on AHP and parameters of engagement (Logit regression)

	Position Divergence on AHP					
ERG2	-1.007+					
	(-1.85)					
ERG3		-0.739*				
		(-2.09)				
ERG_TENURE			-0.212			

			(-0.96)			
FORMAL_INT				-0.579		
				(-1.44)		
INFORMAL_INT					-0.0348	
					(-0.39)	
ERG_INTERACTIO N						-0.145
						(-1.41)
_cons	1.153*	1.112*	1.476+	0.843	1.762*	1.162+
	-3.48	-3.49	-1.71	-1.34	-3.02	-1.87
N	108	108	44	44	47	44

Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

The next step considers individual and community characteristics in examining variation in position divergence on the Affordable Housing Plan. In three out of six of the specifications, relationships between engagement in regional governance and position divergence are statistically significant and negative. The statistically significant relationship disappears with the introduction of a binary variable indicating whether a respondent is elected or appointed. No relationships are statistically significant once respondents' ideology is controlled for. Controlling engagement, education, whether a respondent is elected or appointed, and other variables, the more ideologically liberal respondents are, the more homogeneous their positions on affordable housing (see Table 56).

Table 56: Position divergence on AHP and respondent characteristics

	Position Divergence on AHP	Position Diverg. on AHP				
ERG2	-1.007+ (-1.85)	-0.955+ (-1.75)	-0.915+ (-1.66)	-0.907 (-1.63)	-0.225 (-0.32)	0.134 -0.16
RESP_EDU		-0.260 (-0.63)	-0.189 (-0.44)	-0.187 (-0.44)	0.063 -0.11	0.262 -0.43
PPP_FIELD			-0.340 (-0.56)	-0.334 (-0.55)	-0.342 (-0.42)	-0.266 (-0.29)

APPOINTED				0.071 (0.1)	0.764 (0.8)	1.354 (1.05)
RESP3IDEOL					-2.620* (-4.42)	-2.592* (-3.90)
LOG_POP						-0.038 (-0.18)
PCP						2.945 (0.63)
H65PLUS						0.071 (0.63)
PNWP						0.025 (1.3)
LOG_HHINCOME						0.767 (0.52)
UNEMPRATE						0.888 (1.63)
VACANT_HOUSE						0.046 (-0.54)
_cons	1.153* (3.48)	0.494 (0.46)	0.579 (0.53)	0.648 (0.5)	2.179 (1.2)	17.84 (0.95)
N	108	106	106	106	106	106

Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

As Tables 57 and 58 indicate, respondents' ideology is related to support for the Affordable Housing Plan. Nearly 71% of the respondents identifying as somewhat or very conservative did not support AHP, and they had higher levels of position divergence. In contrast, more than 78% of those who considered themselves middle-of-the- road supported AHP and had lower position divergence. All of those who identified as very or somewhat liberal supported AHP and had lower levels of position divergence.

Table 57: Support for affordable housing plan (AHP) by ideology

Ideology	Don't support AHP	Support AHP	Total
Somewhat - very conservative	12 (71%)	5 (29%)	17

Middle-of-the-road	8 (22%)	29 (78%)	37
Somewhat - very liberal	0 (0%)	55 (100%)	55
TOTAL	20 (18%)	89 (82%)	109

Table 58: Position Divergence on AHP by ideology

Ideology	Lower Policy Divergence (0.179)	Higher Policy Divergence (0.821)	Total
Somewhat - very conservative	5 (29%)	12 (71%)	17
Middle-of-the-road	29 (78%)	8 (22%)	37
Somewhat - very liberal	55 (100%)	0 (0%)	55
TOTAL	89 (82%)	20 (18%)	109

Although substituting ERG3 for ERG2 produces generally similar results, in some cases, there are some meaningful changes in results. Note that the coefficients on ERG3 are statistically significant in more specifications than in the case of ERG2 and the level of statistical significance also improves over ERG2. In four out of six specifications, position divergence on AHP is statistically significant and is negatively associated with engagement in regional governance.

Table 59: Position divergence on AHP and engagement with regional organizations

	PD_AHP	PD_AHP	PD_AHP	PD_AHP	PD_AHP	PD_AHP
ERG3	-0.739*	-0.707*	-0.687+	-0.687+	-0.154	0.32
	(-2.09)	(-2.00)	(-1.94)	(-1.92)	(-0.33)	(0.56)
RESP_EDU		-0.226	-0.15	-0.15	0.076	0.261
		(-0.55)	(-0.35)	(-0.35)	(0.14)	(0.43)
PPP_FIELD			-0.374	-0.374	-0.339	-0.328
			(-0.62)	(-0.62)	(-0.42)	(-0.35)
APPOINTED				-0.003	0.763	1.438
				(-0.00)	(0.8)	(1.11)
RESP3IDEOL					-2.604*	-2.664*
					(-4.34)	(-3.96)

LOG_POP						-0.031
						(-0.15)
PCP						3.262
						-0.69
H65PLUS						0.081
						-0.72
PNWP						0.026
						-1.36
LOG_HHINCOME						0.721
						-0.48
UNEMPRATE						0.984+
						-1.71
VACANT_HOUSE						-0.056
						(-0.64)
_cons	1.112*	0.539	0.619	0.616	2.212	18.22
	-3.49	-0.5	-0.57	-0.48	-1.24	-0.96
N	108	106	106	106	106	106

Statistical significance: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 59 shows that the coefficient on PD_AHP is consistent with the expectation (negative in sign and statistically significant) until political ideology (RESP3IDEOL) is introduced as an explanatory variable. The coefficient on ideology is large and statistically significant. Most other independent variables are statistically insignificant, except unemployment rate. A positive coefficient on unemployment rate (UNEMPRATE) implies that unemployment rate of a locality is positively related with position divergence on AHP. This can be explained by the fact that the unemployment rate of a locality is negatively correlated with the median household income (LOG_HHINCOME) and the support for affordable housing (SUPPORT_AHP) is positively correlated with the median household income, *i.e.*, localities with higher income show more support for affordable housing, which is inversely related with position divergence on AHP. Table 60 presents correlation between these variables.

Table 60: Correlation between AHP-support, income, and unemployment

	PD_AHP	SUPPORT_AHP	LOG_HHINCOME	UNEMPRATE
PD_AHP	1			
SUPPORT_AHP	-1	1		
LOG_HHINCOME	-0.196	0.196	1	
UNEMPRATE	0.201	-0.201	-0.642	1

In sum, this section examined the relationships between local government officials’ engagement with regional governance and their support for and position divergence on the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA) and the Affordable Housing Plan (AHP). The results suggest that local government officials’ engagement with regional governance is positively related with their support for SCA and negatively related with position divergence on SCA. These findings are mostly consistent with Hypothesis 1. The findings also indicate that officials who are engaged with regional governance are more likely to support and less likely to show higher position divergence on AHP. This finding, however, does not hold in every region or locality.

In order to understand these relationships more fully, Chapter 3 introduced two intermediate concepts, policy relevant knowledge (PRK) and policy core beliefs (PCB), that appear in hypotheses 2 and 3. In theory, local government officials’ engagement with regional governance (ERG) should enhance their policy relevant knowledge, and I expect to see a positive relationship between ERG and PRK. Similarly, engagement with regional governance might bring some changes in officials’ policy beliefs and in turn be associated with greater uniformity of policy beliefs. Thus, I anticipate that engagement with regional governance and divergence in policy core beliefs will be negatively related.

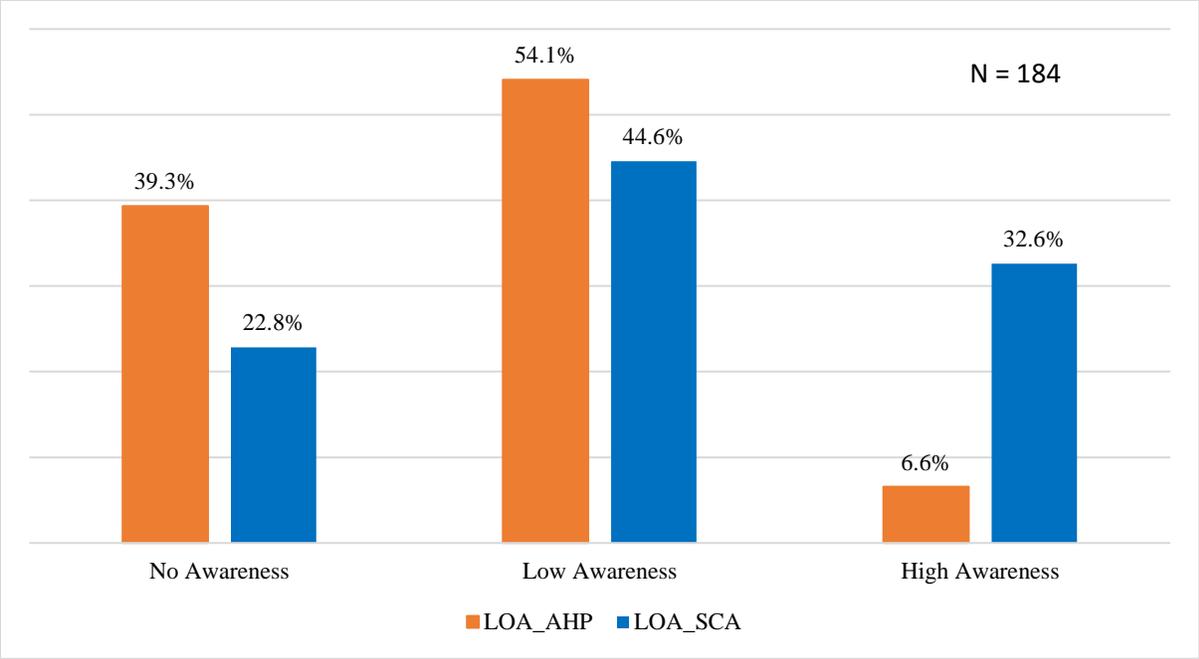
The next section first explores the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy relevant knowledge and then examines the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy core beliefs.

6.5. Engagement with regional governance and policy relevant knowledge

Hypothesis 2 states that local government officials' engagement with regional governance will be positively related to their level of policy relevant knowledge. As noted previously, policy relevant knowledge was measured in terms of respondents' level of awareness of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act and subsequent community sustainability initiatives (LOA_SCA), of an affordable housing plan in Maryland (LOA_AHP), and affordable housing expenditures (LOA_AHE).

Figure 35 shows the relatively low levels of awareness of the local government officials surveyed. Over 39% reported no awareness of AHP, and nearly 23% reported a lack of awareness of the SCA. Even fewer respondents had high levels of awareness, with less than 7% indicating they had high levels of awareness of the Affordable Housing Plan.

Figure 35: Engagement in Regional Governance and Awareness of SCA and AHP



6.5.1. Relationship between Engagement with Regional Governance and Policy Relevant Knowledge on Sustainability

Respondents who engaged with regional governance showed relatively higher levels of awareness on SCA than those who did not engage with regional governance (see figure 36). Over 29% of those not engaged with regional governance reported *no awareness* of SCA, as opposed to 15% of those who engaged with regional governance. In contrast, over 42% of those engaged with regional governance reported *high awareness* of SCA, whereas less than 25% of those not engaged with regional governance reported such a level of awareness. This is consistent with the second hypothesis. For more details, see Table 61.

Figure 36: Level of awareness on SCA and engagement with regional governance (ERG3)

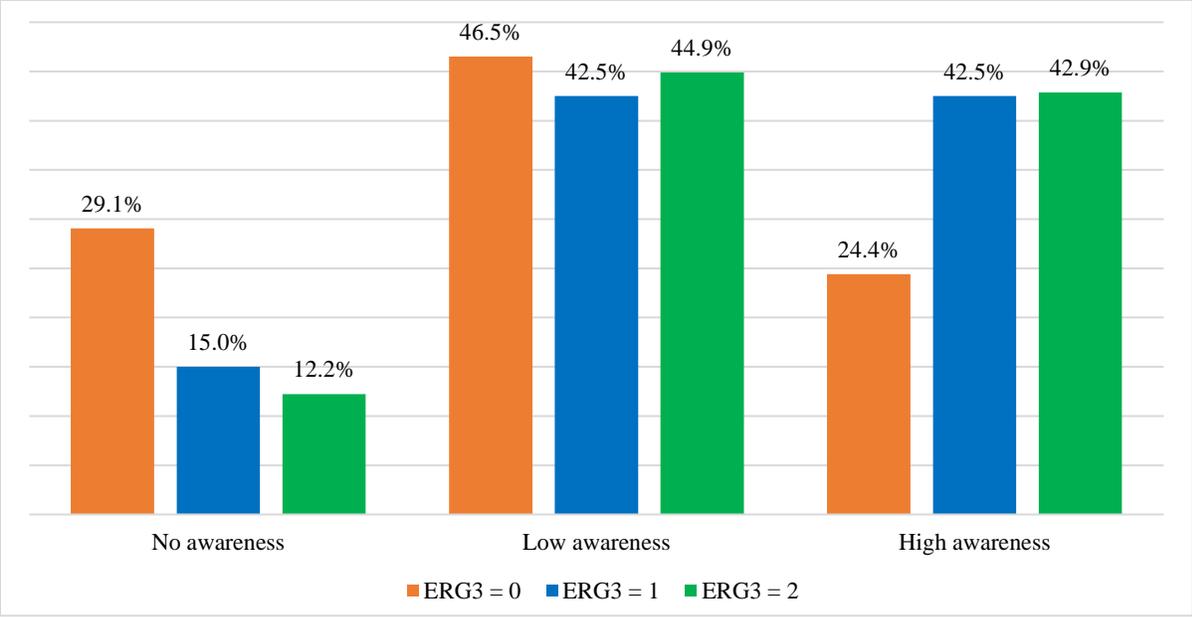


Table 61: Awareness of SCA and engagement with regional governance

Engagement with Regional Governance	Level of Awareness of SCA			
	None	Low	High	Total
NERG (ERG3 = 0)	25 (29%)	40 (47%)	21 (24%)	86
ERG (ERG3 = 1)	6 (15%)	17 (43%)	17 (43%)	40
ERG (ERG3 = 2)	6 (12%)	22 (45%)	21 (43%)	49
Total	37 (21%)	79 (45%)	59 (34%)	175

6.5.2. Relationship between Engagement with Regional Governance and Knowledge on Affordable Housing

One half of the respondents who did not engage with regional governance lacked awareness of the Affordable Housing Plan and another half reported low levels of awareness. In contrast, those who engaged with regional governance had higher levels of awareness of AHP. Among those who were members of regional organization(s), over 65% reported some awareness of AHP, and all respondents who claimed they had high levels of were engaged with regional governance. These findings also are consistent with hypothesis 2 (see Figure 37 and Table 62).

Figure 37: Engagement with regional governance (ERG3) and awareness of affordable housing (AHP)

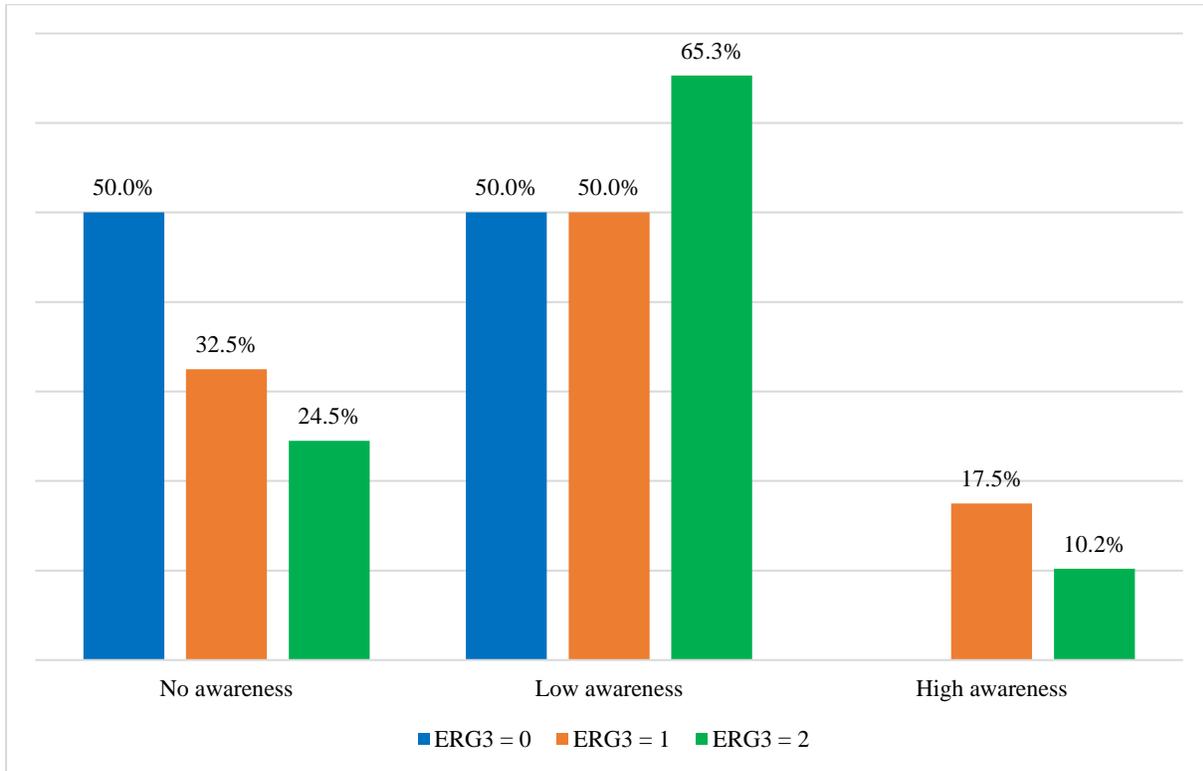


Table 62: Engagement in regional governance and awareness of affordable housing plan

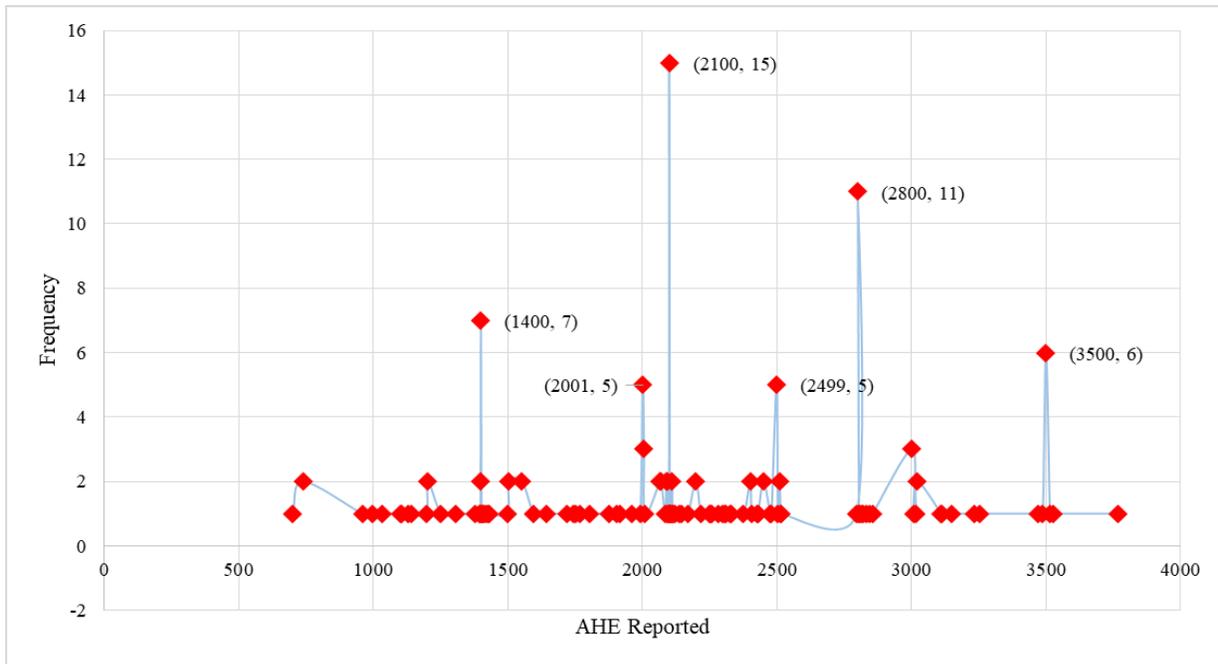
Engagement with Regional Governance	Level of Awareness of AHP			
	None	Low	High	Total
NERG (ERG3 = 0)	43 (50%)	43 (50%)	0 (0%)	86
ERG (ERG3 = 1)	13 (32.5%)	20 (50%)	7 (17.5%)	40
ERG (ERG3 = 2)	12 (24.5%)	32 (65%)	5 (10%)	49
Total	68 (39%)	95 (54%)	12 (7%)	175

6.5.3. Relationship between Engagement with Regional Governance and awareness of Affordable Housing Expenditures

Respondents’ knowledge of accepted views of affordable monthly housing expenditures varied. The survey asked respondents to “assume a household’s monthly gross income is \$7,000”

and then to indicate the point at which the household's monthly housing costs would be unaffordable. The generally accepted response is approximately \$2,100 (30% of income). Although the modal response was \$2,100, responses ranged from \$700 to \$3,766 (see Figure 38).

Figure 38: Engagement with regional governance and awareness of AHE



Since the survey allowed respondents to drag and place a slider to any expenditure between \$700 and \$4,200, respondents may have placed the slider close to a number and not necessarily on a number.

Figure 39: Distribution respondent-reported affordable housing expenditure (AHE)

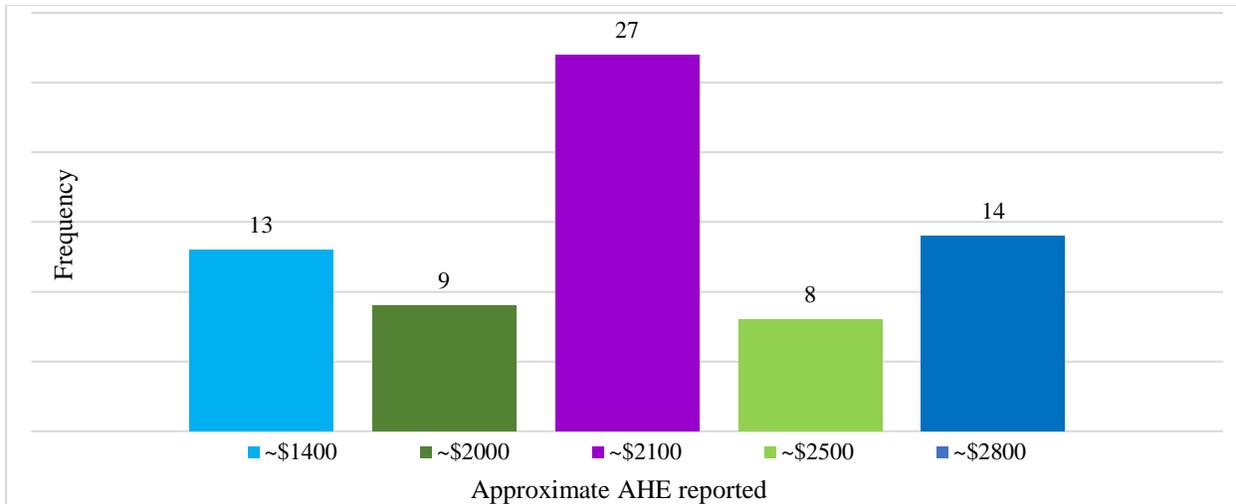
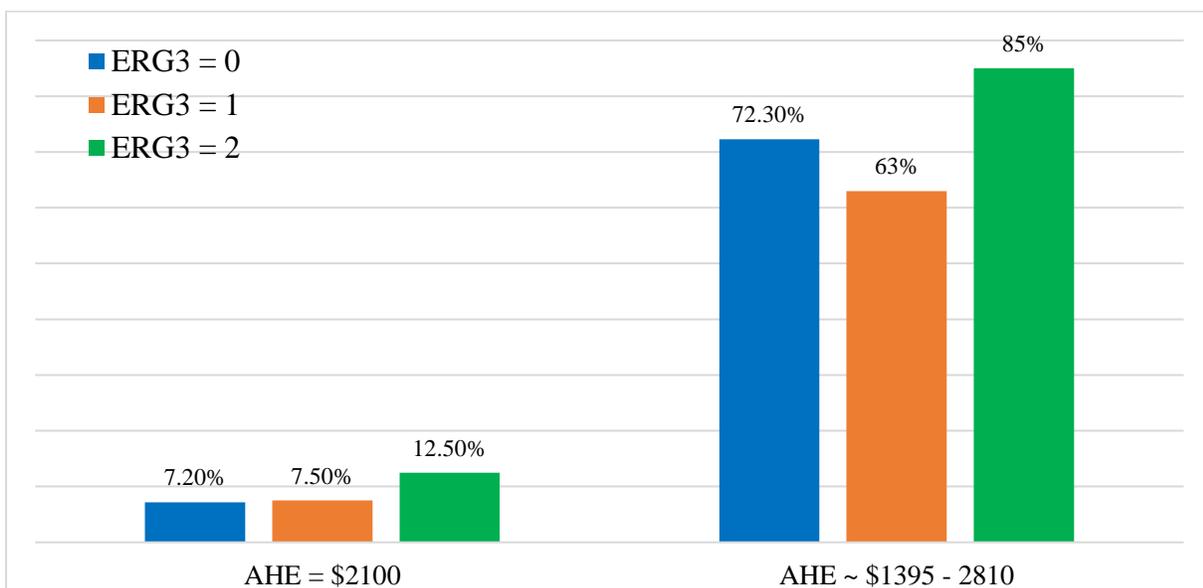


Figure 39 shows that several respondents indicated AHE as being close to \$1,400, \$2,800, and \$4,200. Of the 171 respondents, whose engagement with regional governance is known, 83 reported not being engaged with regional governance in any way and 88 indicated they were. Out of these 171 respondents, 8.8% reported AHE correctly, and close to three-quarters reported AHEs between \$1,395 and \$2,810 (see Figure 40 and Table 63).

Figure 40: Knowledge of affordable housing expenditure by engagement with regional governance



In theory, engagement with regional governance is expected to increase local government officials’ policy relevant knowledge and hence their knowledge about policy issues. Indeed, those officials who were engaged with regional governance are more likely to correctly report AHE than others. Among those respondents who are engaged with regional governance, 10.8% responded to the AHE question correctly (as opposed to 8.8% overall) and showed a higher level of awareness of the definition of affordable housing expenditure than those that did not engage in regional governance in any way (7.2%).

Taking into consideration different types of engagement with regional governance, the analysis reveals that those who were engaged in one or more regional governance organizations (ERG3 = 2), were more likely to report the AHE correctly (see Figure 63) than those who were somewhat involved with regional governance or not engaged at all.

Table 63: Knowledge of AHE by engagement with regional governance

Reported AHE	ERG2 = 0	Percent	ERG2 = 1	Percent	Total	Percent
\$2,100	6	7.2%	9	10.8%	15	8.8%
\$1,395 - 2,810	61	73.5%	66	75.0%	127	74.3%

Engagement in regional governance appears less important in accounting for awareness of AHE than it does for awareness of SCA or of AHP. Moreover, the relationship between engagement in regional governance and awareness of SCA and AHP retain statistical significance when controls are added (see Table 64).

Table 64: Relationships between engagement with regional governance and levels of awareness of SCA, AHP, and AFE (Ordered Logit Regression)

Independent Variables	Level of awareness SCA	Level of awareness AHP	Level of awareness AHE	Level of awareness SCA	Level of awareness AHP	Level of awareness AHE
ERG3	0.481* (2.83)	0.625* (3.41)	0.292 (1.43)	0.434* (2.35)	0.548* (2.84)	0.303 (0.77)
RESP_EDU				-0.004 (-0.02)	0.253 (1.01)	0.343 (1.22)
PPP_FIELD				1.209* (3.52)	0.0494 (0.14)	-0.0346 (-0.10)
APPOINTED				-0.569 (-1.50)	-0.314 (-0.82)	-0.217 (-0.55)
cut1_cons	-0.981* (-4.52)	-0.006 (-0.03)	0.830* (3.7)	-1.232+ (-1.75)	0.385 (0.55)	1.549* (1.96)
cut2_cons	1.087* (4.93)	3.219* (8.9)	2.571* (8.05)	1.002 (1.42)	3.587* (4.63)	3.303* (4.0)
N	175	175	171	169	169	166

Statistical significance: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The positive coefficients for ERG3 indicate that the level of awareness of policy issues is higher among those engaged with regional governance, but only reaches statistical significance for awareness of SCA and AHP. In addition, Table 65 shows that although the relationship between respondents' field of study in policy, planning, and politics (PPP) and awareness of the Sustainable Communities Act is positive and statistically significant, the relations between SCA awareness and backgrounds in STEM or in other fields are not as expected. A positive and statistically significant correlation in the first case suggests that respondents with expertise in politics, policy, or planning are likely to show a higher level of awareness of the Sustainable Communities Act and subsequent community sustainability initiatives. This increased awareness could be a result of the respondents' training or field-specific knowledge gained through experience of working in the field. However, the same is not true for respondents with expertise in other fields.

Table 65: Relationship between policy relevant knowledge and respondents' fields of expertise

	Level of Awareness SCA	Level of Awareness SCA	Level of Awareness SCA
ERG3	0.412* (2.31)	0.466* (2.66)	0.454* (2.56)
RESP_EDU	-0.01 (-0.04)	0.18 (0.77)	0.311 (1.3)
APPOINTED	-0.577 (-1.52)	-0.770* (-2.07)	-0.724+ (-1.92)
PPP_FIELD	1.200* (3.5)		
STEMR_FIELD		0.134 (0.29)	
ASSHL_FIELD cut1			-1.000* (-3.27)
_cons cut2	-1.258+ (-1.79)	-1.171+ (-1.67)	-1.389+ (-1.96)
N	170	170	170

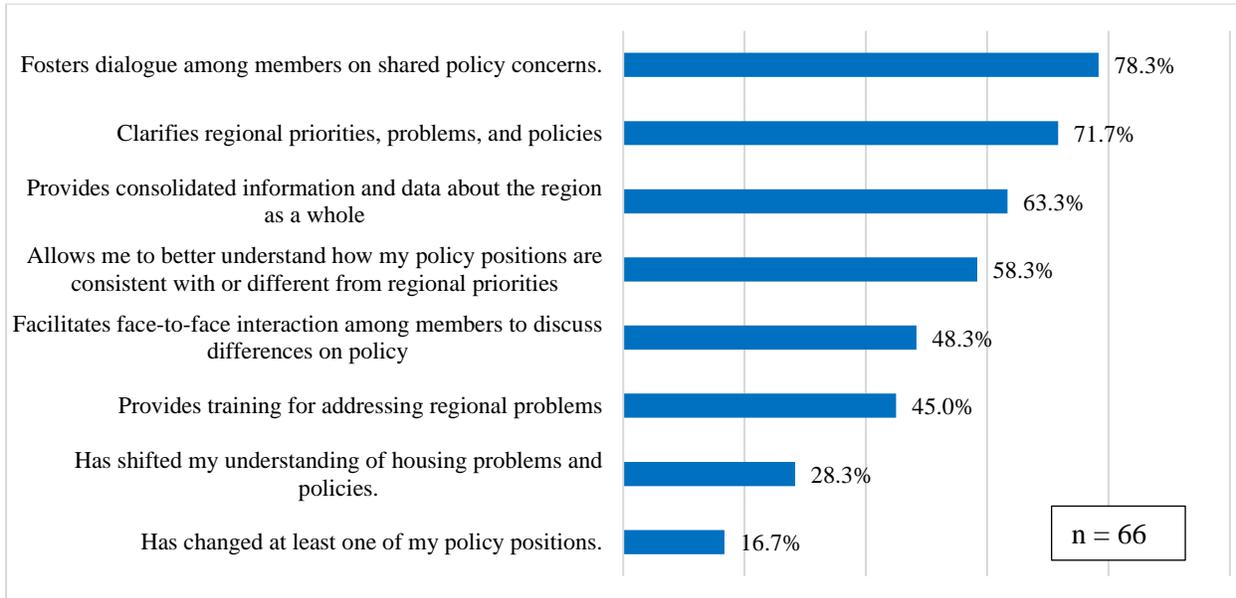
Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

6.5.4. Relationship between Engagement with Regional Governance and Policy Knowledge

To better understand the mechanism through which engagement with regional governance may help enhance the policy relevant knowledge of local government officials, I examined responses to a survey question asking about the activities of the regional organizations with which they were most involved (see Figure 66). Almost half of those who answered this question (45%) reported that such regional organizations “provided training for addressing regional problems,” and close to 60% (58.3%) noted that the organizations “allowed them to better understand if their policy positions are consistent with or different from regional

priorities.” More than 28% responded that the organization had “shifted their understanding of housing problems and policies.”

Table 66: Key activities of regional organizations



Such responses suggest that regional organizations help educate those engaged in regional governance by providing information, training, and clarifying regional problems and priorities.

6.6. Relationship between Engagement with Regional Governance and Policy beliefs

Given the continuous nature of the indicators tapping policy core beliefs,⁵² their relationships with engagement in regional governance (ERG2 and ERG3) are analyzed with the help of linear regression models (see Table 67). Although most of the relationships with policy beliefs are statistically insignificant, the relationship between engagement with regional

⁵² Policy core beliefs are operationalized in terms of variables such as SWF, NGHBR, EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY, COMMUTE, UNEMP_CRIME, and BUS_TOUR. For details of the operationalization, see Chapter 4.

governance and prioritizing housing that reduces commuting time (COMMUTE) is positive and statistically significant. Similarly, when the expanded version of engagement (ERG3) is included, engagement is positively related to COMMUTE and to the housing priorities of equity and affordability.

Table 67: Engagement with regional governance and policy core beliefs

	SWF	NGHBR	EQUITY	AFFORD ABILITY	COMMUTE	UNEMP_ CRIME	BUS_ TOUR
ERG2	-0.066 (-0.18)	0.127 (0.69)	0.479 (0.91)	0.29 (0.97)	0.481* (2.28)	-0.41 (-1.30)	0.294 (1.14)
ERG3	-0.002 (-0.01)	0.143 (1.31)	0.565+ (1.85)	0.309+ (1.76)	0.311* (2.51)	-0.262 (-1.41)	0.176 (1.16)
N	154	169	163	171	171	167	168

Statistical significance: + p<0.1, * p< 0.05, ** p<0.01

To check the robustness of the relationship between regional engagement and policy core beliefs, other explanatory variables such as respondents' ideology, educational background, and whether an official is elected or appointed are accounted for (see Table 68). Multivariate analyses show that with the addition of controls, the relationship between regional engagement and commuting distance retains significance but the other two do not. In these latter cases, respondents' ideology has positive and statistically significant relationships with equity and affordability.

Table 68: Engagement with regional governance and select policy beliefs

	EQUITY	AFFORDABILITY	COMMUTE
ERG3	0.323 (1.05)	0.219 (1.22)	0.231+ (1.8)

RESP_IDEOL	0.909* (3.78)	0.477* (3.43)	0.165 (1.63)
RESP_EDU	-0.423 (-1.04)	-0.222 (-0.95)	-0.211 (-1.25)
APPOINTED	-0.485 (-0.78)	-0.0965 (-0.26)	-0.506+ (-1.95)
_cons	18.86* (15.97)	8.997* (13.08)	6.288* (12.71)
N	157	165	165

Statistical significance: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

6.6.1. Divergence in Policy Beliefs and Regional Engagement

Hypothesis 3 predicted a negative relationship between local government officials' engagement with regional governance and divergence in policy core beliefs. Simple linear regression analysis shows that engagement with regional governance is negatively related to divergence for most policy core beliefs (see Table 69). Exceptions include the relationships between engagement and divergence on reducing commute distance and divergence on additional affordable housing units in a locality would increase unemployment and crime. None of the coefficients, however, is statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Table 69: Engagement with regional governance and divergence in policy beliefs

Regional Engagement (ERG2)	Divergence in SWF	Divergence in NGHBR	Divergence in EQUITY	Divergence in AFFORD	Divergence in COMMUTE	Divergence in UNEMP_CRIME	Divergence in BUS_TOUR
ERG2	-0.087	-0.127	-0.194	-0.106	0.021	0.026	-0.149
Std. error	(-0.39)	(-0.69)	(-0.59)	(-0.56)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(-0.86)
ERG3	-0.0235	-0.143	-0.296	-0.0752	0.019	0.0187	-0.107
Std. error	(-0.18)	(-1.31)	(-1.53)	(-0.67)	(0.27)	(0.17)	(-1.05)
N	154	169	163	171	171	167	168

6.7. Summary

This chapter examined the three hypotheses about local officials’ engagement with regional governance. Explored first were expectations in a broad policy area, the Sustainable Communities Act and the community sustainability initiatives that followed. Then attention turned to a narrower topic, the Maryland Affordable Housing Plan. The first hypothesis predicted a negative association between local government officials’ engagement with regional governance and their policy position divergence in these policy areas. Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between officials’ engagement with regional governance and their policy relevant knowledge. Finally, the third hypothesis predicted a negative association between local government officials’ engagement in regional governance and divergence in policy core beliefs. Table 70 summarizes the main findings.

Table 70: Summary of findings

Proposition/Hypothesis	Community Sustainability Policy (SCA)	Affordable Housing Policy (AHP)
P1/H1: Negative association between ERG and PPD	Yes	Inconclusive (Evidence is mixed)
P2/H2: Positive association between ERG and PRK	Yes	Yes
P3/H3: Negative association between ERG and PCB	N/A	Inconclusive (Evidence is mixed)

The evidence suggests that in the case of sustainability policy at the state level, local government officials engaged in regional governance are more likely to have lower levels of position divergence compared to those who are not engaged. In four out of seven regions in Maryland, officials engaged with regional governance demonstrated a lower policy position divergence than those who were not engaged in regional governance. At the local level, data were analyzed only for the five localities with the most responses. In each of those jurisdictions,

respondents who engaged with regional governance were more likely to show lower position divergence. In three of the five localities, those who did not engage in regional governance were more likely to show higher position divergence.

Multivariate analysis shows that in most cases, engagement with regional governance has a negative and statistically significant relationship with policy position divergence. Thus, based on evidence from this state-wide survey, I conclude that in Maryland, local government officials who engaged with regional governance showed a lower position divergence about community sustainability policy than those who did not engage in regional governance. The findings are largely consistent with the first hypothesis.

Although existing literature lacks work that specifically examines how engagement with regional governance may be related with policy actors' position divergence, some scholars note that working with regional organizations may provide policy actors a platform for exchanging and sharing ideas and information, thereby allowing mitigation of fragmentation among policy actors (Feiock, 2009; Lubin, 2020). Reducing fragmentation among policy actors may be viewed as reducing their position divergence on policy related matters. So the results from this study appear consistent with this view. Lubin (2020) found cities working together under the influence of regional organizations are likely to adopt certain sustainability policies that are less controversial and hence less risky. It should be noted that localities adopt policies only when there is either a consensus or a reasonable degree of agreement among different policymakers, which can be interpreted as a result of a reduced level of position divergence among them.

In a more specific policy context—affordable housing policy, the association between engagement with regional governance and position divergence is largely negative, but not robust. At the state level, local government officials engaged with regional governance are more likely

to show lower position divergence than those that did not engage; in some cases, though, this was not the case. In three out of seven regions, the results were consistent with Hypothesis 1. Yet, in one region, those who engaged in regional governance were less likely to show lower position divergence than those who were not engaged. In the remaining three regions, respondents were equally likely to show higher or lower position divergence, regardless of their engagement with regional governance.

Locality level analysis produced results consistent with Hypothesis 1 in only two localities; in two other cases, respondents were equally likely to show lower position divergence regardless of whether they engaged with regional governance. In two cases, officials engaged with regional governance were more likely to show higher position divergence than those that who were not engaged. This finding is not consistent with the first hypothesis. Multivariate regression analysis between position divergence on affordable housing policy and engagement with regional governance (along with other explanatory variables) also shows mixed results. In most cases, the coefficient on engagement with regional governance is negative but not always statistically significant; in one case, the coefficient is positive but not statistically significant.

This study finds evidence supporting hypothesis 2. The level of knowledge of community sustainability policy was higher among officials who engaged with regional governance; those not engaged had a relative lack of awareness of community sustainability. Likewise, in the case of affordable housing policy, those who were engaged with regional governance showed higher levels of knowledge about the policy than those who were not engaged. Multivariate analyses typically found positive and statistically significant relationships between engagement with regional governance and policy knowledge.

Evidence of learning as local government officials engaged with regional governance is consistent with theories of policy learning, governance learning, network learning, and social learning (Koschatzky & Kroll, 2007; Pemberton, 2002). As officials from different localities share and exchange ideas and concerns, they learn from each other (Martin, Paget, & Walisser, 2012; Termeer et al., 2011). This learning is reflected in greater awareness of sustainability policies in general and affordable housing policy, in particular.

Finally, there was insufficient evidence to support hypothesis 3. Out of seven indicators of policy core beliefs, five showed the expected negative relationships with engagement with regional governance. Yet, none of the coefficients were statistically significant. This implies, given the data analyzed here, that there is no statistically significant association between engagement with regional governance and policy core beliefs. This finding (or lack thereof) can be explained in at least two ways. First, researchers and analysts can consider this as a case of insufficient data or evidence. Since this study did not cover multiple policy domains, data were not collected from multiple states or countries, and the survey was conducted at one point in time, one can argue that if any of these factors changes, findings may differ. Second, one can possibly argue that policy actors' core beliefs are immutable and are unlikely to be influenced by their engagement with regional governance. This explanation seems consistent with the view that policy core beliefs are too stable to be changed by one's external affiliations (Ripberger, Gupta, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014; Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009). Rather than policy core beliefs changing as a result of interaction with others, policy actors tend to interact more with those with similar policy beliefs (Weible, Ingold, Nohrstedt, Henry, & Jenkins-Smith, 2020). Analyzing data on environmental policy networks, Henry and others observed two ways of actor-actor interactions: (a) *belief homophily*—a situation where policy actors actively form

connections with others sharing their belief system, and (b) *policy-oriented learning*, where connected actors become more similar in their beliefs (Henry, Dietz, & Sweeney, 2021). So, it may be possible that as a result of interactions and exchange of ideas among policy actors, some actors' beliefs may shift toward the extremes, and as a result, no reduction in policy position divergence is observed.

In addition to testing the hypotheses, this study reveals several other interesting relationships. First, respondents' ideology is a strong predictor of their policy positions. Relatively more liberal respondents tend to show higher levels of support for the Sustainable Communities Act and the subsequent community sustainability initiatives. The analysis also reveals that nearly 71% of those who identified as conservative did not support the affordable housing plan, whereas all liberal respondents supported the plan. Political ideology is also important for position divergence on affordable housing policy. Policymakers' political ideology (RESP3IDEOL) had a negative and statistically significant ($p < .05$) relationship with position divergence on affordable housing policy. Respondents' ideology also has a positive and statistically significant relationship with policy core beliefs about equity and affordability. That is, those who identified themselves as liberals are more likely to consider equity and affordability as higher priority goals than their conservative counterparts.

Although these findings are mostly consistent with previous scholarship, there is an element of surprise as well. Many scholars believe that ideology and core beliefs can have strong influence on one's policy attitudes and policy positions (Scally & Tighe, 2015; Tighe, 2010). While some scholars observe that conservatives tend to be less welcoming to affordable housing (Goodman & Hatch, 2022; White & Nandedkar, 2021), others note that popular opposition to developing additional affordable housing units is not confined within ideological groupings

(Scally & Tighe, 2015). When it comes to placing affordable housing in one's own neighborhood, both conservatives and liberals often are opposed (Marble & Nall, 2021). Here, however, the divide between conservative officials and their liberal counterparts seems to be deeper than anticipated: nearly all respondents who identified themselves as liberals supported construction of more affordable housing in their own communities. Conservative respondents, on the other hand, did not show such support.

In some cases, appointed officials appeared to take more heterogeneous policy positions on SCA than their elected counterparts. Elected officials show more homogeneity in their support for the Sustainable Communities Act. Although some scholars observe that local elected officials, compared to appointed administrators, are less likely to be focused on sustainability policy (Mullin et al., 2015), others note that elected local government officials are more likely to advocate for policies that are popular among their constituents (Bae & Feiock, 2013; Gerber & Gibson, 2009); some local elected officials tend to claim sustainability as an issue and champion it (Krause, YS Park, Hawkins, & Feiock, 2019; Lubin, 2020; Mullin, Feiock, & Niemeier, 2020). In the case of Maryland, the data here suggest that most of the elected officials support sustainability policies, and hence position divergence is lower compared to appointed officials.

Finally, I examine the relationship between respondents' field of expertise and policy relevant knowledge. A positive and statistically significant relationship suggests that respondents with expertise in politics, policy, or planning are likely to show a higher level of awareness of both the Sustainable Communities Act and subsequent community sustainability initiatives. This increased awareness could be a result of the respondents' training or field-specific knowledge gained through the experience of working in the field. Surprisingly, the same is not true for respondents with other backgrounds.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This dissertation analyzes position divergence among local and regional officials on community sustainability policy, focusing on affordable housing. Based on evidence from a statewide survey of policymakers in Maryland, this study finds that policymakers share a wide range of positions on community sustainability policies. Moreover, position divergence on community sustainability among local government officials engaged with regional governance is lower than among those who are not engaged with regional governance. Although position divergence on affordable housing among those engaged with regional governance generally is lower than for those not engaged with regional governance, this finding is not robust. Moreover, local government officials' engagement with regional governance is associated with higher levels of policy relevant knowledge, but policy core beliefs are not related to policymakers' engagement in regional governance.

These findings are important for public policy and administration scholarship as conflict is inevitable in these fields. They may help practitioners and scholars to better understand episodes of policy conflicts, their roots, and how they might be prevented or contained. Using a relatively novel policy conflict framework, the research expanded its application to policy conflicts in sustainability policy, with a focus on affordable housing. The study drew on theoretical and empirical insights from other fields to probe the relationship between engagement with regional governance and policy position divergence. In addition, by examining concepts such as policy-relevant knowledge and policy core beliefs and linking them with policy position divergence, the research highlighted a mechanism through which involvement in regional governance might help reduce differing policy positions. By focusing on regional governance,

this study explored *how* regional governance can help manage policy conflicts. Insights also may be useful for scholars of governance learning and policy learning.

Limitations of the study

Nonetheless, the study has several limitations. One involves the data collection process. Identifying possible survey recipients was challenging. In most cases, I was able to contact local government officials from relatively larger and well-resourced localities, as smaller localities did not have publicly available contact information for many officials. In other instances, localities were contacted but they did not respond due to staff shortages or lack of IT infrastructure. This implies that the study examined responses mostly from relatively larger or wealthier localities.⁵³

A second limitation is that the response rate for this survey was very low (about 11%). Even among those that responded, many responses were incomplete. Although the response rate for the survey was above 11%, the completion rate is around 6.7%. The small number and proportion of respondents (about 180 out of a pool of over 2750 contacts) limited the possibilities for more sophisticated statistical analyses and for more complete understanding of policy dynamics.

The low response rate likely reflected a number of factors. One was the timing of fielding the survey. The survey was conducted from the end of 2020 into early 2021. At the time, the 2020 elections might have kept some local government officials occupied who could have otherwise responded to the survey. In late 2020 and early 2021, COVID-19 lockdowns also might have affected the responses, because many government offices in Maryland were closed. The survey also was circulated before, during, and just after the winter holidays.

⁵³ In future, such issues can be addressed, to some extent, by sending paper questionnaires via postal mail.

The study's cross-sectional design is a third limitation. For studying policy conflicts, tracing policymakers' positions on policies, their policy core beliefs, and policy knowledge/awareness over time is valuable. This is particularly the case when the extent and nature of participation in regional governance is central to the analysis. Relatedly, the study cannot say much about *why* an actor takes a particular policy position.

Next Steps

Despite its limitations, this study has revealed several key findings. The relationship between policy actors' engagement with regional governance and position divergence emerged in many, but not all instances, as expected. Future research might examine why the relationship sometimes appears (e.g., in certain policy areas, regions, localities) but not always.

In the future, I plan to expand the scope of this study temporally, geographically, methodologically, and substantively. Conducting similar surveys at different times may provide further insights, especially regarding changes in actors' policy positions, if any. Data collected at different time periods can enable pooled cross-section or panel data analysis, which would enable researchers to carry out fixed-effects models. Such models would be capable of examining trends in position divergence and any influence of engagement with regional governance on officials' policy core beliefs and policy positions over time.

Furthermore, I plan to conduct similar surveys in other states, especially those with regional governance mechanisms and regulatory environments that differ from Maryland. This will help us better understand the relationships among institutional environment, type of regional governance, and officials' policy positions.

In addition, qualitative analyses (of evidence from interviews, focus groups, or participant observation) might yield deeper insights and greater understanding of *how* local government officials' engagement with regional governance related to position divergence. Qualitative analysis also might contribute to understanding whether and how officials' engagement with regional governance is associated with policy core beliefs.

An extension of this research may include conducting studies aimed at examining how localities in a region can reduce conflict by encouraging a certain number or percentage of local government officials to engage with regional governance.

Future studies also will consider additional substantive policy areas such as transportation, natural resource use and protection, and economic development. These areas also are conflict-prone, and a good deal of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation take place regionally. Examination of how engagement with regional governance shapes policy position divergence in these policy areas will allow exploration of whether officials' views in different policy areas are more or less likely to be modified based on engagement with regional governance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Maryland Community Sustainability Initiatives (2010 - 2020)

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a joint-partnership that would improve access to affordable housing, offer citizens better low cost transportation options, and help protect the environment.

2010 – The state of Maryland passed the Sustainable Communities Act of 2010

– BMC was awarded the federal government’s SCI-RPG.

2012 – Analysis of Impediments to Regional Fair Housing

2014 – The Baltimore Regional Housing Plan and Fair Housing Equity Assessment

– Howard County passes affordable/fair housing bill

2015 – Regional Plan for Sustainable Development

2016 – Queen Anne’s County conducted Affordable Housing Needs Assessment

2018 – Baltimore City Passes a Ban on Housing Discrimination

2019 –

- The Baltimore City passes Bill 18-0308, which would allow discrimination based on the source of income (with a 20% cap).
- The Baltimore County Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act
- Anne Arundel County Council passes workforce housing legislation, but postpones anti-discrimination bill
- Analysis of Impediments to Regional Fair Housing

Appendix II: Survey Instrument

Dissertation Survey: Position Divergence of Local Government Officials on Housing Policy

Survey Consent Form This survey is part of a study of local and regional policymaking in Maryland. We are asking you to participate in the survey because of your involvement with local/regional policymaking in Maryland or the greater Washington, D.C. area. Your responses will remain confidential, and we anticipate no risk or physical harm to you from completing the survey. Your contact details have been collected from publicly available sources including Maryland State Archives and websites of government/nonprofit organizations. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. The 10-15 minutes survey can be completed online, though you may complete the survey offline and send it via email (contact us at the email addresses provided below if you prefer to complete it via email). The responses you provide will be analyzed along with many others (from a pool of nearly 3000 local government, regional governance, and NGO officials), and they will contribute to a variety of both scholarly and professional publications. The study is led by Shahidur Rashid Talukdar, a doctoral researcher at Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy, under the supervision of Dr. Karen Hult. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (email: shahidur@vt.edu) or my dissertation advisors Dr. Karen Hult (email: khult@vt.edu) or Dr. Thomas Skuzinski (email: tskuzinski@niu.edu). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may communicate with them at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu. if:

- You have questions about your rights as a research subject
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team
- You cannot reach the research team
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team to provide feedback about this research

Please respond "I Agree" to continue with the survey.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "I Agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age

I AGREE and continue (1) I DISAGREE (2)

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "I Disagree" button. Thank you for considering participation.

Thank you for agreeing to fill out this survey. In the following section, you will come across a few questions that will help us understand your professional background and policy views.

1. Please indicate the type of organization(s) you work for. If you are engaged with different types of organizations, select as many options as applicable.

- Local government (county, city, township, etc.)
- Inter-county and regional agencies (Metropolitan Planning Council/Organization, Regional Planning Council/Commission, Regional Transportation Planning board, etc.)
- State Government
- Non-profit organization or advocacy group(s)
- Retired or currently not working
- Other (please specify) _____

2. Please indicate which of the following option(s) describe the primary area in which you are currently engaged

- Human Resources and General Administration
- Finance and Accounts
- Housing and Community Development
- Economic and Business Development
- Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation
- Health and Family Welfare
- Education
- Law and Order
- Transit, Transportation, Roads
- Water, Waste-water, Solid waste
- Other (please specify) _____

3. How long have you been working in this field (indicated above)?

- 0-4 years
- 5-8 years
- 9-12 years
- More than 12 years

Thank you for letting us know about your professional background. In the following section you will come across a few questions that will help us understand your thoughts/views about housing policy, in general, and affordable housing, in particular.

4. Which aspects of housing do you find most important? [Rank order the following options by assigning a score to each of the following items: 1 = most important and 6 = least important].

- A) _____ Building wealth through ownership
- B) _____ Basic shelter
- C) _____ A place to raise a family
- D) _____ Access to a good neighborhood
- E) _____ Means of transferring wealth across generations

F) _____ Other (please type)

5. In your locality, what level of priority should be given to each of the housing policy goals below?

	Very low priority (1)	Low priority (2)	High priority (3)	Very high priority (4)
Reducing the concentration of poorer households	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing home-ownership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring a fair share of affordable housing in each county/city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better matching the location of housing to the location of jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the stock of housing available for households earning 60-100% of area's median income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning 20-60% of area median income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning less than 20% of the median income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing the number of families living in segregated communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ending source-of-income-based discrimination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving access to quality education for families with children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing travel time between workplaces and residences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any other (please type)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Assume a household's monthly gross income is \$7,000. At what dollar amount would their monthly housing costs (e.g., mortgage payment or rent) become unaffordable?

700 1400 2100 2800 3500 4200



Housing Affordability: A number of policymakers and scholars define housing affordability in terms of the fraction of income a household has to spend toward housing. If a household has to spend over 30% of its gross monthly income on housing expenditure (rent/mortgage/tax), such a housing expenditure would be considered unaffordable for the household. In other words, many policymakers and scholars believe that affordable housing should cost less than 30% of a household's gross monthly income.

7. Many observers describe the United States as facing a problem of housing affordability. Indicate what you think of the housing affordability problem for the housing market in your area [Choose as many options as you think appropriate].

- Housing affordability is not much of a problem in my area
- Housing affordability is mainly a concern for middle-to-low-income individuals and households
- Housing affordability is a concern for mostly very low-income individuals and households
- Housing affordability is a concern mostly for families with young children (aged 0 through 16 years)
- Housing affordability is a concern mostly for the elderly population (aged 65 years or older)
- Housing affordability is a concern mostly for the racial/ethnic minorities
- Housing affordability is a concern mostly for young professionals
- Housing affordability is a concern for everyone in my area

8. Of factors listed below, which do you think are most influential in shaping your position on affordable (moderate and low-income) housing policy [Indicate the level of influence by choosing appropriate options]?

	Extremely influential	Influentia l	Somewhat influential	Un(Not) influentia l
A) Concern for local businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B) Concern for tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C) Concern for unemployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D) To minimize the travel distance between residences and workplaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E) Concern for low income households	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F) Concern for racial and ethnic minorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
G) Concern about crime rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
H) To allow many important workers (e.g., nurses, police officers, K-12 teachers, younger residents) to live closer to where they work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I) To contribute to creating more diverse communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. In October 2017, the state of Maryland pledged to create 1,500 new affordable housing opportunities in high-opportunity parts of the Baltimore region. Are you aware of this pledge?

- I know a great deal about this pledge
- I am somewhat aware of this pledge
- I don't know much about this pledge
- I don't know anything about this pledge

10. Assume that this pledge applies to your area. What is your view of such a pledge by the state government? [Choose as many options as apply to you]

- I don't agree with such a plan of the state government
- I think such a policy places undue pressure on counties and cities
- I think this type of policy will increase crime and drive away businesses from my locality
- I don't want any more low-income households in my locality
- I agree with this idea, and I support this initiative to create new affordable housing units
- I would like to see more affordable housing units built in my locality

11. In 2010, Governor O'Malley signed into law the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act of 2010. How aware are you of the "Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010" and the subsequent "Sustainable Communities" initiatives?

- I am not aware of these
- I am somewhat aware of these
- I am well-aware of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act (2010)
- I am well-aware of the Maryland Sustainable Communities Initiatives

12. How do you think the passage of Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and subsequent initiatives often labeled “Sustainable Communities” might have influenced your position on sustainability policies? Indicate which option(s) apply to you.

- A. These have no influence on my policy position
- B. I don’t agree with the policy goals
- C. I agree with the policy goals but don’t agree with the way those goals are being addressed
- D. Sustainability should be a policy priority for me and my locality (county/city/municipality)
- E. My locality (county/city/municipality) already has one or more designated Sustainable Communities
- F. Sustainability is a policy priority for me
- G. Other response (please type)

13. The following questions will help us understand your engagement with regional (metropolitan or inter-county) policy making and governance. If you are directly or indirectly engaged in regional governance or policy making, please answer the following questions (14-19). If you are not engaged with regional policy making or any regional organizations, you may skip these questions and answer questions 20 through 24, instead.

- Somewhat involved with regional policy making and governance
- Engaged with one or more regional organizations
- Not involved with regional policy making or governance

14. If you are a member of, or work in a regional planning commission or council, with which of the organization(s) below are you affiliated?

- Baltimore Metropolitan Council
- Tri-County Council for Western Maryland
- Upper-shore Regional Council
- Mid-shore Regional Council
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- Baltimore Regional Transportation Board
- Regional Additive Manufacturing Partnership of Maryland
- Fort George G. Meade Regional Growth Management Committee
- Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission

- National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council
- National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
- Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority
- Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
- Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
- Upper Shore Regional Council
- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
- Washington Suburban Transit Commission
- Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network, Maryland
- The Opportunities Collaborative
- Other (please specify) _____

15. Please indicate how you are involved in regional organization(s) or policy making (select all that apply)

- I am a voting member in one or more regional organizations
- I am a non-voting member (or staff) in one or more regional organizations
- I serve in a committee for regional policy
- I occasionally participate in regional policy making or governance in an advisory role
- I work as a consultant for one or more regional organizations
- Any other capacity (please type)

16. Approximately how many years have you served on the board or staff of a regional organization in Maryland?

- 0-4 years
- 4-8 years
- 8-12 years
- More than 12 years

17. How often do you have formal meetings with other elected/appointed leaders in relation to regional planning or policy making?

- At least once a month
- At least once in 3 months
- At least once in a year
- Not very often

18. Do you also interact with regional policymakers outside of the formal meetings? If yes, how often do you informally interact with other local/regional officials in relation to these regional organization(s)?

- I usually don't interact with regional policymakers outside of the formal settings
- I interact with them, at least once a month

- I interact with them, at least once in 3 months
- I interact with them, at least once in a year
- Not very often

19. Many observers note that regional organizations can play a number of roles in regional policy making. How does the regional organization(s) you are engaged with facilitate policy making? [Choose as many options as you think appropriate]

The regional organization(s) with which I am most involved:

- Provides consolidated information about the region as a whole.
- Clarifies regional priorities, problems, and policies.
- Provides training for addressing regional problems.
- Fosters dialogue among members on shared policy concerns.
- Facilitates face-to-face interaction among members to discuss differences on policy.
- Allows me to better understand how my policy positions are consistent with or different from regional priorities.
- Has shifted my understanding of housing problems and policies.
- Has changed at least one of my policy positions.
- Any other (please specify)_____.

You are almost done! The following questions (20-24) will help us understand some aspects of your personal and professional background.

20. Which of the following broadly describes your highest level of education?

- I have a high school diploma, associate degree, or some college
- I have a college/undergraduate degree
- I have a graduate/professional degree
- Other qualification (please type)

21. Which of the following areas broadly describes your professional training/expertise?

- I have a degree in public policy, urban planning, politics, or a related field
- I have a degree in business, humanities, or other social sciences (different from those mentioned above)
- I have a degree in STEM related field
- Other (please type)

22. In what type of community did you grow up?

- Metropolitan area
- Suburban area
- Small town/city

- Rural community

23. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

- Black or African-American
- Hispanic or Latino(a)
- Asian or Asian-American
- White or Caucasian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Other (please specify)

24. How would you describe your own general outlook: as being more conservative, more liberal, or more middle-of-the road?

- Very liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Middle-of-the-road
- Somewhat conservative
- Very conservative

Appendix III: Institutional Review Board Approval



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 5, 2020
TO: Karen Hult, Shahidur Rashid Talukdar, Thomas Stefan Skuzinski
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 29, 2024)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Position Divergence of Local Government Officials on Housing Policy
IRB NUMBER: 20-582

Effective August 5, 2020, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)**
Protocol Determination Date: **August 5, 2020**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix IV: Survey Response by Locality

County	Complete Response	Incomplete Response	No Response	Total Contacted	Survey completion	Response initiation
Frederick County	19	13	172	204	9.3%	15.7%
Anne Arundel	9	4	72	85	10.6%	15.3%
Garrett County	3	2	32	37	8.1%	13.5%
Worcester County	5	5	65	75	6.7%	13.3%
Harford County	9	5	92	106	8.5%	13.2%
Kent County	4	3	47	54	7.4%	13.0%
Prince George's	31	22	366	419	7.4%	12.6%
Talbot County	2	5	49	56	3.6%	12.5%
Montgomery	22	26	345	393	5.6%	12.2%
Wicomico County	4	2	44	50	8.0%	12.0%
Allegany County	7	3	74	84	8.3%	11.9%
Caroline County	2	6	61	69	2.9%	11.6%
Carroll County	16	7	185	208	7.7%	11.1%
Calvert County	6	2	67	75	8.0%	10.7%
Dorchester	3	2	44	49	6.1%	10.2%
St. Mary's County	1	3	37	41	2.4%	9.8%
Howard County	4	3	66	73	5.5%	9.6%
Baltimore City	16	5	222	243	6.6%	8.6%
Cecil County	5	2	78	85	5.9%	8.2%
Somerset County	2	0	23	25	8.0%	8.0%
Washington	6	2	118	126	4.8%	6.3%
Baltimore County	1	2	48	51	2.0%	5.9%
Charles County	4	0	73	77	5.2%	5.2%
Queen Anne's	2	1	57	60	3.3%	5.0%
Total	183	125	2,437	2,745	6.7%	11.2%

Appendix V: Exploratory Factor Analysis Q5

Q5. In your locality, what level of priority should be given to each of the housing policy goals below?

Responses to Q5

	Housing Goal	Very High Priority	High Priority	Low Priority	Very Low Priority
resp_var13	Reducing the concentration of poorer households	26.5%	48.5%	19.1%	5.9%
resp_var14	Increasing home-ownership	21.6%	48.6%	26.9%	2.9%
resp_var15	Ensuring a fair share of affordable housing in each county/city	40.9%	44.2%	12.0%	2.9%
resp_var16	Better matching the location of housing to the location of jobs	20.7%	53.4%	22.1%	3.9%
resp_var17	Increasing the stock of housing available for households earning 60-100% of area's median income	16.9%	42.5%	33.3%	7.3%
resp_var18	Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning 20-60% of area median income	28.4%	50.0%	18.3%	3.4%
resp_var19	Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning less than 20% of the median income	29.8%	42.3%	22.1%	5.8%
resp_var20	Reducing the number of families living in segregated communities	30.1%	42.1%	19.6%	8.1%
resp_var21	Ending source-of-income-based discrimination	32.5%	37.9%	20.7%	8.9%
resp_var22	Improving access to quality education for families with children	46.6%	43.3%	7.2%	2.9%
resp_var23	Reducing travel time between workplaces and residences	18.4%	39.1%	36.2%	6.3%

Correlation matrix showing Pearson correlation between different response choices

Corr. matrix	resp~13	resp~14	resp~15	resp~16	resp~17	resp~18	resp~19	resp~20	resp~21	resp~22	resp~23
resp_var13	1										
resp_var14	0.3563	1									
resp_var15	0.4401	0.1936	1								
resp_var16	0.2122	0.1327	0.166	1							
resp_var17	0.0746	0.0436	0.1552	0.2014	1						
resp_var18	0.2522	0.0785	0.4246	0.1547	0.333	1					
resp_var19	0.2982	0.1329	0.4721	0.1656	0.2042	0.6551	1				
resp_var20	0.4097	0.1276	0.4154	0.1083	0.0914	0.2381	0.3216	1			
resp_var21	0.3944	0.2228	0.3696	0.1615	0.1225	0.3196	0.391	0.5046	1		
resp_var22	0.2554	0.1367	0.2344	0.2147	0.1455	0.1479	0.1972	0.2533	0.4078	1	
resp_var23	0.0881	0.0287	-0.0243	0.5626	0.2134	0.0739	0.1112	0.0337	0.1277	0.2078	1

PCA: Rotated components, sorted

Variable name	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Unexplained
resp_var13	0.4873	-0.0329	0.0137	0.4249
resp_var21	0.4258	0.085	0.0286	0.442
resp_var20	0.4197	0.0779	-0.0882	0.4975
resp_var14	0.4078	-0.2033	0.0387	0.6515
resp_var22	0.3197	-0.056	0.2368	0.6262
resp_var15	0.3012	0.3008	-0.1201	0.4314
resp_var18	-0.0286	0.6264	-0.03	0.2342
resp_var19	0.0895	0.5348	-0.0397	0.3077
resp_var17	-0.177	0.4147	0.2695	0.5478
resp_var23	-0.0393	-0.0169	0.6792	0.2389
resp_var16	0.0645	0.0029	0.6187	0.306

Grouping response choices into broader substantive categories

Variable name	Policy Goal	Assigned Group
resp_var13	Reducing the concentration of poorer households	Promoting equity
resp_var14	Increasing home-ownership	
resp_var15	Ensuring a fair share of affordable housing in each county/city	
resp_var20	Reducing the number of families living in segregated communities	
resp_var21	Ending source-of-income-based discrimination	
resp_var22	Improving access to quality education for families with children	
resp_var17	Increasing the stock of housing available for households earning 60-100% of area's median income	Ensuring housing affordability
resp_var18	Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning 20-60% of area median income	
resp_var19	Increasing the stock of housing affordable to households earning less than 20% of the median income	
resp_var16	Better matching the location of housing to the location of jobs	Ensuring the ease of commute
resp_var23	Reducing travel time between workplaces and residences	

Following this grouping, six variables are created as follows:

EQUITY (Promoting equity) = resp_var13 + resp_var14 + resp_var15 + resp_var20 + resp_var21 + resp_var22

AFFORDABILITY (Ensuring housing affordability) = resp_var17 + resp_var18 + resp_var19

COMMUTE (Ensuring the ease of commute) = resp_var16 + resp_var23

Descriptive statistics of these variables are as follows:

Variable	Obs	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
EQUITY	195	18.256	19	20	3.300	6	24
AFFORDABILITY	207	8.686	9	9	1.922	3	12

COMMUTE	206	5.597	6	6	1.413	2	8
PD_EQUITY	195	2.591	1.744	1.744	2.036	0.256	12.256
PD_AFFORD	207	1.476	1.314	0.314	1.226	0.314	5.686
PD_COMMUT	206	1.151	0.597	0.403	0.817	0.403	3.597

Here, PD_EQUITY = abs(EQUITY - 18.25641), PD_AFFORD = abs(AFFORDABILITY - 8.68599), and PD_COMMUT = abs(COMMUTE - 5.597087).

Appendix VI: Exploratory Factor Analysis Q8

Q8. Of factors listed below, which do you think are most influential in shaping your position on affordable (moderate and low-income) housing policy [Indicate the level of influence by choosing appropriate options]?

- A. Concern for local businesses
- B. Concern for tourism
- C. Concern for unemployment
- D. To minimize the travel distance between residences and workplaces
- E. Concern for low income households
- F. Concern for racial and ethnic minorities
- G. Concern about crime rates
- H. To allow many important workers (e.g., nurses, police officers, K-12 teachers, etc.) to live closer to where they work
- I. To contribute to creating more diverse communities

Levels of influence

Not(un) influential = 0, Somewhat influential = 1, Influential = 2, Highly influential = 3, Extremely influential = 4

Correlation matrix of factors

	Q8A	Q8B	Q8C	Q8D	Q8E	Q8F	Q8G	Q8H	Q8I
Q8A	1								
Q8B	0.3874	1							
Q8C	0.2023	0.1952	1						
Q8D	0.1173	-0.0369	0.2623	1					
Q8E	0.0586	-0.1272	0.373	0.2127	1				
Q8F	0.13	-0.0656	0.3709	0.2112	0.7718	1			
Q8G	0.0912	0.2831	0.2854	0.0052	0.0254	0.1236	1		
Q8H	0.1492	0.0243	0.1919	0.4684	0.3196	0.3398	0.0787	1	
Q8I	0.0415	-0.0662	0.2711	0.3033	0.4513	0.529	0.0502	0.4746	1

Principal components (eigenvectors)

Variable	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Comp4	Unexplained
Q8A	0.1464	0.483	0.2255	-0.6019	0.1723
Q8B	0.0208	0.6477	0.0475	-0.1199	0.2992
Q8C	0.3461	0.2762	-0.2176	0.147	0.4486
Q8D	0.3102	-0.0349	0.5888	0.252	0.2711
Q8E	0.4483	-0.1931	-0.3355	-0.2348	0.1689
Q8F	0.4713	-0.1191	-0.3338	-0.2062	0.1564

Q8G	0.1224	0.4376	-0.3185	0.6406	0.1598
Q8H	0.3808	-0.0309	0.4733	0.1654	0.2956
Q8I	0.4231	-0.1608	0.0594	0.0533	0.4207

Rotated components, sorted

Variable	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Comp4	Unexplained
Q8E	0.6305	-0.0674	-0.0103	-0.0611	0.1689
Q8F	0.6218	-0.05	0.0334	0.0062	0.1564
Q8I	0.3309	0.3096	-0.0767	0.0048	0.4207
Q8D	-0.1008	0.7053	-0.0043	-0.003	0.2711
Q8H	0.0342	0.6283	0.0365	-0.0032	0.2956
Q8A	0.0583	0.0261	0.7938	-0.1833	0.1723
Q8B	-0.1313	-0.0401	0.5794	0.2864	0.2992
Q8G	-0.0366	-0.007	-0.0901	0.8419	0.1598
Q8C	0.2703	0.0507	0.1328	0.4144	0.4486

Based on these eigenvalues, the response choices are grouped into broader substantive categories as follows.

Grouping response choices into broad substantive categories

Original response choices	Broad substantive category
A. Concern for local businesses	Concern for Local Businesses and Tourism
B. Concern for tourism	
C. Concern for unemployment	Concern for Unemployment and Crime rates
G. Concern about crime rates	
E. Concern for low-income households	Concerns for poor, minorities, and diversity
F. Concern for racial and ethnic minorities	
I. To contribute to creating more diverse communities	
D. To minimize the travel distance between residences and workplaces	Concern for reducing commute distance
H. To allow many important workers (e.g., nurses, police officers, K-12 teachers, younger residents) to live closer to where they work	

Following this grouping, four variables are created as follows:

BUS_TOUR (Concerns for Local Businesses and Tourism) = Q8A+Q8B

UNEMP_CRIME (Concerns for Unemployment and Crime rates) = Q8C+Q8G

INCLUSION (Concerns for poor, minorities, and diversity) = Q8E+Q8F+Q8I

COMMUT_DIST (Concern for reducing commute between place of work and home) = Q8D+Q8H

Variables INCLUSION and COMMUT_DIST are similar in nature to those from Q5. So, the following table provides descriptive statistics of the two additional variables (BUS_TOUR and UNEMP_CRIME) and their divergences from the respective mean values. Divergences (DIV_XYZ) are computed as the absolute value of the difference from the variable mean.

Variable	No. of Obs.	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
BUS_TOUR	175	2.074	2	2	1.661	0	8
UNEMP_CRIME	174	4.017	4	4	2.044	0	8
DIV_BUS_TOUR	175	1.232	1.074	1.074	1.110	0.074	5.926
DIV_UNEMP_CRIME	174	1.642	1.983	0.017	1.211	0.017	4.017

Appendix VII: EFA Characteristics of Localities

To account for factors that can influence local government officials' policy positions, several socio-economic variables were considered. The following is a list of such variables initially considered. However, following a bivariate correlation analysis among these variables, it was found that many of them are strongly correlated with each other.

Full Variable Names	Short Name (Stata)
Log of total population in thousands	LOG_POP
Log of total population density	LOG_DENSITY
Percent change in population in the last decade	PCP
Percentage of population engaged in Agricultural and Forestry related activities	POP_AGRI
Average commute time to work in minutes	MTTWM
Percentage of household with minor(s)	HCH18ELow
Percentage of household with elderly(s)	H65PLUS
Percentage of white population	PWP
Percentage of non-white population	PNWP
Log of household income	LOG_HHINCOME
Labor-force participation rate	LFPR
Unemployment rate	UNEMPRATE
Percentage of household living below poverty line	PHLBPL
Log of total revenues received by the locality in a year	LOG_REV
Log of total expenditures by the locality in a year	LOG_EXP
Average household size (membership)	AHHS
Percentage of housing units that are vacant	VACANT_HOUSE
Log of median housing prices	LOG_MHHP
Log of median housing rent	LOG_RENT
Percent of voting age population voting for a Democrat presidential candidate	PRES_DEM
Percent of voting age population voting for a Democrat gubernatorial candidate	GOVDEM

Correlation Matrix	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
LOG_POP (1)	1.00																			
LOG_DENSITY (2)	-0.03	1.00																		
PCP (3)	-0.18	-0.12	1.00																	
MTTWM (4)	0.10	0.04	0.20	1.00																
HCH18ELOW (5)	-0.07	-0.16	0.44	0.47	1.00															
H65PLUS (6)	-0.21	-0.29	-0.22	-0.37	-0.29	1.00														
PWP (7)	-0.29	-0.57	0.25	-0.20	0.32	0.31	1.00													
PNWP (8)	0.29	0.57	-0.25	0.20	-0.32	-0.31	-1.00	1.00												
LOG_HHINCOME (9)	0.07	-0.07	0.25	0.54	0.77	-0.07	0.16	-0.16	1.00											
LFPR (10)	0.03	0.24	0.16	0.52	0.53	-0.52	-0.23	0.23	0.58	1.00										
UNEMPRATE (11)	-0.01	0.37	-0.34	-0.17	-0.48	-0.09	-0.51	0.51	-0.49	-0.04	1.00									
PHLBPL (12)	0.00	0.21	-0.32	-0.37	-0.60	-0.06	-0.24	0.24	-0.78	-0.43	0.53	1.00								
LOG_REV (13)	0.98	-0.09	-0.21	0.04	-0.12	-0.10	-0.23	0.23	0.03	-0.05	0.00	0.03	1.00							
LOG_EXP (14)	0.98	-0.09	-0.21	0.04	-0.12	-0.10	-0.23	0.23	0.03	-0.05	-0.01	0.03	1.00	1.00						
AHHS (15)	-0.03	0.08	0.23	0.56	0.60	-0.40	-0.24	0.24	0.53	0.51	-0.08	-0.29	-0.13	-0.12	1.00					
VACANT_HOUSE (16)	-0.08	-0.11	-0.26	-0.45	-0.55	0.42	0.10	-0.10	-0.47	-0.48	0.18	0.27	0.05	0.05	-0.49	1.00				
LOG_MHHP (17)	0.04	0.04	0.20	0.39	0.68	0.02	0.12	-0.12	0.89	0.53	-0.47	-0.74	0.02	0.01	0.38	-0.35	1.00			
LOG_RENT (18)	0.18	0.23	0.13	0.47	0.49	-0.18	-0.25	0.25	0.80	0.61	-0.22	-0.57	0.12	0.12	0.51	-0.41	0.76	1.00		
PRES_DEM (19)	0.26	0.60	-0.27	0.26	-0.18	-0.23	-0.84	0.84	0.08	0.25	0.35	0.04	0.20	0.20	0.26	-0.12	0.10	0.41	1.0	
GOVDEM (20)	0.25	0.59	-0.29	0.23	-0.21	-0.22	-0.84	0.84	0.04	0.22	0.36	0.06	0.19	0.19	0.24	-0.09	0.06	0.37	1.0	1.0

To avoid multicollinearity, locality characteristics that are highly correlated with each other are dropped.

1. LOG_POP is highly correlated (Pearson correlation > 0.5) with LOG_REV and LOG_EXP, so the latter two are dropped.
2. PCP is not correlated with other factors, so it is left as such.
3. PNWP is highly correlated with PWP, LOG_DENSITY, UNEMPRATE, PRES_DEM, and GOVDEM (these are dropped).
4. LOG_HHINCOME is highly correlated with LFPR, AHHS, PHLBPL, LOG_MHHP, and LOG_RENT (these are dropped).
5. H65PLUS is not strongly correlated with other factors except LFPR, which is already dropped, so H65PLUS is left as such.
6. UNEMPRATE is strongly correlated with PHLBPL; so the latter is dropped.
7. VACANT_HOUSE is not strongly associated with other variables and so left as such.

This process of elimination—based on correlation among factors—allowed me to consider only the seven locality characteristics discussed above as independent variables for regression analysis.

Appendix VIII: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Q12

Q12. How do you think the passage of Maryland Sustainable Communities Act 2010 and subsequent initiatives often labeled “Sustainable Communities” might have influenced your position on sustainability policies? Indicate which option(s) apply to you.

Code	Original Response Choice
SCA_PA	A. These have no influence on my policy position
SCA_PB	B. I don’t agree with the policy goals
SCA_PC	C. I agree with the policy goals but don’t agree with the way those goals are being addressed
SCA_PD	D. Sustainability should be a policy priority for me and my locality (county/city/municipality)
SCA_PE	E. My locality (county/city/municipality) already has one or more designated Sustainable Communities
SCA_PF	F. Sustainability is a policy priority for me
SCA_PG	G. Other response (please type)

Summary table of the Q12 responses

Variable	No. Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
SCA_PA	182	0.269231	0.444784	0	1
SCA_PB	182	0.032967	0.179043	0	1
SCA_PC	182	0.082418	0.275759	0	1
SCA_PD	182	0.406593	0.492553	0	1
SCA_PE	182	0.318681	0.467251	0	1
SCA_PF	182	0.258242	0.438875	0	1
SCA_PG	182	0.06044	0.238957	0	1

Correlation Matrix							
corr	SCA_PA	SCA_PB	SCA_PC	SCA_PD	SCA_PE	SCA_PF	SCA_PG
SCA_PA	1						
SCA_PB	0.0267	1					
SCA_PC	-0.1819	-0.0553	1				
SCA_PD	-0.4016	-0.1528	-0.0447	1			
SCA_PE	-0.3885	-0.1263	0.0094	-0.062	1		
SCA_PF	-0.3298	-0.1089	-0.0399	0.3806	0.1622	1	
SCA_PG	-0.1539	-0.0468	-0.076	-0.1161	-0.124	-0.097	1

Grouping of responses on the basis of correlation analysis

Group 1:

SCA_PA and SCA_PB; Correlation ~ 0.027, these choices are either neutral about or against the SCA in Maryland

Group 2:

SCA_PC	SCA_PE	Correlation ~0.009	These choices are supportive the SCA in Maryland
SCA_PE	SCA_PF	Correlation ~0.162	
SCA_PD	SCA_PF	Correlation ~0.381	

Principal Components Analysis

Variable	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Unexplained
SCA_PD	0.6853	-0.0915	-0.0503	0.2708
SCA_PF	0.5698	0.0901	-0.125	0.4069
SCA_PB	-0.1588	-0.1475	-0.1205	0.8962
SCA_PE	-0.072	0.6565	-0.1203	0.3958
SCA_PA	-0.317	-0.5325	-0.2699	0.2362
SCA_PC	-0.2705	0.4968	-0.116	0.6135
SCA_PG	-0.0419	-0.0196	0.9309	0.046

Based on these eigenvectors, we can group SCA_PD, SCA_PE, and SCA_PF together

On the basis of small but positive correlation, we can group SCA_PA and SCA_PB together

I create a variable SUPPORT_SCA, which takes the value 0 if respondents select A or B; 1 if they choose C,D,E, F.

No one has chosen B with CDEF; some have chosen B with A

However, some respondents have chosen A along with E, in which case SUPPORT_SCA is coded 0.