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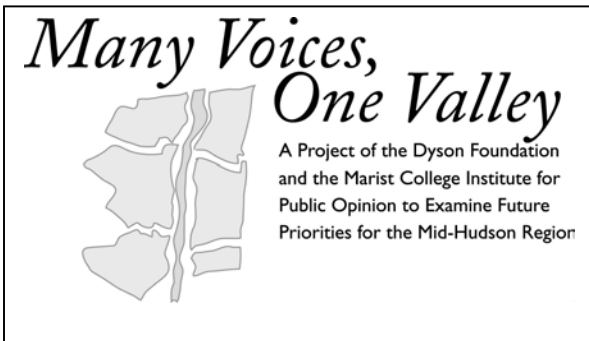
# *Many Voices, One Valley*



A Project of the Dyson Foundation  
and the Marist College Institute for  
Public Opinion to Examine Future  
Priorities for the Mid-Hudson Region

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Summary of the Findings  
Dutchess County  
October 2002



**SUMMARY: DUTCHESS COUNTY**

**Profile**

Dutchess County residents are demographically similar to Hudson Valley residents as a whole.

		Dutchess County Residents	Hudson Valley Residents
		Row %	Row %
College Education	Less than college	60%	63%
	College graduate	40%	37%
Age	18 to 30	17%	17%
	31 to 44	33%	34%
	45 to 60	32%	33%
	Over 60	18%	16%
Race	White	84%	86%
Race	African-American	9%	7%
Race	Latino	6%	8%
Income	Less than \$50,000	40%	45%
	\$50,000 or more	60%	55%
Public Assistance Over Past Year	HH member(s) receiving public assistance now or in past year	3%	5%
	No one in HH receiving public assistance now or in past year	97%	95%

		Mean
Total number adults and children	Dutchess County Residents	2.9
	Hudson Valley Residents	2.9

- Dutchess County residents mirror the overall age distribution and household size of the region.
- 40% of Dutchess County residents have earned at least a college education compared with 37% of Hudson Valley residents.
- 60% of residents of Dutchess County have a family income of more than \$50,000 compared with 55% of Hudson Valley residents.

## The Quality of Life

Dutchess County residents and community leaders feel very positive about their community and most feel they can have an impact on making their community a better place to live.

- Dutchess County residents and community leaders rate their community highly. 92% of Dutchess County residents rate their community as a place to live as excellent, very good, or good. This compares with 88% of Hudson Valley residents who rate their community positively.
- 98% of community leaders in Dutchess County feel positively about their community. Overall, 96% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley rate their community as excellent, very good, or good.
- 61% of Dutchess County residents have lived in their community for more than 10 years. Almost one in four (24%) have moved to their community within the past five years.
- Most Dutchess County residents (77%) believe they can have at least a moderate impact on making their community a better place to live. 76% of Hudson Valley residents and 77% of Americans feel the same way.
- 53% of Dutchess County residents and 48% of community leaders in the county think the best way to make a difference in their community is to volunteer. 49% of Hudson Valley residents, 47% of the region's community leaders, and 41% of Americans believe in volunteerism, as well.
- 58% of Dutchess County residents and 78% of community leaders report regularly volunteering or participating in civic organizations, churches, or clubs. 57% of Hudson Valley residents, 87% of community leaders in the region, and 52% of Americans are active in local organizations.

## Staying in Touch?

While a majority of community leaders in Dutchess County feels decision-makers see things the way the public does, there is no consensus among Dutchess County residents on whether or not decision-makers in their community share the public's view.

- 57% of Dutchess County community leaders believe decision-makers do see things the way the public does, and 37% believe decision-makers see things differently.
- 42% of Dutchess County residents feel that the individuals that make decisions in their community mostly see things the way the public does and 48% feel that the decision-makers in their community see things differently than the public does. One in ten Dutchess County residents are unsure.

Many Dutchess County residents and community leaders think the public’s views on issues count at least a fair amount in decisions that are made in their community.

- 68% of residents and 79% of community leaders in Dutchess County think the public’s views do count a great deal or a fair amount in decisions that are made in their community. 68% of residents and 76% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley feel the same way.
- Like the Hudson Valley where 68% of residents feel their views are represented at least sometimes, 69% of residents in Dutchess County feel their own interests and views are represented in the decisions that are made in their community almost always or sometimes. 28% of Dutchess County residents feel their interests are represented only seldom or never.
- 82% of Dutchess County community leaders feel their views are represented at least sometimes.

**Issues: The Priorities**

The economy including keeping businesses in the area and creating jobs, the quality of the public schools, health care, and providing services for seniors are the top five concerns of Dutchess County residents.

- Keeping businesses in the area and improving the quality of the public schools tie as the top priorities for Dutchess County residents.

**Dutchess County Residents**

	Mean
Keeping businesses in the area	7.9
Improving the quality of the public schools	7.9
Making health care more affordable	7.7
Providing services for senior citizens	7.5
Creating more jobs	7.5
Making health insurance easier to get	7.3
Protecting open space	7.3
Making your community safer	7.3
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	7.2
Providing more after-school activities	7.2
Reducing taxes	7.1
Providing more affordable, quality child care	6.6
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	6.5
Improving the quality of the water	6.5
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.4
Reducing homelessness	6.3
Increasing the number of public areas	6.2
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.1
Slowing growth and development	6.1

The economy tops the list of priorities for Dutchess County community leaders.

- Two of the top five issues for Dutchess County community leaders are economic. Community leaders in the county agree that keeping businesses in the area is the most important priority. Creating more jobs ranks third close behind the need to improve the public schools.

**Dutchess County Community Leaders**

	Mean
Keeping businesses in the area	8.5
Improving the quality of the public schools	8.0
Creating more jobs	7.9
Making health care more affordable	7.8
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	7.4
Providing more after-school activities	7.3
Making health insurance easier to get	7.3
Providing services for senior citizens	7.0
Protecting open space	7.0
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	6.9
Providing more affordable, quality child care	6.9
Reducing taxes	6.9
Making your community safer	6.8
Improving the quality of the water	6.7
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.7
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.4
Increasing the number of public areas	6.1
Reducing homelessness	6.1
Slowing growth and development	4.6

**The Top Five Issues: The Economy**

Residents and community leaders in Dutchess County rank economic issues as major priorities for their county.

- Keeping businesses in the area is the number one issue for residents and community leaders in Dutchess County. Creating jobs ranks as one of the top five concerns for both groups.
- Dutchess County residents feel more positively about the quality of jobs available to them than residents in the Hudson Valley (39%) or within any of the other five counties. 50% of residents in Dutchess County rate the quality of jobs available in their community positively, 44% of county residents rate them as fair or poor, and 6% are unsure.
- 70% of community leaders in Dutchess County rate the quality of jobs in the county positively, and 30% rate them as fair or poor.

- 41% of Dutchess County residents and 43% of community leaders in the county feel too little is spent on improving the quality of jobs. 45% of residents and 46% of community leaders in Dutchess County feel spending is about right.

### **Issues: The Public Schools**

In Dutchess County, improving the quality of the public schools is a major priority for both residents and community leaders.

- Improving the quality of the public schools is the number one issue, along with the priority of keeping businesses in the area, for Dutchess County residents, and ranks second for community leaders in the county.
- Like Hudson Valley residents, 70% of Dutchess County residents rate the public schools in their community positively, and 26% of county residents rate the schools as fair or poor.
- Similarly, 68% of Dutchess County community leaders rate the public schools positively, and 29% rate them as fair or poor.
- 52% of Dutchess County residents and 45% of community leaders in the county feel spending on the public schools is about right. 34% of residents in Dutchess County and 33% of community leaders think there has been too little spending on the public schools in their community.

### **Issues: Health Care**

Making health care more affordable is an important priority for residents and community leaders in Dutchess County.

- Dutchess County residents and community leaders rank making health care more affordable as one of the top five issues for the county.
- 59% of Dutchess County residents rate the health care services available to them in their community positively. 35% of residents in the county rate the services as fair or poor. This compares with 55% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the health care services available to them and 39% of residents in the region who rate these services as fair or poor.
- 74% of community leaders in Dutchess County rate the health care services as excellent, very good, or good. This is the highest positive rating by community leaders in the counties of the Hudson Valley. Still, 24% of community leaders in Dutchess County rate the health care services available in their community as fair or poor.
- 46% of Dutchess County residents think that the right amount of money is spent on health care services in their community. 38% of residents in the county feel too few resources are expended on health care services.

- Similarly, 51% of community leaders in Dutchess County feel that the right amount of money is spent on health care services in their community, and 35% of community leaders in the county believe too few dollars are allocated to these services.

### **Issues: Services for Senior Citizens**

Providing services for senior citizens is a high priority for Dutchess County residents and community leaders.

- Except for residents in Dutchess and Ulster Counties, a majority of residents in the other Hudson Valley counties rate the services for seniors in their community positively. It is not that Dutchess County residents are more negative about the services available in their community, rather it is because they are more unsure about how to rate them than residents in the other counties within the region. 46% of Dutchess County residents rate the services available for senior citizens in their community positively. 36% of county residents rate these services as fair or poor, and 18% are unsure how to rate them. This compares with 49% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the services available for senior citizens in their community.
- 64% of community leaders in Dutchess County rate the services for senior citizens available in the county positively. 58% of community leaders in the region feel positively about the services available for senior citizens in their community.
- 48% of residents and 56% of community leaders in Dutchess County think spending on services for senior citizens is about right. 33% of Dutchess County residents and 35% of community leaders in the county think too little money is spent on providing these services.

### **Issues: Housing**

Only among community leaders in Dutchess County does the issue of increasing affordable housing rank among the top five issues.

- Although many Hudson Valley residents and community leaders rate the affordability of housing as an important priority, this issue does not rank as highly as other concerns. Only among community leaders in Dutchess County does the issue of increasing affordable housing rank among the top five priorities.
- 70% of community leaders in Dutchess County rate the amount of affordable housing available in their community as fair or poor. 25% of community leaders in the county rate the affordability of housing positively.

- Like Hudson Valley residents as a whole, 60% of Dutchess County residents rate the amount of affordable housing available in their community as fair or poor. 34% of Dutchess County residents and 35% of Hudson Valley residents rate the availability of affordable housing positively.
- In Dutchess County, 49% of residents and 64% of community leaders feel too few resources are spent on increasing the amount of affordable housing in their community.

## Community Connections

Most Dutchess County residents have access to the Internet.

- 74% of Dutchess County residents have access to the Internet. This compares with 70% of Hudson Valley residents and 54% of Americans who are online.<sup>1</sup> 70% of Dutchess County residents have access to the Internet at home.
- 54% of Dutchess County residents have Internet access at work compared with 46% of residents in the Hudson Valley and 41.7% of Americans.
- 79% of Dutchess County households have some type of personal computer at home. 75% of Hudson Valley households report having a personal computer at home.
- 90% of community leaders in Dutchess County have access to the Internet. 76% of community leaders in the county have access to the Internet at home, and 82% have access at work.

Two-thirds of Dutchess County residents are employed at least part-time.

- 66% of Dutchess County residents are employed either full-time or part-time. 18% are retired, and 16% are not currently employed. This compares with 69% of Hudson Valley residents and 67% of Americans who are employed. 15% of Hudson Valley residents are retired, and 16% are not employed.
- 38% of Dutchess County households are dual income households – households that have more than one adult who works either full-time or part-time. 30% of Dutchess County households have two full-time wage earners.
- 87% of Dutchess County workers commute to work by car by themselves, 7% car pool, 3% use public transportation, and 3% walk to work.
- The average time spent commuting one way for Dutchess County workers is 29 minutes. This compares with the Hudson Valley average of 28 minutes.
- 29% of Dutchess County workers travel for more than 30 minutes, one way, to work.

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<sup>1</sup> "A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet," U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Census Bureau. Findings are based on the September 2001 U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey of approximately 57,000 households in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Dutchess County residents stay informed by listening to the radio and reading a local daily newspaper.

- 64% of Dutchess County residents listen to news on the radio everyday, and 86% of residents in the county get their news from the radio at least once a week.
- 43% of residents in Dutchess County read a local newspaper everyday. 82% of county residents read a local daily newspaper at least once a week.
- 39% of residents in Dutchess County watch local television news everyday, 73% tune in for local news at least once in an average week.
- 30% of Dutchess County residents have read all of the last four issues of their weekly community newspaper, and 65% have read at least one of the last four issues.
- 20% of Dutchess County residents read a national newspaper each day. 50% of Dutchess County residents do not read a national newspaper in an average week. This is similar to the 51% of Hudson Valley residents who do not read a national newspaper.
- 24% of Dutchess County residents with access to the Internet go online everyday for news. 24% of the 74% of Dutchess County residents who have access to the Internet or an online service means that 18% of residents in the county access the Internet each day for news.
- Dutchess County community leaders also cite radio and local daily newspapers as their top two sources for news. 92% listen to the radio for news at some time during the week, and 91% read a local daily newspaper at least once a week.

## Study Design

The study is a joint project of the Dyson Foundation and the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. It was conducted to better understand residents' perceptions about the present and future direction of the Hudson Valley. The goals were to assess the needs and priorities for the Hudson Valley through the opinions of both its residents and its community leaders, and to identify areas of shared and divergent perspectives. The results can be used as a tool to inform the public and those who help guide the region's future about the interests, concerns, and needs of the area. The results may also be a resource for other organizations and agencies within the region to identify and quantify community need in specific areas. Such documentation provides a value to the region and to those groups and individuals that work to make their community a better place to live and work.

Two surveys were conducted. The first survey interviewed 3,882 residents in the six counties that define the Hudson Valley region. The counties included Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, and Ulster. The survey was designed to collect information about the Hudson Valley as a region and to allow for county level analysis, as well. Representative samples were drawn from each county based on the population distribution within that county. 830 residents in Dutchess County were

interviewed. In order to analyze the opinions of residents of the Hudson Valley the six county samples were combined and weighted to reflect the population distribution of the entire region. Interviews of Hudson Valley residents were administered by telephone from October 5<sup>th</sup> through December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Residents had a choice to complete the survey in English or Spanish.

A second companion survey was conducted with 245 community leaders within the same six counties. This scientifically selected sample of community leaders included influentials and decision-makers who have a role in how community priorities are identified and realized, and how resources, goods, and services are distributed in their community. Included in the sample were government and elected officials, heads of major institutions, prominent members of the media, and business executives. As in the survey of residents, the design takes into account an interest in understanding the opinions of community leaders from throughout the Hudson Valley and from within each county. Interviews of Hudson Valley community leaders were conducted by telephone from November 15<sup>th</sup> through December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

	US Census Population 2000	Residents	Community Leaders
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Columbia County	6%	6%	6%
Dutchess County	28%	28%	28%
Greene County	5%	5%	5%
Orange County	34%	34%	34%
Putnam County	9%	9%	9%
Ulster County	18%	18%	18%

The sampling error for the results of the survey of Hudson Valley residents, 3,882 interviews, is  $\pm 2\%$ , and for the results of Dutchess County residents, 830 interviews, is  $\pm 3.4\%$ . The sampling error for the results of the survey of Hudson Valley community leaders, 245 interviews, is  $\pm 6.5\%$ . When assessing the results for community leaders at the county level, the findings should be considered as a cross-section of those views.

The complete results for the study are available on the Internet at <http://www.dyson.org/manyvoices.html>. It can also be accessed from the Dyson Foundation website (<http://www.dysonfoundation.org>) or the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion website (<http://www.maristpoll.marist.edu>). The full report along with summaries for Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, and Ulster counties are available. Copies on CD-ROM are also available from the Foundation's offices by calling 845.677.0644.