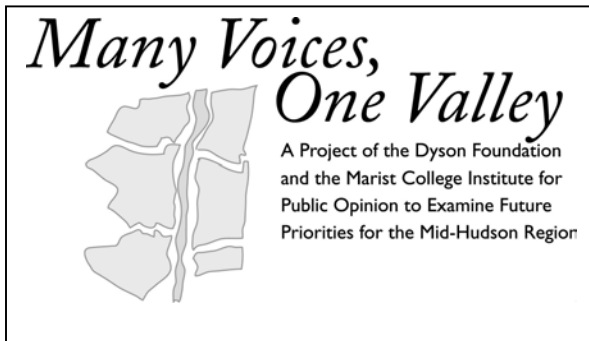

Many Voices, One Valley



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

Summary of the Findings
Ulster County
October 2002



SUMMARY: ULSTER COUNTY

Profile

Ulster County households are less likely to have children than the average Hudson Valley household, and as a result are smaller than the average Hudson Valley household.

- Households in Ulster County are less likely to have children than the average Hudson Valley household. 39% of households within the county have children compared with 43% of households in the region.
- As a result, Ulster County households are smaller than the average household in the region. The average household size in Ulster County is 2.7 compared with 2.9 in the region. Nationally the average household size is 2.6.
- Ulster County residents have lower incomes than Hudson Valley residents as a whole. 56% of county residents earn less than \$50,000 a year and 33% earn less than \$30,000 annually. 55% of Hudson Valley residents have an annual family income of \$50,000 or more.

Lack of access to health insurance affects a significant portion of the residents in Ulster County.

- 17% of Ulster County households report that an adult member is not currently covered by health insurance. 29% of county households report an adult member either does not have health insurance now or did not have continuous coverage during the past year.
- In addition, 6% of Ulster County residents indicate that a child in their household is currently without health insurance, and 15% of residents in the county mention that a child in the household experienced a gap in health care coverage in the past year.
- Overall, 18% of Ulster County households have a member including adults and children currently without health insurance, and 30% of households in the county either do not currently have health care coverage or experienced a gap in health care coverage in the past year for at least one member of the household.

		Ulster County Residents	Hudson Valley Residents
		Row %	Row %
Race	White	89%	86%
Race	African-American	5%	7%
Race	Latino	8%	8%
College Education	Less than college	65%	63%
	College graduate	35%	37%
Income	Less than \$50,000	56%	45%
	\$50,000 or more	44%	55%
Income	Less than \$30,000	33%	24%
	\$30,000 or more	67%	76%
Children in HH	Child(ren) in HH	39%	43%
	No children in HH	61%	57%
Current Health Insurance	Adult(s) currently not insured	17%	11%
	Adult(s) currently insured	83%	89%
Continuous Health Insurance	Adult(s) not insured now or in past year	29%	23%
	Adult(s) continuously insured over past year	71%	77%
Current Health Insurance	Child(ren) currently not insured	6%	6%
	Child(ren) currently insured	94%	94%
Continuous Health Insurance	Child(ren) not insured now or in past year	15%	13%
	Child(ren) continuously insured	85%	87%
Current Health Insurance	HH member(s) currently not insured	18%	12%
	HH member(s) currently insured	82%	88%
Continuous Health Insurance	HH member(s) not insured now or in past year	30%	24%
	HH member(s) continuously insured	70%	76%

The Quality of Life

Ulster County residents and community leaders feel positively about their community, and most feel they can have an impact on making their community a better place to live.

- Residents of Ulster County feel positively about where they live. 86% of Ulster county residents rate their community as an excellent, very good, or good place to live. This compares with 88% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about their community.
- Community leaders in Ulster County are very enthusiastic about their community. Like community leaders in the region, 96% of Ulster County community leaders rate their community positively.
- 65% of Ulster County residents have lived in their community for more than 10 years. Comparable to the Hudson Valley as a whole, where 24% of residents are recent arrivals to their community, 23% of Ulster County residents have moved to their community within the past five years.

- 73% of Ulster County residents 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.
- 47% of residents and 40% of community leaders in Ulster County think the best way to make a difference in their community is to volunteer. 49% of Hudson Valley residents, 47% of community leaders in the region, and 41% of Americans believe volunteerism is the best way to get involved, as well.
- 55% of Ulster County residents and 86% 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?

A majority of community leaders in Ulster County feels community decision-makers share the public's view, although Ulster County residents divide on this question.

- 52% of Ulster County community leaders believe decision-makers do see things the way the public does, and 43% believe decision-makers see things differently. 5% of community leaders in the county are unsure.
- In contrast, 49% of Ulster County residents feel that the individuals who make decisions in their community mostly see things differently from the way the public does. 44% of residents in Ulster County feel decision-makers in their community see things mostly the way the public does. 7% of Ulster County residents are unsure.

Most Ulster County residents and community leaders think the public's views on issues do count at least a fair amount in decisions that are made in the community.

- 70% of residents and 74% of community leaders in Ulster County think the public's views do count a great deal or a fair amount in decisions that are made in the community. In the Hudson Valley, 68% of residents and 76% of community leaders feel the same way.
- When considering their own personal interests and views, 70% of residents in Ulster County feel they are represented in the decisions that are made in their community almost always or sometimes. 29% of residents in Ulster County feel their interests are represented only seldom or never. This compares with 84% of Ulster County community leaders, and 68% of Hudson Valley residents who feel their views are represented almost always or sometimes.

Issues: The Priorities

The number one issue for Ulster County residents is making health care more affordable.

- In a county where 30% of the households had at least one member go without health insurance in the past year, it is not surprising that making health care more affordable is the most important priority for Ulster County residents. Making health insurance easier to get ranks fourth.

Ulster County Residents

	Mean
Making health care more affordable	8.0
Keeping businesses in the area	8.0
Improving the quality of the public schools	7.9
Making health insurance easier to get	7.7
Providing services for senior citizens	7.5
Creating more jobs	7.5
Providing more after-school activities	7.3
Protecting open space	7.2
Reducing taxes	7.1
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	7.1
Making your community safer	7.1
Providing more affordable, quality child care	7.0
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	6.8
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.6
Reducing homelessness	6.2
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.1
Improving the quality of the water	6.1
Increasing the number of public areas	6.0
Slowing growth and development	5.7

The economy, the schools, and health care are the most important concerns of community leaders in Ulster County.

- There is a strong consensus among community leaders in Ulster County on the top issues facing the county. Keeping businesses in the area ranks highest with an average score of 8.7, improving the quality of the public schools ranks second with an average score of 8.6, making health care more affordable, making health insurance easier to get, and creating more jobs follow with a mean score of 8.1.

Ulster County Community Leaders

	Mean
Keeping businesses in the area	8.7
Improving the quality of the public schools	8.6
Making health care more affordable	8.1
Making health insurance easier to get	8.1
Creating more jobs	8.1
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	7.9
Providing services for senior citizens	7.2
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	7.2
Providing more affordable, quality child care	7.1
Providing more after-school activities	7.0
Reducing homelessness	6.8
Reducing taxes	6.7
Making your community safer	6.7
Improving the quality of the water	6.5
Protecting open space	6.5
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.5
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.0
Increasing the number of public areas	5.4
Slowing growth and development	4.2

The Top Five Issues: Health Care**Issues: Health Care**

In a county that is experiencing a high rate of non-insured adults and children, both Ulster County residents and community leaders view health care as a major priority.

- In Ulster County the affordability of health care and accessibility of health insurance are two of the top five priorities for both residents and community leaders. These two issues receive a higher rating of concern from both residents and community leaders in Ulster County than from any of the other counties in the Hudson Valley.
- 50% of residents and 60% of community leaders in Ulster County rate the health care services in their community positively. This compares with 55% of Hudson Valley residents and 68% of community leaders in the region who rate health care in their area as excellent, very good, or good.
- 44% of Ulster County residents and 40% of community leaders in the county rate the health care services available to them as fair or poor. 39% of residents and 30% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley share this view about their health care services.
- 46% of Ulster County residents feel too few resources are being allocated to health care services in their community, and 37% feel spending is about right. 3% of residents in the county feel too much money is spent of these services, and 14% are unsure.

- Community leaders in Ulster County are more divided. 44% feel spending on health care services is too little, and 49% feel spending on health care services in their community is about right. 7% are unsure.

Issues: The Economy

The economic health of their community is a major priority for both Ulster County community leaders and residents.

- Keeping businesses in the area tops the list of priorities for community leaders in Ulster County and ranks second for county residents.
- Jobs are also a concern. 68% of residents in Ulster County rate the quality of jobs in the county as fair or poor. This compares with 57% of Hudson Valley residents who rate the quality of jobs available in the area as fair or poor.
- 68% of Ulster County community leaders also rate the quality of jobs in their community as fair or poor. In contrast, 51% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley rate the quality of jobs positively.
- 56% of Ulster County residents and 63% of community leaders in the county feel too few community resources are spent on improving the quality of jobs in their community.

Issues: The Public Schools

Improving the quality of the public schools is an important priority for Ulster County residents and community leaders.

- Both residents and community leaders of Ulster County view improving the quality of their public schools as a major priority, each group scoring it only one-tenth of a point behind their top issue.
- Although the public schools in Ulster County receive good marks from both their residents and community leaders, the public schools in Ulster County are rated lower by residents and community leaders of the county than are public schools in the other counties of the Hudson Valley.
- 61% of Ulster County residents rate their public schools positively, and 33% of county residents rate the public schools as fair or poor. This compares with 70% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the public schools, and 26% of residents in the region who rate them as fair or poor.

- Similarly, 61% of community leaders in Ulster County rate the public schools positively, and 37% of community leaders in the county rate the public schools as fair or poor. 67% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley feel positively about their public schools, and 30% of the region's community leaders rate the public schools as fair or poor.
- 51% of Ulster County residents and 49% of community leaders in the county feel spending on the public schools is about right. 33% of residents and 40% of community leaders in Ulster County think there is too little spending on the public schools in their community. 10% of residents and 9% of community leaders in the county believe spending on the public schools in their community has been too much.

Issues: Services for Senior Citizens

Providing services for senior citizens is an important priority in Ulster County.

- Providing services for seniors ranks fifth among the priorities for Ulster County residents.
- Only in Dutchess and Ulster Counties, do a majority of residents not rate the services available for seniors in their community positively. 44% of Ulster County residents rate the services available for senior citizens in their community positively. 39% of county residents rate these services as fair or poor, and 17% are unsure how to rate them. This compares with 49% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the services available for senior citizens, and 36% of residents in the region who rate them as fair or poor.
- 49% of community leaders in Ulster County feel positively about the services for senior citizens available in the county, and 42% rate these services as fair or poor. 9% are unsure.
- 42% of Ulster County residents and 56% of community leaders in the county think spending on services for senior citizens is about right. 37% of Ulster County residents think too little money is spent on providing services to senior citizens, 3% feel too much is spent on these services, and 18% are unsure. 32% of community leaders in the county think too little money is spent on providing services to senior citizens, and 12% are unsure.

Issues: Tolerance

Improving relations among racial and ethnic groups is an important priority for Ulster County community leaders.

- Ulster County community leaders are more likely than residents in the county to believe there is discrimination against some members of their community. A similar trend is seen between community leaders and residents in the region.

- A majority of Ulster County community leaders feels there is at least some discrimination in their community against people who receive public assistance (77%), African-Americans (72%), homosexuals (61%), immigrants (60%), Latinos (58%), and people with disabilities (53%).
- A smaller proportion of Ulster County residents than community leaders in the county feels there is at least some discrimination against people who receive public assistance (54%), African-Americans (47%), homosexuals (45%), immigrants (49%), Latinos (41%), and people with disabilities (38%).

Community Connections

Many Ulster County residents have access to the Internet.

- 68% of Ulster County residents have access to the Internet. This compares with 70% of Hudson Valley residents and 54% of Americans who are online.¹ 63% of Ulster County residents have access to the Internet at home.
- 41% of Ulster County residents have Internet access at work compared with 46% of residents in the Hudson Valley and 41.7% of Americans.
- 73% of Ulster County households have some type of personal computer at home.
- 95% of community leaders in Ulster County have access to the Internet. 81% of community leaders in the county have access to the Internet at home, and 85% have access at work.

Most Ulster County residents are employed at least part-time.

- 71% of Ulster County residents are employed either full-time or part-time. 14% are retired, and 15% 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.
- Households in Ulster County are less likely to have two adults who work either full-time or part-time than are households in the other counties of the region except for Greene County. 31% of Ulster County households have at least two adults who work either full-time or part-time. 27% of Ulster County households have two full-time wage earners.
- 90% of Ulster County workers commute to work by car by themselves, 4% car pool, 4% use public transportation, and 2% walk to work.
- The average time spent commuting one way for Ulster County workers is 23 minutes, the shortest in the region along with workers in Columbia County. This compares with the Hudson Valley average of 28 minutes.
- Only 22% of Ulster County workers travel for more than 30 minutes to get to work.

¹ "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.

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

- 57% of Ulster County residents listen to news on the radio everyday, and 81% of residents in the county get their news from the radio at least once a week.
- 48% of residents in Ulster County read a local newspaper everyday. 81% of county residents read a local daily newspaper at least once a week.
- 31% of residents in Ulster County watch local television news everyday. 64% watch local television news at least once in an average week.
- 36% of Ulster County residents have read all of the last four issues of their weekly community newspaper, and 66% have read at least one of the last four issues.
- 15% of Ulster County residents read a national newspaper each day. 49% of Ulster County residents read a national daily newspaper at least once a week.
- 22% of Ulster County residents with access to the Internet go online everyday for news. 22% of the 68% of Ulster County residents who have access to the Internet or an online service means that 15% of residents in the county access the Internet each day for news.
- Most Ulster County community leaders get their news each day from radio (77%), or a local daily newspaper (74%). 53% of community leaders in the county read each issue of their weekly community newspaper, as well.

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. 520 residents in Ulster 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 5th through December 10th, 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 15th through December 19th, 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 Ulster County residents, 520 interviews, is $\pm 4.3\%$. 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.