



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

# Many Voices One Valley 2007

## Ulster County Report

### Table of Contents

A PROFILE .....	1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ULSTER COUNTY .....	1
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS .....	3
RATING OF COMMUNITY .....	3
ROLE IN IMPROVING COMMUNITY .....	3
VOLUNTEERISM .....	4
RESPONSIVENESS OF LOCAL LEADERS .....	4
NEW RESIDENTS .....	5
ISSUES: THE PRIORITIES .....	5
OVERVIEW OF RESIDENTS' PRIORITIES .....	5
TOP PRIORITIES: HEALTH CARE .....	6
HEALTH CARE: AFFORDABILITY .....	7
HEALTH INSURANCE: ACCESSIBILITY .....	7
RATING HEALTH CARE SERVICES .....	7
SPENDING ON HEALTH CARE SERVICES .....	8
SUMMARY: HEALTH CARE .....	8
TOP PRIORITIES: EDUCATION .....	9
IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS .....	9
RATING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS .....	9
SPENDING ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS .....	9
SUMMARY: EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY .....	10
TOP PRIORITIES: ECONOMIC PRIORITIES .....	10
REDUCING TAXES .....	10
KEEPING BUSINESSES IN THE AREA .....	10
SUMMARY: ECONOMIC PRIORITIES .....	11
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE .....	11
RESIDENTS WHO INTEND TO LEAVE .....	11
MAKING ENDS MEET .....	12
RATING THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY .....	12
MANAGING THE FAMILY BUDGET .....	12
HOUSING MATTERS .....	13

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RENTING BUT HOPING TO OWN .....	13
WORKING IN THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY .....	14
PEOPLE DOING WITHOUT .....	16
HEALTH MATTERS .....	17
HOUSEHOLDS WITH GAPS IN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE .....	17
HOUSEHOLDS CURRENTLY WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE .....	18
GOING WITHOUT BECAUSE OF COST .....	19
CONCLUSION .....	19
HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED .....	20
HOW TO INTERPRET THE NUMBERS .....	21
METHODOLOGY: SAMPLE DESIGN .....	22
METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION .....	22
OUTCOME RATES .....	23

# Many Voices One Valley 2007

## Ulster County Report

*Many Voices One Valley 2007* reports the results of a survey conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion and funded by the Dyson Foundation about what people in New York's Mid-Hudson Valley think of living in the region. While the study included Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties, this summary details only the results for Ulster County.

The study updates a similar study conducted in 2002. Many of the questions asked five years ago are part of this new study so that life in the Mid-Hudson Valley and Ulster County may be compared over time.

There have been several additions to the earlier study, as well. The current research delves deeper than the 2002 survey into how people rate the affordability of the region and examines the issue of health care.

In the present study, 4,320 residents of the Mid-Hudson Valley were interviewed April 9<sup>th</sup> through June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. This includes 527 residents living in Ulster County. The survey results for all residents in the Mid-Hudson region are statistically significant at  $\pm 1.5\%$  while the margin of error for Ulster

County residents is  $\pm 4.5\%$ . The margin of error increases for smaller sub-groups in the population.

For additional information and complete details of the survey questionnaire and results visit [www.ManyVoicesOneValley.org](http://www.ManyVoicesOneValley.org). Full reports for both the 2007 and the 2002 studies may be accessed there, as well.

### A Profile

#### Demographic Profile of Ulster County

The Mid-Hudson Valley includes seven counties: Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, and Ulster. In terms of population, Ulster County is one of the larger counties in the region. Its residents comprise 16% of the total Mid-Hudson Valley population.<sup>1</sup>

In many areas, the demographic makeup of Ulster County closely resembles the composition of the entire Mid-Hudson Valley population. Income is one example. As with Mid-Hudson Valley households, more than half of all people living in Ulster County are in households with an annual income of more than \$50,000. 54% of county households have a yearly income of \$50,000 or more compared with 58% of the region's households.

Additionally, the average household size of 2.8 in Ulster County is exactly the same as that of the Mid-Hudson region. Five years ago, the average household size in Ulster

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<sup>1</sup> Results not depicted in the charts of the report are detailed in the appendices which are available on [www.ManyVoicesOneValley.org](http://www.ManyVoicesOneValley.org), the study website.

County was 2.7. Among households with children, the average household size in Ulster County is 4.2 the same as it is in the Mid-Hudson Valley as a whole.

As is found regionally, Ulster County residents without a college education do continue to outnumber residents with a college degree by a wide margin. 63% of county residents have not completed college compared with 65% of Mid-Hudson Valley residents.

But there are some ways in which residents of Ulster County differ from residents of the region as a whole. For instance, the racial and ethnic composition of the county is more homogenous than the Mid-Hudson region as a whole. 88% of Ulster County residents are white compared with 83% of the region's residents. 7% of Ulster County residents identify themselves as Latino compared with one in ten Mid-Hudson Valley residents. 4% of Ulster County residents are African American compared with 7% of the region as a whole.

Ulster County households are less likely to have children than the average household in the Mid-Hudson region. 38% of Ulster County households include children compared with 44% of households regionally. 12% of Ulster County households include a child who is under age five which is comparable to the regional proportion of 15%. About three in ten Ulster County households include school age children which compares with 38% of households in the region overall that have children age five to eighteen.

	Ulster County	Mid-Hudson Valley
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	49%	49%
Women	51%	51%
<b>Race</b>		
White	88%	83%
African American	4%	7%
Latino	7%	10%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$50,000	46%	42%
\$50,000 or more	54%	58%
<b>Age</b>		
Under 45	40%	44%
45 or older	60%	56%
<b>Education</b>		
Less than college	63%	65%
College graduate	37%	35%
<b>Children</b>		
Households with children	38%	44%
Households with children under 5	12%	15%
Households with children age 5 to 18	31%	38%

	Ulster County	Mid-Hudson Valley
<b>Households with Children</b>		
Low income	19%	21%
Single parents	17%	11%

As is true for children living in the region as a whole, about two in ten Ulster County households with children have a total household yearly income of less than \$30,000. 17% of Ulster County households with children are headed by one parent. This compares with 11% of households with single parents in the entire Mid-Hudson region.

One of the highest proportions of uninsured households in the region has persisted in Ulster County. 31% of all households have at least one person who has encountered a gap in health insurance coverage over the past year, and 15% of households in the county have at least one adult or child who is not currently insured. These figures have remained fairly stable since 2002.

Households	Ulster County		Mid-Hudson Valley	
	2007	2002	2007	2002
Gap in health insurance	31%	30%	24%	24%
Currently not insured	15%	18%	12%	12%
Households with Children	Ulster County		Mid-Hudson Valley	
	2007	2002	2007	2002
Children with gap in health insurance	19%	15%	15%	13%
Children currently not insured	8%	6%	7%	6%

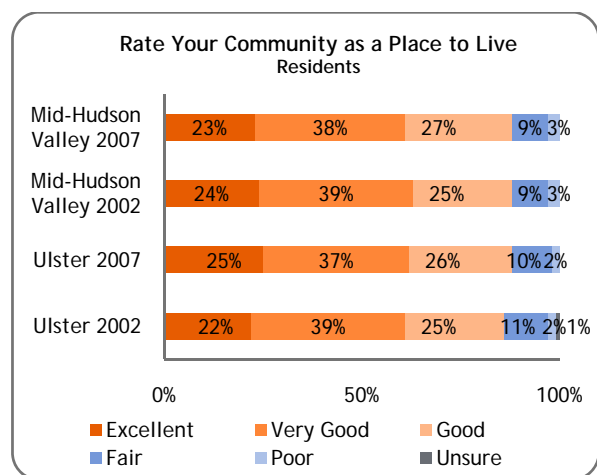
In addition, the proportion of Ulster County's uninsured children has not diminished since 2002. 19% of all households with children have at least one child who has not had continuous coverage over the past year compared with 15% five years ago. 8% are presently without insurance compared with 6% who were uninsured in 2002.

The proportion of children without coverage in Ulster County is similar to the overall Mid-Hudson region.

## Continuity and Change in the Past Five Years

### Rating of community

88% of Ulster County residents feel positively about their community as a place to live. One in four county residents see their community as an excellent place to live and another 63% say it is either very good or good. County residents' attitudes parallel the opinions of Mid-Hudson Valley residents. Since 2002 there has been very little change in opinion about this among the residents of Ulster County.

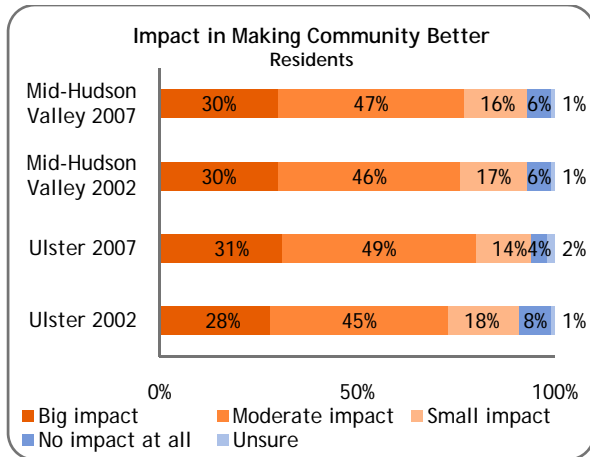


Question wording: Overall, how would you rate your community as a place to live? Would you say it is: excellent, very good, good (positive), fair or poor (negative)?

### Role in improving community

80% of Ulster County residents think they can have, at minimum, a moderate impact on shaping the place in which they live. This compares with 77% of Mid-Hudson Valley residents who feel this way. Five years ago, 73% of county residents thought

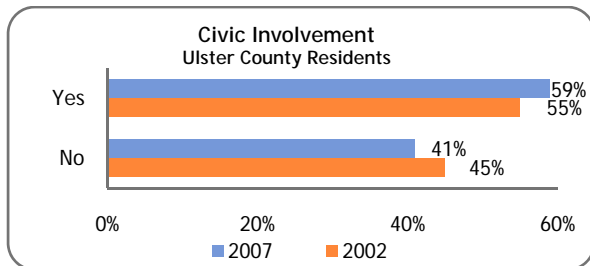
they could make a difference in their community.



Question wording: Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live: a big impact, a moderate impact, a small impact, or no impact at all?

### Volunteerism

51% of people in Ulster County who think they can make a difference in the community believe volunteering their time is the best way to do so. 37% mention the importance of getting other people involved. In fact, about six in ten Ulster County residents say they volunteer on a regular basis or participate regularly in a civic organization, a church, or a club.

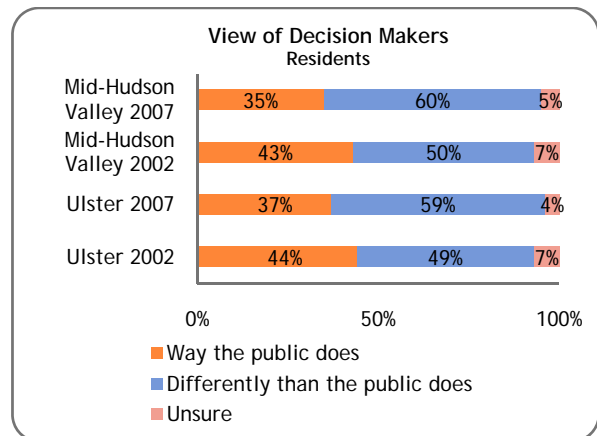


Question wording: Do you regularly volunteer or are you active in a civic organization, a church, or a club?

### Responsiveness of local leaders

Since 2002, one of the largest changes is in peoples' perceptions of the responsiveness of local decision makers. Five years ago, Ulster County residents were divided when asked if local leaders mostly saw things as the public did or mostly saw things differently. At that time, 49% felt there was a disconnect between those that had the power to make decisions in their community and the public, and 44% felt decision makers were, in fact, in sync with public opinion.

A majority of people living in the county now think there is a disconnect between the views of those in leadership positions and the general public. Today, 59% of county residents believe decision makers view things differently than the public. Only 37% think leaders in their community are in touch with public sentiment.



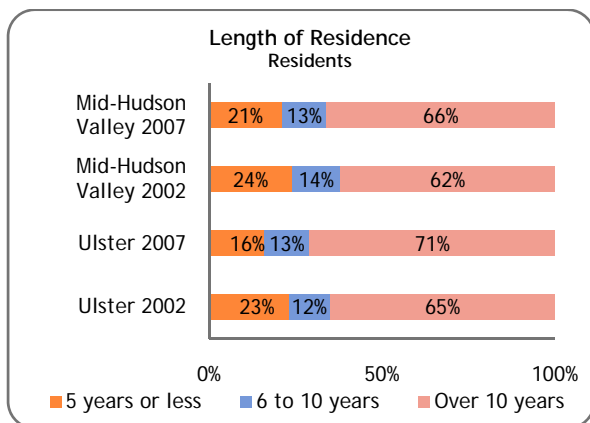
Question wording: Overall, do you feel that those individuals who are in positions to make decisions for your community mostly see things the way the public does or mostly see things differently than the public does?

This change in perspective is not unique to the residents of Ulster County. Mid-Hudson Valley residents are now more doubtful that their leaders are in step with public opinion than they were five years ago.

### New residents

Over seven in ten residents have called Ulster County home for at least a decade. Nevertheless, the county is home to a sizeable proportion of new residents. 16% of people living in Ulster County have moved to their community in the past five years. Proportionately, however, the influx of new residents in Ulster County has been smaller than that of the overall Mid-Hudson region which is at 21%.

The average length of residence in Ulster County is 27 years, compared with 2002 when Ulster County residents had lived in their community on average 26 years.



Question wording: How many years have you lived in your community?

## Issues: The Priorities

### Overview of residents' priorities

Using a scale from 0 to 10, Ulster County residents were asked to assess the level of priority they felt should be placed on a list of issues affecting the area where they live. 10 represented a top priority while 0 represented the issue was not a priority at all. The issues varied from health care to public education, from taxes, jobs, and the economy to the environment, along with a mix of other community services.

Making health care more affordable is the top priority for Ulster County residents just as it was in 2002. Today, it receives an average rating of 8.1 which is very close to the average score of 8.0 it received five years ago. The second ranked issue for Ulster County residents is improving the quality of the public schools. This was also a major concern for county residents five years ago.

The biggest change for Ulster County residents is in their concern for reducing taxes. Ranked ninth five years ago with an average rating of 7.1, it is now the third top priority for county residents with an average score of 7.9.<sup>2</sup> Lowering the tax burden has similarly moved up the priority rankings across the Mid-Hudson region.

<sup>2</sup> Mean ranking tables list the average to the tenths place but are sorted in absolute order. For example, while both "Reducing taxes" and "Making health insurance easier to get" are rounded to 7.9, their averages are 7.95 and 7.94, respectively. They are, therefore, ranked three and four in the priorities list.

Ulster County	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Making health care more affordable	1	8.1	1	8.0
Improving the quality of the public schools	2	8.0	3	7.9
Reducing taxes	3	7.9	9	7.1
Making health insurance easier to get	4	7.9	4	7.7
Keeping businesses in the area	5	7.9	2	8.0
Creating more jobs	6	7.9	6	7.5
Providing services for senior citizens	7	7.7	5	7.5
Protecting open space	8	7.5	8	7.2
Improving relations between different racial and ethnic groups	9	7.4	10	7.1
Providing more after-school activities	10	7.3	7	7.3
Making your community safer	11	7.2	11	7.1
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	12	7.1	13	6.8
Providing more affordable, quality child care	13	7.0	12	7.0
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	14	7.0	14	6.6
Increasing or improving public transportation	15	6.4	16	6.1
Improving the quality of the water	16	6.4	17	6.1
Reducing homelessness	17	6.3	15	6.2
Increasing the number of public areas	18	6.2	18	6.0
Slowing growth and development	19	6.0	19	5.7

Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between.

Other major issues for Ulster County residents include making health insurance more accessible, keeping businesses in the area, and creating jobs. In fact, only two-tenths of a point separate the average score for the top priority and the average rating of the sixth priority.

#### Top Priorities: Health Care

Many residents of Ulster County are anxious about health care costs. As noted, making health care more affordable remains the number one priority for county residents of the county, and making health insurance easier to get is ranked fourth.

In Ulster County, this issue hits close to home. Nearly one-third of all county households have a member who has not had uninterrupted health insurance coverage and, therefore, has experienced a gap in that insurance for at least some time over the course of the last year. 15% of all households have at least one person who is currently without health insurance. In fact, Ulster County has one of the highest rates of households without current coverage in the region.

Ulster County is one of the two Mid-Hudson Valley counties with the greatest proportion of households which face gaps in their health insurance coverage. The other county is Columbia, where, like Ulster County, 31% of households have not had continuous coverage over the past year.

Many Ulster County households with children are also strained in their efforts to secure coverage for their children. 19% of

county households have at least one child who has experienced a gap in coverage over the past year, and 8% of county households include a child who is presently without insurance.

**Health care: affordability**

Since so many people in Ulster County cannot rely on uninterrupted health insurance coverage, it is not surprising to find that about half of all residents of the county rate making health care more affordable a 10 the highest possible score on the priority rating scale.

Making Health Care More Affordable	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	1	8.0	3	7.7
Ulster	1	8.1	1	8.0

Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between: Making health care more affordable.

The issue of providing lower health care costs yields an average score of 8.1 among Ulster County residents. This compares with the average rating of 8.0 it received among county residents in 2002 when this issue also ranked as the topmost issue among residents of the county.

The affordability of health care is the number one issue for the Mid-Hudson region as whole, receiving a mean score of 8.0 from residents across the region.

**Health insurance: accessibility**

Another health care issue also makes the top five list for Ulster County residents. Making health insurance easier to get is an important issue for many residents of the county and it ranks fourth among residents' priorities.

As an issue, making health insurance easier to get now receives an average rating of 7.9 out of 10 among Ulster County residents compared with the average score of 7.7 five years ago. This issue also ranked fourth for county residents in 2002.

The accessibility of health insurance is a leading concern for Mid-Hudson Valley residents as a whole, as well. It ranks fifth among residents' priorities.

Making Health Insurance Easier to Get	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	5	7.7	6	7.4
Ulster	4	7.9	4	7.7

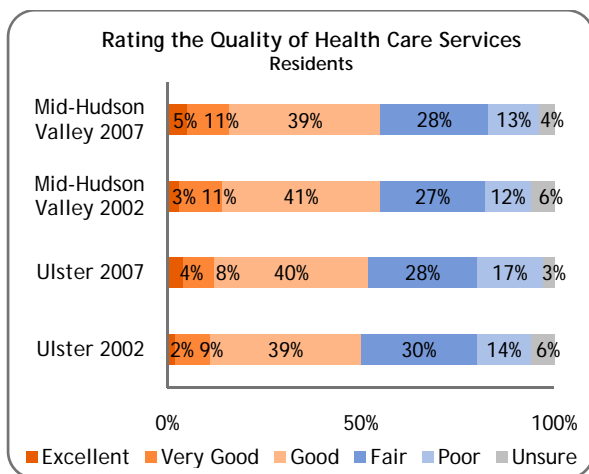
Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between: Making health insurance easier to get.

**Rating health care services**

Although a majority of residents in Ulster County feel positively about the quality of health care services in their community only 4% find that they are of excellent caliber. 45% rate these services as fair or poor. Residents' views on this matter are

very similar to the opinions expressed by residents throughout the Mid-Hudson region.

Since 2002, there has been little fluctuation in the number of Ulster County residents who report satisfaction with the health care services in their community. About half of all county residents assessed health care services favorably five years ago. Similarly, in 2002, 44% did not rate the quality of health care services positively.

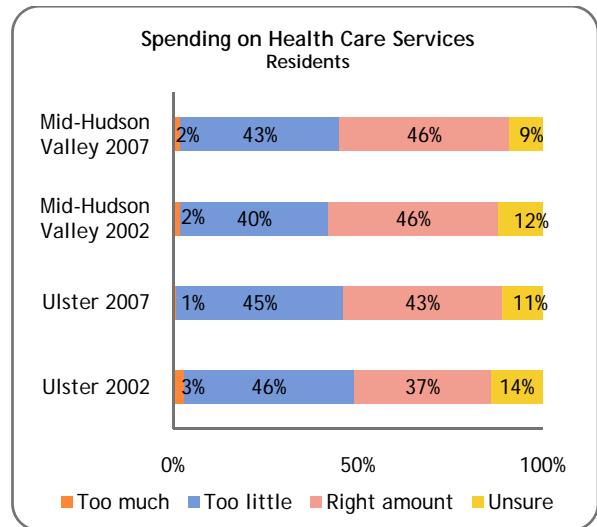


Question wording: Would you rate each of the following in your community as excellent, very good, good (positive), fair, or poor (negative): Health care services?

**Spending on health care services**

When it comes to spending on health care services, Ulster County residents divide. 45% believe too little is being spent on health care services, and 43% think the amount allocated is adequate. This compares to residents' opinions in 2002 when 46% felt more resources were not enough and 37% believed spending was on target.

On this issue the residents of Ulster County express similar opinions to Mid-Hudson Valley residents as a whole.



Question wording: Does your community spend too much, too little, or about the right amount on health care services?

**Summary: health care**

A focus on health care matters resonates with the residents of Ulster County. The cost of health care is rated the top priority for communities to address. There is a general consensus that more needs to be done to make health insurance more accessible.

Many residents feel positively about the health care services in their area but there are also quite a few residents that are not satisfied. A substantial proportion of the population thinks more money needs to be set aside to improve current services.

### Top Priorities: Education

Quality public education continues to be deemed a top community priority by the residents of Ulster County. Although only about three in ten Ulster County households have at least one school age child, residents across the county find public education to be an important priority.

### Improving public schools

Improving the quality of public schools is the second leading priority for Ulster County residents. This concern yields an average score of 8.0 compared with the 7.9 rating it received five years ago when the issue ranked third for county residents. Education is also one of the top priorities regionally.

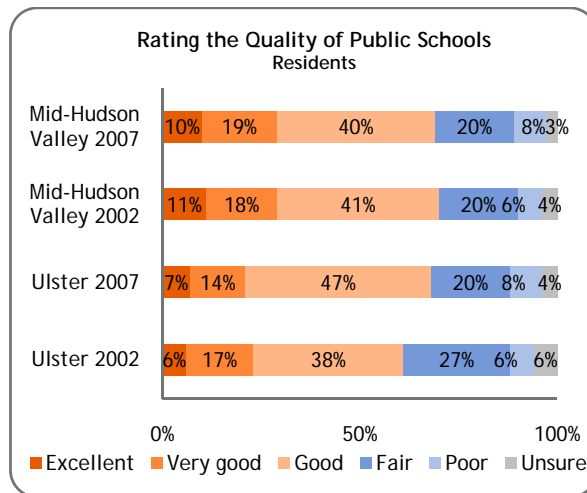
Improving the Quality of the Public Schools	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	4	7.8	2	7.8
Ulster	2	8.0	3	7.9

Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between: Improving the quality of the public schools.

### Rating the quality of public schools

In 2002, residents of Ulster County were considerably less enthusiastic about the quality of their schools than people living in other parts of the Mid-Hudson Valley. Today, their opinions closely mirror the region as a whole.

7% of county residents rate the quality of the public schools as excellent, 14% say they are very good, and 47% feel they are good. 28% rate the local public schools negatively including 8% of county residents who describe the caliber of their public schools as poor.

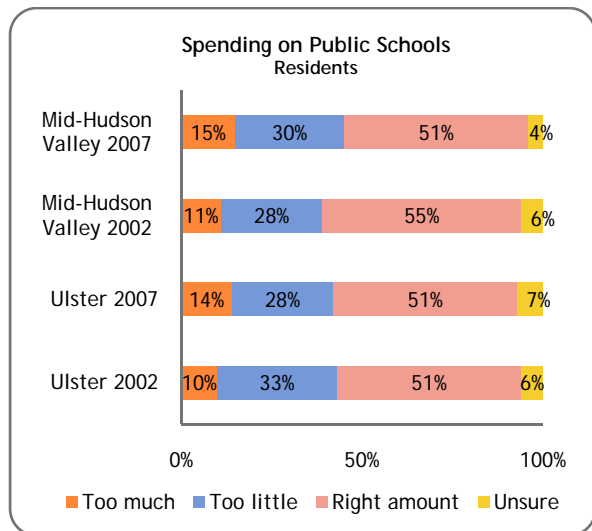


Question wording: Would you rate each of the following in your community as excellent, very good, good (positive), fair, or poor (negative): The quality of the public schools?

### Spending on public schools

Nearly three in ten Ulster County residents think their community does not spend enough on public education, and 14% believe too much money is being spent. A slim majority of county residents are satisfied with the amount of money their community allocates toward improving public schools.

The opinions of the people of Ulster County mirror the views of Mid-Hudson Valley residents as a whole. Furthermore, county residents' attitudes have not changed substantially in the past five years.



Question wording: Does your community spend too much, too little, or about the right amount on public schools?

**Summary: education as a priority**

Ulster County residents are very concerned with providing children with a quality public education. For the most part, people in the county rate the quality of their public schools favorably, and about half of county residents think community spending in this area is on target.

**Top Priorities: Economic Priorities**

Residents in Ulster County consider economic issues to be major priorities. In fact, both reducing taxes and keeping businesses in the area are among the five leading priorities for county residents overall.

**Reducing taxes**

In 2002, Ulster County residents considered taxes to be an important priority but did not perceive it as one of the most pressing issues facing the county. Reducing taxes

ranked only ninth out of nineteen priorities. Today it ranks third.

In the past five years, the tax burden has become one of the top concerns for Ulster County residents. It now receives an average score of 7.9 out of a high score of 10 from people living in the county. This is an increase from the average score of 7.1 it received in 2002.

Indeed, anxiety over taxes is much greater than it was just five years ago. At that time, 32% of Ulster County residents assigned it the highest rating of 10. Today, nearly half, 48%, of residents consider it worthy of a top score of 10.

An increase in focus on the tax burden is not limited to Ulster County, it's shared across the Mid-Hudson Valley. Regionally, reducing taxes climbed from a rank of ninth in 2002 to third today.

Reducing Taxes	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	3	7.9	9	7.3
Ulster	3	7.9	9	7.1

Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between: Reducing taxes.

**Keeping businesses in the area**

Keeping businesses in the area is in the top tier of priorities for Ulster County residents. It is ranked number five and receives a mean rating of 7.9 on a scale from 0 to 10 with 10 being the most important.

Nevertheless, keeping businesses in the area is a lower priority for residents of Ulster County than it is for Mid-Hudson Valley residents as a whole. It is the number two issue for the region.

Ulster County residents ranked keeping businesses in the area as the second highest priority for the community in 2002 with an average score of 8.0. Today it receives a 7.9, and it continues to rank highly among residents' priorities for the region.

Keeping Businesses in the Area	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	2	7.9	1	7.9
Ulster	5	7.9	2	8.0

Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a priority at all for your community and you may use the numbers in between: Keeping businesses in the area.

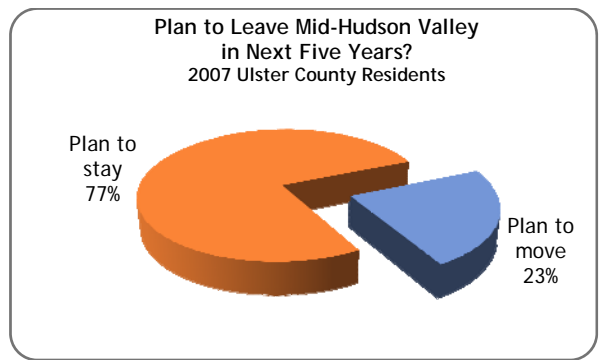
**Summary: economic priorities**

The residents of Ulster County are concerned about economic issues. Anxiety over the local tax burden has grown over the past five years, and it is now one of the top issues in the minds of Ulster County residents. Many residents also continue to think the region should work to prevent businesses from leaving the area.

**Plans for the Future**

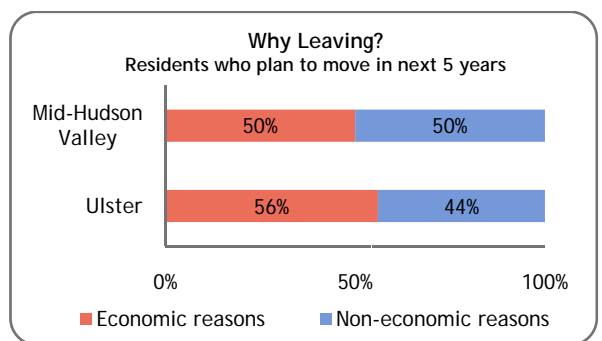
**Residents who intend to leave**

When asked to think about where they would be living in five years, 77% of Ulster County residents say they are staying put. However, 23% intend to relocate in the near future. This compares with 29% of Mid-Hudson Valley residents who plan to move out of the region in the next five years.



Question wording: Thinking about five years from now, do you plan to stay in the Hudson Valley or do you plan to move someplace else?

Ulster County residents who plan to move out of the area are more likely to cite economic reasons than the average Mid-Hudson Valley resident.



Question wording: What is the main reason you plan to move away from the Hudson Valley?

56% of Ulster County residents who intend to move out cite economic factors. For instance, 20% of residents planning to relocate blame taxes, 15% point to jobs, and 15% mention the cost of living.

For people in Ulster County who intend to move on for non-economic reasons, the number one motive is that it is time for a change.

	Ulster County	Mid-Hudson Valley
<b>Why Leaving?</b>		
Taxes	20%	17%
Jobs	15%	12%
Cost of living	15%	17%
Time for a change	9%	7%
Climate	7%	8%
Housing costs	6%	4%
Retirement	5%	5%
Move near family	3%	5%
Quality of life	3%	6%
Overcrowded	2%	6%
Finish college-school	2%	2%
Schools	<1%	2%
Other	13%	9%

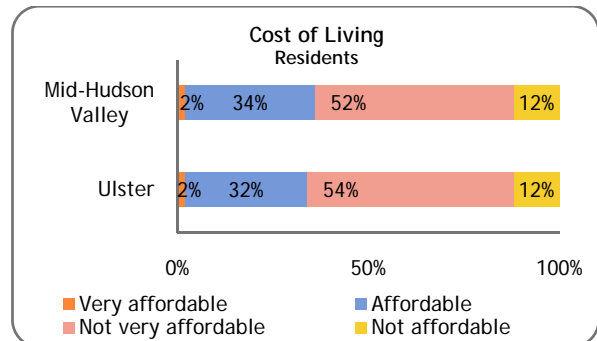
Question wording: What is the main reason you plan to move away from the Hudson Valley?

### Making Ends Meet

#### Rating the affordability of the Mid-Hudson Valley

When evaluating the cost of living for an average family, two thirds of Ulster County residents feel the region is not a very affordable place to live. 54% say it is not very affordable and 12% find it not affordable at all.

This figure is similar to the 64% of Mid-Hudson Valley residents who see the region as unaffordable.



Question wording: Overall, would you describe the cost of living in the Hudson Valley for the average family as very affordable, affordable, not very affordable, or not affordable at all?

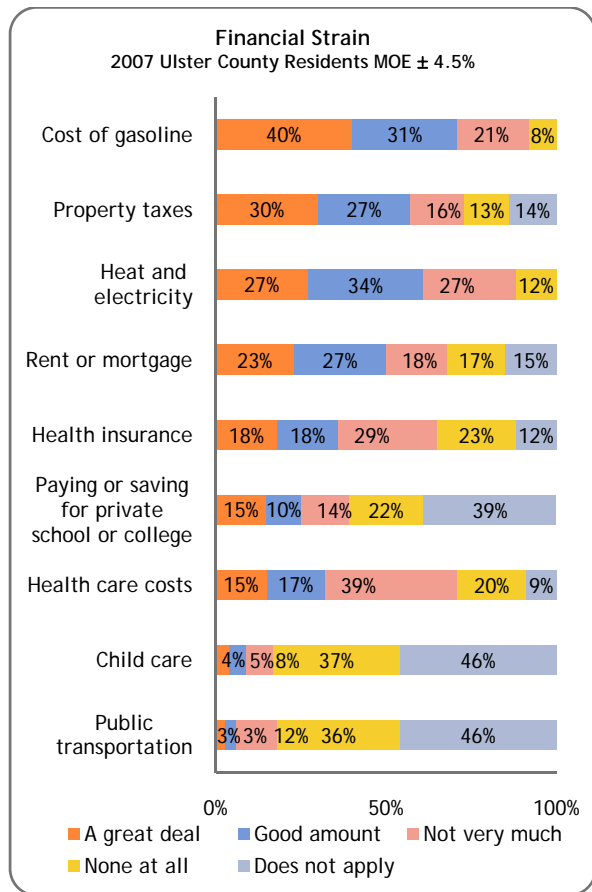
#### Managing the family budget

While many people in Ulster County mention multiple financial pressures that strain their monthly budgets, the price of gasoline outpaces other costs for county residents.

71% of county residents feel financially pressed by the high cost of gas. This includes 40% of Ulster County residents who say paying at the pump has caused a great deal of financial strain and another 31% who report a good deal of difficulty paying for gasoline.

Many Ulster County residents are financially strained by the cost of heat and electricity. 61% of county residents are financially pressed by the cost of utilities. This includes 27% of county residents who say it adversely affects their household budget a great deal.

57% of county residents see property taxes as a financial burden including 30% who say it puts a great deal of stress on their monthly financial obligations.



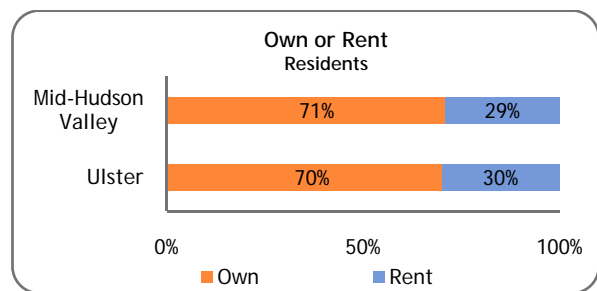
Question wording: Thinking about an average month, how much financial strain does the cost of gasoline/the cost of public transportation such as buses and trains/your rent or mortgage/heat and electricity/property taxes/child care/paying or saving for private school or college/health care costs or medical expenses not including health insurance/health insurance put on your family budget: a great deal of financial strain, a good amount, not very much, or none at all? If something doesn't apply to you, please say so.

Half of Ulster County residents are concerned with the financial impact of their monthly rent or mortgage payment. Nearly

one in four county residents feels a great deal of financial strain from these expenses. About one-third of county residents finds it difficult to cover the cost of their health insurance.

### Housing matters

Like most Mid-Hudson Valley residents, seven in ten people living in Ulster County are homeowners. 70% of county residents own their home compared with 30% who are renters.

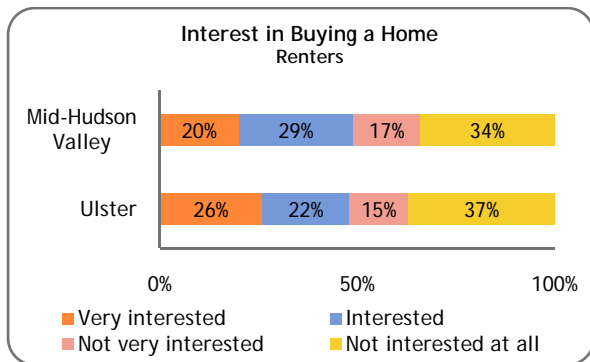


Question wording: Do you own your own home or do you rent?

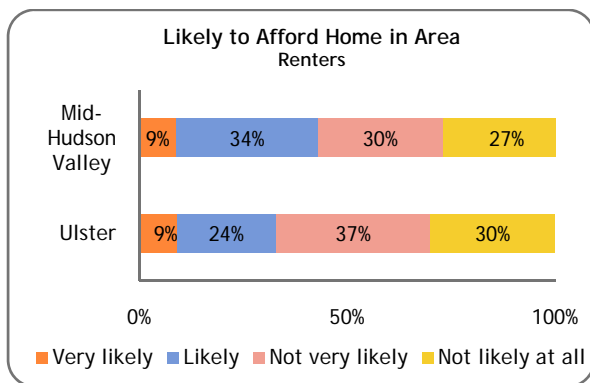
### Renting but hoping to own

When asked about their interest in future homeownership, renters living in Ulster County divide about whether or not they are interested in buying a home in the area. 48% express interest, and 52% do not have an interest in purchasing a home someday.

When Ulster County renters were queried on the likelihood that that will be able to afford a home in the area, only a third felt it likely including only about one in ten that foresaw it as very likely. About two-thirds of all county renters feel priced out of homeownership.



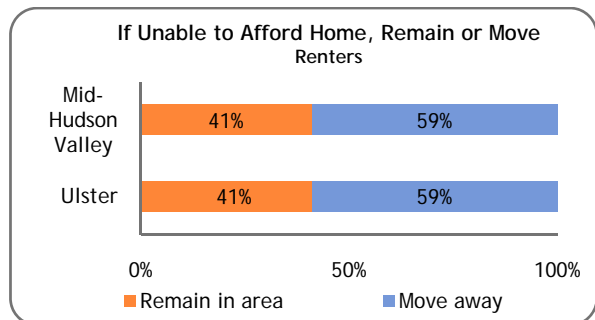
Question wording: Are you very interested, interested, not very interested, or not interested at all in buying a home in this area?



Question wording: Do you think it is very likely, likely, not very likely, or not likely at all that you will be able to afford a home in this area?

People who rent in Ulster County are more pessimistic about the prospect of future homeownership than renters living throughout the Mid-Hudson region. 57% of Mid-Hudson Valley renters doubt they will be able to afford a home in the area.

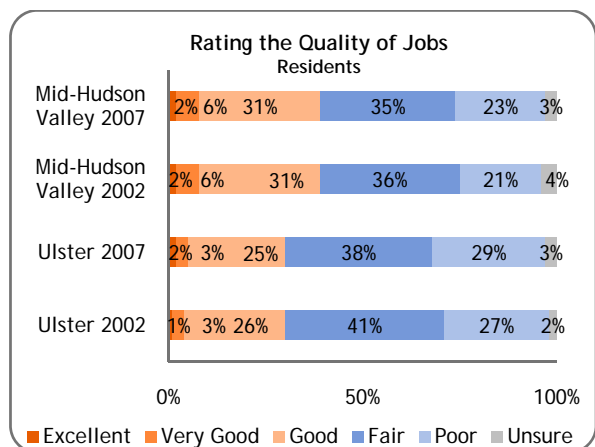
Just like renters in the Mid-Hudson region as a whole, if Ulster County renters are unable to purchase a home in the area, a majority of them, 59%, plan to leave the region.



Question wording: If you cannot afford to buy a home here, are you likely to remain living in the Hudson Valley, or are you likely to move away?

### Working in the Mid-Hudson Valley

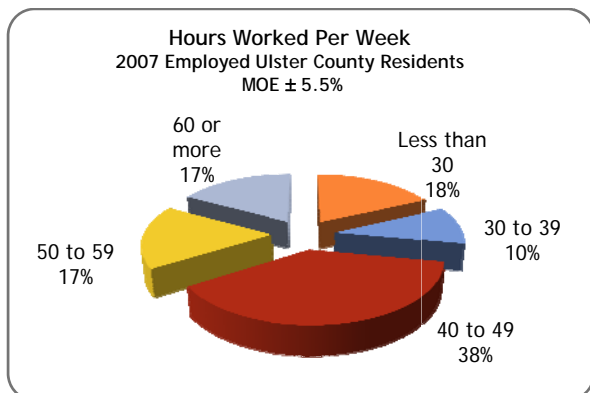
Most Ulster County residents are not pleased with the quality of employment offered in their local area. Two in three Ulster County residents do not describe the quality of jobs favorably. While most people living in other parts of the Mid-Hudson region are not happy with the jobs in their community, Ulster County residents are even less satisfied than Mid-Hudson Valley residents.



Question wording: Would you rate each of the following in your community as excellent, very good, good (positive), fair, or poor (negative): The quality of jobs?

56% of Ulster County households hold at least two jobs. This is one of the highest proportions reported in the seven counties of the Mid-Hudson Valley. Households with two jobs include those where two adult earners work as well as those where one adult holds multiple jobs. Reliance on more than one job is not unique to Ulster County households. Rather, it is a pattern found throughout the Mid-Hudson region.

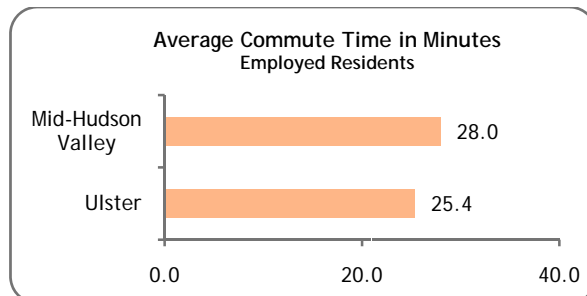
Ulster County workers clock 42.4 hours on average each week. 72% of employed Ulster County residents work forty hours or more weekly including more than a third of workers who work fifty hours plus in a typical week. Employed residents in the county put in a comparable amount of hours as the average Mid-Hudson Valley worker. 74% of the regions' workers work at least forty hours per week with a weekly average of 43.1 hours.



Question wording: In total, approximately how many hours do you work in an average week?

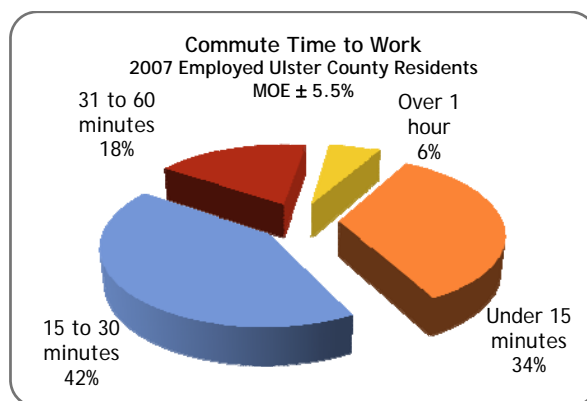
Ulster County residents who travel to work spend an average of 25.4 minutes to get to their jobs each day which is shorter than the travel time for the average worker in

the Mid-Hudson Valley. Regionally, those that work commute about 28 minutes.



Question wording: In minutes, how long does it take you to get one way from home to work?

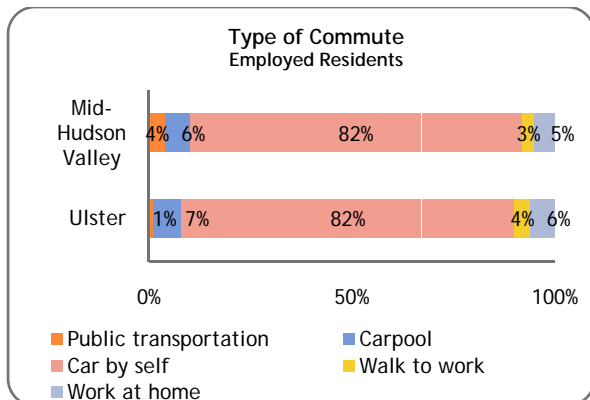
Most Ulster County residents who need to get to work can do so in less than a half hour. About one-third of employed county residents commute less than fifteen minutes and 42% travel between fifteen and thirty minutes one way to get to their job daily. About one in five workers have travel times between thirty-one minutes and an hour, and 6% commute over an hour away from their homes to their jobs.



Question wording: In minutes, how long does it take you to get one way from home to work?

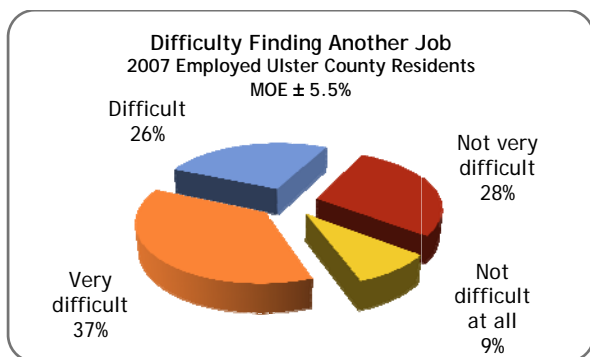
82% of employed Ulster County residents travel to work in a car alone. Exactly the

same proportion of the region's workers commute the same way.



Question wording: On most workdays, do you commute to work by car by yourself, carpool with other adults, or do you take public transportation such as a bus, train, or subway?

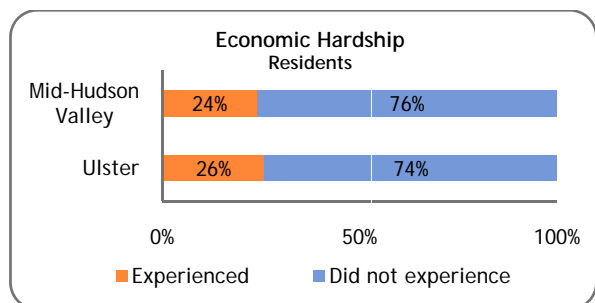
63% of Ulster County residents who are employed think it would not be easy to find a similar job within the same distance from their home as the job they have now if they were to lose their current position. This includes 37% of working residents who say it would be very difficult to find a comparable job.



Question wording: If you were to lose your job, would it be very difficult, difficult, not very difficult, or not difficult at all to find another similar position about the same distance from your home?

### People doing without

A substantial number of Ulster County households confronts serious financial difficulties. Residents were asked if they had to deal with each of several economic hardships in the past year. These difficulties include challenges purchasing food or paying for housing, their utilities, or health care needs. About one in four Ulster County residents mention at least one hardship they have faced in the past twelve months. This proportion is in line with the proportion of residents in the Mid-Hudson region as a whole who face these types of financial difficulties.



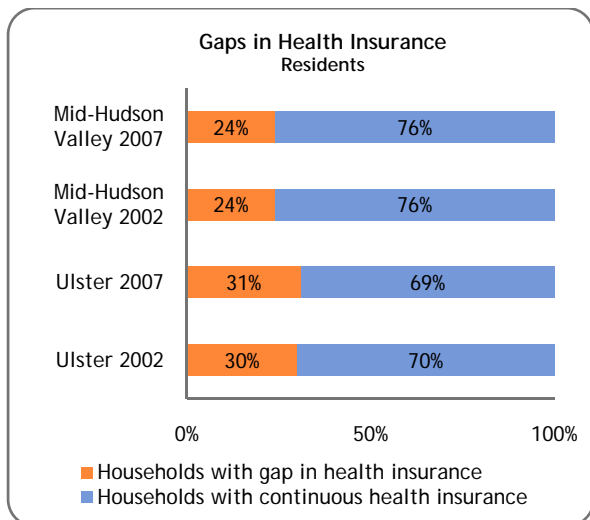
Question wording: In the past 12 months did you experience any of the following every month, some months but not others, a couple of times, once, or not at all you: cut the size of your meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food/got emergency food from a church, a food pantry, or food bank/did not have enough money to pay your mortgage, rent, or utility bills/moved in with other people even for a little while because you could not afford to pay your mortgage, rent, or utility bills/missed or skipped a doctor's appointment because you could not afford to pay for it/did not buy needed medicine because you did not have the money to pay for it?

## Health Matters

### Households with gaps in health insurance coverage

The battle to maintain continuous health insurance is a serious one in Ulster County. In fact, among the seven counties of the Mid-Hudson region, Ulster County, along with Columbia County, has the greatest proportion of households that face gaps in their health insurance coverage.

About three in ten households in Ulster County include someone who has not had continuous health insurance and, therefore, has experienced a gap in coverage at some point in the past year. This includes both adults and children who are without health insurance at present and households, while currently insured, that have had at least one member without coverage in the past year.

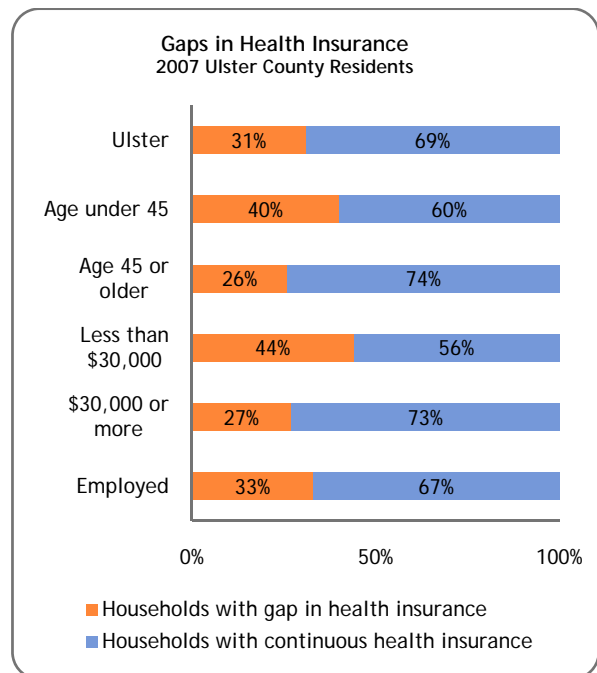


Question wording: Do the adults/children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now? Was there ever a time in the past 12 months when an adult/child in

your household did not have any health insurance or a health plan?

Using the U.S. Census, this means approximately 21,205 of the estimated 68,401 households in the county confront the struggle to maintain continuous health coverage for all household members.<sup>3</sup>

In the past five years, there has been no progress in reducing this proportion. In 2002, three in ten Ulster County residents were without or experienced a gap in their health insurance coverage.

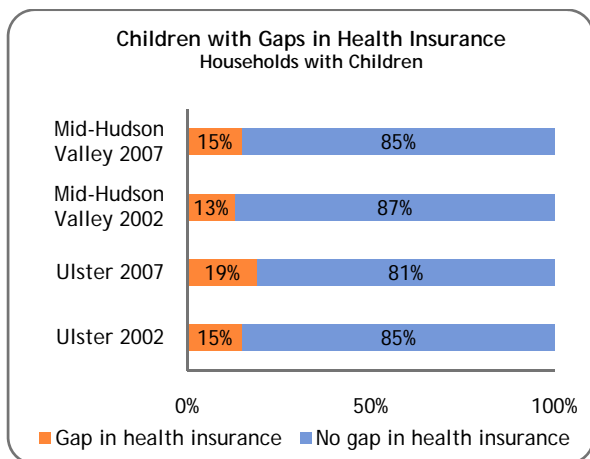


Question wording: Do the adults/children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now? Was there ever a time in the past 12 months when an adult/child in your household did not have any health insurance or a health plan?

<sup>3</sup> Population estimates for households are based on the American Community Survey, Census 2005.

Young people and low income households in the county are more likely to have to deal with this situation. Four in ten Ulster County adults under the age of forty-five reside in a household where a member has encountered a gap in insurance during the past twelve months. 44% of households with an annual income of less than \$30,000 have had interrupted coverage, as well. Employment carries no assurance of a secure health insurance plan. 33% of county residents who work experienced a gap in coverage this year.

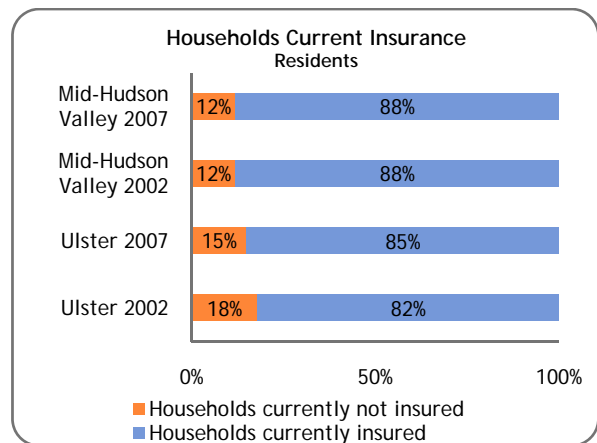
Children are not unaffected. 19% of households with children in Ulster County include at least one child who has not had the benefit of uninterrupted coverage. There has been no reduction in this proportion since 2002 when the rate was 15%.



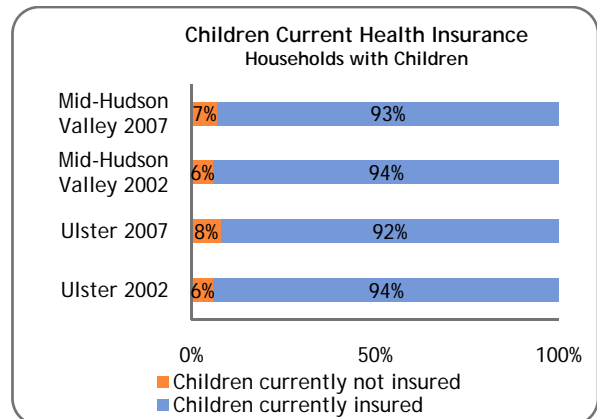
Question wording: Do the children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now? Was there ever a time in the past 12 months when a child in your household did not have health insurance or a health plan?

### Households currently without health insurance

15% of households in Ulster County include at least one member, adult or child, who is currently without health insurance. Ulster County has one of the highest rates of households without current insurance in the Mid-Hudson Valley.



Question wording: Do the adults/children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now?



Question wording: Do the children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now?

Using the U.S. Census, approximately 10,260 households of the estimated 68,401 households in the region have at least one

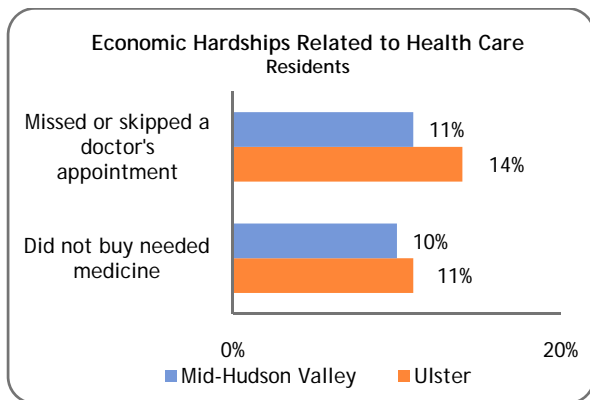
adult or child who does not have health insurance.

8% of Ulster County households with children have at least one child without current health insurance.

### Going without because of cost

There is a considerable proportion of Ulster County residents who experience severe economic hardships related to health care. In the past year, 14% of Ulster County residents did not visit a doctor because they could not pay for it. The county has one of the largest proportions of residents in the Mid-Hudson Valley who have missed or skipped a visit to a doctor on at least one occasion in the past year because of cost.

11% of county residents did not buy needed medicine because they could not afford it. This proportion is consistent with the overall average for the Mid-Hudson region.



Question wording: In the past 12 months did you experience any of the following every month, some months but not others, a couple of times, once, or not at all you: missed or skipped a doctor's appointment because you could not afford to pay for it/did not buy needed medicine because you did not have the money to pay for it?

### Conclusion

People living in Ulster County identify many challenges confronting their communities the most pressing of which include health care costs, quality public education, and the local economy. Making health care more affordable ranked as the top issue for Ulster County residents, followed by improving the public schools, reducing taxes, making health insurance easier to get, and keeping business in the area. All but one of the top five concerns was also in the top tier in 2002. New to the top tier of priorities for Ulster County is lowering taxes. This is a phenomenon not unique to the county as the tax burden has risen in the rankings across the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Of the seven counties of the Mid-Hudson Valley, Ulster County has the third largest population. In most respects the county is demographically similar to the region as a whole. One difference is that while the average household size for Ulster County is exactly the same as the average for Mid-Hudson region households, Ulster County households are less likely to include children.

Many Ulster County residents struggle to pay for health care and health insurance. In the region, Ulster County, along with Columbia County, has the greatest proportion of households that had gaps in their health insurance coverage this year. In addition, a small but substantial proportion of county residents cannot afford medical treatment or are currently uninsured. The proportion of residents in the county unable to maintain health insurance has remained

unchanged since 2002. As such, it is not surprising that making health care more affordable is the number one issue for county residents. Further, the accessibility of health insurance is in the top five, fourth in order of priority for county residents.

A majority of households in Ulster County rely on the income from more than one job and over a third of the county's workers clock more than fifty hours in an average week. About six in ten employed residents of Ulster County think it would be difficult to obtain a similar position with a comparable travel time from their home if they were to lose the job they have now. Many county residents are not satisfied with the quality of the jobs that are available in their community.

Although many people are homeowners in the county, over half of the county's renters are not interested in buying a home in the area. For those renters who are interested only about a third think it is likely they will be able to do so. Ulster County renters who are interested in buying are more pessimistic about the prospect of buying a home than the average Mid-Hudson renter who would like to be a homeowner.

One of the biggest shifts in opinion over the course of the past five years has been in Mid-Hudson residents' views on the responsiveness of local leaders. In 2002, in most counties, many residents felt their community leaders' views were in step with public opinion. At that time, Ulster County's residents were divided about whether their local leaders mostly viewed

things the way the public did, or not. Now, only 37% of county residents feel decision makers' views concur with public opinion. Similarly, today many Mid-Hudson Valley residents are likely to think there is a disconnect between the views of individuals who are in positions to make decisions for their community and the public.

Many Ulster County residents view their community leaders as out of sync with public opinion. People living in the county want a county where they can afford the cost of health care, there is quality public education, and local businesses can thrive. County residents would like the county to be a place where people who work hard can afford the cost of living without struggling to make ends meet.

#### How the Survey Was Conducted

The survey was conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion and funded by the Dyson Foundation. 4,320 adults eighteen years of age or older who live in the Mid-Hudson Valley in New York were interviewed in proportion to the adult population in seven counties: Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, and Ulster. 527 residents living in Ulster County were interviewed. The survey was designed to collect information about the Mid-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. In order to analyze the opinions of residents of the Mid-Hudson Valley, the seven county

samples were combined and weighted to reflect the population distribution of the entire region.

	2007 Survey	2005 Census
<b>Mid-Hudson Valley</b>		
<b>County</b>		
Columbia	4%	5%
Dutchess	27%	26%
Greene	3%	3%
Orange	34%	34%
Putnam	9%	9%
Sullivan	7%	7%
Ulster	16%	16%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	49%	49%
Women	51%	51%
<b>Race</b>		
White non-Latino	80%	80%
Non-white	20%	20%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$50,000	42%	43%
\$50,000 or more	58%	57%
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 34	26%	27%
35 to 54	42%	42%
55 and over	32%	31%

	2007 Survey	2005 Census
<b>Ulster County</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	49%	49%
Women	51%	51%
<b>Race</b>		
White non-Latino	86%	87%
Non-white	14%	13%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$50,000	46%	49%
\$50,000 or more	54%	51%
<b>Age</b>		
Under 45	40%	45%
Over 45	60%	55%

The goal of a scientifically designed survey sample is to be representative of the population that is being surveyed. The results obtained from a scientific probability survey are not just answers from those individuals who responded but more importantly, because of the design and methods by which the data is collected, can be used to generalize to the population as a whole. For this report, the results are an estimate of what would have been obtained, within a certain range, if all adults eighteen years of age or older in the Mid-Hudson region or Ulster County were interviewed.

#### How to interpret the numbers

Sampling error is the difference between the responses to the survey if all adults eighteen years of age or older who live in the Mid-Hudson Valley or Ulster County had been interviewed and the actual survey results. Sampling error is primarily based upon the number of interviews in the survey sample. The sampling error may be interpreted as indicating the probability (95 times out of 100) within which the results of repeated samplings, in the same time period, assuming the same sampling procedures, could be expected to fall within a certain range.

The margin of error for the survey results of Mid-Hudson Valley residents is  $\pm 1.5\%$  for percentages near 50% at a confidence level of 95%. The margin of error for Ulster County residents is  $\pm 4.5\%$ . The sampling error diminishes slightly for questions whose results are at the extremes and the sampling error increases as the number of

interviews for a particular group or subgroup within the sample declines.

For example, 48% of Ulster County residents surveyed feel reducing taxes rates a 10 on a scale of 0 to 10 as a priority for their community. We may conclude that there is a high probability, 95 times out of 100, that the average results for this question of repeated samplings in the region will fall between 52.5% and 43.5%,  $\pm 4.5\%$ . All results are rounded to the next whole number.

In evaluating the information detailed in this report, several points should be noted. First, the analysis often focuses on differences among subgroups rather than commonalities. Therefore, the charts depicted in the report do not include all factors but rather those where differences are evident. Tables in the appendix may be referenced for further detail among subgroups and other key segmenting variables.

Second, some questions in the survey were only asked of a subgroup of those interviewed depending on an answer to a previous question. For instance, residents were asked if they were currently employed. If they were not, they were not asked subsequent questions about their job such as commute time. Questions that were not asked of all residents are identified.

Finally, totals in tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

#### Methodology: sample design

A stratified random digit dial (RDD) probability design was used to draw the telephone numbers for the survey. RDD ensures representation of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the seven counties. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each county was represented in proportion to the adult population. The telephone numbers were obtained from Survey Sampling International in Fairfield, Connecticut. The sample file was electronically matched after selection to the yellow pages business directory and screened for business and/or disconnected numbers.

In order to participate in the survey a household had to have a residence located within one of the seven counties and have an adult resident that was eighteen years of age or older. A member within each household was then selected to be interviewed through the use of a random household selection method. In order to be interviewed, a respondent needed to be at least eighteen years of age or older and be a resident of the Mid-Hudson Valley. This report presents the results for Ulster County residents.

#### Methodology: data collection

The questionnaire and the telephone sample were programmed for computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Interviewing was conducted from a centralized telephone facility at the Marist

College Institute for Public Opinion using trained interviewers who were specifically briefed on this study. The interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish.

There were a total of 151 interviewers and supervisors who worked on this study. On average, the supervisor to interviewer ratio was seven to one. Polling supervisors regularly monitored, evaluated, and provided feedback to the interviewing staff throughout the data collection period. The average length of the survey was nineteen minutes.

Eighty-seven pretest interviews for the survey were administered by telephone on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007. As a result of the pretest, the questionnaire was updated and revised. Due to the limited nature of the changes, pretest interviews were included as part of the final dataset.

Additional interviews were conducted April 10<sup>th</sup> through June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Interviewers contacted households between 5:15 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Callbacks were also conducted between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Up to eighteen attempts to contact a household were made before a telephone number was eliminated from the sample. Callbacks were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Suspended interviews and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to a completed interview. This included callbacks to initial unsuccessful

contacts, refusal conversion, and scheduled appointments. A toll free number was used so that respondents could call back the survey center at their convenience to complete an interview. 2%, or seventy-three respondents, completed a survey interview by contacting the survey center using the toll free number.

Information collected from survey participants is both confidential and anonymous. Personal identifying information is removed from files after the integrity of the data has been verified.

#### Outcome rates

Outcome rates were computed using Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys published by the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), 2006.<sup>4</sup>

- The contact rate is the proportion of all cases in which some responsible household member is reached.
- The cooperation rate is the proportion of all cases that complete an interview of all eligible households that are contacted.
- The refusal rate is the proportion of all cases in which a household member or the respondent refuses to be interviewed, or breaks-off an interview, of all potentially eligible cases.

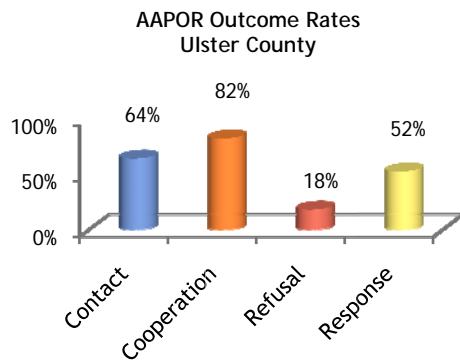
The response rate is the number of complete interviews with eligible adults

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<sup>4</sup> This report may be found at:  
[http://www.aapor.org/uploads/standarddefs\\_4.pdf](http://www.aapor.org/uploads/standarddefs_4.pdf)

divided by the number of eligible households in the sample. The response rate is calculated by multiplying the contact rate by the cooperation rate.

For the region as a whole, the contact rate was 71%, the cooperation rate was 86%, the refusal rate was 14%, and the response rate was 61%.



For the survey of Ulster County, the contact rate is 64%, meaning that for nearly two thirds of the phone records in the county it was established that the phone number was a valid household phone number. The remaining 36% of records include phone numbers that were not verifiable, those that were attempted multiple times without confirmation that there was an adult age eighteen or older living in the household, or bad numbers such as fax or data lines, disconnected or non-working, or business numbers.

There was a very high cooperation rate, 82%. This means that for those records where contact was made with an adult age eighteen or older in the household, there was a very high chance of completing a survey. This was accompanied by a refusal rate of 18%. In order to compute the response rate, the contact rate, 64%, is multiplied by the cooperation rate, 82%. The total response rate for the Ulster County survey is 52%.

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