



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

Orange County Report

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Many Voices One Valley 2007

Orange 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 Orange 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 Orange 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 9th through June 19th, 2007. This includes 956 residents living in Orange 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 Orange

County residents is $\pm 3.5\%$. 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. Full reports for both the 2007 and the 2002 studies may be accessed there, as well.

A Profile

Demographic Profile of Orange County

The Mid-Hudson Valley includes seven counties: Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, and Ulster. Orange County has the largest population in the region and its residents comprise about one third of the total Mid-Hudson Valley population.¹

The demographic makeup of Orange County is very similar in many respects to the composition of the entire Mid-Hudson Valley region. For instance, as with the larger Mid-Hudson Valley population, about six in ten people living in Orange County reside in households with an annual income of more than \$50,000.

However, there are some areas in which Orange County households differ from the region as a whole. For example, the average household size in Orange County is larger than the average Mid-Hudson Valley household. It is 3.2 compared with the regional average of 2.8. In 2002, the

¹ Results not depicted in the charts of the report are detailed in the appendices which are available on www.ManyVoicesOneValley.org, the study website.

average household size in Orange County was 3.1 while the average Mid-Hudson Valley home was 2.9. The average household size of Orange County households with children is 4.4 compared with the regional average of 4.2.

Compared with the typical household in the Mid-Hudson region Orange County households are more likely to have children. Half of Orange County households have at least one child in contrast to the 44% of households across the region. 20% of Orange County households have a family member who is under age five compared with the regional proportion of 15%. 43% of Orange County households include children age five to eighteen which compares with 38% of households in the region overall that have school age children.

22% of Orange County children live in households where the total annual income is less than \$30,000. This compares with 21% of children in the region as a whole. Similar to the entire Mid-Hudson region, single parents head 8% of Orange County households with children.

Orange County is more racially diverse than the Mid-Hudson region as a whole. 77% of Orange County residents report they are white compared with 83% regionally. Of the seven counties, Orange County has the largest Latino population. 14% of Orange County residents are Latino compared with one in ten Mid-Hudson Valley residents. 9% of Orange County residents are African American compared with 7% of the region as a whole.

	Orange County	Mid-Hudson Valley
Gender		
Men	50%	49%
Women	50%	51%
Race		
White	77%	83%
African American	9%	7%
Latino	14%	10%
Income		
Less than \$50,000	40%	42%
\$50,000 or more	60%	58%
Age		
Under 45	46%	44%
Over 45	54%	56%
Education		
Less than college	67%	65%
College graduate	33%	35%
Children		
Households with children	50%	44%
Households with children under 5	20%	15%
Households with children age 5 to 18	43%	38%

Many residents of Orange County do not have a college degree. As with the region as a whole, two-thirds of all county residents have not completed college.

Households with Children	Orange County	Mid-Hudson Valley
Low income	22%	21%
Single parents	8%	11%

Since 2002, the proportion of residents in Orange County without health care coverage has remained the same. About a quarter of all Orange County households have at least one member who has

experienced a gap in coverage over the past year, and 12% of all households have someone who is not presently insured. These figures mirror those of the region as a whole.

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

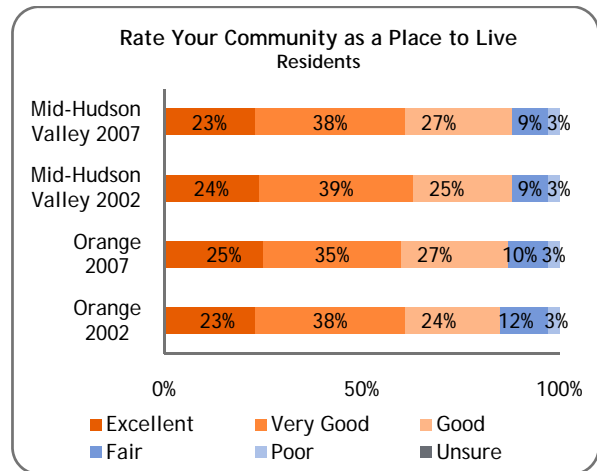
The proportion of uninsured children in Orange County has remained relatively stable since 2002. 15% of all households with children have at least one child who has not had continuous coverage over the past year compared with 13% five years ago. 8% do not currently have insurance compared with 6% who were uninsured in 2002. The reported rates of uninsured children in Orange County are comparable to the overall Mid-Hudson region.

Continuity and Change in the Past Five Years

Rating of community

87% of Orange County residents rate life in their community favorably. 25% of county residents believe their community is an excellent place to live and another 62%

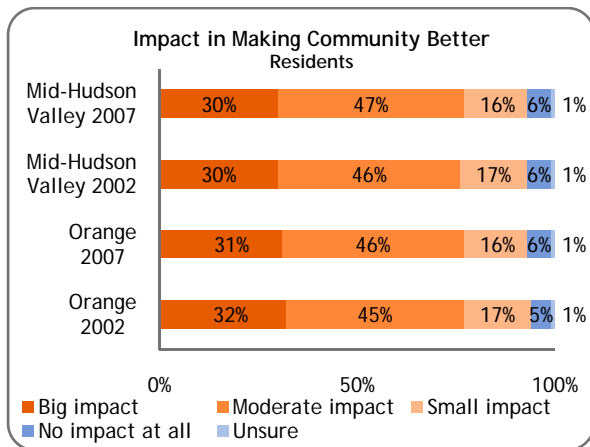
describe their area as either very good or good. Orange County residents' opinions closely parallel the attitudes of Mid-Hudson Valley residents, and since 2002 there has been very little change in opinion among county residents.



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

Orange County residents believe they can have an impact when it comes to making a difference in their community. 77% think they can either have a big or moderate impact on the place in which they live. The same proportion of Mid-Hudson Valley residents also feel this way. There has been no change since 2002 in the proportion of county residents who think they can play a role in shaping life in their community.

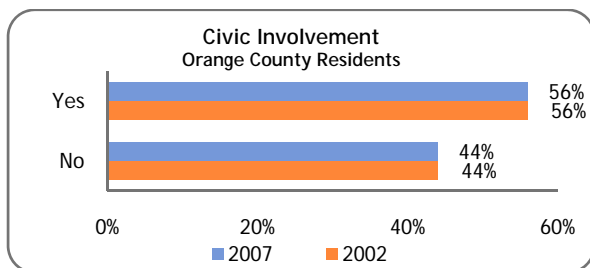


Question wording: Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live: a big impact, a moderate impact, a small impact, or no impact at all?

Volunteerism

50% of residents in Orange County who believe they can make a difference in the community believe volunteering their time is the best way to do so. 37% think the optimal route is to get other people involved.

In fact, a majority of Orange County residents volunteer on a regular basis or are active in a civic organization, a church, or a club.

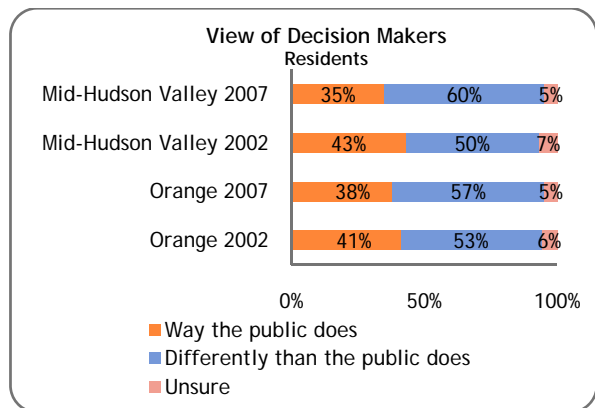


Question wording: Do you regularly volunteer or are you active in a civic organization, a church, or a club?

Responsiveness of local leaders

People in Orange County still feel decision makers in their community are not responsive to public opinion. In 2002, a majority, 53%, of Orange County residents felt there was a disconnect between individuals in positions to make decisions for the community and the public, and 41% felt local leaders were, in fact, in step with public opinion.

In Orange County, the publics' perspective on this topic has remained stable over the past five years. 57% of county residents now think leaders view things differently than the average citizen. Only 38% think local decision makers' views are in sync with public sentiment.



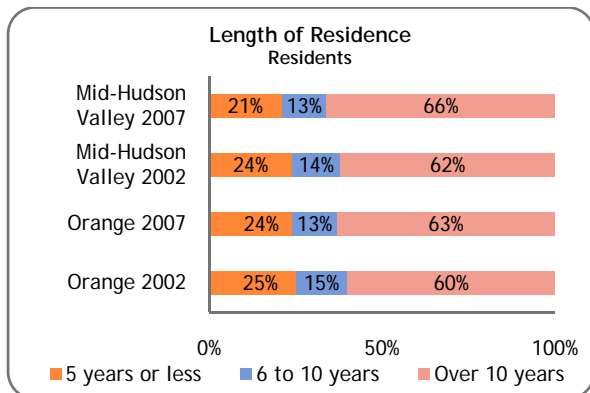
Question wording: Overall, do you feel that those individuals who are in positions to make decisions for your community mostly see things the way the public does or mostly see things differently than the public does?

While the perceptions of residents in Orange County have not changed much since 2002, there has been a change in attitude among residents residing across the Mid-Hudson region. At that time, Orange County was one of only two counties where

more than half of the residents felt their local leaders were out of step with the public. Orange County is no longer an outlier. Residents across the region are now more skeptical of their leaders' responsiveness, and Orange County residents' opinions on this topic are now consistent with the attitudes of the average Mid-Hudson Valley resident.

New residents

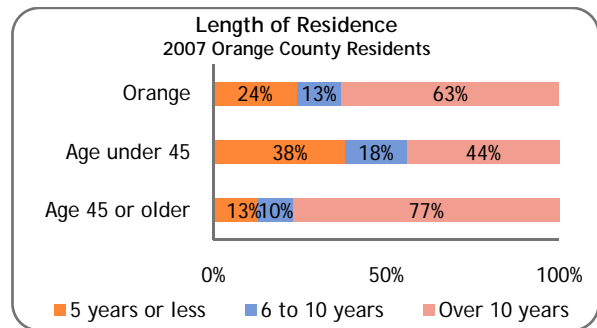
While more than six in ten current residents of Orange County have lived in their community at least a decade, there is a considerable proportion of new residents. About a quarter of county residents moved into their community since 2002.



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

63% of Orange County residents have called their community home for more than ten years, 13% have lived in the area for six to ten years, and 24% of residents are new, having moved to the area in the past five years. In 2002, county residents had lived in the community on average for about 24 years. Today, the average length of residence is a shorter 21 years.

Orange County residents under the age of forty-five are more likely than older residents to be recent arrivals. Nearly four in ten county residents in this younger age group moved to their community in the past five years compared with 13% of residents age forty-five or older.



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

Issues: The Priorities

Overview of residents' priorities

Orange County residents were asked to assess how important a variety of issues were for their community. The topics spanned from health care to taxes, from the local economy to public education, along with a host of other community services. Using a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, residents evaluated the amount of focus they felt should be placed in each area.

In 2002, keeping businesses in the area was the highest priority for Orange County residents. This issue continues to be a major priority but now the number one concern in the county is making health care

more affordable. Lowering health care costs was the number four issue five years ago.

As with residents of other parts of the Mid-Hudson Valley, Orange County residents are considerably more concerned about the tax burden than they were just five years ago. Reducing taxes is the number two concern in Orange County. Five years ago, this issue ranked tenth.

Residents of Orange County are concerned about a host of other issues, as well: public schools, services for senior citizens, the accessibility of health insurance, community safety, and jobs. The gap between the top issue and the eighth most important priority is just three-tenths of a point.²

Orange County is one of only two counties where providing services for senior citizens is in the top tier of priorities.

Top Priorities: Health Care

Orange County residents voice concern about health care costs and the accessibility of health insurance. Making health care more affordable is the number one priority and making health insurance easier to get is the number six priority for county residents.

² Mean ranking tables list the average to the tenths place but are sorted in absolute order. For example, while both “Making health care more affordable” and “Reducing taxes” are rounded to 8.0, their averages are 8.04 and 8.01, respectively. They are, therefore, ranked one and two in the priorities list.

Orange County	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Making health care more affordable	1	8.0	4	7.7
Reducing taxes	2	8.0	10	7.4
Keeping businesses in the area	3	8.0	1	8.0
Improving the quality of the public schools	4	7.8	2	7.9
Providing services for senior citizens	5	7.7	3	7.7
Making health insurance easier to get	6	7.7	7	7.5
Making your community safer	7	7.7	5	7.6
Creating more jobs	8	7.7	6	7.6
Providing more after-school activities	9	7.6	9	7.5
Protecting open space	10	7.5	8	7.5
Improving relations between different racial and ethnic groups	11	7.3	11	7.4
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	12	7.2	15	6.6
Providing more affordable, quality child care	13	7.0	12	6.9
Improving the quality of the water	14	6.8	13	6.8
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	15	6.8	14	6.6
Increasing or improving public transportation	16	6.6	16	6.6
Increasing the number of public areas	17	6.6	18	6.5
Slowing growth and development	18	6.5	17	6.5
Reducing homelessness	19	6.3	19	6.1

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.

About one in four Orange County households struggle to maintain health insurance. 24% of the county’s households have someone who has not had continuous health insurance coverage and, therefore, has experienced a gap in that coverage at some time in the last year. 12% of all households have at least one member who is currently uninsured.

Many Orange County children are without health care coverage. 15% of households have at least one child who has experienced a gap in insurance over the past year, and 8% of households include a child who is uninsured right now.

Health care: affordability

Not unexpectedly a majority of county residents rate making health care more affordable with the highest possible score on the rating scale, a 10 for top priority.

Making Health Care More Affordable	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	1	8.0	3	7.7
Orange	1	8.0	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 care more affordable.

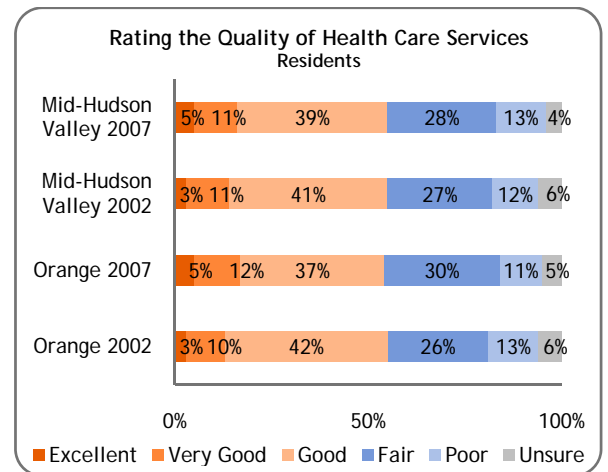
Affordable health care receives an average score of 8.0 overall among Orange County residents. This compares with the average rating of 7.7 it yielded among county

residents five years ago when this issue ranked fourth.

The affordability of health care is also the number one issue for the Mid-Hudson Valley overall. It receives a mean score of 8.0 from residents across the region, as well.

Rating health care services

A majority of Orange County residents rate the caliber of health care services in their community favorably although only 5% believe they are of excellent quality. Over four in ten residents rate local health care services as fair or poor. County residents’ perceptions of these services are consistent with the attitudes held by 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): Health care services?

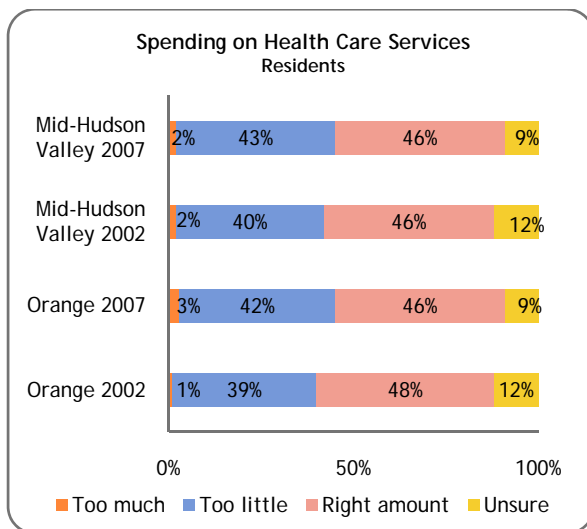
There has been little change in the proportion of Orange County residents who are satisfied with the quality of health care services since 2002. A majority of residents assessed health care services in their

community favorably five years ago, as well. Similarly, in 2002, 39% did not rate the quality of health care services positively.

Spending on health care services

Residents in Orange County divide about the adequacy of funding levels for community health care services. 42% think not enough is being spent on health care services, and 46% believe the current level of funding is on target. These attitudes toward health care spending are in line with residents living in the Mid-Hudson region as a whole.

County residents' attitudes toward this issue have remained fairly constant since 2002 when 39% believed too few dollars were being allocated, and 48% felt spending in their community was about right.



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

Summary: health care

Many Orange County residents feel health care issues are the most pressing issues in their community. County residents find health care affordability the top priority for their community to address.

A majority of county residents feel positively about the health care services in their area but they are not enthusiastic about them. A substantial proportion of the population thinks more money needs to be set aside to improve current services.

Top Priorities: Economic Priorities

Orange County residents think a considerable amount of attention should be placed on economic issues. Both tax reduction and keeping businesses in the area are among the three leading priorities for county residents overall.

Reducing taxes

Since 2002, the concern for reducing taxes has risen to the top tier of priorities for the residents of Orange County. It now yields an average score of 8.0 out of a high score of 10 from people living in Orange County. This is an increase from the average rating of 7.4 it received in 2002.

Five years ago, Orange County residents considered taxes to be an important priority but did not perceive it as one of the most pressing issue areas confronting the county. Today reducing taxes ranks second compared with only tenth in 2002.

Anxiety over taxes has greatly increased in Orange County over the course of the past five years. At that time, 37% of county residents found it to be a top priority worthy of the highest rating of 10. Now, exactly half of county residents rate it as a priority with a top score of 10.

Orange County residents are not alone. The public's attention to the tax burden has heightened dramatically across the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Reducing Taxes	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	3	7.9	9	7.3
Orange	2	8.0	10	7.4

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

Retaining local businesses is a main concern for many people in Orange County. Keeping businesses in the area receives a mean score of 8.0 with 10 being the top priority, and it ranks third on the list of nineteen priorities.

The importance of business retention to Orange County residents is just as intense today as it was five years ago. In 2002, residents ranked keeping businesses in the area as the single highest priority for the community. Its average rating of 8.0 among residents in the region is unchanged and it still ranks among residents' top three priorities for their community.

Keeping Businesses in the Area	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	2	7.9	1	7.9
Orange	3	8.0	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: Keeping businesses in the area.

Summary: economic priorities

Economic issues are major concerns for the residents of Orange County. Worry about the local tax burden has increased considerably since 2002. It is now the number two issue on the minds of county residents compared with its rank at number ten five years ago. Additionally, many county residents also believe that the county should work harder to prevent local businesses from leaving the area.

Top Priorities: Education

Having quality local public schools is essential to residents of Orange County. Improving the caliber of public education is in the top tier of priorities for county residents.

Improving public schools

While over four in ten county households include at least one school age child, education ranks highly for many residents of the county, not just parents of children. This issue now ranks fourth, overall, among

county residents, and its average rating is 7.8 out of 10.

Concern about education resonates with residents throughout the Mid-Hudson Valley. It also ranks fourth regionally, and it receives a mean rating of 7.8.

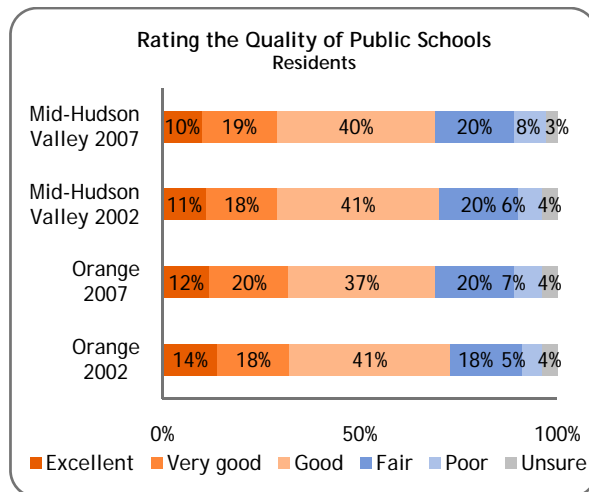
Improving the Quality of the Public Schools	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	4	7.8	2	7.8
Orange	4	7.8	2	7.9

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

While only 12% of Orange County residents consider their public schools to be excellent, 69% do rate the local schools favorably. About a quarter of residents classify them negatively, but only 7% of residents describe the caliber of their public schools as poor.

Orange County residents' level of satisfaction with the quality of public education mirrors that of the average Mid-Hudson Valley resident. County residents' assessments of the quality of public schools have remained relatively stable over the past five years.

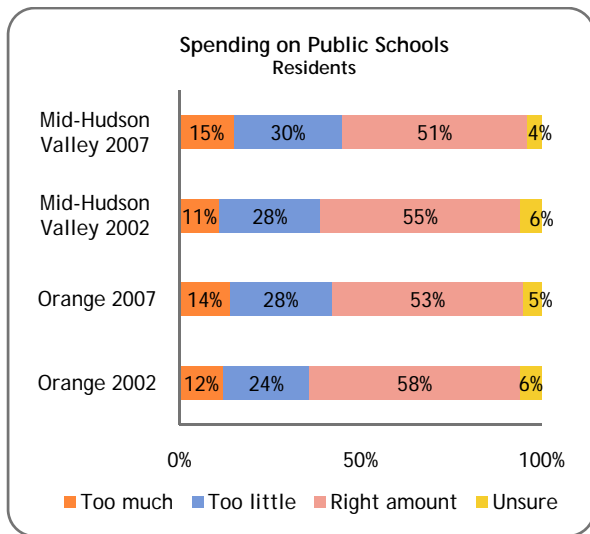


Question wording: Would you rate each of the following in your community as excellent, very good, good (positive), fair, or poor (negative): The quality of the public schools?

Spending on public schools

A slim majority, 53%, of Orange County residents are happy with the amount their community spends on improving public schools. 28% of county residents think their community does not allocate sufficient funds, and 14% believe too much money is being spent on public education. The opinions of Orange County residents are similar to the attitudes of Mid-Hudson Valley residents across the region.

There has been a modest change in Orange County residents' attitudes over the past five years. In 2002, 58% of county residents believed funding for public schools was on target compared with 53% today.



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

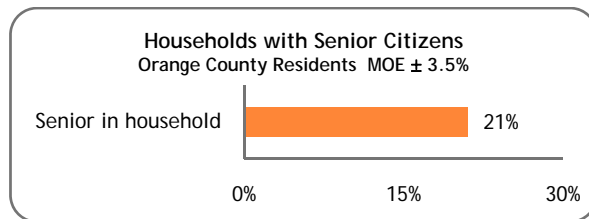
Summary: education as a priority

Quality public education is important to the people of Orange County. Most county residents feel positively about the quality of their local public schools. A majority of county residents find community spending for public education is about right, but a noteworthy proportion of the populace would like more monies allocated to this issue.

Top Priorities: Services for senior citizens

Providing services for senior citizens

It is not surprising that providing services for senior citizens ranks among the top tier of priorities in a county where one in five households include a resident over the age of sixty-five.



Question wording: Including yourself, how many people including adults and children, live in your household? How many are adults over the age of 65?

Indeed, when asked to rate senior services as a community priority, 34% of Orange County residents give this issue the highest rating, a 10 on a scale from 0 to 10. On average, this issue receives a score of 7.7 from county residents, the same average rating it received in 2002.

Providing Services for Senior Citizens	2007		2002	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Mid-Hudson Valley	7	7.6	4	7.5
Orange	5	7.7	3	7.7

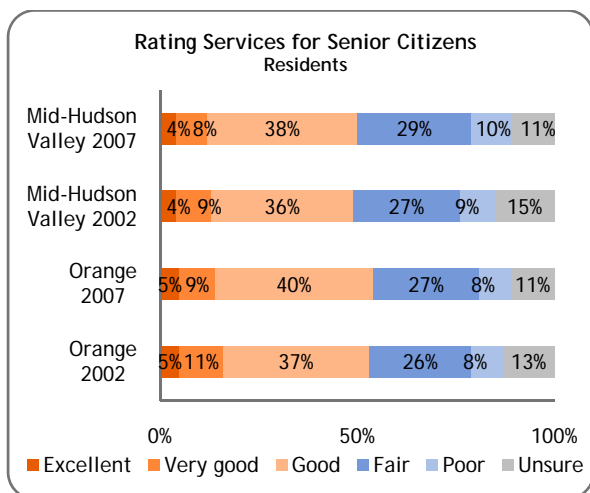
Question wording: Now I want to ask you about several issues that some communities face. Using the numbers 0 through 10 with 10 being a top priority and 0 being not a priority at all, please tell me how you would rate each one for your community. 10 is a top priority for your community and 0 is not a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

While its average score as a priority remains comparable over the past five years, providing services for senior citizens now ranks fifth on county residents' list of priorities down from third in 2002. This pattern is consistent throughout the Mid-Hudson region. Although providing services for senior citizens now has a lower ranking it still receives a comparable rating compared with five years ago.

Rating services for senior citizens

Overall, more than half of all residents in Orange County have a positive impression of the quality of services offered to senior citizens in their community. 54% rate these services as at least good while 35% consider them to be of fair or poor quality.

These sentiments closely mirror county residents' attitudes five years ago when 53% felt positively about the quality of services available to senior citizens in their community, and 34% did not.



Question wording: Would you rate each of the following in your community as excellent, very good, good, (positive) fair, or poor (negative): Services for senior citizens?

Orange County is one of the only counties in the Mid-Hudson Valley where a majority of residents feel positively about the services offered to senior citizens in their community.

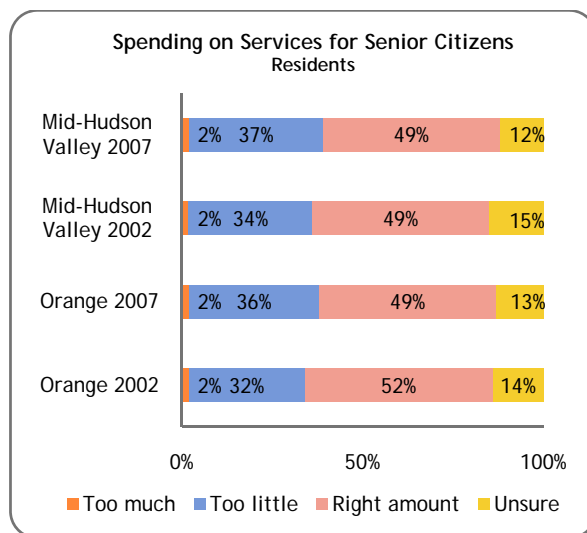
Spending on services for senior citizens

Nearly half, 49%, of all Orange County residents believe funding for senior

citizens' services in their community is adequate while 36% think it is too low.

This finding is fairly consistent with public opinion in 2002. At that time, 52% of residents in Orange County felt spending for these services were on target, and 32% believed more resources should be allocated.

Orange County residents' opinions on this issue are in line with the views held by the average Mid-Hudson Valley resident. Among residents of the region as a whole, 49% think too little is being spent, and 37% believe funding is on target.



Question wording: Does your community spend too much, too little, or about the right amount on services for senior citizens?

Summary: services for senior citizens

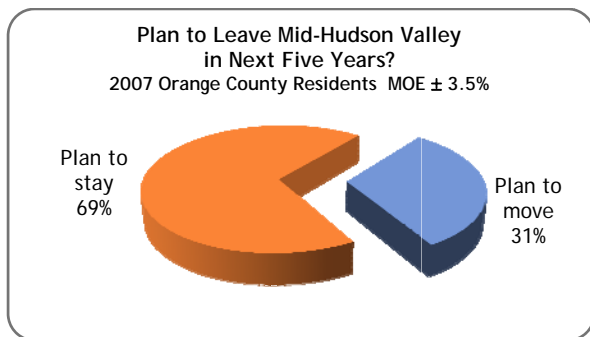
Overall, many Orange County residents are concerned about providing services to senior citizens. They are satisfied with the quality of services offered to senior citizens, and they feel more positively than

not about the level of funding directed toward this issue.

Plans for the Future

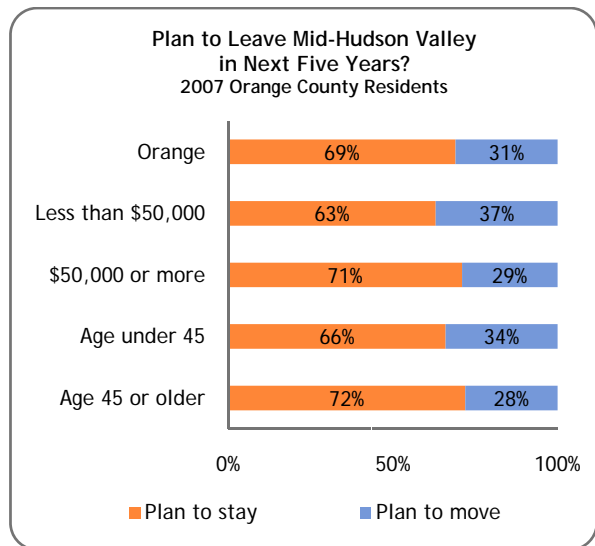
Residents who intend to leave

While most people in Orange County have no intention of leaving the area, about three in ten county residents plan on moving out of the area in the next five years. This compares with 29% of residents in the Mid-Hudson region as a whole who intend to relocate in the near future.



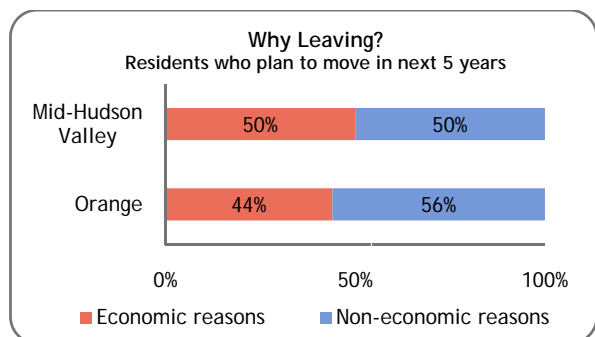
Question wording: Thinking about five years from now, do you plan to stay in the Hudson Valley or do you plan to move someplace else?

There are differences based on age and income. Both young people and those living in lower income households are more inclined to leave. More than a third of all Orange County adults forty-five or younger intend to leave the region in the near future compared with 28% of adults age forty-five or older. Nearly four in ten residents of Orange County with household incomes of less than \$50,000 a year intend to move someplace else in the next five years compared with 29% of residents in households with a higher household income.



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?

There are quite a few different reasons why Orange County residents intend to leave the area. 56% of county residents thinking about relocating mention non-economic reasons and the remainder, 44%, plan to do so because of economic reasons.



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

Orange County residents are less likely to plan to leave the area for economic reasons than the average Mid-Hudson Valley resident. For example, 8% mention they

may leave because the area is overcrowded. The same proportion will leave because of retirement and another 8% mention it is a time for a change. Still, two of the top three reasons for leaving the region among Orange County residents are economic.

The cost of living and the tax burden are the top reasons voiced by Orange County residents who are planning to move away. 17% of residents planning to relocate cite the cost of living, and 17% point to taxes.

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

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

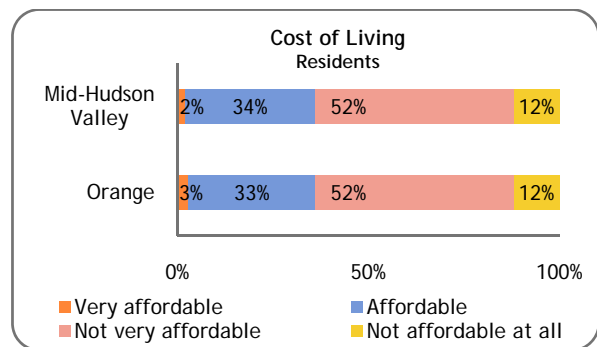
Making Ends Meet

Rating the affordability of the Mid-Hudson Valley

There is a diversity of economic experiences and family finances among Orange County residents, but there is

general agreement that the area is unaffordable for the average family.

As with residents living in the region as a whole, 64% of Orange County residents say the Mid-Hudson Valley is not affordable including 12% of residents who describe the region as not affordable at all.

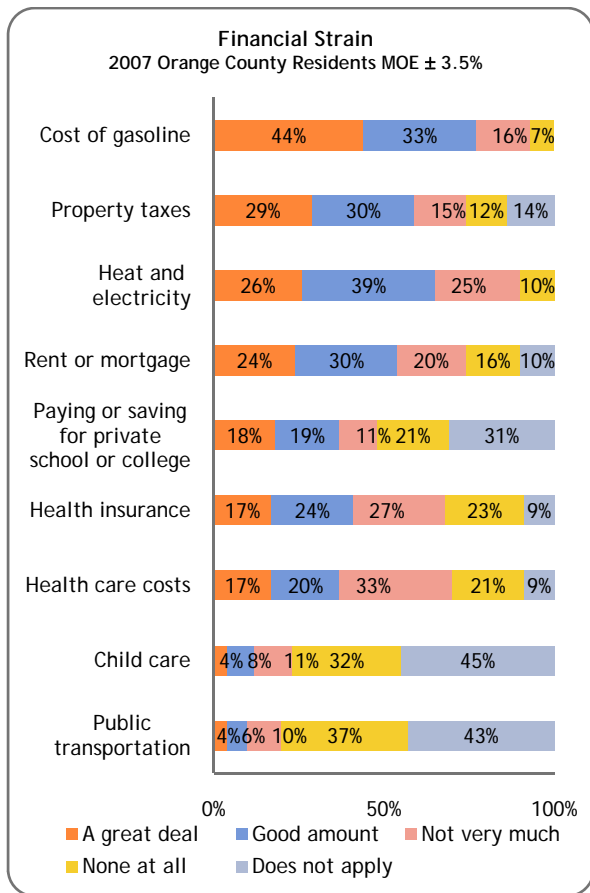


Question wording: Overall, would you describe the cost of living in the Hudson Valley for the average family as very affordable, affordable, not very affordable, or not affordable at all?

Managing the family budget

Many households in Orange County have a hard time affording a variety of monthly expenses. The cost of gasoline is the most often cited burden for county residents. 77% of county residents feel the pressure of the cost of fuel on their household budget. 44% say the price they pay at the pump puts a great deal of strain on their budget and another 33% say it places a good amount of pressure on their finances.

Property taxes are a major concern, as well. 59% of Orange County residents report these expenses place stress on their household budget including 29% who experience a great deal of financial pressure each month.



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.

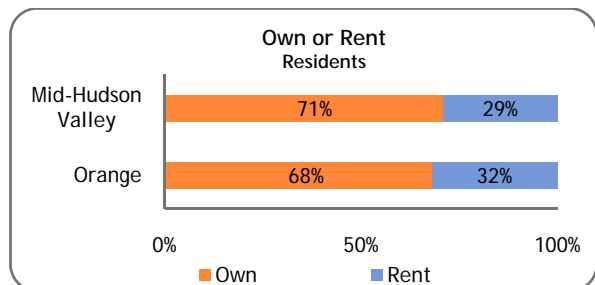
Many residents of Orange County struggle to pay basic utilities. Nearly two-thirds find it difficult to meet these monthly expenses. 26% say heating and electric expenses cause considerable financial strain and another 39% feel a good deal of budget pressure.

A majority of Orange County residents report their rent or mortgage payment strains their finances each month including 24% of county residents who describe it as a great deal of pressure on their household budget.

Even though about three in ten county residents do not deal with the cost of private school or college tuition, it is a considerable burden for those who do. 37% of county residents indicate that the cost of private school or college tuition places a strain on their household finances.

Housing matters

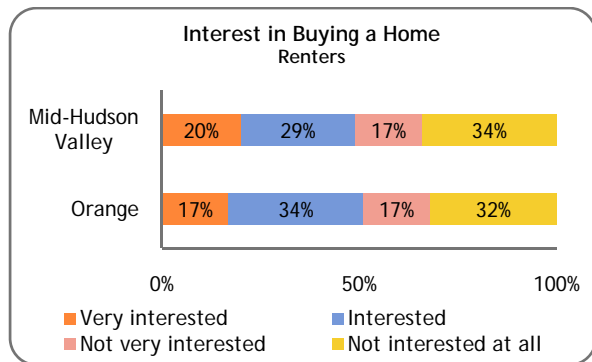
Like most Mid-Hudson Valley residents, many Orange County residents are homeowners. 68% of county residents own their home compared with 32% who rent.



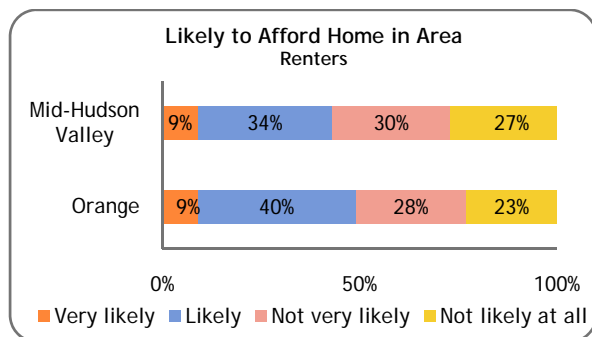
Question wording: Do you own your own home or do you rent?

Renting but hoping to own

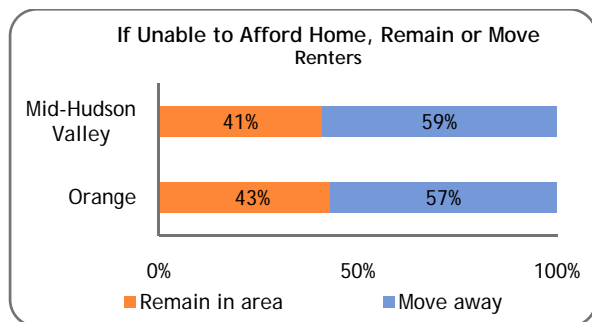
About half of the renters living in Orange County are interested in buying a home in the area someday. 51% voice interest in homeownership while 49% do not.



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?



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?

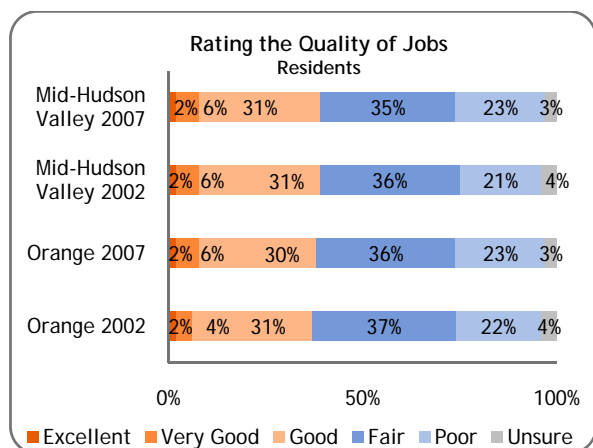
But, about half of all Orange County renters feel priced out of homeownership. This compares with 57% of Mid-Hudson Valley

renters who doubt they will be able to afford a home in the area.

Like renters across the Mid-Hudson region, a majority of Orange County renters are not likely to remain in the region if they cannot afford to buy a home in the area.

Working in the Mid-Hudson Valley

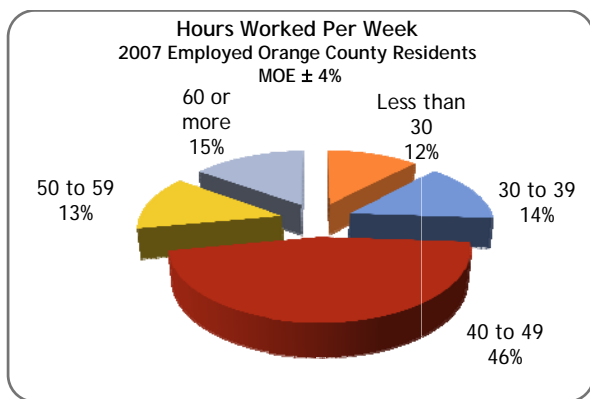
Following regional trends, most residents of Orange County are not satisfied with the jobs available in their community. 59% of Orange County residents do not view the quality of jobs favorably.



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?

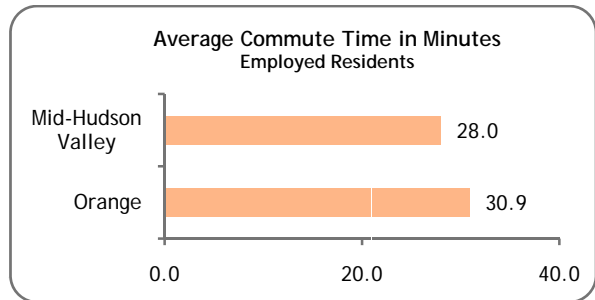
Many Orange County residents are working harder in order to keep up with the cost of living. A majority of households, 57%, maintain at least two jobs. This includes households where two adults work as well as those households where one adult has at least two jobs. This pattern is not limited to Orange County and is found throughout the Mid-Hudson region.

Overall, workers in Orange County put in a comparable amount of hours as the average Mid-Hudson Valley worker. On average, Orange County workers clock 42.5 hours each week compared with 43.1 for the average worker in the region. 74% of employed Orange County residents work forty hours or more each week as does the same proportion of workers across the region.



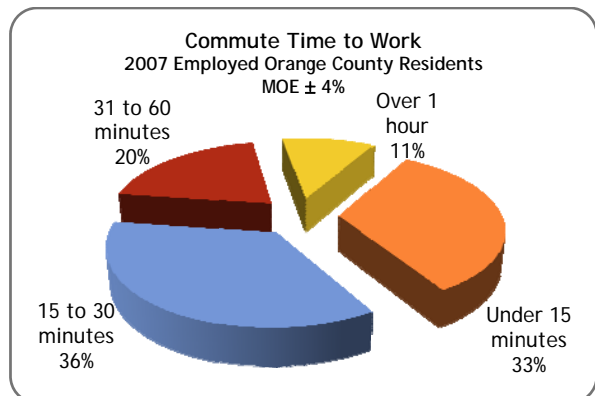
Question wording: In total, approximately how many hours do you work in an average week?

Employed Orange County residents do not work as close to home as employed residents in most of the other counties of the region. Workers in Orange County have the second longest travel time of people who work in the Mid-Hudson Valley. On average, people who work in Orange County travel nearly 31 minutes one way to their job compared with the regional average of 28 minutes.



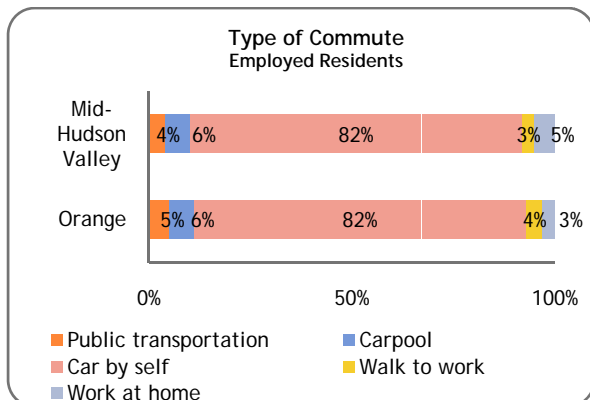
Question wording: In minutes, how long does it take you to get one way from home to work?

While one-third of employed Orange County residents commute less than fifteen minutes, about three in ten travel over a half hour away one way from their homes to their jobs.



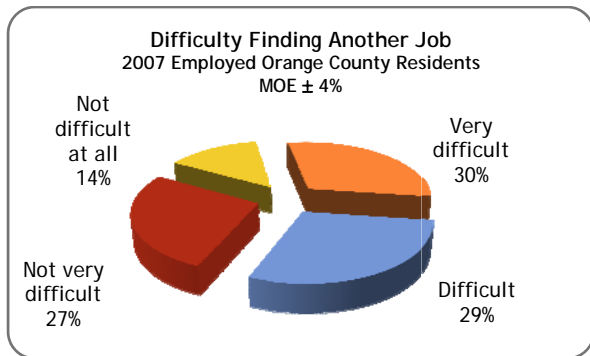
Question wording: In minutes, how long does it take you to get one way from home to work?

Most employed Orange County residents travel to work in a car alone, as do most workers in the Mid-Hudson Valley.



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?

Nearly six in ten Orange County residents who are employed believe it would be difficult to find a comparable position with a similar commute if they lost their current job. This includes three in ten working residents who say it would be very difficult to do so.

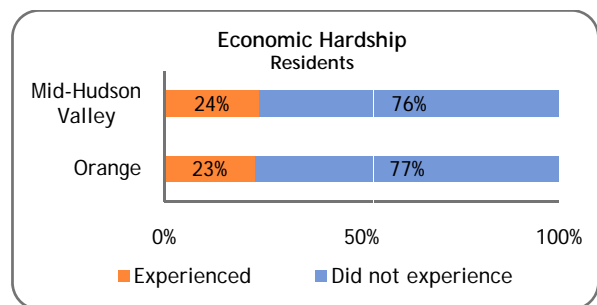


Question wording: If you were to lose your job, would it be very difficult, difficult, not very difficult, or not difficult at all to find another similar position about the same distance from your home?

People doing without

23% of Orange County households face major economic struggles. Residents were queried as to whether or not they experienced each of several financial

difficulties over the course of the past year. These difficulties included trouble finding the money to pay for food, housing, utilities, or medical treatment. While 77% of Orange County residents have not confronted any of these severe hardships, more than one in five residents mentioned at least one. This proportion is similar to the figure for the Mid-Hudson region as a whole.



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

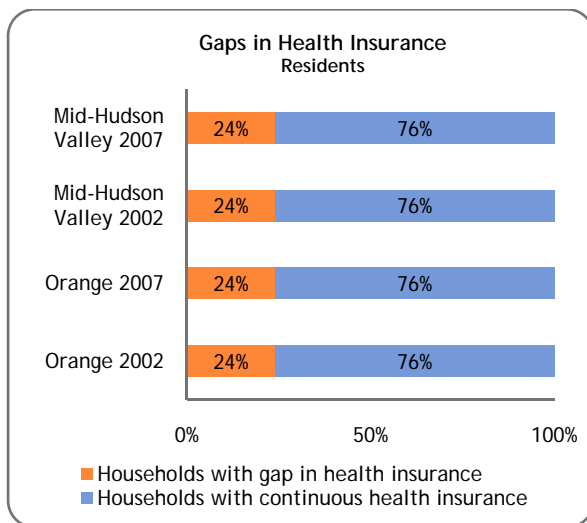
A substantial proportion of Orange County households have trouble sustaining uninterrupted health insurance coverage. 24% of households in Orange County include someone who has not had continuous health insurance and, therefore, has experienced a

gap in coverage at some time during the past year. This figure includes both adults and children who are currently without health insurance and households, while currently insured, include at least one person who encountered a gap during the past year.

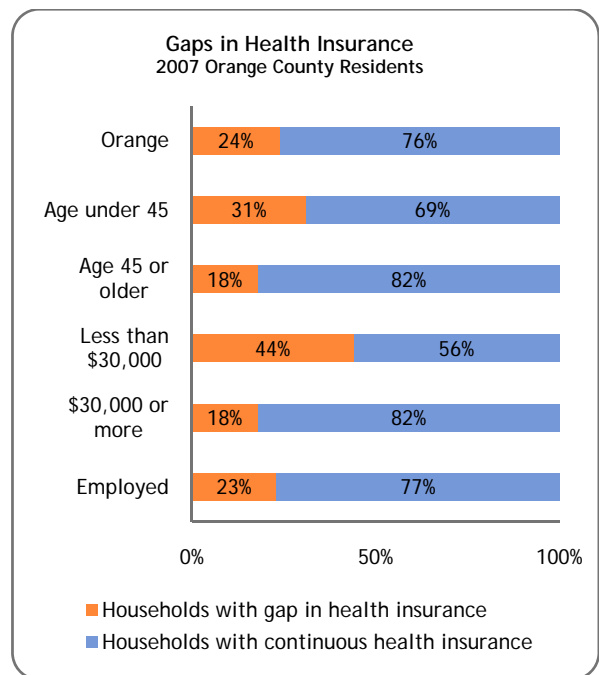
Using the U.S. Census, this means approximately 29,610 of the estimated 123,371 households in the county face the challenge of keeping health coverage continuous for all household members.³ In the past five years there has been no progress in reducing this proportion. 24% of Orange County residents were also without health insurance or experienced a gap in their plan at that time.

Who is more likely to face this challenge? Age and income are important factors. Over the past year, more than three in ten Orange County adults under age forty-five reside in a household in which a member has confronted a gap in health care coverage. Income is particularly relevant. 44% of low income households, that is, with yearly earnings of less than \$30,000, have gone without continuous insurance.

Unfortunately, working at a paid job does not improve a resident's chance of living in a household that is able to maintain coverage for all members. 23% of county residents who are employed live in households that experienced a gap in health insurance this past year.

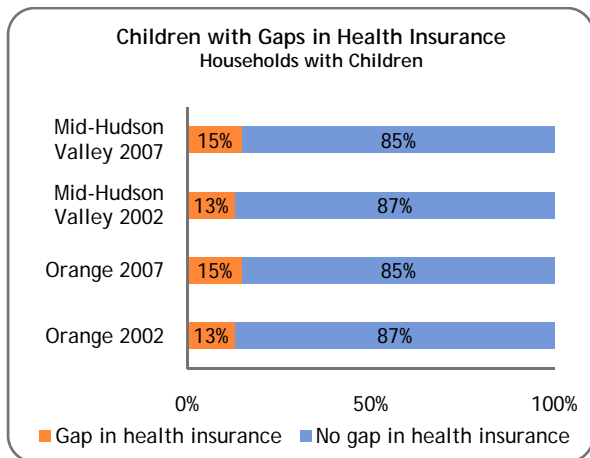


Question wording: Do the adults/children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now? Was there ever a time in the past 12 months when an adult/child in your household did not have any health insurance or a health plan?



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?

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

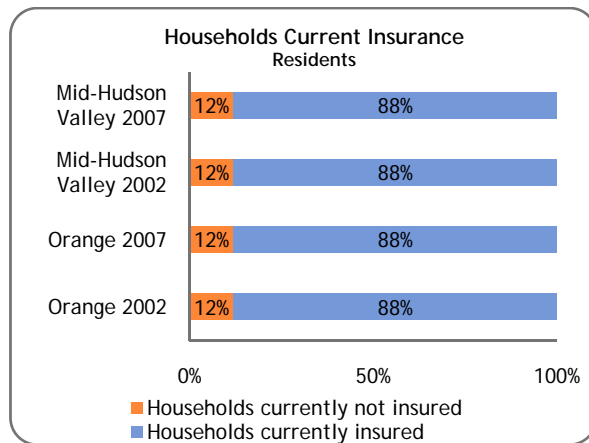


Question wording: Do the children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now? Was there ever a time in the past 12 months when a child in your household did not have any health insurance or a health plan?

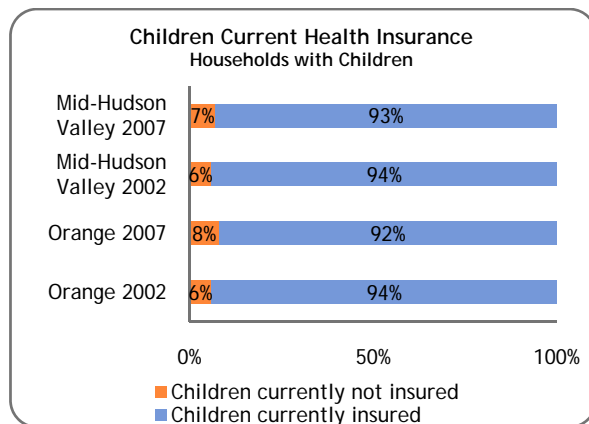
Children are also affected. About one in six Orange County households with children include at least one child who has gone without continuous health insurance. This rate has not been reduced since the last study in 2002 when the rate was 13%.

Households currently without health insurance

Using the U.S. Census, approximately 14,805 households of the estimated 123,371 households in the region include at least one member, adult or child, who is currently without health insurance. 12% of households in Orange County have at least one adult or child who does not have health insurance. 8% of all county households with children have at least one uninsured child.



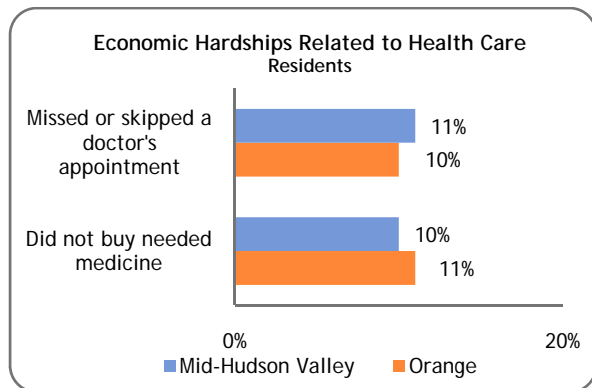
Question wording: Do the adults/children in your household have health insurance or a health plan right now?



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

Going without because of cost

Medical expenses are a burden to many Orange County household budgets. In some county households the situation is severe. So severe, in fact, these households either skipped a doctor's appointment or did not buy needed medicine because they just couldn't afford it.



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?

Because of cost, 10% of Orange County residents did not visit a doctor and 11% did not buy needed medicine. These proportions are similar to those reported across the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Conclusion

Orange County is the southernmost county of the seven counties of the Mid-Hudson Valley. It has the largest population of the region and while in many ways the county is similar to the region as a whole, in other ways it differs. In terms of income and education the people of Orange County are very similar to the region's residents. However, racially the county is less homogenous than the Mid-Hudson region. 77% of county residents are white compared with 83% of residents regionally. Orange County households are also larger and more likely to include children than the average Mid-Hudson Valley household.

The residents of Orange County voice concern about many issues they feel their communities must prioritize. They identify the most pressing as the affordability of health care, economic issues like lowering taxes and retaining local businesses, their local public schools, and services for senior citizens. Making health care more affordable ranks number one in Orange County followed by reducing taxes, keeping businesses in the area, improving public education, and providing services for senior citizens.

All of the top five priorities with the exception of lowering the tax burden were among the top priorities in 2002. Concern about taxes dramatically rose from a rank of tenth five years ago to the number two position today. Also noteworthy, is that only Orange County and Putnam County rank providing services for senior citizens a top five priority.

Like the Mid-Hudson region as a whole, 24% of Orange County households have experienced a gap in health care coverage or are presently without insurance.

A majority of households in Orange County rely on income from more than one job. About three in four employed county residents clock more than forty hours on a weekly basis. Yet many county residents are not happy with the quality of jobs that are available jobs. Many employed residents believe it would not be easy to find a similar job with a comparable commute if they were to lose their current job.

While most county residents own their own home, a majority of the county’s renters feel priced out of future homeownership in the region.

Five years ago, many people in the Mid-Hudson region felt local leaders viewed things for the most part the way the public did. In 2002, only in Orange County and Greene County did a majority of residents have the view that there was a disconnect between local leaders and public opinion. But in this more recent study, one of the biggest shifts in attitudes has been in the region’s residents’ perception about whether or not community decision makers views are in sync with the public’s viewpoints. Today, majorities in each county of the Mid-Hudson Valley share this view.

Orange County residents continue to think their local decision makers are out of step with public opinion. These county residents want to live in a place where health care costs are kept in check and the tax burden is manageable for an average family. The people of Orange County desire an economy that nurtures local businesses, provides quality education for their children, and meets the needs of its senior citizens. Residents of the county would like a county that is more affordable and where the jobs that are available and the wages that are paid allow for a household to make ends meet without a constant struggle.

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. 956 residents living in Orange 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.

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

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.

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 Orange County were interviewed.

	2007 Survey	2005 Census
Orange County		
Gender		
Men	50%	49%
Women	50%	51%
Race		
White non-Latino	73%	72%
Non-white	27%	28%
Income		
Less than \$50,000	40%	40%
\$50,000 or more	60%	60%
Age		
Under 45	46%	52%
Over 45	54%	48%

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 Orange 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 residents is $\pm 1.5\%$ for percentages near 50% at a confidence level of 95%. The margin of error for Orange County residents is $\pm 3.5\%$. 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, 49% of Orange County residents believe the level of funding for senior citizens' services in their community is about right. 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 45.5%, $\pm 3.5\%$. 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 Orange 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 9th, 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 10th through June 19th, 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.

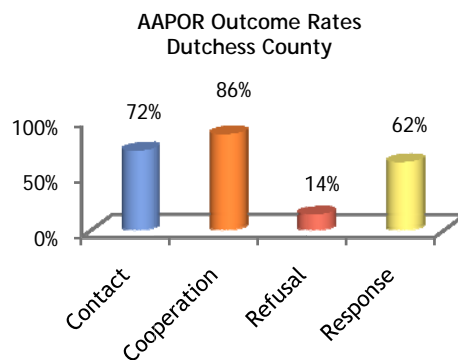
Outcome rates

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), 2006.⁴

- 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 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 survey of Orange County, the contact rate is 72%, meaning that for over seven in ten phone records in the county it

⁴ This report may be found at: http://www.aapor.org/uploads/standarddefs_4.pdf

was established that the phone number was a valid household phone number. The remaining 28% 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, 86%. 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 14%. In order to compute the response rate, the contact rate, 72%, is multiplied by the cooperation rate, 86%. The total response rate for the Orange County survey is 62%.

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%.