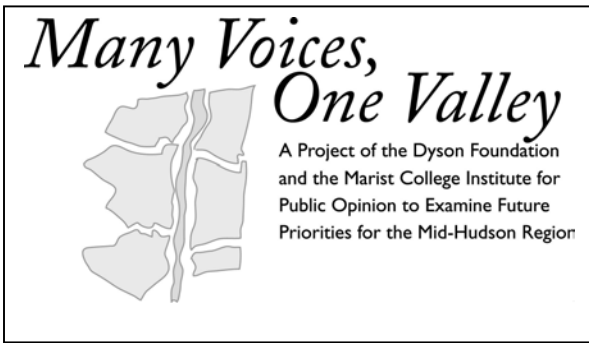

Many Voices, One Valley



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

Summary of the Findings
Orange County
October 2002



SUMMARY: ORANGE COUNTY

Profile

Nearly half of Orange County households have children, and as a result Orange County households are larger than the average Hudson Valley household.

		Orange County Residents	Hudson Valley Residents
		Row %	Row %
Age	18 to 30	19%	17%
	31 to 44	34%	34%
	45 to 60	32%	33%
	Over 60	15%	16%
Race	White	82%	86%
Race	African-American	8%	7%
Race	Latino	12%	8%
College Education	Less than college	63%	63%
	College graduate	37%	37%
Income	Less than \$50,000	44%	45%
	\$50,000 or more	56%	55%
Children in HH	Child(ren) in HH	48%	43%
	No children in HH	52%	57%

			Mean
Total number adults and children	Orange County Residents		3.1
	Orange County Residents	Children in HH	4.3
		No children in HH	2.1
	Hudson Valley Residents		2.9

- Households in Orange County are more likely to have children than the average household in the Hudson Valley. 48% of Orange County households have children compared with 43% in the region.
- As a result, households in Orange County are larger than both the regional average and the national average. The average household size in the county is 3.1 compared with 2.9 in the region and 2.6 nationally.

- There are similarities, as well. 56% of Orange County residents earn \$50,000 or more annually compared with 55% of Hudson Valley residents with family incomes of at least \$50,000. In addition, like other Hudson Valley residents, 37% of Orange County residents have completed a college education.

The Quality of Life

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

- 85% of Orange County residents rate their community as an excellent, very good, or good place to live. 95% of community leaders in the county rate their community positively. This compares with 88% of Hudson Valley residents and 96% of community leaders in the region who rate their community well.
- 60% of Orange County residents have lived in their community for more than 10 years. 25% of residents in Orange County have moved to their community within the past five years.
- 77% of Orange County residents believe they can have at least a moderate impact on making their community a better place to live. 76% of Hudson Valley residents and 77% of Americans feel the same way.
- 47% of residents and 49% of community leaders in Orange County think the best way to make a difference in their community is to volunteer. 49% of Hudson Valley residents, 47% of community leaders in the region, and 41% of Americans believe in volunteerism, as well.
- 56% of Orange County residents and 93% of community leaders report regularly volunteering or participating in civic organizations, churches, or clubs. 57% of Hudson Valley residents, 87% of community leaders in the region, and 52% of Americans are active in local organizations.

Staying in Touch?

A majority of residents in Orange County feels community decision-makers see things differently from the way the public does, although Orange County community leaders divide on this question.

- 53% of Orange County residents feel that the individuals that make decisions in their community mostly see things differently from the way the public does. 41% of residents in Orange County feel that the decision-makers in their community share the public's perspective. 6% of Orange County residents are unsure.
- 51% of Orange County community leaders believe decision-makers do see things the way the public does, and 48% believe decision-makers see things differently. 1% of Orange County community leaders are unsure.

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

- 67% of residents and 70% of community leaders in Orange County think the public’s views do count a great deal or a fair amount in decisions that are made in the community. 68% of residents and 76% of community leaders in the Hudson Valley feel the same way.
- 66% of Orange County residents and 78% of community leaders in the county feel their views are represented in the decisions that are made in their community almost always or sometimes. This compares with 68% of Hudson Valley residents and 81% of community leaders in the region who feel this way.

Issues: The Priorities

Orange County residents rank keeping businesses in the area as their highest priority followed closely by improving the quality of the public schools.

- Only 3/10ths of a point separate the next nine priorities of the residents of Orange County. These issues include services for seniors, the affordability of health care, community safety, creating more jobs, making health insurance easier to get, protecting open space, providing more after-school activities for children and teenagers, reducing taxes, and improving relations between different racial and ethnic groups.

Orange County Residents

	Mean
Keeping businesses in the area	8.0
Improving the quality of the public schools	7.9
Providing services for senior citizens	7.7
Making health care more affordable	7.7
Making your community safer	7.6
Creating more jobs	7.6
Making health insurance easier to get	7.5
Protecting open space	7.5
Providing more after-school activities	7.5
Reducing taxes	7.4
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	7.4
Providing more affordable, quality child care	6.9
Improving the quality of the water	6.8
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.6
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	6.6
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.6
Slowing growth and development	6.5
Increasing the number of public areas	6.5
Reducing homelessness	6.1

Orange County community leaders rank the economy as the most important issue facing the county.

- The two top issues for Orange County community leaders are economic. Community leaders in the county rank keeping businesses in the area as the most important priority followed by the need to create more jobs.

Orange County Community Leaders

	Mean
Keeping businesses in the area	8.4
Creating more jobs	8.0
Improving the quality of the public schools	7.8
Making health care more affordable	7.6
Improving relations between different racial & ethnic groups	7.6
Making health insurance easier to get	7.4
Providing services for senior citizens	7.2
Providing more after-school activities	7.1
Providing more affordable, quality child care	7.0
Increasing the number of public areas	6.8
Making your community safer	6.8
Increasing or improving public transportation	6.7
Increasing the amount of affordable housing	6.7
Protecting open space	6.7
Improving the quality of the water	6.6
Reducing taxes	6.5
Supporting the arts and providing more cultural events	6.3
Reducing homelessness	5.5
Slowing growth and development	4.8

The Top Five Issues: The Economy

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

- Keeping businesses in the area is the number one issue for both residents and community leaders in Orange County.
- 59% of Orange County residents rate the quality of jobs available in their community as fair or poor, and 37% of residents in the county rate them positively. This compares with 57% of Hudson Valley residents who rate the quality of jobs available in their community as fair or poor, and 39% of residents in the region who rate them positively.
- In contrast, 53% of community leaders in Orange County rate the quality of jobs in the county positively, and 45% rate them as fair or poor.
- 52% of Orange County residents feel too few resources are spent in their community on improving the quality of jobs. 38% of county residents feel their community spend about the right amount.

- Only 39% of community leaders feel too little money is spent on improving the quality of jobs in their community, and 52% feel the right amount of monies are being allocated.

Issues: The Public Schools

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

- Improving the quality of the public schools ranks second for Orange County residents closely behind the priority of keeping businesses in the area and third on the list of priorities for community leaders after the two economic issues of keeping businesses in the area and creating jobs.
- 73% of Orange County residents rate the public schools in their community positively, and 23% of county residents rate the schools as fair or poor. This compares with 70% of Hudson Valley residents who rate their public schools positively, and 26% of residents in the region who rate them as fair or poor.
- Similarly, 68% of Orange County community leaders rate the public schools positively, and 30% rate them as fair or poor.
- A majority of Orange County residents (58%) and community leaders (53%) feel spending on the public schools is about right. 24% of residents in Orange County and 31% of community leaders think there has been too little spending on the public schools in their community.

Issues: Health Care

In Orange County, making health care more affordable is important to both residents and community leaders.

- Both Orange County residents and community leaders rank making health care more affordable as one of the top five issues for the county.
- 55% of Orange County residents rate the health care services available to them in their community positively. 39% of residents in the county rate the services as fair or poor. This compares with 55% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the health care services available to them and 39% of residents in the region that rate these services as fair or poor.
- 72% of community leaders in Orange County rate the health care services as excellent, very good, or good. 27% of community leaders in the county rate the health care services available in the community as fair or poor.
- 48% of Orange County residents think spending on health care services in their community is about right. 39% of residents in the county feel too few resources in their community are allocated to health care services.

- 53% of community leaders in Orange County feel that the right amount of money is spent on health care services in their community, and 40% of community leaders in the county believe too little money is spent on these services.

Issues: Services for Senior Citizens

Providing services for senior citizens is a high priority for Orange County residents.

- Providing services for seniors ranks third among the priorities for Orange County residents after their interest in keeping businesses in the area and improving the quality of the public schools.
- 53% of Orange County residents rate the services available for senior citizens in their community positively. 34% of county residents rate these services as fair or poor, and 13% are unsure how to rate them. This compares with 49% of Hudson Valley residents who feel positively about the services available for senior citizens, and 36% of residents in the region who rate them as fair or poor.
- Like community leaders in the Hudson Valley, 58% of community leaders in Orange County rate the services for senior citizens available in the county positively.
- A majority of both Orange County residents (52%) and community leaders in the county (56%) think spending on services for senior citizens is about right. 32% of Orange County residents and 34% of community leaders in the county think too little money is spent on providing these services.

Issues: Tolerance

Orange County's community leaders feel there is at least some discrimination against a number of groups in the community. Improving relations among racial and ethnic groups is an important priority for Orange County's community leaders.

- Many community leaders in Orange County feel there is at least some discrimination against people who receive public assistance (66%), immigrants (65%), African-Americans (62%), homosexuals (56%), and Latinos (54%).
- A smaller proportion of Orange County residents than community leaders in the county feel there is at least some discrimination against people who receive public assistance (48%), immigrants (44%), African-Americans (43%), homosexuals (39%), and Latinos (39%).

Community Connections

Most Orange County residents have access to the Internet.

- 68% of Orange County residents have access to the Internet. This compares with 70% of Hudson Valley residents and 54% of Americans who are online.¹ 63% of Orange County residents have access to the Internet at home.
- 44% of Orange County residents have Internet access at work compared with 46% of residents in the Hudson Valley and 41.7% of Americans.
- Like Hudson Valley residents, 75% of Orange County households have some type of personal computer at home.
- 88% of community leaders in Orange County have access to the Internet. 85% of community leaders in the county have access to the Internet at home, and 82% have access at work.

69% of Orange County residents are employed at least part-time.

- Like Hudson Valley residents, 69% of Orange County residents are employed either full-time or part-time. 15% are retired, and 16% are not currently employed. This also compares with 67% of Americans who are employed.
- 41% of Orange County households are dual income households – households that have more than one adult who works either full-time or part-time. 33% of Orange County households have two full-time wage earners.
- 84% of Orange County workers commute to work by car by themselves, 7% car pool, 7% use public transportation, and 2% walk to work.
- The average time spent commuting one way for Orange County workers is 30 minutes. This compares with the Hudson Valley average of 28 minutes.
- 32% of Orange County workers travel for more than 30 minutes, one way, to work.

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

- 59% of Orange County residents listen to news on the radio everyday, and 83% of residents in the county get their news from the radio at least once a week.
- 52% of residents in Orange County read a local newspaper everyday. 84% of county residents read a local daily newspaper at least once a week.
- 39% of residents in Orange County watch local television news everyday, and 71% watch local television news at least once in an average week.

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

- 40% of Orange County residents have read all of the last four issues of their weekly community newspaper, and 69% have read at least one issue in the past month.
- 18% of Orange County residents read a national newspaper each day. Like other Hudson Valley residents (51%), a majority of Orange County residents (55%) does not read a national newspaper.
- 24% of Orange County residents with access to the Internet go online everyday for news. 24% of the 68% of Orange County residents who have access to the Internet or an online service means that 16% of residents in the county access the Internet each day for news.
- Orange County community leaders also cite radio and local daily newspapers as their top two sources for news. 93% listen to news on the radio at least once in an average week and 99% read a local daily newspaper at least once a week.

Study Design

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

Two surveys were conducted. The first survey interviewed 3,882 residents in the six counties that define the Hudson Valley region. The counties included Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, and Ulster. The survey was designed to collect information about the Hudson Valley as a region and to allow for county level analysis, as well. Representative samples were drawn from each county based on the population distribution within that county. 1,027 residents in Orange County were interviewed. In order to analyze the opinions of residents of the Hudson Valley the six county samples were combined and weighted to reflect the population distribution of the entire region. Interviews of Hudson Valley residents were administered by telephone from October 5th through December 10th, 2001. Residents had a choice to complete the survey in English or Spanish.

A second companion survey was conducted with 245 community leaders within the same six counties. This scientifically selected sample of community leaders included influentials and decision-makers who have a role in how community priorities are identified and realized, and how resources, goods, and services are distributed in their community. Included in the sample were government and elected officials, heads of major institutions, prominent members of the media, and business executives. As in the survey of residents, the design takes into account an interest in

understanding the opinions of community leaders from throughout the Hudson Valley and from within each county. Interviews of Hudson Valley community leaders were conducted by telephone from November 15th through December 19th, 2001.

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

The sampling error for the results of the survey of Hudson Valley residents, 3,882 interviews, is $\pm 2\%$, and for the results of Orange County residents, 1,027 interviews, is $\pm 3\%$. The sampling error for the results of the survey of Hudson Valley community leaders, 245 interviews, is $\pm 6.5\%$. When assessing the results for community leaders at the county level, the findings should be considered as a cross-section of those views.

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