



INSTITUTE OF
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**THE 2011 LEHIGH VALLEY
QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY**

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

May 16, 2011



KEY FINDINGS:

1. Lehigh Valley residents continue to give positive ratings to the area, overall, as a place to live and raise a family.
2. The percentage of those who believe that life is getting worse in the Lehigh Valley has increased slightly since the first year of this survey.
3. More Lehigh Valley residents rated the local economy as “poor” than in any other previous year of our study.
4. Positive views about local law enforcement remain high, and there is a decrease in the anxiety of residents about becoming a crime victim.
5. The overall quality of the environment in the Lehigh Valley was given high ratings despite half of residents holding a decent amount of concern for water and air quality in their community.
6. There is an increasing percentage of residents concerned with the loss of open spaces in the Lehigh Valley.
7. There was a large decrease in positive ratings for housing quality in the Lehigh Valley since last year’s survey.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of residents of the Lehigh Valley between April 7 and May 2010. Individual households throughout Lehigh and Northampton counties were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, with 459 surveys completed. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, college educated, parents, etc.) and select questions is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded upward at the .5 mark, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100%. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D. of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. Analysis and report writing were completed by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion under the direction of Dr. Borick.

QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

This survey marks the eight in a series of annual observations of citizen views on life in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania. Over the eight years of this project the Lehigh Valley has emerged as one of the fastest growing areas in the Northeastern United States. With that growth have come many changes to the local landscape and cultures. From major developments in the areas of commerce and recreation to the diminishing amount of open space in the area, it is clear

that the Lehigh Valley is undergoing a transformation. This study attempts to measure how residents of the Valley view their lives here, and how those views are evolving over time. Through this process the *Morning Call* and Muhlenberg College hopes to provide the broader community with a deeper insight in to attitudes and behaviors of local residents.

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

The survey findings indicate that Lehigh Valley residents continue to rate the region positively as a place to live. Overall, 91% of valley residents identified the Valley as a positive place to reside, with 30% giving the region an “excellent” rating and 61% a “good” mark. Conversely, only 9% of Lehigh Valley residents viewed the overall livability of the region negatively. These findings are consistent with the ratings Lehigh Valley residents gave to the region in 2010, when 92% of Valley adults rated the area positively overall. A full breakdown of ratings for the quality of life of the region over the last six years follows in Table One below:

Table One

“Rating of the Lehigh Valley as a Place to Live”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor
2003	24%	69%	5%	1%
2004	29%	61%	8%	1%
2005	26%	64%	7%	2%
2006	28%	65%	5%	2%
2007	27%	64%	6%	2%
2008	30%	61%	7%	2%
2009	30%	63%	6%	1%
2010	27%	65%	8%	0%
2011	30%	61%	9%	0%

While citizens generally view the area as a good place to live, the study reveals an increasingly pessimistic outlook regarding the direction of the Lehigh Valley. More than half (51%) of those surveyed expressed the view that life in the Valley is getting worse compared to only 26% who see improvement in quality of life in the area, representing one of the most pessimistic outlook in the eight years of this study. A number of areas of concern that are identified in this study may underlie the negative attitudes of area residents. These include concerns about crime, environmental quality and transportation. These issues will be examined in greater detail later in the study.

Table Two

“Is Life in the Lehigh Valley Getting Better or Worse”

Year	Getting Better	Getting Worse	Staying the Same	Not Sure
2003	32%	48%	11%	9%
2004	38%	39%	16%	8%
2005	28%	43%	22%	7%
2006	32%	52%	12%	4%
2007	29%	48%	17%	6%
2008	25%	54%	15%	6%
2009	28%	51%	14%	7%
2010	26%	52%	19%	3%
2011	26%	51%	15%	8%

PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY LIFE IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

The Lehigh Valley continues to be perceived by its citizens as a positive place to raise a family. 87% of those surveyed rated the area as either an excellent (35%) or good (52%) place to raise a family. However, this year there was a slight increase from previous years in the percentage of residents who believe that the Lehigh Valley is a negative place for families.

Table Three

“Rating of the Lehigh Valley as a Place to Raise a Family”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor
2006	28%	62%	4%	3%
2007	26%	64%	5%	3%
2008	28%	60%	8%	4%
2009	34%	57%	7%	1%
2010	34%	53%	9%	>1%
2011	35%	52%	7%	4%

PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

Coinciding with the national economic downturn, more people rated the economy as negative (59%) than positive (40%).

Table Four
“Ratings of the Economy”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	2%	41%	40%	15%	2%
2004	4%	50%	33%	9%	3%
2005	2%	53%	31%	10%	4%
2006	5%	58%	27%	9%	2%
2007	6%	61%	26%	5%	2%
2008	2%	47%	35%	15%	1%
2009	3%	35%	46%	15%	1%
2010	<1%	42%	44%	12%	2%
2011	<1%	40%	39%	20%	1%

Concern regarding becoming unemployed, a key indicator of the economic health of the region has increased in 2011. 21% of local residents indicated that they were very or somewhat concerned about becoming unemployed during the next year went up 3% from 2010.

Table Five
“Levels of Concern of Becoming Unemployed”

Year	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not too Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Not Sure / Refused
2003	15%	13%	19%	38%	15%
2004	15%	12%	17%	50%	9%
2005	13%	10%	19%	48%	10%
2006	11%	8%	17%	44%	20%
2007	8%	7%	19%	49%	6%
2008	15%	9%	16%	42%	19%
2009	13%	14%	15%	33%	19%
2010	11%	10%	21%	34%	12%
2011	16%	8%	12%	25%	39%

Individual satisfaction with income levels is an indicator of decreasing perceptions of the Lehigh Valley economy. 71% of those surveys report being satisfied, while 23% were dissatisfied to some degree with their family income. This overall percentage of satisfaction is down from satisfaction levels shown in the studies from 2003-2011.

Table Six

**“Individual Satisfaction with Income Level
Among Lehigh Valley Residents”**

Year	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Sure
2003	32%	51%	11%	3%	1%
2004	40%	42%	11%	5%	2%
2005	29%	51%	11%	4%	5%
2006	38%	43%	11%	6%	4%
2007	29%	51%	7%	5%	6%
2008	27%	47%	11%	7%	2%
2009	31%	49%	7%	8%	2%
2010	27%	47%	13%	8%	2%
2011	22%	49%	15%	8%	2%

Lehigh Valley residents level of satisfaction with their current jobs is declining. In 2009 59% of residents were satisfied, and in 2010 this number dropped to 52%. Now in 2011, 47% are satisfied with their current jobs. The number of those unsure or not working has drastically increased since our 2006 study.

Table Seven

“Satisfaction with Current Job”

Year	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Sure / Not Working
2006	42%	27%	4%	2%	25%
2007	39%	23%	5%	3%	27%
2008	40%	22%	3%	4%	31%
2009	40%	19%	3%	3%	35%
2010	28%	24%	2%	3%	42%
2011	29%	18%	6%	4%	43%

PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

In 2011, local residents continued to rate Lehigh Valley law enforcement positively. 82% viewed their local law enforcement positively, with 17% viewing it as excellent and 65% viewing it as good. In contrast, only 14% of residents view local law enforcement negatively, with 14% viewing it as not so good and less than 1% viewing it as poor.

Table Ten
“Ratings of Law Enforcement”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2006	10%	68%	16%	4%	3%
2007	14%	64%	16%	4%	3%
2008	14%	67%	12%	4%	3%
2009	15%	70%	9%	4%	3%
2010	14%	74%	8%	1%	2%
2011	17%	65%	14%	<1%	3%

Along with favorable views on local law enforcement, individual concern with becoming a victim of a crime has slightly decreased over the past year. The results of this latest survey show that 56% of local residents are concerned about becoming a crime victim down from 58% in 2010.

Table Eleven
“Citizen Concern with Becoming a Victim of a Crime”

Year	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not too Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Not Sure / Refused
2003	19%	36%	30%	16%	1%
2004	19%	31%	28%	21%	1%
2005	22%	33%	26%	17%	2%
2006	21%	33%	31%	13%	2%
2007	26%	37%	21%	13%	<1%
2008	31%	33%	20%	14%	1%
2009	28%	33%	25%	14%	<1%
2010	25%	33%	25%	15%	1%
2011	23%	33%	32%	11%	1%

PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN THE VALLEY

Residents of the Lehigh Valley continued to rate the environment positively. 84% percent of perceived the environmental quality as either excellent or good, just as in last year’s survey. Despite some minor fluctuations year to year, overall perceptions of the local environment are fairly consistent between the first study in 2003 and the most recent one in 2011.

Table Twelve

“Ratings of Lehigh Valley Environment”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	9%	65%	19%	5%	3%
2004	8%	66%	19%	5%	3%
2005	5%	63%	23%	7%	1%
2006	6%	67%	20%	5%	2%
2007	7%	71%	17%	3%	2%
2008	7%	69%	19%	4%	1%
2009	9%	69%	19%	3%	1%
2010	7%	77%	14%	1%	2%
2011	10%	74%	12%	2%	3%

While most individuals in the Lehigh Valley offered generally positive appraisals of the region’s overall environmental quality, many in the area indicated significant concern regarding the Lehigh Valley’s water quality. The percentage of residents who indicated some degree of concern for the safety of their drinking water was 46%. This is a slight increase from the 42% in last year’s study who held concern for the quality of their drinking water.

Table Thirteen

“Levels of Citizen Concern with Safety of Drinking Water in their Community”

Year	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not too Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Not Sure / Refused
2003	20%	31%	23%	26%	1%
2004	22%	26%	23%	27%	1%
2005	22%	28%	19%	28%	3%
2006	19%	30%	25%	26%	1%
2007	21%	27%	23%	28%	0%

2008	27%	24%	24%	23%	1%
2009	17%	25%	22%	33%	2%
2010	19%	23%	22%	35%	<1%
2011	20%	26%	30%	24%	<1%

Citizen concern with the safety of air quality in their community decreased in 2010 with 47% either very (20%) or somewhat (27%) concerned. While in 2010, 49% of respondents expressed concern with the safety of air quality.

Table Fourteen

“Levels of Citizen Concern with Safety of Air Quality in their Community”

Year	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not too Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Not Sure / Refused
2003	23%	36%	21%	20%	1%
2004	24%	32%	22%	51%	1%
2005	24%	32%	21%	21%	2%
2006	23%	31%	27%	18%	1%
2007	21%	36%	20%	22%	<1%
2008	26%	30%	23%	20%	1%
2009	21%	33%	22%	24%	<1%
2010	20%	29%	29%	21%	<1%
2011	20%	27%	31%	23%	<1%

Another indicator of the environmental quality is the loss of open spaces, including forests and farms. This is particularly relevant in the Lehigh Valley, which has seen a massive influx of new residents over the last ten-to-fifteen years, and countless new housing and commercial development on farm-land or other open spaces to meet the new demands. In this present study, 81% of citizens expressed some level of concern over this issue, which is a 5% increase from 2010.

Table Fifteen

“Levels of Citizen Concern with the Loss of Open Spaces”

Year	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not too Concerned	Not at all Concerned	Not Sure / Refused
2005	55%	27%	7%	8%	3%
2006	60%	26%	5%	7%	3%
2008	54%	28%	9%	6%	3%
2009	56%	32%	6%	6%	<1%
2010	36%	40%	10%	9%	5%
2011	44%	37%	12%	7%	1%

PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION and HEALTH CARE IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

Two of the most consistent indicators for the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley have been in the areas of education and health care. In 2011 60% of residents rated public schools in the region as either excellent or good, which is a large drop from the results in 2009 (69%). Since the first study in 2003, roughly 7 out of 10 individuals have continually given the public schools these positive ratings. This year, 6 out of 10 gave good ratings.

Table Sixteen
“Ratings of Public Schools in the Lehigh Valley”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	12%	58%	15%	5%	9%
2004	14%	56%	14%	5%	10%
2005	16%	52%	17%	6%	10%
2006	15%	56%	13%	6%	10%
2007	14%	55%	17%	7%	7%
2008	11%	58%	15%	9%	7%
2009	13%	56%	18%	6%	8%
2010	15%	54%	16%	7%	8%
2011	11%	49%	21%	8%	10%

The perceived quality of healthcare services has remained strong, and has changed little in the past year. The 2011 data indicates that 88% of local residents have a positive view of health care in the Lehigh Valley.

Table Seventeen

“Ratings of Health Care Services”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	30%	56%	7%	4%	1%
2004	28%	58%	7%	5%	2%
2005	34%	52%	7%	5%	2%
2006	34%	52%	6%	6%	2%
2007	31%	55%	8%	4%	2%
2008	29%	53%	9%	6%	2%
2009	43%	46%	7%	3%	1%
2010	38%	52%	7%	>1%	2%
2011	39%	49%	9%	1%	1%

PERCEPTIONS OF RECREATION

During the last year the Lehigh Valley has experienced a boom of openings and announcements of major recreational venues in the Lehigh Valley. From new upscale shopping complexes like the new addition to the Lehigh Valley Mall, to the opening of Coca Cola Park and the America On Wheels Museum in Allentown, the region has been active in the expansion of recreational opportunities. The results of this year’s survey show that 81% of residents give positive marks to the area’s recreational opportunities.

Table Eighteen

“Ratings of Recreational Opportunities”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	21%	54%	17%	5%	2%
2004	27%	53%	13%	4%	3%
2005	21%	54%	15%	5%	4%
2006	21%	56%	15%	5%	2%
2007	20%	61%	11%	2%	4%
2008	28%	53%	13%	5%	<1%
2009	28%	54%	14%	2%	2%
2010	27%	55%	12%	2%	4%
2011	22%	59%	16%	2%	2%

PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSING

In terms of perceptions about the Valley’s housing we find that 66% rate it positively, which is an 11% decrease from our 2010 survey.

Table Nineteen

“Rating of Housing in the Lehigh Valley”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	12%	70%	12%	3%	3%
2004	15%	66%	12%	3%	4%
2005	11%	64%	18%	4%	3%
2006	11%	61%	21%	4%	2%
2007	10%	62%	18%	6%	4%
2008	11%	61%	20%	6%	2%
2009	9%	65%	17%	5%	3%
2010	7%	70%	19%	2%	2%
2011	10%	56%	23%	8%	4%

PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

The views of Lehigh Valley residents on the services provided by their local or county governments have also remained consistent over time. 66% gave a positive and 26% gave a negative rating to the government services of the area, similar to 2010 when 70% and 23% of residents had positive or negatives views respectively.

Table Twenty

“Ratings of Government Services”

	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2006	5%	62%	16%	5%	11%
2007	7%	60%	18%	5%	9%
2008	5%	63%	18%	7%	6%
2009	6%	68%	18%	3%	5%
2010	7%	63%	19%	4%	3%
2011	8%	58%	20%	6%	6%

VIEWS ON RACE RELATIONS IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

Another important issue in the Lehigh Valley, with its significant racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in urban areas, which we have sought to gain insight on was race relations. On this issue, positive perceptions have remain unchanged since last year, with 63% now offering an excellent or good rating.

Table Twenty-One

“Ratings of Race Relations”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	3%	57%	26%	8%	6%
2004	5%	55%	24%	6%	9%
2005	4%	54%	21%	8%	13%
2006	3%	58%	22%	7%	10%
2007	4%	57%	25%	5%	9%
2008	5%	58%	24%	5%	8%
2009	4%	61%	24%	4%	6%
2010	4%	59%	27%	4%	6%
2011	5%	58%	17%	8%	11%

TRANSPORTATION

The views of local residents on transportation in the Lehigh Valley have remained steady in the last few years. 58% believe that transportation is excellent or good, a seven percent increase from 2010.

Table Twenty-Two

“Rating of Transportation in the Lehigh Valley”

Year	Excellent	Good	Not So Good	Poor	Not Sure
2003	5%	60%	21%	8%	6%
2004	7%	45%	26%	14%	9%
2005	3%	49%	28%	12%	9%

2006	5%	46%	25%	10%	14%
2007	5%	50%	29%	10%	6%
2008	5%	42%	31%	16%	6%
2009	5%	45%	31%	10%	4%
2010	4%	47%	29%	11%	9%
2011	6%	52%	28%	10%	4%

CONCLUSION

Despite the national economic situation, the economy ratings in the Lehigh Valley Quality of Life survey have increased from last year in multiple categories. Residents also continue to rate the Lehigh Valley highly as a place to live and raise a family. Recreation, law enforcement, healthcare, transportation and public schools continue to be rated highly. More residents are showing concern over the loss of public spaces. One category that saw a significant decrease in positive ratings was the quality of housing in the Lehigh Valley. It will be important to continue to assess the quality of life of the region on an annual basis, to confirm whether these positive trends will continue.