



INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC OPINION  
MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

*The Morning Call /*  
**Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion**

**THE 2010 LEHIGH VALLEY  
QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY**

**KEY FINDINGS REPORT**

May, 2010



## 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 better in the Lehigh Valley has decreased slightly from last year.
3. The rating of the state of the economy in Pennsylvania has improved from last year in multiple categories.
4. Positive views about local law enforcement are at their highest level in the history of this study, including a decrease in the anxiety of residents about becoming victim to crime.
5. The overall quality of the environment in the Lehigh Valley was given high ratings despite increasing concern about the water-quality in the community.
6. Ratings of recreational opportunities in the region were at their highest level ever, in the eight years of this study.

**METHODOLOGY:** The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of residents of the Lehigh Valley between April 7 and May 6, 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 409 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, 92% of valley residents identified the Valley as a positive place to reside, with 27% giving the region an “excellent” rating and 65% a “good” mark. Conversely, only 8% 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 2009, when 93% 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%

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 (52%) 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%

<b>2004</b>	38%	39%	16%	8%
<b>2005</b>	28%	43%	22%	7%
<b>2006</b>	32%	52%	12%	4%
<b>2007</b>	29%	48%	17%	6%
<b>2008</b>	25%	54%	15%	6%
<b>2009</b>	28%	51%	14%	7%
<b>2010</b>	26%	52%	19%	3%

### 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 (34%) or good (53%) 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”

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

### PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

Coinciding with the national economic downturn, more people rated the economy as negative (56%) than positive (43%).

**Table Four**

#### “Ratings of the Economy”

<b>Year</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not So Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>2003</b>	2%	41%	40%	15%	2%

<b>2004</b>	4%	50%	33%	9%	3%
<b>2005</b>	2%	53%	31%	10%	4%
<b>2006</b>	5%	58%	27%	9%	2%
<b>2007</b>	6%	61%	26%	5%	2%
<b>2008</b>	2%	47%	35%	15%	1%
<b>2009</b>	3%	35%	46%	15%	1%
<b>2010</b>	>1%	42%	44%	12%	2%

Concern regarding becoming unemployed, a key indicator of the economic health of the region has decreased in 2010. 21% of local residents indicated that they were very or somewhat concerned about becoming unemployed during the next year down 6% from 2009.

**Table Five**

**“Levels of Concern of Becoming Unemployed”**

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

Individual satisfaction with income levels is an indicator of decreasing perceptions of the Lehigh Valley economy. 74% of those surveys report being satisfied, while 21% were dissatisfied to some degree with their family income. This overall percentage of satisfaction is down from satisfaction levels shown in the studies from 2003-2009.

**Table Six**

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

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

Lehigh Valley residents level of satisfaction with their current jobs is declining. In 2008, 62% of residents were satisfied with their jobs, in 2009 59% of residents were satisfied. Now in 2010, only 52% of residents are satisfied with their current jobs.

**Table Seven**

**“Satisfaction with Current Job”**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Not Sure / Not Working</b>
<b>2006</b>	42%	27%	4%	2%	25%
<b>2007</b>	39%	23%	5%	3%	27%
<b>2008</b>	40%	22%	3%	4%	31%
<b>2009</b>	40%	19%	3%	3%	35%
<b>2010</b>	28%	24%	2%	3%	42%

**PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY**

In 2010, local residents continued to rate Lehigh Valley law enforcement positively. 78% viewed their local law enforcement positively, with 14% viewing it as excellent and 74% viewing it as good. In contrast, only 9% of residents view local law enforcement negatively, with 8% viewing it as not so good and 1% viewing it as poor.

**Table Ten**

**“Ratings of Law Enforcement”**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not So Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>2006</b>	10%	68%	16%	4%	3%

<b>2007</b>	14%	64%	16%	4%	3%
<b>2008</b>	14%	67%	12%	4%	3%
<b>2009</b>	15%	70%	9%	4%	3%
<b>2010</b>	14%	74%	8%	1%	2%

Along with favorable views on local law enforcement, individual concern with becoming a victim of a crime has decreased over the past year. The results of this latest survey show that 58% of local residents are concerned about becoming a crime victim down from 61% in 2009.

**Table Eleven**

**“Citizen Concern with Becoming a Victim of a Crime”**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not too Concerned</b>	<b>Not at all Concerned</b>	<b>Not Sure / Refused</b>
<b>2003</b>	19%	36%	30%	16%	1%
<b>2004</b>	19%	31%	28%	21%	1%
<b>2005</b>	22%	33%	26%	17%	2%
<b>2006</b>	21%	33%	31%	13%	2%
<b>2007</b>	26%	37%	21%	13%	<1%
<b>2008</b>	31%	33%	20%	14%	1%
<b>2009</b>	28%	33%	25%	14%	<1%
<b>2010</b>	25%	33%	25%	15%	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, up slightly 6% from 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 2010.

**Table Twelve**

**“Ratings of Lehigh Valley Environment”**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not So Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>2003</b>	9%	65%	19%	5%	3%
<b>2004</b>	8%	66%	19%	5%	3%

<b>2005</b>	5%	63%	23%	7%	1%
<b>2006</b>	6%	67%	20%	5%	2%
<b>2007</b>	7%	71%	17%	3%	2%
<b>2008</b>	7%	69%	19%	4%	1%
<b>2009</b>	9%	69%	19%	3%	1%
<b>2010</b>	7%	77%	14%	1%	2%

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 42%. This figure is the same number from last year’s study.

**Table Thirteen**

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not too Concerned</b>	<b>Not at all Concerned</b>	<b>Not Sure / Refused</b>
<b>2003</b>	20%	31%	23%	26%	1%
<b>2004</b>	22%	26%	23%	27%	1%
<b>2005</b>	22%	28%	19%	28%	3%
<b>2006</b>	19%	30%	25%	26%	1%
<b>2007</b>	21%	27%	23%	28%	0%
<b>2008</b>	27%	24%	24%	23%	1%
<b>2009</b>	17%	25%	22%	33%	2%
<b>2010</b>	19%	23%	22%	35%	>1%

Citizen concern with the safety of air quality in their community decreased in 2010 with 49% either very (20%) or somewhat (29%) concerned. While in 2009, 54% of respondents expressed concern with the safety of air quality.

**Table Fourteen**

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not too Concerned</b>	<b>Not at all Concerned</b>	<b>Not Sure / Refused</b>
<b>2003</b>	23%	36%	21%	20%	1%
<b>2004</b>	24%	32%	22%	51%	1%
<b>2005</b>	24%	32%	21%	21%	2%
<b>2006</b>	23%	31%	27%	18%	1%
<b>2007</b>	21%	36%	20%	22%	<1%
<b>2008</b>	26%	30%	23%	20%	1%
<b>2009</b>	21%	33%	22%	24%	<1%
<b>2010</b>	20%	29%	29%	21%	>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, 76% of citizens expressed some level of concern over this issue, which is a 12% drop from 2009.

**Table Fifteen**

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

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

**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 2010 69% of residents rated public schools in the region as either excellent or good, which is identical to the results in 2009. In fact since the first study in 2003, roughly 7 out of 10 individuals have continually given the public schools these positive ratings.

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

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

The perceived quality of healthcare services has remained strong, and is up slightly from the past year. The 2010 data indicates that 90% of local residents have a positive view of health care in the Lehigh Valley.

**Table Seventeen**  
**“Ratings of Health Care Services”**

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

**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 82% of residents give positive marks to the area’s recreational opportunities.

**Table Eighteen**

**“Ratings of Recreational Opportunities”**

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

**PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSING**

In terms of perceptions about the Valley’s housing we find that 77% rate it positively, which is an increase from recent years.

**Table Nineteen**

**“Rating of Housing in the Lehigh Valley”**

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

**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. 70% gave a positive and 23% gave a negative rating to the government services of the area, similar to 2009 when 74% and 21% of residents had positive or negatives views respectively.

**Table Twenty**  
**“Ratings of Government Services”**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not So Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>2006</b>	5%	62%	16%	5%	11%
<b>2007</b>	7%	60%	18%	5%	9%
<b>2008</b>	5%	63%	18%	7%	6%
<b>2009</b>	6%	68%	18%	3%	5%
<b>2010</b>	7%	63%	19%	4%	3%

**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 slightly decreased over the past few year, with 63% now offering an excellent or good rating down from 65% last year.

**Table Twenty-One**  
**“Ratings of Race Relations”**

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

## TRANSPORTATION

The views of local residents on transportation in the Lehigh Valley have remained steady in the last few years. 51% believe that transportation is excellent or good, a one percent increase from 2009 and four percent increase from 2008.

**Table Twenty-Two**

### **“Rating of Transportation in the Lehigh Valley”**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not So Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>2003</b>	5%	60%	21%	8%	6%
<b>2004</b>	7%	45%	26%	14%	9%
<b>2005</b>	3%	49%	28%	12%	9%
<b>2006</b>	5%	46%	25%	10%	14%
<b>2007</b>	5%	50%	29%	10%	6%
<b>2008</b>	5%	42%	31%	16%	6%
<b>2009</b>	5%	45%	31%	10%	4%
<b>2010</b>	4%	47%	29%	11%	9%

## 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 and public schools continue to be rated highly. 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.