

## Community Wellbeing Survey Shows that Greater New Haven Residents Have Much to Celebrate; Sets Sights on Shared Goals

(New Haven, CT) January 18, 2013: DataHaven and a collaboration of community funders including The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and United Way of Greater New Haven today announced the results of their 2012 Community Wellbeing Survey, the largest survey of its kind ever conducted in the New Haven metropolitan area. Managed by DataHaven, the Siena College Research Institute survey involved interviews with 1,307 randomly-selected residents between September 4 and October 16, 2012 on topics such as government services, education, and urban planning, as well as individual questions about civic engagement, health, and family economics.

"Results from this survey show that we have much to celebrate," according to Penny Canny, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Grantmaking & Strategy at The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and President of the Board at DataHaven. "Four out of five respondents express personal satisfaction with the city or area where they live. We also have a strong foundation for further improvement, with a solid majority of residents giving time or money to local initiatives within the past year, believing that their personal economic circumstances will improve in coming years, and feeling their neighborhood is safe, trustworthy, and able to organize itself for change if needed."

The Wellbeing Survey measures progress toward longstanding community priorities, including the need to ensure that children have the opportunity to succeed and to boost the financial security of families. Although the metropolitan area generally does well when compared to the national average on measures of health, income, and human capital (for example, with its Congressional District 3 ranking among the top 20% nationwide in the Measure of America's *Human Development Index*), the Wellbeing Survey's timely new data shows that many residents continue to face significant barriers to economic success, educational achievement, health, housing, and other critical aspects of life.

"As a scientific survey of our entire adult population, the Wellbeing Survey gives us a powerful tool to gauge the challenges facing our community, and will help guide our efforts to have greater impact," explained Jennifer Heath, Executive Vice President at United Way of Greater New Haven and a DataHaven Board member.

"For 20 years, DataHaven has been encouraging data sharing between local, state, and national programs. We believe that the information released today, and forthcoming analyses of the data, will be of great use to neighborhood groups and other initiatives that are collaborating to improve the quality of life in Greater New Haven," noted Mark Abraham, Executive Director of DataHaven.

As an example, Abraham points out that the Wellbeing Survey has been simultaneously coordinated with a health survey of six lower-income neighborhoods within the City of New Haven, conducted this fall by the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE), a community-academic partnership based at the Yale University School of Public Health. CARE, the City of New Haven Health Department, Yale-New Haven Hospital, DataHaven, and other local organizations have formed a partnership to improve their understanding of health conditions within the region and take action to address disparities. Results from the CARE survey are expected in the coming weeks.

"Without common measures of where we stand, it is difficult for organizations to take collective action toward meeting community goals," Dr. Canny of DataHaven said. "Addressing the disparities in wellbeing, where they exist, represents the greatest opportunity for us to boost the trajectory of our entire region. High levels of community engagement, in spite of the difficult conditions faced by many families, suggest that most residents are optimistic and willing to work on improving our region."

Residents are encouraged to visit an interactive website, <http://survey.ctdatahaven.org/>, to read more and provide feedback on the results.

**CONTACT:**

Mark Abraham  
Executive Director  
Regional Data Cooperative for Greater New Haven, Inc. (DataHaven)  
129 Church Street, Suite 605  
New Haven, CT 06510  
203-500-7059  
info@ctdatahaven.org

**About the Greater New Haven Community Wellbeing Survey**

The 2012 Community Wellbeing Survey, a project of DataHaven, is thought to be the largest survey of its type ever conducted in our area. Although many questions were derived from other national surveys to enable comparability, the project focused on collecting information on community wellbeing that is not available from any other public sources.

The 20-minute telephone survey, conducted by the Siena Research Institute at Siena College in Loudonville, New York, involved landline and cell phone interviews with 1,307 randomly-selected households between September 4 and October 16, 2012. Researchers interviewed residents age 18 and over from within a group of 13 municipalities including the City of New Haven, its "inner ring" (East Haven, Hamden, and West Haven), and "outer ring" suburbs (Orange, Milford, North Haven, Guilford, Branford, North Branford, Madison, Woodbridge, Bethany). The data are representative of neighborhoods and diverse populations throughout Greater New Haven. Survey respondents are anonymous and will never be identified. The survey carries an overall margin of error of +/- 2.7%.

DataHaven currently provides over \$25,000 worth of free technical assistance to local nonprofit organizations and community groups each year, and will work to accommodate public requests for information from the survey. Please visit the DataHaven website for more information.

**About DataHaven**

DataHaven, an affiliate of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership in Washington, DC, was founded in 1992 as the Regional Data Cooperative to encourage information sharing and the stronger use of data within the public sector, including nonprofit organizations, researchers, and local residents. As a result of its relationships with the Connecticut Data Collaborative and other partners, DataHaven is managing an increasingly extensive array of community-level data from throughout the State about a wide variety of topics.

**About the Siena Research Institute**

Founded in 1980, the Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research throughout the United States. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, please call Don Levy at 518-783-2901.

###

*"After 10 years, community institutions and foundations, including The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, United Way of Greater New Haven, the Carolyn Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and major employers have convened around the need for updated community indicators data about Greater New Haven. Civic organizations, public agencies, and neighborhoods need access to the most accurate and recent data in order to maximize the impact of their work."*

Penny Canny, Ph.D., President of the Board of DataHaven and Senior VP, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

*"The Wellbeing Survey serves as a follow-up to the COMPASS household survey, conducted in 2003, and gives us valuable information about the disparities in education and financial stability that are still very real in our region. These data will help guide our collective efforts to ensure that we are using meaningful strategies to improve community results."*

Jennifer Heath, DataHaven Board Member and Executive VP, United Way of Greater New Haven

*"This valid and representative study of area residents' attitudes, behaviors and experiences provides a wellspring of data for the community. Citizens, governmental entities, and local organizations can fruitfully mine this study and use it to generate community conversations as well as potentially fruitful efforts to enhance the collective quality of life in Greater New Haven."*

Don Levy, Ph.D., Director, Siena College Research Institute

*"Like other national surveys of wellbeing, the Greater New Haven Community Wellbeing Survey is important because it begins to collect indicators of community health and happiness that are not available from any other sources, but which are no less important than the measurements we commonly use to assess social and economic trends."*

Mark Abraham, Executive Director of DataHaven

---

### Purpose: Improving Wellbeing in Greater New Haven

The Greater New Haven Community Wellbeing Survey helps funders, policymakers, service providers, and local residents develop a more in-depth understanding of issues of shared community interest. These issues, including financial security, education, civic life, and the local built environment, significantly impact the people living within our region's increasingly diverse neighborhoods.

We believe that the Wellbeing Survey represents the most comprehensive survey of its type ever conducted in our area, as well as the first major survey conducted in our region anytime in the past ten years. It is part of a growing body of community-driven research that looks comprehensively at the interrelationships between quality of life, health, economic stability, and public policy concerns.

With this Executive Summary and the full report from Siena College Research Institute, DataHaven is pleased to be able to make this information available to the public. With our community partners, we hope to conduct the Wellbeing Survey again in 2014 or 2015. We look forward to working with citizens, community groups, and researchers to understand the results, identify gaps where more information is needed, and use data to support progress toward improving quality of life in Greater New Haven.

The Community Wellbeing Survey was made possible by grants and in-kind support from The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Carolyn Foundation, United Way of Greater New Haven, Annie E. Casey Foundation, NewAlliance Foundation, and Yale-New Haven Hospital.

## Background: The Survey Design Process

Design of the Community Wellbeing Survey was based in part upon national and statewide surveys, in order to allow some degree of comparability with broader indicators such as those tracked by the Federal Government's *Healthy People 2020* and *Civic Life in America* initiatives and by U.S. Census data. Questions were also derived from local surveys such as *Greater New Haven Community COMPASS*, a 2003 initiative that helped develop a broadly-shared understanding of the changing conditions that impact the New Haven metropolitan area. The final list of questions was assembled by DataHaven with guidance from Dr. Donald Levy, Director of the Siena College Research Institute.

In addition to consulting with a variety of community partners, DataHaven coordinated its survey design and timing with the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE), a community-academic partnership based at the Yale University School of Public Health. CARE has developed a health survey of adults in six lower-income neighborhoods within the City of New Haven, which was conducted in 2009 and then again simultaneously with the Community Wellbeing Survey in the fall of 2012. CARE has been collaborating with DataHaven, the City of New Haven, regional health care providers, and local neighborhood associations around public health issues for a number of years. In the case where the questions overlapped between these two surveys, question wording was mostly identical in the English version as well as in the Spanish translations.

DataHaven selected the geographical area to include within the survey based on the extent of the 2003 *Community Compass* survey and the regions represented by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, United Way of Greater New Haven, and Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments. The Wellbeing Survey sampled all towns in these service areas on a proportional basis, with the exception of Wallingford, Meriden, and Cheshire, which were not included because they completed their own community needs survey in 2011, and the Lower Naugatuck Valley region, which was not included because it conducted its own Quality of Life Survey in 2010. In order to ensure a diverse sample that included populations that are traditionally more difficult to reach via telephone, a small oversample of residents within the City of New Haven was also conducted, with results weighted statistically to reflect the inclusion of the additional cell phone and landline calls in this area.

For more information on survey methodology, please refer to the full text of the Siena College Research Institute's report, or contact DataHaven via email at [info@ctdatahaven.org](mailto:info@ctdatahaven.org).

## Next Steps: Sharing the Results and Collecting Feedback

In addition to the preliminary release of Survey results in December 2012, DataHaven plans to release a *State of Greater New Haven Report* in early 2013. This report will incorporate results from the Community Wellbeing Survey along with data on key indicators and trends of local interest. Many new neighborhood-level data sets have become available to Connecticut in recent years, from programs including the 2010 Census, American Community Survey, and Local Employment Dynamics. Also, the Connecticut Data Collaborative organization, for which DataHaven currently serves as the "data steward," has assembled a vast collection of town-level data from various state agencies and sources.

DataHaven strongly encourages residents to comment on the survey results, and to contribute their ideas for improving wellbeing in Greater New Haven, by visiting an interactive internet-based forum hosted at the DataHaven website. At this website, visitors can also learn more about the survey results and access additional analyses.

Finally, DataHaven is planning to discuss results at a number of community forums and events over the course of 2013. Information collected from the project will be shared directly with nonprofits, municipalities, and elected officials to help increase understanding of the region's needs and opportunities, and provide a basis for improving data collection and use within Greater New Haven.

## Highlighted Results from the Community Wellbeing Survey

As illustrated below, results from the Wellbeing Survey can help illuminate the incredible strengths of the Greater New Haven community, as well as the barriers that may prevent many individuals from fully enjoying their lives. These each represent crucial opportunities that we must understand if we wish to make progress toward improving the economic competitiveness and livability of our region.

In many cases, “drilling down” into the survey data reveals significant differences by age, race or ethnicity, income level, education level, and geographical area. Analyzing these differences, rather than simply looking at averages across the region, is the best way for community leaders to pinpoint opportunities for change and make meaningful progress toward widely-shared community goals.

In the section below, we highlight some of the overall survey results by topic area, and attempt to place them in a broader context of statewide or national trends. Please interpret the individual survey estimates with caution, as estimates for smaller population groups have a higher margin of error than the margin of error for Greater New Haven as a whole, which is plus or minus 2.7% (at a 95% confidence level). For example, our estimates for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics carry margins of error of 3.3%, 6.9%, and 8.2%, respectively, and estimates for the City of New Haven carry a margin of error of 4.4%. This is important to consider when viewing the “crosstabs” of survey estimates and judging whether differences between any groups are likely to be statistically significant.

We will conduct further analysis to better understand each of these findings. Please refer to the report from Siena College Research Institute, and analyses to be posted on the DataHaven website.

### *Overall Community Satisfaction and Quality of Life*

- **81% of Greater New Haven residents are satisfied with the city or area where they live.** Residents living within lower-income urban neighborhoods are significantly less likely to report being satisfied with their area. This compares almost directly with results from a 2011 national survey on wellbeing by Gallup, which reported that 81% of residents in U.S. Congressional District 3 (which covers a similar geographical area) were satisfied with our region. Gallup also reported lower levels of community satisfaction within lower-income urban neighborhoods.
- **28% feel that their city or area is improving, 51% feel that it is remaining about the same, and 20% feel that it is getting worse.** Although most residents within all areas feel that their area is getting better or at least staying the same, those living in the City of New Haven are more likely to say that their city or area is improving when compared with residents of suburban areas. In a recent Gallup national survey of wellbeing, the New Haven metropolitan area was comparable to the national average on a somewhat similar question of city optimism.
- **The most highly-rated aspects of life** include the quality of health care, the availability of entertainment and stores, the condition of public parks, the job done by the police to keep residents safe, and Greater New Haven as a place to raise children (see chart below).
- **Relative to the above measures, residents give particularly low ratings to the affordability of living in Greater New Haven, with 74% replying that this aspect of life was only “fair” (42%) or “poor” (32%).** Many residents also have concerns about other aspects of life we asked about, some of which are detailed in the sections below as well as in the Siena College Research Institute report.
- **Most residents have high levels of “life satisfaction.”** On the whole, 79% of Greater New Haven residents feel more satisfied or just as satisfied with their lives as they did one year ago, and 78% say they are satisfied when thinking about the job, vocation, or tasks that they engage in each day, what they accomplish, and where can lead them. On average, levels of life satisfaction are fairly high regardless of age, race, household income, and education level. These findings are consistent with other national surveys on this subject.

## *Employment and Household Economic Security*

- Only 20% of adults throughout Greater New Haven feel that the ability of residents to obtain suitable employment is “excellent” or “good,” while 31% say that it is only “fair” and 31% say that it is “poor.” Among the questions in this section of the Wellbeing Survey, this was the most poorly-rated aspect of life in Greater New Haven. Residents with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher are somewhat more likely than other groups to believe that the ability of residents to find jobs is “excellent” or “good,” with 27% reporting this. Residents who identify as Black or African-American are significantly more likely to say that the ability to find jobs is difficult, with just 15% saying it is “excellent” or “good,” 29% saying that it is only “fair,” and 46% saying it is “poor.”
- Related to the above, the “underemployment rate” in the Greater New Haven region is estimated at 15% (higher than the official unemployment rate, which is approximately 9%). The Wellbeing Survey shows that underemployment rates are significantly higher among young people (a rate of 21% for those age 18-34, versus 7% for those age 55 and up), as well as within communities of color (18% and 23% for Black and Hispanic adults, respectively, versus 11% for Whites). We define underemployment as the percent of residents who said they were unemployed plus those who are employed part time out of necessity rather than choice. While these estimates are comparable to other statewide data, they may underestimate the scope of the issue as they do not include those who have given up looking for work.
- When asked about the past year, 6% of residents say that they did not have enough money to provide adequate shelter or housing for themselves or their families, and 20% say that they did not have enough money to buy food they needed. Levels of food insecurity, as measured by the latter question, range from 10% in “Outer Ring” suburbs, to 24% in “Inner Ring” suburbs and 31% in the City of New Haven. Recognizing the many threats to our health and wellbeing caused by household hunger, the Federal Government’s Healthy People 2020 program has set an ambitious target of cutting national food insecurity by more than half, from 15% to 6%, by 2020. Unlike national surveys, the Wellbeing Survey provides local-level data that will help civic leadership identify strategies that can make progress toward this target.

## *Economic Mobility*

- Considering future economic mobility, residents are evenly divided on the question of whether the opportunities of children today to succeed will be better than or not as good as those they had had, with 46% saying “better” and 45% saying “not as good.” Compared to the population as a whole, residents age 18-34, women, and residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino are more optimistic that the opportunities of children today will be better than those they have had. These results are comparable to surveys from the Pew Economic Mobility Project, which show that the perception of economic mobility for future generations has significantly declined since the 1980s.
- Similarly, 53% of residents within Greater New Haven say that they are better off financially than their parents were when they were the same age, versus 37% who say they are not. This figure declines significantly for adults in the lowest 25% of the household income distribution (41% better, 51% not, for those with income under \$30,000 per year), suggesting a perceived lack of intergenerational economic mobility among many residents.

## *Civic Engagement*

- Although direct comparisons with other cities using civic engagement data are difficult, the Wellbeing Survey shows that all neighborhoods within Greater New Haven contain a rich base of social capital that they can use to take action to improve quality of life when needed. For example, 87% of residents who have children in their household say that it would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” that other local residents would organize themselves to take action if a nearby elementary school were proposed to be closed down. Greater New Haven also has high levels of neighborly trust, with 80% of residents agreeing that people in their neighborhood help each other when needed, and 80% agreeing that they can be trusted.

- Greater New Haven residents are a charitable people. Over the past year, 58% of residents have volunteered, 71% say they have donated at least \$25 to a cause in the local area, and 42% use arts and culture resources at least somewhat often. Results also suggest that lower-income residents may face greater barriers to participating in arts and culture events.
- Survey results suggest that local governments can improve the ways in which they connect with area residents. Although only 6% of Greater New Haven residents report that the responsiveness of their local government is “excellent,” many residents appear to believe that they can improve the decisions made in their area, with 28% saying that they have “great” or “moderate” influence over local government decisions. However, nearly 1 in 3 residents says they feel that they have “no influence at all” on their local government. Younger residents are more likely to feel that they do not have influence in their government.

## Health

- When asked to rate their own health, 85% of adults in Greater New Haven report being in “good,” “very good,” or “excellent” health - a figure that rises to 94% among those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more. Self-reported health is a good predictor of wellbeing and future health care costs, and in other research has been found to be associated with factors such as the ability of residents to find employment. On this common measure of self-reported health, Greater New Haven residents appear to score as good as or slightly better than the national averages (based on Federal CDC data).
- The disparity in health insurance coverage is a major concern, with 10% of adults throughout Greater New Haven reporting that they have no health insurance at all. Although just 1% of adults with household incomes in the top 25% of the household income distribution (\$100,000 per year or more) report having no health insurance, the proportion of adults who are uninsured rises to 21% among adults in the bottom 25% of the income distribution (\$30,000 per year or less).
- Roughly in line with the troubling statistics found nationally and in Connecticut, 57% of adult residents in Greater New Haven are overweight (34%) or obese (23%) as measured by Body Mass Index (BMI). Diet and exercise are key to maintaining a healthy weight. When asked about exercise, only 37% of adults in Greater New Haven report getting moderate physical activity or exercise at least 5 times per week, suggesting that we may be falling short of the Federal Government’s *Healthy People 2020* target of 47.9%.
- The smoking rate in Greater New Haven (17%) is close to or slightly below the national average, but is still well above the Federal Government’s *Healthy People 2020* target of 12%. Just 3% of adults with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher say that they currently smoke at least a half a pack of cigarettes every day, versus 13% of adults without a Bachelor’s Degree.

## Education and Youth

- 55% of Greater New Haven residents agree that children and youth in their town generally have the positive role models they need, while 37% disagree. This overall result, and the estimates by geographical area, are nearly identical to findings from the 2003 Community COMPASS survey, the last major quality of life survey conducted in our area. Residents within New Haven, particularly those within lower-income neighborhoods, are several times less likely to say that children in their area have positive role models than residents in outer suburban areas.
- On average, residents appear to be satisfied with the quality of local child care and the public school system. Among all households with children, 70% of residents are satisfied with the quality of child care in their area, though only about half (47%) are satisfied with the cost of these services. 56% of Greater New Haven residents in households with children rate the quality of the public schools as “excellent” or “good,” 22% rate them as “fair,” and 14% rate them as “poor.”
- Most families are involved in school activities and after school programs. 96% of parents with school-age children attend school activities, and 76% report that their children participate in

after school activities. Children living within lower-income households are less likely to participate in after school activities, with a 24-percentage point gap, 87% to 63%, between the top 25% (\$100,000 or more) and bottom 25% (\$30,000 or less) of households by income distribution.

- **91% of adults with children in their household have a computer with high-speed internet in their home.** Results suggest that a small but significant number of children as well as adults, particularly those living within lower-income households, may experience barriers to accessing the internet at times.

### *Neighborhood Environment*

- **Although Greater New Haven is generally perceived to be a safe place, public safety is a major concern in some neighborhoods.** A majority, both in Greater New Haven (62%) and within the higher-income neighborhoods within the City of New Haven (55%), feel safe to go on walks in their neighborhood at night. However, within the lower-income neighborhoods in the City of New Haven, results suggest that only 22% of residents feel safe to go on walks in their neighborhood at night. Throughout the entire region, 76% of residents in households that report an income of \$100,000 or more say that they feel safe to go on walks in their neighborhood at night, versus just 45% of those in households making less than \$30,000.
- **Transportation access varies widely by population group and income.** A small, but significant, number of residents are mobility challenged, as they report having no access to a car as well as having limited access to public transportation. Additionally, 22% of residents with a household income of less than \$15,000 say that they “never” have access to a car when needed, versus just 1% of those residents with an income of \$50,000 or more.
- **The survey includes other questions about the built environment, such as how residents feel about parks, stores, and walkability in their neighborhoods.** For example, among residents over age 65, a significant share (30%) say that crossing busy streets presents difficulty to them in getting to public transportation stops. DataHaven is working with community partners to develop a better understanding of these complex variables and how they may impact other aspects of life.

## Contact Information

Please direct questions to:

Mark Abraham, Executive Director  
Regional Data Cooperative for Greater New Haven, Inc. (DataHaven)  
Email (preferred): [info@ctdatahaven.org](mailto:info@ctdatahaven.org)  
Telephone: 203-500-7059  
129 Church Street, Suite 605  
New Haven, CT 06510