# ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

*In Conjunction with the Citizens Commission for Digital Inclusion*

## Verizon Copper Decommissioning Survey Analysis

comptroller.ulstercountyny.gov Released October 2026

The Ulster County Citizens Commission for Digital Inclusion launched a resident survey on September 28, 2026, to better understand residents' reliance on Verizon copper landlines, the availability and reliability of alternative communication services, and concerns about the proposed retirement of copper telephone service. This report analyzes survey responses received through noon on October 22, 2026.

The survey received a total of 677 total responses, 657 of which were from Ulster County residents. Responses also came from residents of Greene, Sullivan, Dutchess and Columbia Counties. Further analysis was done on Ulster County responses only.

It is important to note the following points. This is a small sample of the total number of households in Ulster County. According to the American Community Survey of the US Census, Ulster County has 76,112 households, so 657 responses represents .0.86% of all households. The analysis must also take into account that those households without internet and without cellular service are unlikely to answer an online survey. The survey did include 3 paper survey responses collected by the Shandaken Town Clerk and 3 responses of people who called the Comptroller's Office.

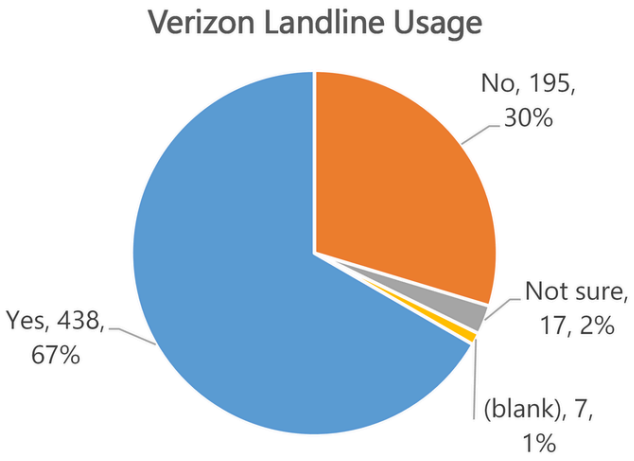
Of the Ulster County responses, responses were filed from every municipality in the County. Town of Woodstock had the most responses, with Shandaken coming in second. Residents from all over the County are concerned about the decommissioning of copper land lines.

In reviewing the survey data, we were also able to obtain from Ulster County Emergency Management the number of 911 calls by municipality and the percentage of those calls that are made via a landline. The survey response numbers by municipality are provided with the 911 data. The villages of Ellenville, New Paltz and Saugerties are contained within their corresponding towns.

| Municipal Level Data | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Municipality | Survey Responses | 911 Calls 10/1/25-9/30/26 | % 911 via Wireline |
| Denning | 22 | 91 | 12% |
| Esopus | 17 | 2,159 | 2% |
| Gardiner | 7 | 1,135 | 3% |
| Hardenburgh | 1 | 26 | 58% |
| Hurley | 48 | 1,218 | 3% |
| Kingston, City | 39 | 10,889 | 3% |
| Kingston, Town | 7 | 307 | 2% |
| Lloyd | 20 | 4,613 | 5% |
| Marbletown | 25 | 1,360 | 4% |
| Marlborough | 7 | 1,698 | 2% |
| New Paltz | 24 | 4,284 | 2% |
| Olive | 69 | 892 | 5% |
| Plattekill | 3 | 2,813 | 1% |
| Rochester | 54 | 1,926 | 3% |
| Rosendale | 30 | 1,737 | 2% |
| Saugerties | 42 | 5,304 | 2% |
| Shandaken | 91 | 1,054 | 13% |
| Shawangunk | 7 | 1,816 | 7% |
| Ulster | 14 | 7,304 | 1% |
| Wawarsing | 34 | 4,901 | 4% |
| Woodstock | 94 | 1,753 | 4% |
| (blank) | 2 | | |
| **Total** | **657** | **57,280** | **3%** |

***"My husband died because at the time Verizon land line was down because of issues that have been fixed, and no cell coverage. Also the fire department couldn't get anyone on the radio unless they went down the street. The ambulance went to the wrong address and it took over a hour to get them to my husband. He died on the way to the hospital because of the delay."***

***"My life alert is hooked up to my landline. Electric comes through the copper wiring, and even if Spectrum internet goes down, I still have my landline. Spectrum is spotty in my town. On the best of days, it goes out every single day. Even the hotels in the area advertise it as spotty Wi-Fi. I have health issues, a brain tumor, and I am a seizure risk. My very life depends upon my Verizon landline, and I don't want to lose it."***




**Of the 657 responses to the survey:**

- 335 or 51% of respondents have experienced an emergency communications failure
- 254 or 39% have access to cellular service at home
- 308 or 47% have access to internet at home

Of the 657 Ulster County respondents, 438 or 67% of them have Verizon landlines.

**Of the 438 respondents with a Verizon copper landline:**

- 412 or 94% use their landline to reach 911
- 119 or 27% use their landline for medical alert or monitoring equipment (including TSS for hard of hearing)
- 136 or 31% use their landline to support a security or fire alert system

**Other service available:**

- 147 or 34% have reliable cellular service at their location
- 172 or 39% have reliable internet service
- 84 or 19% have both reliable internet and cellular at their location
- 206 or 47% have neither reliable cellular service or internet at their location

In conclusion, approximately 1% of households took the Ulster County Verizon Copper Landline Survey. Unfortunately, individuals without cellular service or internet and those that are not digitally connected may not have had access to the survey. Nonetheless, the results of the survey show that a large percentage of respondents (51%) have experienced a communications failure. Many of those that have landlines (94%) rely on their landlines to reach 911. Although some copper landline users do have access to cellular (34%) or internet (39%), many landline users (44%) do not have access to either reliable cellular service or internet.

***"Foremost, for health reasons, my wife has an implanted chip in her heart that sends a transmission every night, and without the landline, this will not be possible and we don't have cell phones that work in our area. Also, our alarm system (fire/emergency/theft) will not transmit without the landline, and this is a huge safety and health issue. My wife and I are 80 years old."***

***"We are a public library. During outages during weather emergencies, the library is the ONLY place that can offer the ability to place emergency or urgent calls because of our landline. Additionally, we cannot operate our elevator without a copper landline for the emergency call button. We will not pass New York State inspection."***

***"We need the landline as I need to be accessible 24/7 for my job in law-enforcement. Our cell service is unreliable. Our Internet is unreliable. We had a five day power outage in February a few years ago and that landline is the only thing we were able to contact people with. Losing the landline leaves us without any way to call for help in an emergency."***

Given Verizon's expressed interest in hearing residents' concerns and working with the County to identify practical, location-specific solutions, the resident survey will remain open to gather additional information and inform ongoing discussions with Verizon. https://tinyurl.com/VerizonPOTS-Survey

The Commission also launched a separate survey of critical facilities and community anchor institutions on October 21, 2026, to identify communications vulnerabilities and essential service needs, particularly those affecting public safety. https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/67EApABpQv