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A First Look at the Nagin Administration

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A First Look at the Nagin Years



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Mayoral Approval

Nagin enjoys a very high approval level one year into his term. Approval of Nagin is somewhat racially polarized with whites intensely positive, and blacks positive, but less intensely. For example, 60% of whites “strongly” approve of Nagin, and 37% of blacks feel the same.

Support for the Mayor 1996 and 2003

	1996 (Morial)	2003 (Nagin)
Strongly Approve	45%	46%
Somewhat Approve	34	34
Somewhat Disapprove	8	4
Strongly Disapprove	9	5
Don't Know/Refused	4	11
N	401	457

- There is very little disapproval of Nagin.
- Disapproval is also slightly affected by race, with more blacks disapproving than whites. However, we should emphasize that a large majority of blacks (73%) approve of Nagin's performance as mayor.

Comparative Mayoral Approval

The high level of approval of Nagin can be put in historical perspective by examining the approval level of Morial two years into his first term.

- Nagin's overall approval ratings are strikingly similar to Morial's.
- However, racial polarization was greater in the case of Morial, and the nature of the racial differences was in the opposite direction.
- For Marc Morial, it was the black voters who were intensely approving, but in the case of Ray Nagin, white voters strongly approve more often than black voters.
- Of course, the initial elections of these mayors are reflected in the approval patterns. The 1994 mayoral election was much more racially split than the 2002 mayoral election.

Support for the Mayor by Race 1996 and 2003

	1996 (Morial)		2003 (Nagin)	
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Strongly Approve	58%	23%	37%	60%
Somewhat Approve	32	36	36	31
Somewhat Disapprove	4	14	5	2
Strongly Disapprove	2	20	8	1
Don't Know/Refused	4	7	14	6
N	246	155	280	167

Trust in Local Government

Trust in local government is at the same level that it was six years ago. Americans are traditionally cynical about government, so these figures should not be interpreted purely as opinion about the current City Hall.

- In fact, trust in our local government is about the same as trust in the national government before Sept 11, 2001. However, when the numbers change we can say that trust is increasing or decreasing.

- Two changes have occurred since 1997 which, in combination, produce overall stability. First, white voters have become much more trusting, and second, blacks have become slightly less trusting.

Trust in Local Government 1997 and 2003

	1997	2003	National 2000
Just about Always	5%	4%	4%
Most of the Time	31	34	39
Only Some of the Time	55	54	55
Never (volunteered)	7	6	1
Don't Know/Refused	2	2	1
N	668	457	1555

Trust in Local Government by Race 1997 and 2003

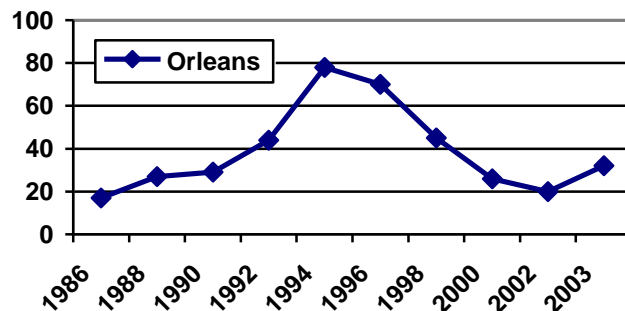
	1997		2003	
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Just about Always	6%	2%	5%	1%
Most of the Time	37	17	32	38
Only Some of the Time	48	72	54	56
Never	7	6	7	5
Don't Know/Refused	2	3	2	--
N	452	204	280	167

Concern about crime

Concern about crime in New Orleans is increasing, as indicated by both the mention of crime as the "biggest problem" and the perception that crime is increasing.

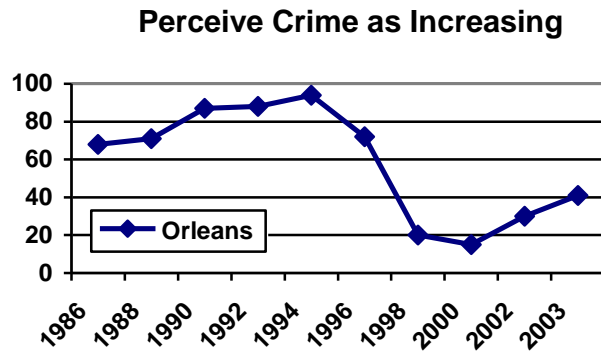
- Last year 20% mentioned crime spontaneously as the most important problem facing the City, but this year 32% cited crime.

Crime as Biggest Problem



- Over the same period the percent perceiving crime as increasing changed from 30% to 41%.

- Black voters are more likely than white voters to say that crime is increasing and to mention crime as the biggest problem, probably because they are more exposed to the crime in their neighborhoods. During the dramatic years of increasing crime in the 1980s we observed this same pattern of blacks noticing the crime before whites.



Perceptions of Crime by Race

	Blacks	Whites
Increased	46%	32%
Same	37	43
Decrease	15	20
DK/RF	2	5
N	280	167

- These trends of increasing concern about crime illustrate the psychological power of the murder rate, as opposed to other types of crime. Violent crime, other than murder, has actually declined in New Orleans, yet the survey results track the increasing number of murders.

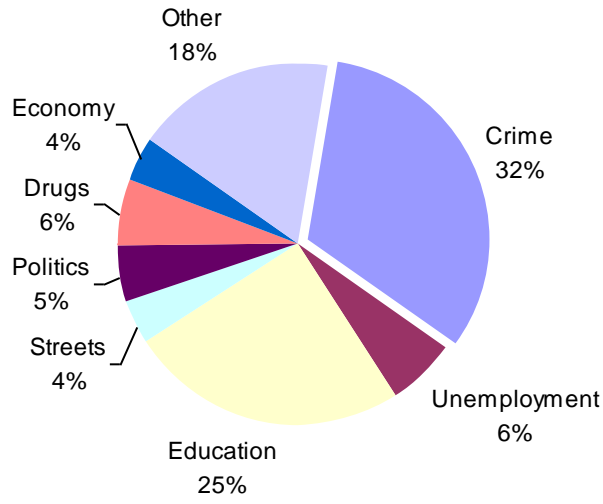
General feelings about life in New Orleans

The increasing concern about crime is just beginning to be reflected in general feelings about life in New Orleans. Although the crime issue has not yet affected the mayor's popularity, it is our opinion that the murder "comeback" has the most potential to diminish the goodwill now felt for Nagin.

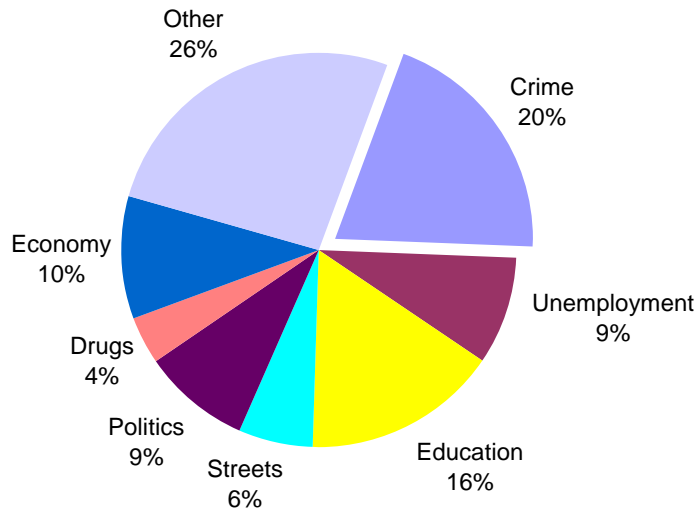
A few more voters this year, compared to 2002, believe that the parish has become a worse place to live.



Biggest Problem Facing Orleans Parish 2003



Biggest Problem Facing Orleans Parish 2002



Concern over Education Rises

One of the most surprising results in this survey is the increased focus of New Orleans voters on education problems. Between 1986 and 1996 education was typically mentioned by only 2-9% of the respondents. Education began to be more salient in the late 1990s as negative publicity about the school system became more prominent in the news. In 2002 16% mentioned education, and this year it rose again to 25%.

The increased mention of education is even more significant when we consider that crime, too, is becoming more salient. Thus, instead of having one dominant problem, there are now two. The increasing mention of education over the past two years may be partly due to the new LEAP testing and the publicity and consequences surrounding the results.

Sample Information:

Number of Respondents:	457
Percentage Black	63%
Percentage Female	58%
Sampling Error	4.7%
Dates of Interviewing	March 22 – March 30, 2003

Appendix

"Thinking back over the last 5 years, would you say that Orleans Parish has become a better or worse place to live, or hasn't there been any change?"

	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000	2002	2003
Better	17%	9%	6%	4%	5%	13%	30%	47%	49%	40%	38%
Same	25	30	18	15	15	23	31	27	31	36	34
Worse	56	57	73	80	78	61	37	22	16	20	25
DK	2	4	3	1	2	3	2	4	4	4	3
	(416)	(470)	(498)	(781)	(596)	(360)	(582)	(442)	(425)	(403)	(457)

"Would you say that the amount of crime in New Orleans Parish has increased, decreased or remained about the same over the last several years?"

	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000	2002	2003
Incr	68%	71%	87%	88%	94%	94%	72%	35%	20%	15%	30%	41%
Same	21	20	10	8	5	5	18	26	28	26	32	39
Decr	7	7	2	3	1	1	8	38	50	57	36	17
DK	4	2	1	1	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	3
	(573)	(416)	(470)	(498)	(781)	(596)	(409)	(582)	(442)	(425)	(403)	(457)