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A Citizen Evaluation of the Morial Administration, 1994-1997

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A Citizen Evaluation of the Morial
Administration,

1994-1997

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Survey Research Center
poli.uno.edu

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The Survey

The UNO Survey Research Center interviewed 582 registered voters in New Orleans regarding their opinions of Mayor Marc Morial and his performance in various areas. The interviews were conducted by telephone between October 25 and November 2, 1997. The survey also includes evaluations of some specific government services that were included in the 1994 and 1996 Quality of Life surveys, so that explicit comparisons can be made across the administration.

Mayoral Popularity:

- **Mayor Marc Morial remains very popular with a 72% approval rating.** This rating is only slightly lower than it was eighteen months ago (April, 1996).
- The Mayor's popularity is very racially polarized; 85% of blacks approve, while 52% of whites approve. Racial polarization is also basically the same as it was in the spring of 1996, and the slight decline in approval occurred in both racial groups.
- Racial division is minimal or non-existent on many of the quality of life measures below, yet it is pronounced on mayoral approval. The reasons will be explored later in this report.

TABLE 1: MAYORAL APPROVAL 1996 AND 1997

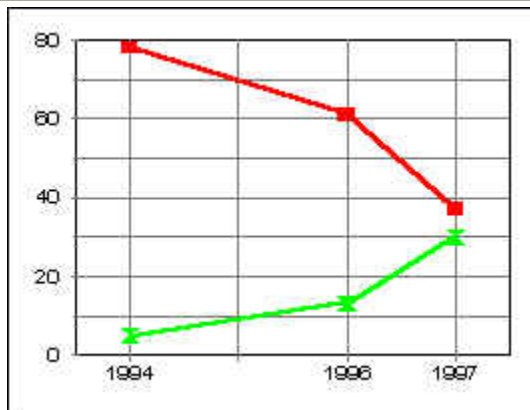
	<i>All</i>		<i>Black</i>		<i>White</i>	
	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
<i>Strongly Approve</i>	44%	38%	58%	52%	23%	15%
<i>Approve</i>	33	34	32	33	36	37
<i>Disapprove</i>	8	11	4	6	14	19
<i>Strongly Disapprove</i>	10	12	2	7	20	22

Over the last 5 years:

Parish has become worse place to live

Parish has become better place to live

Improvement in the General Mood:



- During the Morial administration, i.e. from 1994 to 1997, **there has been substantial improvement in the overall mood of the electorate, both black and white.**
- In 1994 the vast majority of registered voters thought the city had become a worse place to live "over the last few years"; and today only a third have that sentiment.
- There are no racial differences on whether the city has gotten better or worse, both blacks and whites are now evenly divided about the direction of the city, which represents a significant mood change among both races since 1994.
- Regarding the future of the city (Table 3), the mood first declined from 1994 to 1996, then it improved from 1996 to 1997. We believe that the first decline was due to an artificial "high" in 1994 following the election of a new mayor and city council. The recent improvement reflects real changes that have occurred over the past year and which can be seen in other parts of this survey.

TABLE 2

GENERAL MOOD

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

	All			Black			White		
	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997
Better	5%	13%	30%	4%	15%	30%	5%	10%	30%
No Change	15	23	31	15	24	32	14	20	31
Worse	78	61	37	79	58	37	78	66	37
DK	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2

TABLE 3

GENERAL MOOD

"Thinking ahead over the next five years, do you think Orleans Parish will become a better or worse place to live, or won't there be much of a change?"

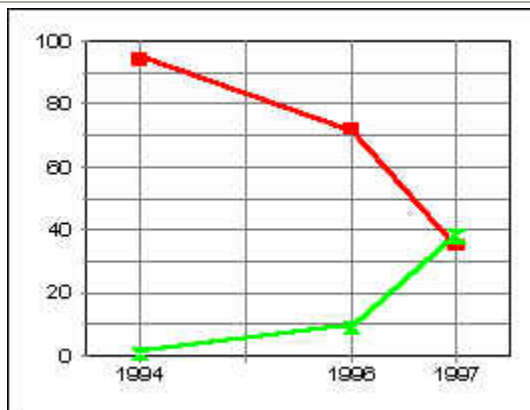
	All			Black			White		
	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997
Better	54%	36%	44%	63%	39%	47%	42%	32%	37%
No Change	16	28	30	14	30	29	18	24	33
Worse	19	26	17	14	22	15	27	34	21
DK	11	9	9	9	9	9	13	10	9

Over the last several years:

Perceive crime as increasing

Perceive crime as decreasing

Recognition That Crime is Decreasing:



- The most remarkable perceptual change is in the area of crime. **Since Marc Morial took office in 1994 the percent believing crime is increasing has dropped from 94% to 35%.** The actual decline in crime reported by the Police Department has been recognized by the public.
- **For the first time in the UNO Quality of Life series, more people think crime is decreasing than think it is increasing.**
- The change in perceptions about crime has occurred among both whites and blacks (Table 4); only a third of both racial groups now believe that crime is still increasing. Blacks, however, are slightly more likely to recognize that crime is actually decreasing - possibly because they were more likely to observe and experience the crime in the first place.
- Crime is still mentioned most often as the most important problem, but the frequency of that mention has dropped from 78% to 60% during the Morial administration (Table 5).
- Voters feel safer than they did three years ago, but there is still considerable wariness about nighttime safety. Today fewer blacks and whites reply that they feel "not at all safe" around their homes during the night.
- In prior surveys whites have felt slightly safer at night than blacks, but today the reverse is true; black voters are more likely to say that they feel "very safe".

TABLE 4**FOCUS ON CRIME**

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

	All			Black			White		
	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997
Increased	94%	72%	35%	93%	70%	34%	96%	77%	37%
Remained Same	5	18	26	6	18	23	3	17	30
Decreased	1	9	38	1	12	43		3	30
DK		2	2			1		3	3

TABLE 5**MENTION OF CRIME AS BIGGEST PROBLEM**

	<i>All</i>			<i>Black</i>			<i>White</i>		
	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
<i>Crime is biggest problem</i>	79%	70%	60%	80%	69%	62%	77%	74%	54%

TABLE 6

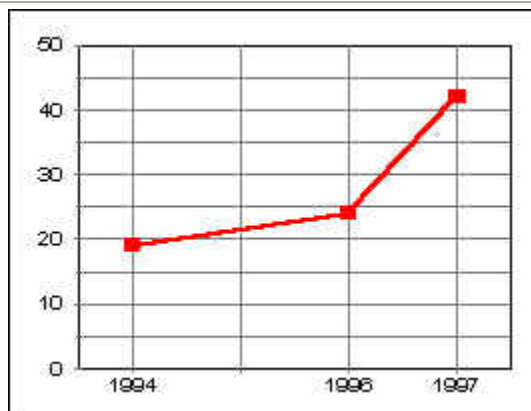
"How safe do you feel around your home during the night?"

	<i>All</i>			<i>Black</i>			<i>White</i>		
	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
<i>Very Safe</i>	10%	13%	18%	8%	11%	21%	11%	15%	12%
<i>Safe</i>	44	43	42	43	44	42	44	43	41
<i>Not Very Safe</i>	25	24	27	25	24	23	24	26	33
<i>Not at all Safe</i>	21	19	13	23	20	14	19	16	13
<i>DK</i>	1	1		1	1		1		1

Quality of Police Protection

Percent saying Good or Excellent

Confidence in Police Increasing:



- Consistent with the recognition that crime is decreasing, **the positive rating of the police has doubled in the past eighteen months.** Police protection has not been rated this highly by the public since 1986, prior to the "crime epidemic" of the late 1980s.

- The police reform program has clearly increased public confidence in the police; there was only minimal change in evaluation of the police during the first two years of the administration. The significant increase in confidence occurred after police reform was implemented.
- Blacks and whites are in complete agreement about improvement in the quality of police protection.
- **Voters regard police reform and the appointment of Chief Pennington as Mayor Morial's most important achievement during his first term** (Table 8). This question was asked in an open format and a third of both blacks and whites mentioned either the police chief or police reform as the Mayor's most important achievement.
- Black voters are more likely than white voters to mention crime control and jobs as Mayor's the most important achievement.

<i>TABLE 7</i>									
<i>QUALITY OF POLICE PROTECTION</i>									
	<i>All</i>			<i>Black</i>			<i>White</i>		
	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
<i>Excellent/Good</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>44%</i>
<i>Fair</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Poor</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>DK</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>

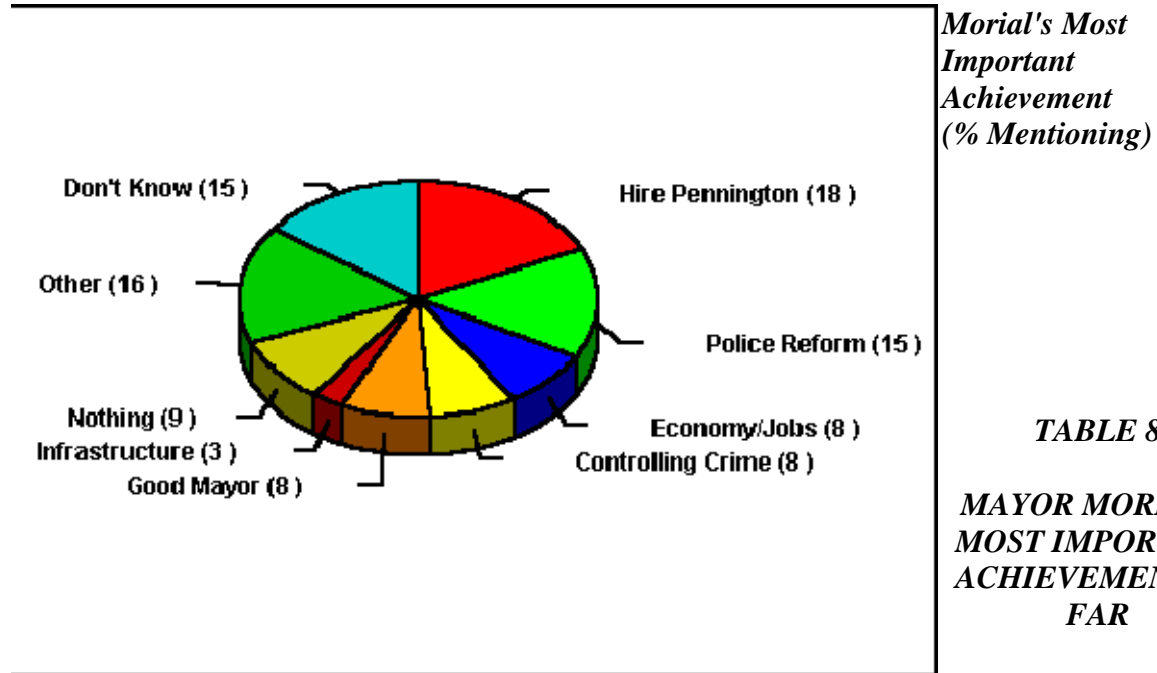


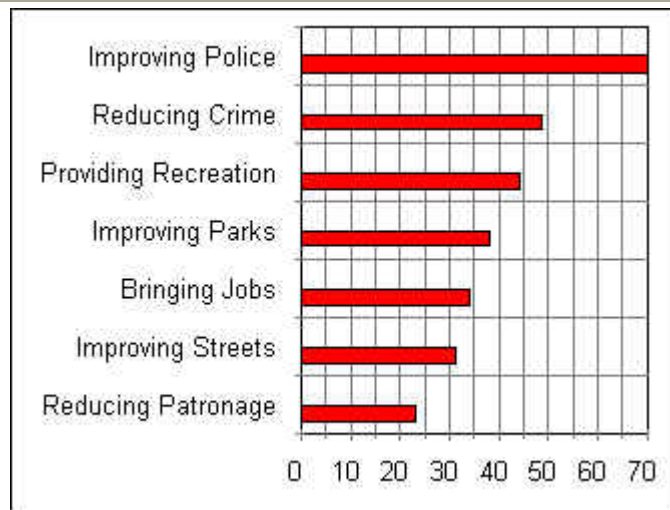
TABLE 8
MAYOR MORIAL'S MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR

	<i>All</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
<i>Hire Chief Pennington</i>	18%	17%	18%
<i>Improving Police Dept.</i>	15	17	13
<i>Economic Development/Jobs</i>	8	11	5
<i>Generally Good Mayor</i>	8	7	9
<i>Controlling Crime</i>	8	10	3
<i>City Projects/Infrastructure</i>	3	3	3
<i>Cleaning Up the City</i>	2	3	1
<i>Improving Housing/Housing Projects</i>	2	3	1
<i>Improving Education</i>	2	2	2

<i>Helping Youth of the City</i>	2	3	1
<i>Curfew</i>	2	2	1
<i>Dealing with Gambling Interests</i>	2	1	3
<i>Nothing</i>	9	7	13
<i>Other</i>	4	4	6
<i>DK-Ref</i>	15	12	21

Mayor's Performance in Specific Areas:

Percent giving positive response



- Again, it is clear that police reform is Mayor Morial's most important achievement in the eyes of voters. Both black and white voters rate his performance in this area higher by far than his performance in other specific areas.
- As is the case in evaluating all public officials, when voters are asked about specific performance, they often respond with their overall evaluation. Thus, the racial polarization on mayoral approval emerged in these performance ratings, although not to the same degree as on the approval measure itself. Blacks are about twenty percentage points more positive on the Mayor's performance in the specific areas, with the exception of improving police.

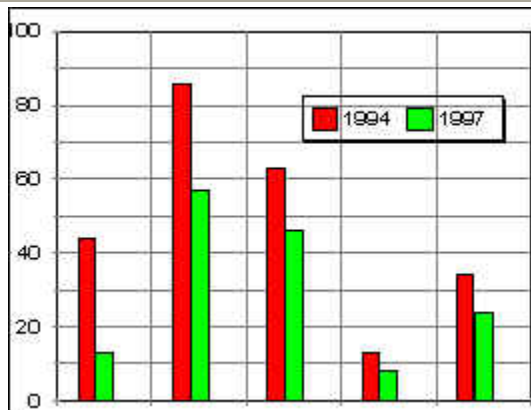
TABLE 9			
MAYOR'S PERFORMANCE IN SPECIFIC AREAS			
% SAYING EXCELLENT OR GOOD			
	<i>All</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>

<i>Reducing crime</i>	49%	57%	38%
<i>Attracting new jobs to the city</i>	34%	43%	21%
<i>improving the streets</i>	31%	38%	18%
<i>improving the parks</i>	38%	46%	24%
<i>providing recreation</i>	44%	51%	31%
<i>reducing patronage in city hall*</i>	23%	32%	8%
<i>improving the quality of police</i>	70%	75%	62%
<i>improving the overall quality of life in the city</i>	41%	50%	27%

** Should be viewed with caution since many voters at the lower educational levels did not understand the meaning of the word, "patronage."*

City Services, 1994-1997:

Percent giving negative response ("poor")



--Park/Rec-Aband-Streets-Public-Traffic-
 -
 -----Housing-----Transp-----

- The rating of five local government services (in addition to police and crime control) can be charted from 1994 to 1997, and **all five services show improvement**. The most dramatic change is a decline in the percent giving the negative, "poor", rating.
- **Parks/recreation and control of abandoned houses** are the services (in addition to police protection) which voters see as most improved since the beginning of the administration. Both whites and blacks see improvements in these two areas.
- Perceptions of the streets, public transportation and traffic have also improved since 1994, but only among black voters.
- White voters are particularly negative about the condition of the streets, much more so than black voters.

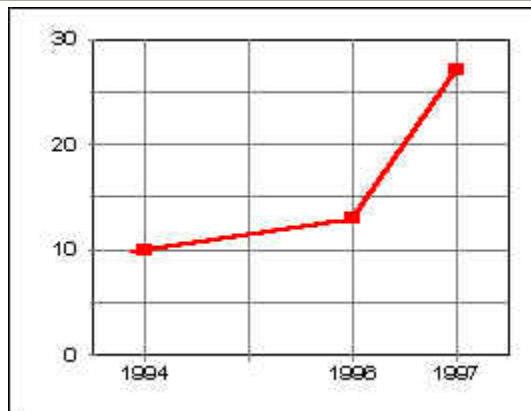
TABLE 10									
CITY SERVICES, 1994-1997									
	All			Black			White		
	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997
Parks and Recreation									
Excellent/Good	22%	31%	40%	14%	24%	43%	33%	40%	36%
Poor	44%	30%	13%	57%	34%	13%	28%	23%	12%
Control of Abandoned Houses									
Excellent/Good	4%	4%	15%	4%	4%	16%	3%	4%	13%
Poor	85%	80%	57%	87%	82%	56%	82%	77%	57%
Conditions of Local Streets and Roads									
Excellent/Good	11%	7%	21%	12%	8%	26%	11%	4%	13%
Poor	63%	72%	46%	62%	69%	37%	63%	75%	61%
Availability of Public Transportation									

Excellent/Good	46%	41%	50%	38%	37%	62%	58%	47%	58%
Poor	13%	17%	8%	17%	20%	8%	8%	11%	8%
Control of Traffic Congestion									
Excellent/Good	24%	21%	32%	19%	18%	33%	29%	24%	32%
Poor	34%	36%	24%	40%	35%	26%	26%	37%	23%
Overall Level of Government Services									
Excellent/Good	14%	20%	29%	18%	19%	34%	9%	21%	22%
Poor	36%	30%	16%	35%	29%	14%	38%	31%	19%

Opportunities for Employment

Percent saying "good" or "Excellent"

Economic Outlook:



- Voter perceptions reflect the actual improvements in the economic condition of the City since 1994. Today both whites and blacks believe opportunities for employment are better than at the beginning of the Morial administration.
- Voter perceptions about the prospect of new industry and new jobs coming to New Orleans have, in the past, reflected the fortunes of the casino; and thus, there has been less improvement in outlook as measured by this item.

TABLE 11									
ECONOMIC OUTLOOK									
	All			Black			White		
	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997	1994	1996	1997
Opportunities for Employment									
Excellent/Good	10%	12%	27%	8%	8%	23%	13%	19%	34%

Poor	46%	47%	23%	58%	56%	28%	31%	33%	14%
Likelihood of new jobs and industry coming into the Parish									
Excellent/Good	20%	12%	24%	21%	13%	27%	19%	11%	18%
Poor	41%	51%	35%	42%	53%	33%	39%	46%	40%
Likelihood of your family increasing its income in the next several years									
Excellent/Good	37%	35%	42%	38%	36%	45%	35%	34%	38%
Poor	26%	31%	20%	27%	30%	20%	25%	34%	19%

Explaining White Approval of the Mayor:

Since white approval of the Mayor is so divided (52/41), we examined some of the possible explanations. The three factors below help explain why white voters approve or disapprove of the Mayor's performance. There are certainly other factors that explain white approval, but they are not in the survey

- (1) The first is evaluations of police protection; whites who give the police a positive rating are three times more likely to approve of the Mayor than whites who give the police a negative rating.
- (2) The second is a perception of corruption in City Hall. Among whites who think there are many "crooked" people in City Hall the Mayor's approval rating is only 36%, but among the whites who think only a few are crooked, his approval is 72%.
- (3) The third is racism, as measured by the University of Michigan's National Election Studies. Whites who score low on the racism scale are much more likely to approve of the mayor (72%).

TABLE 12		
EXPLAINING WHITE APPROVAL OF MAYOR		
	Whites Only	
	% Approve	% Disapprove
Rate Police Positively	66%	32%
Rate Police Negatively	23%	60%

High on Racism Scale	32%	65%
Medium on Racism Scale	55%	39%
Low on Racism Scale	71%	29%
Believe quite a few crooked in City Hall	36%	59%
Believe not many crooked in City Hall	72%	24%

TABLE 13

"Do you think that quite a few people running City Hall are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?"

	Whites	Blacks
Hardly any	11%	20%
Not many	38%	37%
Quite a few	51%	37%

Sample Information:

Sampling error: plus or minus 4%

N: 582

% Black: 63

% Female: 59

Dates of Interviewing: Oct. 25 - Nov. 2, 1997