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“Keeping People”

The 2007 Quality of Life Survey in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes



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<http://poli.uno.edu/unopoll/index.htm>

Executive Summary

The University of New Orleans is committed to assisting in the recovery of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes through periodic surveys of the current residents. By identifying the key problems they are facing and their evaluations of current government services and conditions, we hope to provide guidelines for public policy. Over time these studies can measure the progress or lack of progress we as a community are making. Below are the key findings of this survey.

- Dissatisfaction with city government has grown significantly in New Orleans over the past five months.
- A third of the residents of both Jefferson and New Orleans parishes are still considering leaving. Retaining current residents is dependent on several policy priorities:
 - **Controlling crime**
 - **A more proactive government/speeding up Road Home**
 - **Improving levees/flood prevention**
- The City of New Orleans is much cleaner than it was five months ago.
- Everyday life is easier in both parishes than it was a year ago, but progress over the past five months is mixed.
- The availability of housing has improved in both parishes.
- Residents are less worried than they were a year ago, but improvement has stalled in the past five months.
- Concern about crime has increased dramatically in Jefferson Parish compared to pre-Katrina.
- The mood/depression level of residents has not improved, and, by some indicators, is worsening in Jefferson.
- Temporary living arrangements have not improved.

“Keeping People” The 2007 Quality of Life Survey

The UNO Survey Research Center is continuing a series of studies relevant to the formation of public policy post-Katrina. Our objectives are as follows:

- To provide guidelines for public policy from citizens currently living in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes
- To measure citizen evaluations of basic city services, such as police, crime control, litter control, streets, etc.
- To identify citizens’ key concerns about living in Orleans and Jefferson
- To identify difficulties citizens are encountering in their daily lives.
- To estimate the number of citizens who express likelihood of leaving, and to identify the key reasons for potential out migration.
- To measure the mood of citizens.

The current study is a continuation of the “Keeping People” Quality of Life Survey conducted in November 2006. The survey has limitations in the current environment, and these should be kept in mind.

- These respondents are not the evacuees.
- They are the people in the best living conditions because most are in a house or apartment that is renovated enough to have a land-based phone.
- Both samples are weighted to reflect the Louisiana Dept of Health and Hospitals estimates of racial, age and gender composition released in January 2007.

Biggest Problem Facing Orleans Parish

<i>Biggest Problem (spontaneous mention)</i>	June 2004	October 2006	March 2007
Crime/ Do not feel safe	46%	31%	29%
Dissatisfaction with City Government/Road Home*	8	18	34**
Availability of Housing	--	13	--
Poor Infrastructure	--	8	--
Cost of Living	--	--	10

* In 2004 and 2006 this category ,of course, did not include Road Home.

**Road Home constitutes 4% of this category in 2007.

- The most surprising finding in this study is that, *for the first time in twenty years, something rivals crime as the “biggest” problem facing New Orleans.* In the wake of Katrina, dissatisfaction with city government now equals crime in spontaneous mentions. Given the media attention to crime and the majority belief that crime is increasing, it is striking that negative comments about city government equal comments about crime.
- Comments indicating *dissatisfaction with city government* dominate this category, although comments about the Road Home are also included. A few examples are listed below.
 - “No leadership”, “lack of good leaders”
 - “Elected officials/the mayor”
 - “Politicians never follow through on plans”
 - “The present city government”
 - “Politicians more talk than action”
 - “People need the Road Home money to get back into their homes”

Biggest Problem Facing Jefferson Parish

<i>Biggest Problem (spontaneous mention)</i>	June 2004	October 2006	March 2007
Crime/ Do not feel safe	24%	45%	46%
Government/Politics	--	8	9
Levees/Flood Control	6*	6	8
Availability of Housing	--	6	6
Traffic	8	--	7

* In 2004 this problem was expressed as “drainage”

Trend in Crime

<i>Has the amount of crime in Orleans/Jefferson Parish increased, decreased, or remained about the same over the past year?</i>	Orleans			Jefferson		
	2004	2006	2007	2004	2006	2007
Increased	63%	73%	70%	44%	87%	84%

- **Concern about crime has increased dramatically in Jefferson Parish compared to pre-Katrina.** Crime is by far most frequently mentioned as the biggest problem facing the parish, and today the percent of residents believing that crime is increasing has reached 84%.

Likelihood of Leaving

<i>“How likely is it that you will leave Orleans/Jefferson Parish within the next two years?”</i>	Orleans		Jefferson	
	October 2006	March 2007	October 2006	March 2007
Very likely	17%	12%	17%	14%
Somewhat likely	15	17	15	20
Not very likely	67	70	65	66
Don't know	1	1	3	<1

- Five months ago about one-third of the residents of Orleans and of Jefferson reported in our survey either that they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to leave within the next two years. Today this sentiment is essentially unchanged. These responses do not mean that all of these residents will actually move. Answers to this question can mean many things, from mere frustrations of the day to actual plans to move out. There is still a very real possibility of keeping these residents.
- The people most likely to consider leaving are:
 - Young people
 - People with children under eighteen
 - People with higher levels of depression
 - People who do not feel safe from crime
 - Those who are pessimistic about the future of their parish.

What is the most important thing that government can do to make you more likely to stay?	Orleans	Jefferson
Reduce Crime	26%	27%
Fix levees/pumps	6	10
Employment Opportunities	7	10
More Action from Government	9	-
Road Home funds available	8	-
Nothing/ Don't Know	8	20
N	88	140

If you leave the Parish, where are you most likely to go?	Orleans	Jefferson
Out of Louisiana	63%	54%
Other Louisiana*	9	10
St. Tammany	2	9
Hammond	2	3
Baton Rouge area	1	3
Jefferson Parish	5	--
Orleans Parish	--	7
Don't Know	17	13
Refused	1	1
N	88	140

*not Baton Rouge area, St. Tammany, Hammond, Jefferson, or Orleans

- We asked those who expressed a likelihood of leaving what government could do to make them more likely to stay, and the most common answer in both parishes is to reduce crime. ***Crime and public safety*** are the most critical problems to address immediately in order to retard out migration.
- Beyond crime, those considering leaving New Orleans say that they want more ***Action from Government and a speedier Road Home process***. Government policies that streamline the receipt of Road Home funds or that result in concrete improvements that citizens can see will help retain population.
- ***A majority of those expressing a likelihood of leaving said that they would move out of the state.*** So out migration from New Orleans and Jefferson has an implication for the state population as well as these specific parishes.

Worry, Depression, and Everyday Difficulties

Worry

<i>Percent worried about what will happen to them in the next five years.</i>	Orleans			Jefferson		
	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007
Somewhat worried	36%	29%	35%	33%	30%	33%
Very worried	31	20	22	34	20	19
Total	67	49	57	67	50	52

- The level of worry about what will happen to residents, personally, has improved in the past year. One year ago two-thirds of the respondents said they were worried about what would happen to *them* in the future. Today about half of the residents of Orleans and Jefferson express that level of worry about their future.
- However, in the past five months the improvement in worry has stalled in Jefferson, and worry has even increased in New Orleans. Worry levels are important to monitor as an indicator of recovery because Americans generally tend to be optimistic about the future. Ultimately, residents of this area must reach a greater level of comfort about their future.

Depression and Mood

<i>Percent reported feeling that way 5-7 days last week</i>	Orleans				Jefferson		
	2003 ^b	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007
Tired	--	37	39	38	39	42	46
Irritable	--	20 ^a	22	20	21	17	20
Everything an effort	14	22 ^a	28	24	24	25	27
Trouble falling asleep	11	30 ^a	25	28	21	26	28
Mind not on track	9	23	21	21	13	22	20
Sad	8	21 ^a	23	17	19	17	18

^a The April 2006 Orleans data probably underestimate black residents because the actual population racial distribution was not known at that time. If the sample could have been weighted to the actual percent black, these figures would be a few (1-3) percentage points higher

^b Source: Drs. Jeanne Hurlbert and John Beggs, LSU Dept. of Sociology

- Unfortunately, over the past year, there has been no improvement in the indicators of mood and depression. One-fifth or more of the residents of both parishes are irritable, tired, feel everything is an effort, have trouble sleeping, or cannot keep their mind on track nearly every day.
- Several indicators suggest that depression and mood in Jefferson may be worsening. Fatigue, sleep problems, and difficulty concentrating are reported more often than a year ago. The two factors most likely producing depression in Jefferson are concern about the increase in crime and the unchanging difficulties of everyday life, such as traffic and making home repairs.
- The depression indicators are important to track in both parishes because they are related to the likelihood of moving out of the area.

Everyday Difficulties

<i>Percent reporting difficulty with activities.</i>	Orleans			Jefferson		
	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007
Getting groceries	41 ^a	27	38	41	17	17
Other Shopping	68	56	56	61	35	28
Mail services	86	43	30	71	26	26
Getting around town	68	45	42	60	50	47
Getting Medical care	45 ^a	50	56	34	32	33
Making Home repairs	72	71	54	59	47	51

^a See previous table for explanation.

- An important indicator of the quality of life in New Orleans is the degree of difficulty people experience in their everyday lives. ***Although life is easier in New Orleans than it was a year ago, progress over the past five months on the “difficulty” items is mixed.*** On the positive side, getting mail and making home repairs have become easier for New Orleans residents, but difficulties with shopping, getting medical care, and getting around have not changed significantly.
- Somewhat surprisingly, getting groceries has become more difficult in New Orleans over the past five months. We believe this is due to people now living in Lakeview, Gentilly, and New Orleans East where groceries are scarce.
- As in New Orleans, ***everyday life in Jefferson has definitely gotten easier in the past year, but progress is mixed in past five months.*** Progress has been made in that shopping is easier due to more businesses being open. But every other indicator of

difficulty with everyday life is the same as five months ago. Half of Jefferson residents still report difficulty getting around town and making home repairs.

- The fact that half of the residents in both parishes are still having difficulties making home repairs reflects the slow pace of the recovery as individuals who choose to rebuild struggle with contractors, materials, Road Home etc. Hopefully, as Road Home money reaches more individuals, they will complete their home repairs and, therefore, not report difficulties with rebuilding.

Overall Satisfaction, Income Change, and Living Conditions

Overall Satisfaction

<i>Percent satisfied with life in parish</i>	Orleans				Jefferson			
	2004	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007	2004	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007
“Very Satisfied” and “Satisfied”	59	48	53	48	89	89	87	80

- ***Satisfaction with life in Jefferson Parish is quite high.*** Despite the fact that satisfaction with life in Jefferson has declined slightly in the past five months, it is still at a robust 80%. This is quite a positive indicator for Jefferson, considering that many of the residents are experiencing difficulties with traffic and home repairs and are worried about crime.
- Satisfaction with life in Orleans is lower than in Jefferson, which is quite predictable given the devastation in Orleans. What is troubling is that there has been no improvement in satisfaction over the past year. We will be following this general measure of satisfaction in Orleans over the next few years as a measure of recovery.

Living Conditions and Income Change

<i>Percent reporting:</i>	Orleans			Jefferson		
	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007	April 2006	October 2006	March 2007
Living with others	28 ^a	31	30	27	22	26
Current residence is temporary.	22 ^a	31	28	30	24	25
Family income has decreased.	37 ^a	28	25	24	17	17

^a See Depression table for explanation.

- *On the positive side, in both Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, the number of residents saying that their family income has decreased since Katrina is less than a year ago. In Jefferson income recovery may be nearly complete since only 17% say their income is lower than before the storm.*
- If we measure recovery by the numbers of people who are living with others, have others living with them, or consider their residence as temporary, there has been no improvement in either Orleans or Jefferson in the past year. Twenty to thirty percent are still in these living arrangements.

Evaluations of Government Services and Other Conditions

<i>Percent saying that services are "poor" or "very poor."</i>	Orleans		Jefferson	
	October 2006	March 2007	October 2006	March 2007
Overall level of government services.	53	53	14	13
Police protection	41	37	13	9
Availability of housing	71*	62	35	27
Availability of medical care	51	59	21	19
Conditions of roads and streets	75	70	20	22
Control of traffic	30	38	42	39
Availability of public transportation	33	38	22	20
Drainage and flood control	48	56	34	26
Control of litter and trash	65	35	25	18
Control of abandoned housing	72	75	25	20
Opportunities for employment	26	27	14	13
Likelihood of new jobs and industry	34	37	21	21

*Bolted items indicate change.

- Five months ago UNO set a baseline evaluation of a series of government services and city conditions from which to measure improvement over time. Residents can rate these services from Very Good to Very Poor.
- ***A dramatic improvement has been made in the cleanliness of Orleans Parish.*** Five months ago “control of litter and trash” was one of the lowest rated government services in New Orleans, and now it is one of the most highly rated. City Hall efforts to clean up debris and garbage have clearly been noticed by residents.
- Perceptions of most of these services and conditions have not changed over the past five months. However, ***the availability of housing has improved in both parishes*** and Jefferson residents report improvements in both cleanliness and drainage.
- Both drainage and the availability of medical care in New Orleans are rated lower today than five months ago. Every incident of street flooding will lower citizen evaluations of drainage, and there was a major street flooding event several months ago. Regarding medical care, the lower rating may be due to more residents living in devastated areas where medical care is scarce, and to the fact that some people are just getting around to seeking medical care.

Approval of Mayor Ray Nagin and Parish President Aaron Broussard

<i>Approval of Mayor Nagin</i>	Orleans October 2006			Orleans March 2007		
	All	Whites	Blacks	All	Whites	Blacks
Strongly approve	12%	5%	21%	8%	1%	16%
Approve	28	18	40	25	14	35
Disapprove	24	32	14	28	33	22
Strongly disapprove	32	40	21	35	49	20
Don't Know	2	3	2	4	2	7

<i>Approval of Jefferson Parish President Broussard</i>	Jefferson	
	October 2006	March 2007
Strongly approve	15%	20%
Approve	38	41
Disapprove	16	15
Strongly disapprove	16	13
Don't Know	15	1

- **Only 33% percent of the residents currently living in New Orleans approve of Mayor Ray Nagin.** This approval rating is consistent with the dissatisfaction with city government expressed in the question about the “biggest problem” facing New Orleans. While there is no one overriding reason for the Mayor’s low level of support from the public, evidence in this survey suggests perceptions of a stalled recovery and lack of action on the part of local government.
- The survey results are consistent with a recent report released by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana and the Rockefeller Institute of Government, which contends that recovery is “dependent on how effective leaders have been in making decisions.” (reported by Barrow, *Times Picayune*, April 25, 2007)
- As in the last survey, approval of Mayor Nagin is very racially polarized, with only 15% of whites approving, and 51% of blacks approving. Most interesting is that support for the Mayor has declined nearly equally among both whites and blacks.
- **In spite of the increasing worry about crime in Jefferson Parish, Parish President Broussard’s approval rating has risen.** Currently 61% percent of the residents in Jefferson Parish approve of the job Broussard is doing. The economic boom in Jefferson, along with improvements in the availability of housing and in flood control, is probably contributing to this rise in approval.

Hurricane Evacuation

<i>Percent likely to evacuate when recommended.</i>	Orleans		Jefferson	
	June 2004	March 2007	June 2004	March 2007
Definitely Evacuate	30%	75%	27	55%
Probably Evacuate	40	14	43	22
Probably not Evacuate	15	6	19	8
Definitely not Evacuate	10	4	7	13
Don’t Know	6	2	4	2

- **Hurricane Katrina has had a dramatic effect on residents’ tendency to evacuate when recommended by public officials.** Today over three-quarters of the residents in both Orleans and over half in Jefferson say they would “definitely evacuate” if public officials recommended it. These answers are certainly somewhat inflated by the desire to give the correct response, but the change since 2004 indicates that a much larger proportion of residents in these parishes are certain about their intention to evacuate if recommended.

Survey Information

Survey Methodology:

Dates of Interviewing: March 15 – April 5, 2007

Number of Interviews: Jefferson, 419; Orleans, 302

Sampling Error: 6% in Orleans, 5% in Jefferson

Percent Black in Jefferson sample: 26%

Percent Black in Orleans Sample: 49%

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