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2000 Quality of Life Survey - Orleans and Jefferson Parishes

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2000 QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

ORLEANS AND JEFFERSON PARISHES

April, 2000



University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

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SUMMARY

Perceptions of the quality of life in the City of New Orleans continue to improve. More people think life in the City is getting better than think it is getting worse; the percent saying the City is getting better has more than tripled over the past four years.

The prominence of the crime problem continues to decrease in both parishes. One-fourth or less mention crime as the biggest problem.

New Orleans voters feel safer than they have at any other time since 1986, the beginning of the Quality of Life series. The belief that crime is decreasing has increased from less than 1% to 57% in six years.

The most significant change in Jefferson also occurred in the area of crime, but the improvement is less dramatic because Jefferson voters were never as negative as Orleans voters. Also, Jefferson voters are probably reacting positively to declining crime in the City.

Education is a more salient problem in Orleans than it has been in any previous Quality of Life survey. Beyond crime, Jefferson voters are focused on a variety of problems, such as traffic, politics, education, and drainage.

Despite the recent negative publicity about Orleans public schools, evaluations of the schools simply continue a slow deterioration.

A majority of voters in both parishes favors LEAP, with whites more favorable than blacks. However, in Orleans a plurality of black voters favors the LEAP program.

Public transportation in Orleans, while still rated high relative to other city services, received its lowest rating in fourteen years, probably due to increased fares and reduced services.

Voters in both parishes are more optimistic about employment prospects than they have been at any time in the fourteen year series, but a majority in Orleans still rate job prospects as "poor".

Mayor Marc Morial, while still enjoying a high approval rating of 64%, has lost approval in the past two years, particularly among blacks.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE SERIES

The UNO Survey Research Center began its Quality of Life series in 1986. Since then the quality of life and government services in Jefferson and Orleans parishes has been assessed every other year. The current 2000 survey is the eighth in the series, and in this report we pay particular attention to changes in both parishes that have occurred over the last four years.

These surveys are designed to provide an ongoing picture of how voters view local government services and the general quality of life. They highlight the problems that are of greatest concern to the voters, as well as areas of satisfaction in their parish. The fourteen-year time series can be used to assess the effects of events, programs, and policies. The series can also inform the public and officials about specific areas of perceived deterioration or improvement.

The results of the Quality of Life surveys represent the perceptions and opinions of the registered voters of the two parishes. The results are not objective measures of the quality of life or the quality of government services.

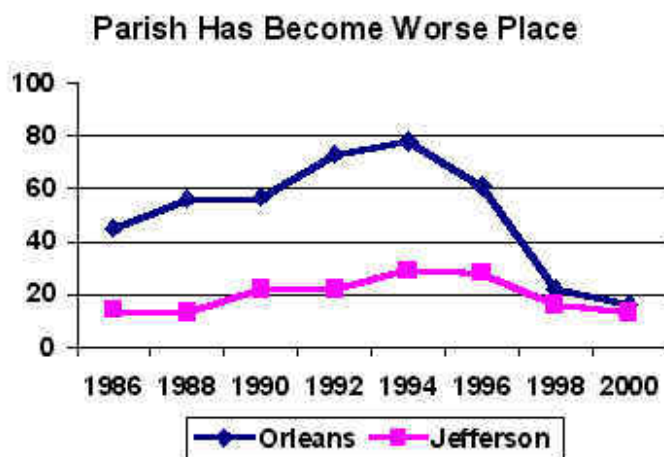
GENERAL QUALITY OF LIFE (Tables 1 & 2)

As has been the case in all of the surveys since 1986, Jefferson voters are quite satisfied with life in their parish. The high level of satisfaction in Jefferson (92%) contrasts with New Orleans where voters are less satisfied (67%). However, the current level of contentment in New Orleans is higher than four years ago when only 53% were satisfied. This pattern of an improving mood in New Orleans is repeated throughout the survey.

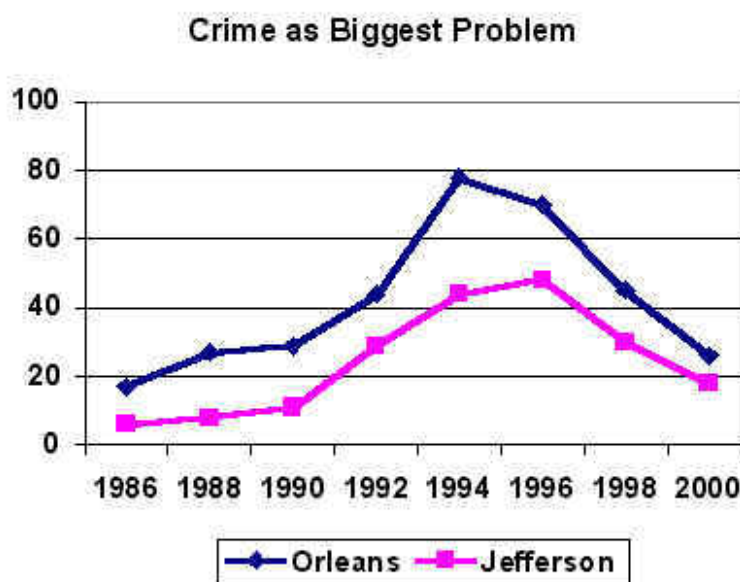
In another general measure of the quality of life, we asked voters if they thought their parish had become a better or worse place to live, or whether there had been no change in the past five years. In contrast to the past when there were huge parish differences, voters in both parishes are about equally positive about things getting better.

The improvement in Orleans is particularly dramatic; compared to four years ago, the percent saying that the city is getting better has more than tripled (13% compared to 49%). As was the case in 1998, more Orleans residents think the city is getting better than think it is getting worse.

Over the last four years, the recent trend in Jefferson is also one of improvement, but not nearly as dramatic as in New Orleans, because Jefferson never reached the extremely low evaluations seen in New Orleans in the early 90's.



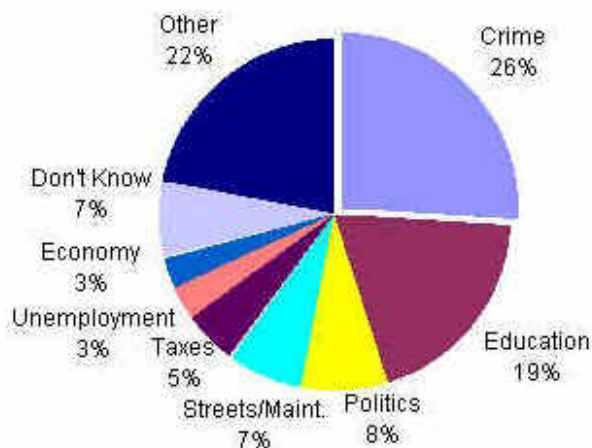
The prominence of the crime problem in Orleans and Jefferson continues to decrease. Over a four year period, the percent spontaneously mentioning crime as the biggest problem has declined from 70 % to 26% in Orleans and from 48% to 18% in Jefferson. It is interesting that the trend in Jefferson parallels the trend in New Orleans, even though the trends in actual crime have not been as variable as those in the City. Citizens in Jefferson are probably responding to the news of declining crime in the City, and that news has created greater comfort in Jefferson.



Biggest Problem Facing Parish

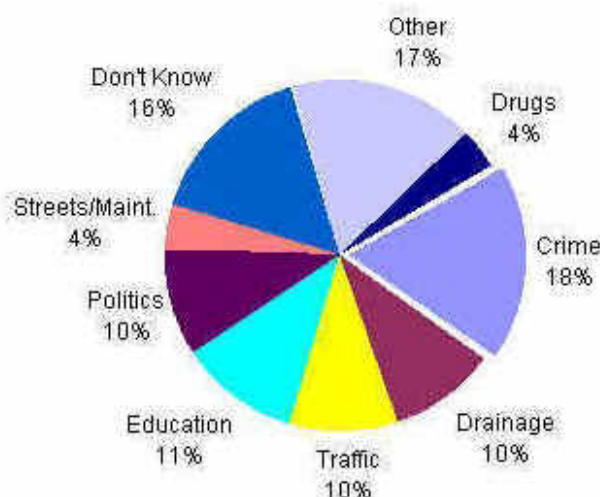
Orleans, 2000

In Orleans, education is a more salient problem than it has been in any previous Quality of Life survey. Understandably, its prominence is greater in Orleans than in Jefferson, given the deluge of publicity about city schools in past years. However, the importance of education to voters in Jefferson is growing as well.



Jefferson, 2000

Because they are less focused on crime and education than Orleans voters, Jeffersonians mention a greater variety of problems, such as traffic, politics and drainage.



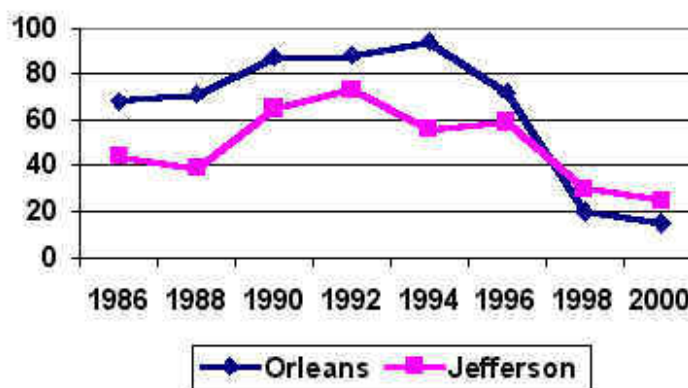
FOCUS ON CRIME (Tables 3 through 6)

In New Orleans, perceptions about crime continue to improve. In every Quality of Life survey from 1986 through 1996 a large majority thought crime in the City was increasing.

Two years ago 20% held that view, and today only 15% say crime is increasing. Thus, **the belief that crime is increasing has dropped 79% in six years.**

It is clear that voters are noticing the actual decline in crime, either from media reports or in their own neighborhoods. The percent of voters who perceive that crime is decreasing in New Orleans has grown from <1% in 1994 to 57% today.

Perceive Crime as Increasing



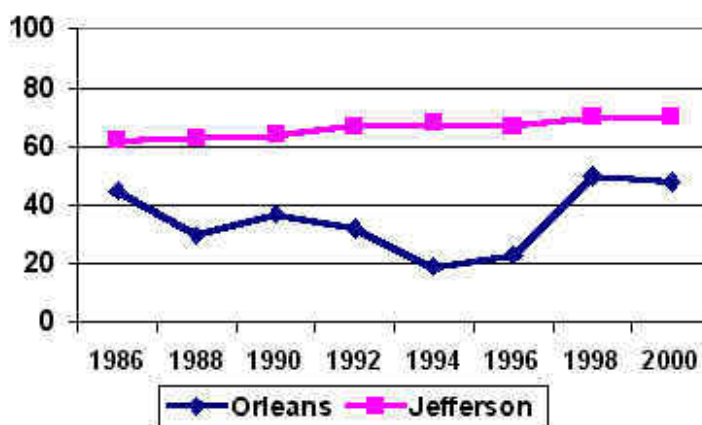
Again, the trend in Jefferson roughly parallels the trend in New Orleans.

Evaluations of the New Orleans police continue to remain high relative to earlier years, consistent with perceptions of the trends in crime. Four years ago only 23% of voters in the city gave the police positive ratings, but today that figure is 48%. As we noted in the 1998 report, the most dramatic increase occurred following the 1996 police reform program.

Police in Jefferson continue to enjoy a high level of confidence from voters in that parish.

Quality of Police Protection

Excellent/Good

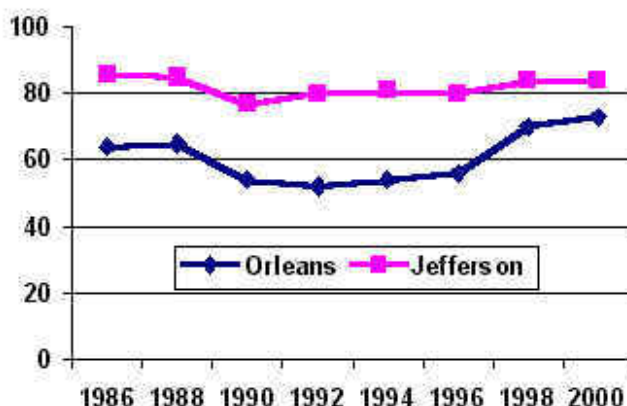


New Orleans residents feel safer than they have at any other time in the Quality of Life series, which is consistent with perceptions about decreasing crime and confidence in police.

The "feeling of safety" is a perception, so it is part reality and part psychological reaction to the news reports of declining crime.

Feeling Safe

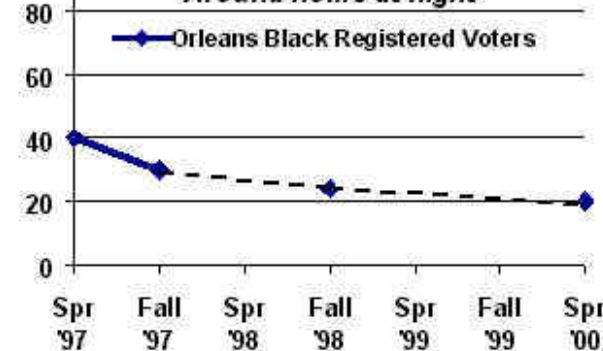
Around home during the night



One of the reasons Orleans voters feel safer is that they hear less gunfire at night than they did three years ago. In the spring of 1997 40% of black registered voters reported hearing gunfire on a regular basis (a few times a month or more often). Today only 20% say that they hear gunfire.

Hearing Gunfire

Around home at night



BEST AND WORST SERVICES (Table 7)

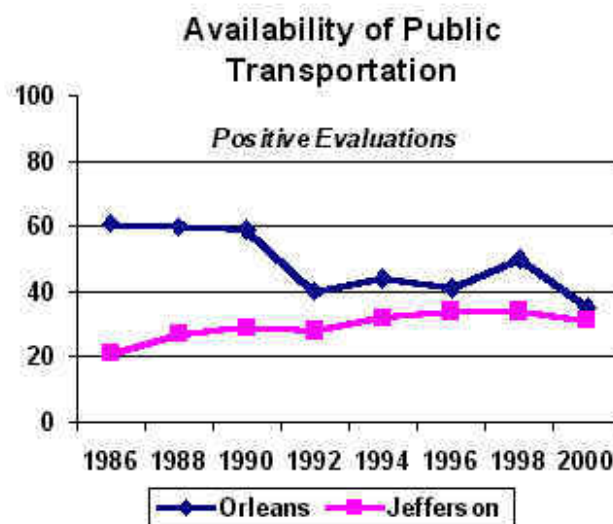
Throughout the surveys Jefferson residents have expressed a much higher level of satisfaction with their local government services, perhaps because those services are indeed better, or perhaps because they expect and need less from local government. The column below listing the "Worst" services best illustrates parish differences. The lowest rated specific services in Orleans are rated "poor" by half or more of the voters, whereas in Jefferson the lowest rated services are rated "poor" by only one third of the voters.

	Best (% positive)	Worst (% poor)
Orleans	Police 48%	Streets 70%
	Fire 74%	Abandoned Houses 71%
		Public Elementary Schools 50%
Jefferson	Police 70%	Traffic 37%
	Fire 81%	Drainage 30%
	Parks 63%	Streets 27%

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

(Table 7)

The largest opinion shift regarding a specific city service has been in the area of public transportation in New Orleans. Public transportation has been one of the highest rated services in the City in all of the Quality of Life surveys, but the percent of registered voters giving it a positive rating has dropped from 50% in 1998 to 35% this year. The change is likely due to the increased fare, frustration with reduced services, and the controversy over management issues.



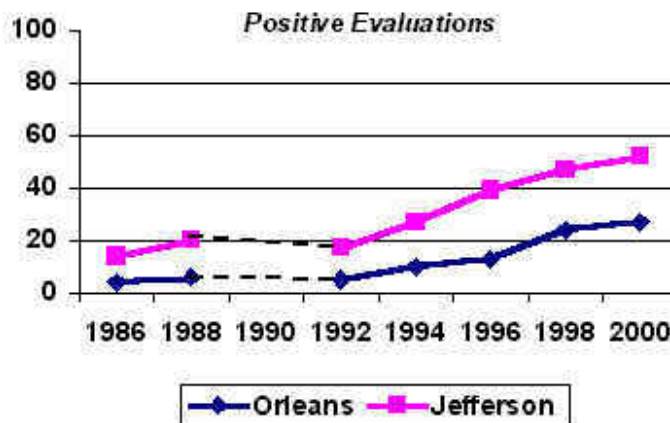
ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

(Table 8)

Voters in both parishes are more optimistic about employment prospects than they have been at any time in the fourteen year series, reflecting the actual economic growth that has

occurred. Of course, there remains a significant, predictable gap between the parishes, with Jefferson voters consistently more positive about employment opportunities. A majority in Jefferson rate job prospects as excellent or good, while a majority in Orleans rate them as fair or poor.

Opportunities for Employment

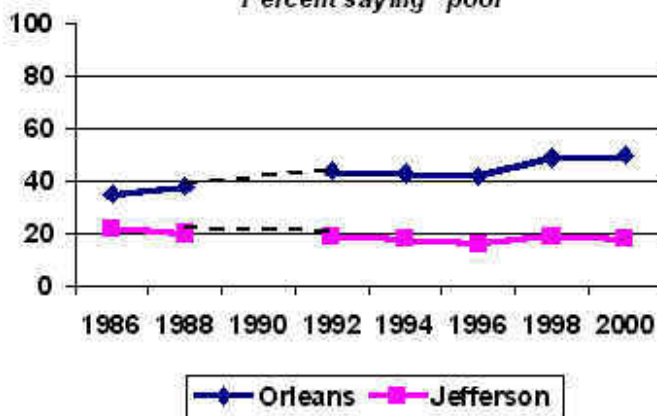


EDUCATION (Table 9)

Evaluations of the public schools in Orleans continue a very slow, but steady deterioration. Actually, given the publicity of the past two years, it is amazing that there has been so little change in opinion of the schools. It may be that opinion has "bottomed out" at about 50% negative as citizens become saturated with stories about the schools.

While evaluations of the public schools are not very high in Jefferson, those evaluations have been very stable across the last twelve years.

Quality of Public Elementary Schools



THE LEAP TEST

A majority of registered voters in both parishes favors the LEAP program, however, there are large racial differences on this issue. **Black voters, whose children are more likely to have taken the test, are far less favorable than white voters**, but, a plurality of black voters in Orleans favors the LEAP program. The greater support for LEAP among Orleans black voters compared to Jefferson black voters can be partly explained by the greater proportion of high income blacks in the City, a group more supportive of LEAP.

The following is the wording of the survey question, and the corresponding responses:

"Have you heard anything about the new LEAP tests that 4th and 8th graders in the public schools have to pass to move on to the next grade? Some people favor the LEAP program and some people oppose it ---

	Orleans			Jefferson		
	All	Black	White	All	Black	White
Favor	56%	45%	75%	59%	27%	66%
Oppose	27	37	11	26	57	20
DK/ Haven't Heard	17	18	14	15	16	14
	(425)	(265)	(154)	(347)	(60)	(281)

Despite an overall decrease in support, Mayor Marc Morial continues to enjoy a high approval rating, 64%. Although approval of the Mayor has decreased among both whites and blacks, most of the decline has occurred in the black electorate. Racial polarization remains; 70% of blacks approve, while 52% of whites approve, resulting in an 18% racial gap in approval. Particularly noticeable is a decrease in the willingness of blacks to express intense approval of the Mayor. For the first time since 1996, less than a majority of blacks, 36%, approve of the Mayor "strongly."

Police Chief Richard Pennington has a high approval rating of 83%, which is not racially polarized. 83% of blacks and 85% of whites approve of the job that Pennington is doing; in fact, intense approval of Pennington has actually increased among whites.

Finally, Sheriff Harry Lee also enjoys widespread support, 77% approve of his job performance. The racial gap in Lee's support (23%) that was very visible four years ago has reappeared at 27%. In the survey of two years ago, the racial polarization on Harry Lee had almost disappeared, but in the past two years black support for the Sheriff has dropped from 78% to 55%. The most notable change is in the intensity of black disapproval. It seems that specific events and instances are producing this variability in black support for Sheriff Lee.

[illegible]

Very Dissatisfied	9	21	16	10	9	1	2	2	2	2
DK	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	0	1
	(498)	(596)	(409)	(442)	(425)	(353)	(402)	(360)	(360)	(347)

TABLE 2: PAST AND FUTURE

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

ORLEANS	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Better	23%	17%	9%	6%	4%	5%	13%	30%	47%	49%
No Change	26	25	30	18	15	15	23	31	27	31
Worse	45	56	57	73	80	78	61	37	22	16
DK	6	2	4	3	1	2	3	2	4	4
	(573)	(416)	(470)	(498)	(781)	(596)	(360)	(582)	(442)	(425)

JEFFERSON	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Better	55%	54%	44%	32%		25%	34%		45%	50%
No Change	28	30	32	43		41	35		32	34
Worse	14	13	22	22		29	28		16	13
DK	3	3	2	3		5	3		7	3
	(567)	(297)	(341)	(353)		(402)	(360)		(417)	(347)

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

[illegible]

Better	44%	49%	43%	33%	54%	36%	44%	48%	49%
No Change	26	24	28	22	16	28	30	27	28
Worse	19	19	20	35	19	26	17	16	15
DK	11	8	9	10	11	9	9	9	8
	(573)	(416)	(470)	(498)	(596)	(409)	(582)	(442)	(425)

JEFFERSON	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Better	51%	56%	55%	49%		35%	45%		48%	48%
No Change	30	30	24	26		28	30		28	28
Worse	12	7	13	17		23	17		16	16
DK	7	7	7	8		14	8		8	8
	(567)	(297)	(341)	(353)		(402)	(360)		(417)	(347)

TABLE 3: CRIME

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

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

JEFFERSON	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Incr	44%	39%	66%	73%		56%	59%		30%	25%
Same	38	41	24	21		30	29		38	47

Decr	9	14	5	5		11	10		24	25
DK	9	6	5	1		3	2		8	3
	(567)	(297)	(341)	(353)		(402)	(360)		(417)	(347)

TABLE 4: HEARING GUNFIRE (ORLEANS)	Blacks Only				All Orleans		
	April 1997	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Spring 2000	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Spring 2000
Never	39%	53%	60%	56%	58%	65%	61%
Few times a year	20	16	15	21	18	16	20
Few times a month or more often	40	30	24	20	23	18	16
DK	1	1	1	3	1	1	3
	(667)	(358)	(268)	(265)	(582)	(442)	(425)

TABLE 5: SAFETY										
"How safe do you feel around your home during the day?"										
	ORLEANS					JEFFERSON				
	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
Very Safe	18%	19%	19%	33%	42%	34%	42%	44%	44%	54%
Safe	50	52	49	51	44	52	47	47	48	40
Not Very Safe	24	17	21	10	10	9	8	7	6	3
Not at All Safe	8	11	11	4	4	4	3	2	1	2
DK	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	1	1
	(498)	(596)	(409)	(442)	(425)	(353)	(402)	(360)	(417)	(347)

"How safe do you feel around your home during the night?"										
	ORLEANS					JEFFERSON				
	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
Very Safe	13%	10%	13%	22%	29%	25%	28%	27%	31%	38%
Safe	39	44	43	48	44	55	53	53	53	46

Not Very Safe	29	25	24	20	20	15	13	13	12	12
Not at All	19	21	19	10	7	5	5	7	3	4
DK	-	-	-	.2	-	-	1	-	1	-
	(498)	(596)	(409)	(442)	(425)	(353)	(402)	(360)	(417)	(347)

TABLE 6: CRIME AS BIGGEST PROBLEM

	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
ORLEANS	17%	27%	29%	44%	78%	70%	44%	26%
JEFFERSON	6%	8%	11%	29%	44%	48%	30%	18%

TABLE 7: QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

	ORLEANS				JEFFERSON			
	EXC	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	EXC	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
GovSvcs								
1994	2%	13	44	35	2%	42	43	9
1996	2%	18	48	30	2%	46	39	7
1998	2%	24	53	18	5%	46	39	6
2000	3%	18	48	27	6%	45	36	9
Police								
1994	2%	17	38	41	15%	53	24	6
1996	2%	21	41	33	20%	47	23	9
1998	7%	43	38	10	20%	49	20	8
2000	6%	42	36	15	17%	53	21	7
Fire								
1994	15%	54	24	1	19%	60	13	1
1996	11%	53	27	6	25%	57	13	1
1998	17%	57	16	1	24%	56	10	1

2000	14%	60	18	3	24%	57	13	2
WtrPollutn								
1994	1%	12	32	44	2%	31	34	24
1996	2%	16	35	39	4%	29	36	21
1998	2%	21	32	32	2%	27	39	21
2000	2%	17	37	36	3%	30	36	21
Zoning								
1994	1%	17	34	32	1%	28	35	20
1996	1%	16	42	27	4%	28	37	16
1998	1%	21	41	23	2%	26	43	18
2000	2%	19	37	28	3%	28	39	19
Drainage								
1994	4%	21	26	46	4%	32	33	30
1996	3%	26	31	38	7%	30	27	34
1998	2%	21	27	47	2%	21	36	39
2000	2%	23	28	46	6%	27	34	30
	ORLEANS				JEFFERSON			
Svcs for	EXC	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	EXC	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
the Poor								
1994	2%	12	32	45	3%	19	33	19
1996	2%	16	36	40	2%	24	33	19
1998	1%	18	34	36	2%	21	36	16
2000	3%	13	34	40	4%	22	30	21
Parks/Rec								
1994	3%	18	32	44	11%	50	24	9
1996	4%	26	36	30	14%	53	22	8
1998	5%	30	35	26	12%	53	23	8

2000	5%	27	37	26	19%	44	25	8
Streets								
1994	1%	10	26	63	2%	36	39	22
1996	.2%	7	21	72	7%	33	38	21
1998	1%	9	24	65	5%	36	35	23
2000	1%	10	17	70	5%	31	36	27
PubTrans								
1994	5%	40	30	13	3%	30	23	24
1996	3%	38	32	17	6%	28	24	22
1998	10%	40	27	10	4%	30	23	18
2000	5%	30	32	27	4%	27	24	23
Traffic								
1994	1%	23	40	34	1%	35	35	28
1996	2%	19	40	36	3%	27	36	31
1998	2%	21	40	34	2%	23	37	35
2000	1%	18	38	37	1%	24	37	37
AbanHouses								
1994	1%	3	9	85	5%	31	22	24
1996	2%	2	13	79	7%	34	20	23
1998	.3%	7	18	71	6%	35	23	18
2000	1%	9	14	71	7%	33	24	21

TABLE 8: ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, ORLEANS

Opportunities for Employment							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Excellent	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%	4%	5%
Good	5	8	9	12	23	20	22

Fair	27	34	38	35	46	37	40
Poor	61	55	46	47	23	31	29
DK	7	2	6	5	5	8	4
	(498)	(781)	(596)	(409)	(582)	(442)	(425)
Likelihood of New Jobs and Industry Coming to the Parish							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Excellent	1%	5%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Good	6	20	18	10	21	17	20
Fair	29	36	33	33	36	32	26
Poor	55	35	41	51	35	40	43
DK	9	4	6	5	5	8	8
	(498)	(781)	(596)	(409)	(582)	(442)	(425)
Likelihood of Your Family Increasing Its Income in Next Several Years							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Excellent	3%		7%	6%	11%	9%	11%
Good	21		30	29	31	34	33
Fair	30		28	25	32	26	27
Poor	34		26	31	20	23	22
DK	12		9	9	5	8	7
	(498)		(596)	(409)	(582)	(442)	(425)
TABLE 8: ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, JEFFERSON							
Opportunities for Employment							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Excellent	1%		1%	6%		9%	8%
Good	16		26	33		38	44
Fair	40		39	35		28	29
Poor	32		24	17		12	11
DK	10		10	10		13	8
	(353)		(402)	(360)		(415)	(347)
Likelihood of New Jobs and Industry Coming to the Parish							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000

Excellent	1%		3%	5%		9%	5%
Good	16		26	23		38	29
Fair	37		29	37		28	33
Poor	34		31	26		12	22
DK	13		11	9		13	11
	(353)		(402)	(360)		(415)	(347)
Likelihood of Your Family Increasing Its Income in Next Several Years							
	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1998	2000
Excellent	6%		5%	9%		9%	14%
Good	23		32	31		38	35
Fair	33		23	30		28	27
Poor	29		30	22		12	19
DK	9		10	8		13	5
	(353)		(402)	(360)		(415)	(347)

TABLE 9: EDUCATION, ORLEANS		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/ Refused
Quality of Public Elementary Schools	1996	2%	13	33	42	10
	1998	2%	15	23	49	11
	2000	2%	13	27	50	8
Quality of Public Junior High Schools	1996	2%	9	32	44	12
	1998	1%	11	27	48	13
	2000	2%	11	25	51	7
Quality of Public High Schools	1996	1%	10	30	47	11
	1998	2%	12	24	51	11
	2000	2%	10	25	52	11
Availability of Private Schools	1996	10%	32	32	11	15
	1998	13%	36	24	10	17
	2000	9%	35	30	10	18
Quality of Private Schools	1996	15%	44	21	4	16
	1998	18%	43	18	2	19

	2000	14%	43	23	3	17
TABLE 9: EDUCATION, JEFFERSON						
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/ Refused
Quality of Public Elementary Schools	1996	7%	29	27	16	20
	1998	5%	29	27	19	20
	2000	4%	28	36	18	14
Quality of Public Junior High Schools	1996	4%	23	33	19	22
	1998	2%	21	31	22	24
	2000	2%	24	33	23	18
Quality of Public High Schools	1996	3%	24	30	23	20
	1998	2%	20	30	23	25
	2000	2%	19	35	25	19
Availability of Private Schools	1996	15%	42	19	6	18
	1998	14%	40	20	6	20
	2000	12%	45	21	8	14
Quality of Private Schools	1996	18%	43	17	3	20
	1998	20%	37	15	2	26
	2000	16%	48	15	4	17

TABLE 10: MORIAL, PENNINGTON, AND LEE JOB APPROVAL												
	All				Black				White			
	1996	1997	1998	2000	1996	1997	1998	2000	1996	1997	1998	2000
<i>Marc Morial</i>												
Strongly Approve	44%	38%	40%	27%	59%	52%	58%	36%	23%	15%	13%	11%
Approve	33	34	36	37	32	33	29	34	36	37	45	41
Disapprove	8	11	10	14	4	6	6	12	14	19	17	19
Strongly Disapprove	9	12	9	16	2	7	4	13	20	22	18	21
<i>Richard Pennington</i>												
Strongly Approve	41%		45%	48%	45%		51%	50%	35%		36%	47%
Approve	42		41	35	40		39	33	45		45	38
Disapprove	6		6	6	5		4	6	7		8	5

Strongly Disapprove	5		4	6	4		4	7	7		3	3
Harry Lee												
Strongly Approve	62%		47%	41%	31%		32%	25%	68%		50%	44%
Approve	23		39	36	35		46	30	21		37	38
Disapprove	5		6	8	15		10	8	3		5	8
Strongly Disapprove	7		4	11	11		7	27	7		3	8

TABLE 12: SAMPLE INFORMATION, 2000		ORLEANS	JEFFERSON
	White	37%	83%
	Black	63	17
	Male	42	45
	Female	58	55
	Median Age	44	44
	Number of Respondents	425	347
	Sampling Error	±4.8%	± 5.4%
	Dates of Interviewing	March 17 – April 4	March 17 – April 4