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# **“Keeping People”**

## **The 2006 Quality of Life Survey in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes**



UNIVERSITY *of*  
NEW ORLEANS

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## 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 will 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.

- A significant proportion of the residents of these two parishes are considering leaving. Retaining current residents is dependent on several policy priorities:
  - Controlling crime
  - A more proactive government/streamlining government bureaucracy
  - Fixing levees/flood prevention
  - Fixing infrastructure
- Lack of jobs and career opportunities are other reasons residents say they are likely to leave.
- Residents are less worried than they were in April.
- Everyday life is not as difficult as it was in April.
- In Orleans Parish fewer people report income losses than in April.
- The mood/depression level of residents has not improved.
- Temporary living arrangements have not improved.
- Crime is most commonly mentioned as the biggest problem in both parishes.
- Beyond crime, in Orleans the areas rated most negatively by residents are conditions of streets, control of abandoned houses, the availability of housing, and control of litter and trash.
- Beyond crime, in Jefferson the areas rated most negatively by residents are traffic, drainage and flood control, and the availability of housing.

## **“Keeping People” The 2006 Quality of Life Survey**

The UNO Survey Research Center is beginning 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 and expansion of the Citizen Recovery Survey conducted in April 2006. Many of the questions from that survey are repeated here to assess the extent of recovery. In addition, we have added questions about government services and evaluations of certain conditions in Orleans and Jefferson to set a baseline on those items.

Given the extent of damage of Katrina, we expect negativity in the results, but that is not the point. The objective is to identify the areas most in need of attention from public policy makers.

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 they are in a house or apartment that is renovated enough to have a land-based phone. They are presumably not in trailers.
- The April 2006 Orleans data included in this report 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, some figures in the tables would be a few (1-3) percentage points higher. These are noted with an “a” in the tables.
- In the current survey we stratified the Orleans sample and weighted the Jefferson sample to reflect the Louisiana Recovery Authority racial composition estimates released in fall 2006.

**Part I: Change From April to October 2006**

**Worry and Everyday Difficulties**

**Worry**

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

- The level of worry and the difficulties of everyday life have clearly improved since April. Seven months 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. The latest survey was conducted at the end of the active hurricane season, and it may be that part of the decline in worry is a decline in worry about hurricanes in 2006.
- Having one half of the residents worried about what is going to happen to them is still rather high. Americans are normally fairly optimistic about their futures. Nonetheless, the worry level in October is a definite improvement over April, and hopefully the trend will continue.

**Everyday Difficulties**

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

<sup>a</sup> 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.

- Over several indicators, life has become less difficult than it was seven months ago. People are reporting greater ease in shopping for groceries, other shopping, sending and receiving mail, and getting around town. This improvement is a sign of recovery, and if this trend continues, it will reduce the stresses on residents that we will see later in this report.
- In contrast, difficulty getting medical care has not improved in either Orleans or Jefferson, confirming the well-known shortages of medical personnel.
- The greatest difficulty in everyday life is making home repairs in Orleans. Over seventy percent reported having trouble in this area. Hopefully, as the Road Home money is disbursed, residents in Orleans will be less frustrated with making home repairs.

## Overall Satisfaction, Income Change, and Living Conditions

### Overall Satisfaction

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

- Satisfaction with life in Jefferson Parish was quite high in April, and remains high today. In fact, satisfaction with life in Jefferson is as high today as it was pre-Katrina in our 2004 Quality of Life Survey. This is quite a positive indicator for Jefferson, considering that most of the residents incurred some damage in Katrina and many are experiencing difficulties with traffic and home repairs.
- Satisfaction with life in Orleans is lower than in Jefferson, which is predictable given the flooding in Orleans. What is troubling is that there has been no improvement in satisfaction over the past seven months. 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	April 2006	October 2006
Living with others	28 <sup>a</sup>	31	27	22
Current residence is temporary.	22 <sup>a</sup>	31	30	24
Family income has decreased.	37 <sup>a</sup>	28	24	17

<sup>a</sup> See second table for explanation.

- On the positive side, in Orleans Parish, the number of residents saying that their family income has decreased since Katrina is less than it was in April. This trend is important to maintain because families who lose income are more likely to leave the area or consider leaving the area.
- 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 since April (the slight improvement is within the 7% margin of error). Twenty to thirty percent are still in these living arrangements.

## Depression and Mood

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

<sup>a</sup> See second table for explanation.

<sup>b</sup> Source: Drs. Jeanne Hurlbert and John Beggs, LSU Dept. of Sociology

- Unfortunately, since our last survey seven months ago, there has been no improvement in the indicators of mood and depression. One-fifth or more of the residents of both parishes are irritable, sad, tired, feel everything is an effort, have trouble falling asleep, or

cannot keep their mind on track nearly every day. Although some of the numbers changed slightly, all of the differences are within the margin of error (7%).

- These indicators are important to track in the future because they are related to the likelihood of moving out of the area.

## ***Part II: Policy Recommendations for Keeping People***

### **Likelihood of Leaving**

<i>Percent reporting likelihood of leaving in the next two years.</i>	Orleans	Jefferson
	October 2006	October 2006
Very likely	17%	17%
Somewhat likely	15	15
Not very likely	67	65
Don't know	1	3

- The most crucial question in this Quality of Life Survey is whether people are likely to stay or likely to leave the area. We asked residents their likelihood of leaving Orleans or Jefferson *within the next two years*. Answers to this question can mean many things, from mere frustrations of the day to actual plans to move out. However, it is important to examine the reasons people are planning to move or considering moving in order to make policy recommendations for keeping people.
- About one-third of the residents of Orleans and of Jefferson say either that they are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to leave within the next two years. If we consider only those who say “very likely”, it represents the potential for a large out migration in the near future.
- Given the magnitude of the disaster and its repercussions, it is difficult to identify only a few reasons residents are considering leaving. We asked the respondents to freely discuss why they are “somewhat” or “very” likely to leave. In these responses we found a few issues that are important for keeping people.
  - 1) **Crime and public safety** are the most critical problems to address immediately. This is the most commonly mentioned motivation for leaving. Public policies to reduce crime in both Orleans and Jefferson are critical to retaining the population.
  - 2) **Action from Government** is more difficult to interpret, but seems to be a general statement about the slowness of recovery and a frustration with bureaucracy. Examples of responses in this category are “red tape”, “lack of leadership” and



“make decisions”. Governor Blanco’s order to speed up the Road Home disbursements is a policy that partially addresses this problem. Any government action or change in bureaucratic procedures that increases the speed and visibility of recovery will help retain population.

- 3) **Fixing Levees and Preventing Flooding** were mentioned as reasons for leaving *Jefferson*. After seeing the devastation in Orleans, Jefferson residents are aware that they are at risk from flooding in a future hurricane. Completion of flood prevention projects, raising levees, and public information about these projects will give residents confidence to stay.
- 4) **Fixing infrastructure**, particularly problems with the streets, was a theme among those who said they were likely to leave *Orleans Parish*. Residents who mentioned infrastructure want to see more physical signs of improvement, or at least kept informed about what improvements are underway.
- 5) **Jobs** is a more personal reason for leaving, not as directly related to public policy as the other reasons above. Over one-fifth of our respondents reported that their family income is still lower than pre-Katrina, and these residents are, predictably, more likely to leave than those whose income is stable or has increased.

The five themes above are based on the approximately sixty respondents in each parish who said they were likely to leave. With such small numbers we cannot accurately quantify the importance of each theme. However, most of these people gave two or more reasons in their discussions, and these are the themes that emerged.

The answers to the “biggest problem” question are based on two hundred people in each parish, so we have more confidence in presenting the percentages that give each response.

### Biggest Problem Facing Orleans Parish

<i>Biggest Problem</i>	October 2006
Crime/ Do not feel safe	31%
Lack of Action from Government	18
Availability of Housing	13
Lack of Infrastructure	8

## Biggest Problem Facing Jefferson Parish

<i>Biggest Problem</i>	October 2006
Crime/ Do not feel safe	45%
Lack of Action from Government	8
Levees/Flood Control	6
Availability of Housing	6

- These results largely confirm the reasons for leaving. Crime is by far the most common response in both parishes, followed by problems with government and leadership, the levees, housing, and infrastructure.

### *Part III: Baseline Evaluations of Government Services and Other Conditions*

<i>Percent saying that services are “poor” or “very poor.”</i>	Orleans	Jefferson
	October 2006	October 2006
Overall level of government services.	53	14
Police protection	41	13
Availability of housing	<b>71</b>	<b>35</b>
Availability of medical care	51	21
Conditions of roads and streets	<b>75</b>	20
Control of traffic	30	<b>42</b>
Availability of public transportation	33	22
Drainage and flood control	48	<b>34</b>
Control of litter and trash	<b>65</b>	25
Control of abandoned housing	<b>72</b>	25
Opportunities for employment	26	14
Likelihood of new jobs and industry	34	21

- In order to set a baseline from which improvement can be measured, we asked residents to rate a series of government services and conditions as “Very Good” to “Very Poor”. UNO will repeat this survey over the next few years to monitor improvement or lack of improvement in the ratings of these aspects of the quality of life.
- In Orleans Parish four conditions/services are perceived much more negatively than others: the **conditions of streets, control of abandoned houses, the availability of housing, and control of litter and trash**. These, along with crime, are well known problems, so it is

certainly no surprise that residents perceive them very negatively. The question is whether or not these ratings improve over the next few years.

- As we would expect, all services and conditions are rated higher in Jefferson than in Orleans. The three conditions/services rated most negatively in Jefferson are **traffic, drainage and flood control, and the availability of housing**. Again, we will be monitoring these ratings in the future.

***Part IV: Approval of Mayor Ray Nagin and Parish President Aaron Broussard***

<i>Approval of Mayor Nagin</i>	Orleans October 2006		
	All	Whites	Blacks
Strongly approve	12%	5%	21%
Approve	28	18	40
Disapprove	24	32	14
Strongly disapprove	32	40	21
Don't Know	2	3	2

- Forty percent of the residents currently living in Orleans Parish approve of Mayor Ray Nagin. There are probably two countervailing forces producing this level of approval. On the one hand, the magnitude of the Katrina disaster and the slow pace of recovery depress approval. On the other hand, the Mayor was recently reelected, and there is a honeymoon after reelection because those who voted for him are likely to approve.
- This survey does not contain evacuees, many of whom voted for Mayor Nagin in the recent election. If they had been included, approval of Mayor Nagin would probably have been higher.
- Approval of Mayor Nagin is very racially polarized, with only 23% of whites approving, and 61% of blacks approving. This pattern reflects the racial polarization in the election.

<i>Approval of Broussard</i>	Jefferson
	October 2006
Strongly approve	15%
Approve	38
Disapprove	16
Strongly disapprove	16
Don't Know	15

- In spite of the controversy over Parish President Broussard's decision to send the pump operators out of town during Katrina, a majority (53%) of the residents of Jefferson currently approve of his overall performance. President Broussard's actions since Katrina, including building the safe houses, have improved citizen evaluations.

### ***Survey Information***

**Co-sponsor:** LSU Dept of Sociology, National Science Foundation Grant, Award #0553702

#### **Survey Methodology:**

Dates of Interviewing: October 19 – 24, 2006

Number of Interviews: Jefferson, 200; Orleans, 200

Sampling Error: 7% in both parishes

Percent Black in Jefferson sample: 24%

Percent Black in Orleans Sample: 45%

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