

# THE FUTURE OF NEW ORLEANS: YOUNG ADULTS IN THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS AREA

The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey

August 2007

In the fall of 2006, the Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a large-scale face-to-face survey of the current residents of the Greater New Orleans area. The survey painted a portrait of a population that had suffered overwhelming setbacks since Hurricane Katrina and continued to face significant hurdles in terms of employment, physical and mental health, and health care access, yet one that was optimistic about the future of New Orleans and mostly approving of the direction of the rebuilding process.

As a group, young adults (those ages 18-34, who make up 24 percent of the area's population) are key to the success of the rebuilding and to whether New Orleans can re-emerge as a thriving community. Using data from the *Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey*, this Survey Brief looks at whether young adults in New Orleans plan to stay in the area, their outlook for the future, their demographic profile, and some of the challenges they face.

## Who will stay and who will go?

The future of New Orleans depends in part on the strength of its residents and their commitment to the area. One of the most encouraging findings from the survey, as previously reported, is that the vast majority of younger and older residents say they plan to stay in the area. However, a finding of potential concern is that young adults (18 percent) are more likely than their older counterparts (8 percent) to say they're planning or seriously considering moving away from the area.

### Percent who are currently planning or seriously considering moving away from New Orleans, by age and parish

|   | Greater N.O. |      | Orleans Parish |      | Jefferson Parish |      |
|---|--------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|------|
|   | 18-34        | 35+  | 18-34          | 35+  | 18-34            | 35+  |
| Yes, planning or seriously considering moving | 18%*         | 8%   | 20%*           | 9%   | 18%*             | 8%   |
| No, not planning or considering moving        | 77%          | 89%* | 78%            | 87%* | 76%              | 89%* |

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference between age groups ( $p < 0.05$ )

Coupled with this greater propensity to say they're planning to move is the fact that young adults are much more likely than older adults to be new to the area; fourteen percent of those ages 18-34 say they moved to the New Orleans area after Hurricane Katrina hit, compared with just two percent of older residents.

In order to determine whether the greater likelihood to report a desire to move is due to a true "age effect" or whether it perhaps reflects some of the underlying demographic differences between younger and older residents, we performed a logistic regression analysis accounting for age and residence in New Orleans prior to Katrina, as well as other demographic factors including gender, race/ethnicity, income, education, and employment. When controlling for all these factors, young adults are still more likely than older adults to say they are planning or seriously considering moving away. However, being new to the New Orleans area also plays a large role in planning to move away, according to the model.

Using the regression model to predict the probability that someone is planning or considering leaving the area, we find that after controlling for other demographic factors, a young adult is twice as likely as an older adult to be planning to move (predicted probability of 0.16 compared with 0.08 for those ages 35 and over). Combining the effects of age and being new to the area, the model predicts that young adults who moved to New Orleans after the storm have the greatest probability of saying they'll move; a young resident who is new to the area has a predicted probability of planning to move that is four times that of an older resident who lived in New Orleans before Katrina (0.33 compared with 0.08) after controlling for other factors.

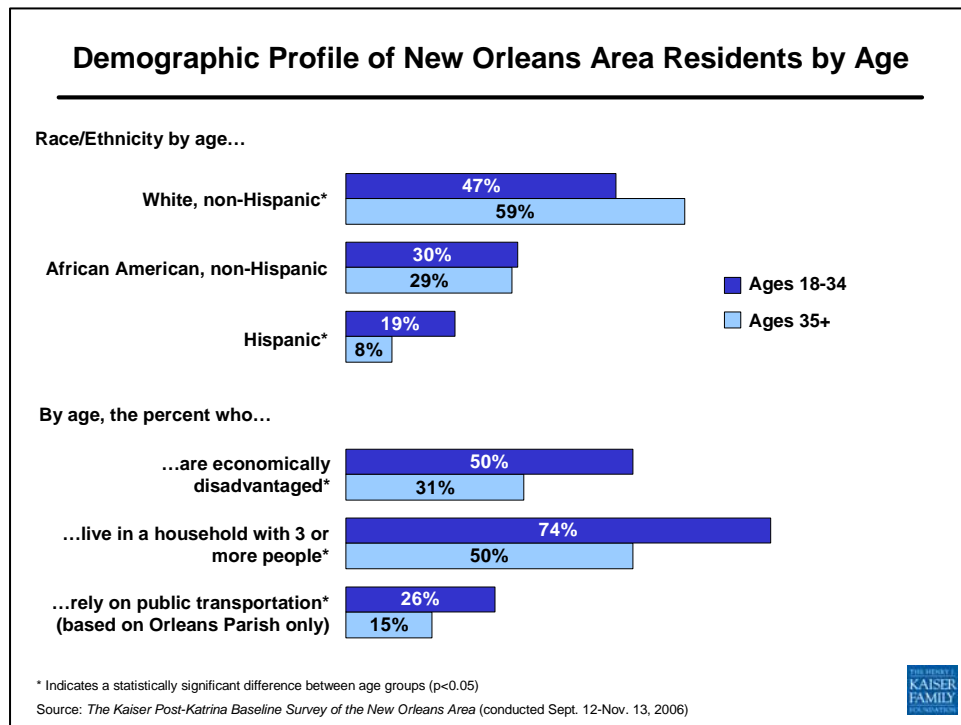
### Predicted probabilities of planning/seriously considering moving, after controlling for other factors

| Characteristic                            | Predicted probability |
|---|-----------------------|
| Age 18-34                                 | .16                   |
| Age 35+                                   | .08                   |
| Moved to N.O. after Katrina               | .22                   |
| Lived in N.O. prior to Katrina            | .10                   |
| Age 18-34, moved to N.O. after Katrina    | .33                   |
| Age 18-34, lived in N.O. prior to Katrina | .15                   |
| Age 35+, moved to N.O. after Katrina      | .19                   |
| Age 35+, lived in N.O. prior to Katrina   | .08                   |

## Demographics of the young adult population of New Orleans

Demographically, young adults in the Greater New Orleans area look somewhat different than older residents of the area. Compared with residents ages 35 and older, young adults in New Orleans are more likely to be Hispanic, and less likely to be white. This is particularly true in Jefferson Parish, where nearly a quarter (23 percent) of young adults self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, compared with 10 percent of older adults.

Young residents of the area are also more likely than their older counterparts to be economically disadvantaged<sup>1</sup> and to live in larger households. In Orleans Parish, young adults are more likely than older residents to rely on public transportation.



Six in ten young adults in greater New Orleans reported being employed either full time (50 percent) or part time (11 percent) at the time of the survey, nearly one in five (18 percent) were students, and about one in ten (9 percent) were unemployed and seeking employment. Among those who were employed, three in ten (31 percent) said their job did not pay enough to cover basic needs such as housing and food, compared with 20 percent of older employed residents. Just over half (54 percent) of young people with jobs said their job offers them health insurance coverage, compared with two-thirds (66 percent) of the employed ages 35 and over.

<sup>1</sup> Because of the large number of respondents who did not answer the household income question, we created a proxy income measure designed to capture whether or not individuals are economically disadvantaged. Individuals were defined as economically disadvantaged if they met any of the following criteria: (a) reported annual household income is less than \$30,000; (b) respondent or any child in the household is on Medicaid; and/or (c) no adult in the household is employed (and respondent is not retired or a student).

## Health status and access to health care

Not surprisingly, young adult residents of New Orleans report being healthier than their older counterparts; 84 percent (compared with 56 percent of those ages 35 and over) say they are in excellent or very good health. Just 15 percent say they have ever been diagnosed with a chronic condition, compared with nearly half (49 percent) of their older counterparts.

Young adults in the New Orleans area as a whole also report being in better mental health than their older counterparts. However, mental health stresses may be greater for young adults living in the city of New Orleans itself, as they are much less likely to report being in excellent mental health compared with young adults in Jefferson Parish.

### Self-reported mental health status of New Orleans residents by age and parish

|           | Greater N.O. |     | Orleans Parish |     | Jefferson Parish |     |
|-----------|--------------|-----|----------------|-----|------------------|-----|
|           | 18-34        | 35+ | 18-34          | 35+ | 18-34            | 35+ |
| Excellent | 41%*         | 27% | 22%            | 25% | 51%*             | 28% |
| Very good | 38%          | 41% | 49%            | 44% | 31%              | 40% |
| Good      | 15%          | 23% | 17%            | 22% | 14%              | 23% |
| Fair      | 5%           | 7%  | 10%            | 9%  | 2%               | 7%  |
| Poor      | 2%           | 1%  | 2%             | 1%  | 1%               | 2%  |

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference between age groups (p<0.05)

While healthier than their older counterparts, young adults in the New Orleans area are more vulnerable when it comes to health care access. One-third of those under age 35 report being uninsured, and a similar share (including nearly half of young adults in Orleans Parish) say they have no regular place to turn when they need health care, or that their usual source of care is a hospital emergency room. Just over a quarter of young adults in greater New Orleans say they have received any preventive health services in the past 6 months.

### Reported problems with access to health care, by age and parish

|  | Greater N.O. |      | Orleans Parish |      | Jefferson Parish |      |
|--|--------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|------|
|  | 18-34        | 35+  | 18-34          | 35+  | 18-34            | 35+  |
| Uninsured  | 33%*         | 17%  | 37%*           | 22%  | 32%*             | 13%  |
| Usual place of care is ER/No usual place of care     | 34%*         | 25%  | 46%*           | 29%  | 28%              | 23%  |
| Received any preventive services last 6 months       | 27%          | 41%* | 29%            | 49%* | 26%              | 40%* |
| Any reported health care access problem <sup>2</sup> | 56%*         | 46%  | 62%*           | 53%  | 53%              | 42%  |

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference between age groups (p<0.05)

<sup>2</sup> Percentage who report at least one of the following: Usual place of care is ER or no usual place of care, uninsured, difficult to get to usual place of care, health needs not being well met, skipped or postponed care or Rx drugs in last 6 months, problems paying medical bills in last 6 months had major financial impact.

## Recovering from Katrina and outlook for the future

Many young adults reported suffering significant setbacks as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Similar to their older counterparts, more than a third (35 percent) of 18-34 year-olds reported that their general life satisfaction was lower now than before the storm, including nearly half (45 percent) of young adults in Orleans Parish.

Despite these setbacks, when it comes to recovering from the effects of the hurricane, most young adults (71 percent) say their lives have largely or almost returned to normal since Katrina. In fact, in Orleans Parish, young adults are significantly more likely than their older counterparts to say their lives are back to normal.

### Self-reported personal situation in recovering from Hurricane Katrina, by age and parish

|  | Greater N.O. |     | Orleans Parish |      | Jefferson Parish |     |
|--|--------------|-----|----------------|------|------------------|-----|
|  | 18-34        | 35+ | 18-34          | 35+  | 18-34            | 35+ |
| Life is largely or almost back to normal | 71%          | 66% | 64%*           | 51%  | 74%              | 77% |
| Life is still very or somewhat disrupted | 26%          | 34% | 33%            | 49%* | 24%              | 23% |

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference between age groups (p<0.05)

The vast majority (81 percent) of young adults say they are optimistic about the future of the New Orleans area, including 84 percent of those in Jefferson Parish and 74 percent in Orleans Parish. Like their older counterparts, a large majority (78 percent) of young adults say their experiences with Hurricane Katrina have made them better able to cope with future stresses.

But while they are optimistic about the future, young residents of New Orleans are more likely than older residents to report being worried about a variety of possible problems, including six in ten who say they are very worried that the levees will not be rebuilt with enough strength to protect their neighborhoods, more than half who are very worried about another severely damaging hurricane hitting the area, and nearly four in ten who are very worried about being able to find or afford decent housing. Young adults in Jefferson Parish have worries that are particularly disproportional to their older counterparts in the parish on these questions. While one might expect worries among these “young invincibles” to be lower than their older counterparts, the relatively higher level of worries reflects the particularly difficult circumstances facing residents in this devastated and recovering area.

### Percent who say they are very worried about particular problems, by age and parish

|   | Greater N.O. |     | Orleans Parish |     | Jefferson Parish |     |
|---|--------------|-----|----------------|-----|------------------|-----|
|   | 18-34        | 35+ | 18-34          | 35+ | 18-34            | 35+ |
| The levees will not be rebuilt with enough strength to protect your neighborhood    | 61%*         | 44% | 58%            | 52% | 62%*             | 41% |
| Another hurricane will hit this area and cause similar or worse damage than Katrina | 52%*         | 36% | 48%            | 43% | 54%*             | 33% |
| You won't be able to find or afford a decent place to live                          | 39%*         | 28% | 40%            | 31% | 39%              | 27% |
| You won't have enough income to meet all your needs                                 | 39%          | 30% | 41%            | 38% | 38%              | 27% |
| Health care services may not be available if you need them                          | 34%          | 36% | 43%            | 42% | 30%              | 31% |
| You will become sick from pollutants left over from the floods                      | 25%          | 26% | 28%            | 29% | 25%              | 24% |

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference between age groups (p<0.05)

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This Survey Brief is based on analysis of *The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey of the New Orleans Area*, which was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation. This in-person survey was conducted door-to-door from September 12 to November 13, 2006. Interviews were completed in English and Spanish among 1,504 randomly selected adults ages 18 and older residing in Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard parishes. These four neighboring parishes make up Region 1 as defined by Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals, an administrative region used for recovery planning. The sample included 347 adults ages 18-34 and 1,149 adults ages 35 and over. The sample design was a stratified area probability sample, with 456 sampling points distributed proportionate to expected population size in each of the four parishes, and in each of fourteen Census tract defined neighborhoods in Orleans Parish. An oversample was drawn in Orleans to allow for more detailed analysis of this area; final results have been weighted so that each parish reflects its estimated share of the area's population. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 4 percentage points; for ages 18-34 it is plus or minus 8 percentage points, and for ages 35+ it is plus or minus 4 percentage points. For results based on other subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error may be higher. ICR/International Communications Research collaborated with Kaiser researchers on sample design and weighting, and supervised the fieldwork. The full questionnaire, topline, and methodology are contained in Appendix E of the May 2007 report, *Giving Voice to the People of New Orleans: The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey*, available on the web at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/pomr051007pkg.cfm>.

Additional copies of this publication (#7683) are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org).

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