

INTRODUCTION

Two and half years after Hurricane Katrina left the city of New Orleans flooded by the lake waters that poured through its broken levees, and one a half years after our first comprehensive study of life in the city, the Kaiser Family Foundation once again asked the residents of Orleans Parish to share their opinions and experiences with us and with the country.³ The goal: to use rigorous survey research methods to accurately paint a portrait of a city, and a populace, in the throes of an ongoing recovery, an ongoing struggle, an ongoing, defiant celebration of their survival.

Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed it were remarkably devastating for the Gulf Coast, but especially for the state of Louisiana. In that state, nearly 1,500 lives were lost, 900,000 people were displaced, 16,000 businesses were flooded and forty schools were destroyed.⁴ And within Louisiana, the majority of the affected population was in New Orleans. Over three quarters of New Orleans' population was affected by flooding, and when all was said and done, the city's population was halved a year after the storm.⁵ Analyses have shown that African Americans in the city were disproportionately affected by the disaster, making up 73 percent of the parish's affected population.⁶

The results of this second of at least three planned surveys of the New Orleans area are sobering. They suggest that many New Orleans residents are disappointed by the pace of recovery, disheartened by a perceived lack of opportunity in the city, and feel forgotten by their nation and its leaders. There is a sense of progress stalled, opportunity limited, and perhaps overly high expectations not being met. This sense is doubtless in part unique to the city's challenges and in part a reflection of the wave of economic distress that is sweeping the nation this year. In New Orleans there are also signs of spreading mental strain and frustration. The survey suggests that, perhaps as a result of this mood, more residents than in 2006 are considering taking their families, belongings and careers elsewhere.

Even while views of the city's current state are dim, however, city residents report widespread optimism about the city's future. And the survey finds pockets of hope, from improving views of race relations to better access to health care to satisfaction with opportunities for worship in the city.

For those following this project over time, it's worth noting that the 2008 round of surveying focused specifically on Orleans Parish, rather than the larger four parish area of the 2006 survey, primarily because the majority of affected people lived in New Orleans.⁷ The survey, of course, can also only focus on the needs of those New Orleans residents who have returned to the city. The views of those former residents now living in other parts of the state or other parts of the country are not able to be represented here.

³ See: "Giving Voice to the People of New Orleans: The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey," Kaiser Family Foundation 2006. <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/pomr051007pkg.cfm> and "Health Challenges for the People of New Orleans," Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006. <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/7659.cfm>

⁴ Shartzer, Adele. "Health Care in New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina" online tutorial. <http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials/katrina/player.html>

⁵ The Louisiana Recovery Authority. "Hurricane Katrina Anniversary Data for Louisiana," August 2006.

⁶ Gabe, T., et. al. "Hurricane Katrina: Social-Demographic Characteristics of Impacted Areas," *CRS Report for Congress*, November 4, 2005. www.gnocdc.org/reports/crsrept.pdf. Here "affected" is defined as displaced by flooding or damage.

⁷ Note that throughout the report, Orleans Parish and New Orleans are used interchangeably to describe the city proper.

A PORTRAIT OF NEW ORLEANS RESIDENTS IN 2008

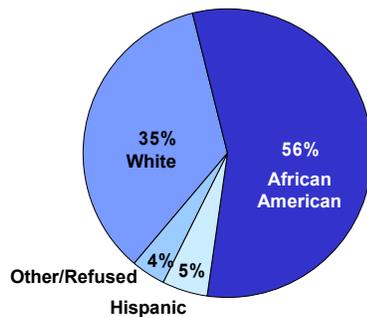
The 2000 Census pegged New Orleans' population at 484,674.⁸ Then Katrina hit, and the city temporarily emptied. Many residents returned, many others did not. The Census Bureau estimates that by 2007, the population had returned to roughly half its pre-storm size, numbering 239,124.⁹ The growth between July 2006 and July 2007 alone made New Orleans the fastest growing large city in the country. More recent estimates suggest the population may have even grown to roughly 60 percent of its pre-Katrina population by 2008.¹⁰

What stands out about the city in the 2008 Kaiser survey is the extent to which its residents are made up not of newcomers to the area but of Katrina survivors. Fully nine in ten in the parish say that they lived in New Orleans at the time the storm hit in late August 2005. One in ten have come to the city since that time, a group marked in particular by their relative youth and by a somewhat more optimistic outlook.

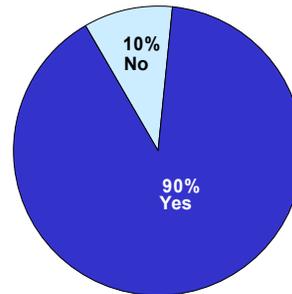
Despite the fact that the population is smaller overall, in many ways the demographic shape of the population is similar.¹¹ Overall, just over half of the city's adult residents (56 percent) are African American, roughly one in three (35 percent) are white, and 5 percent are Hispanic. This is roughly equivalent to the shape of the population in our 2006 survey, fielded one year after Katrina. It is also fairly similar to the city's pre-storm distribution as measured by the Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey (ACS), which found that the adult population was 60 percent African American and 32 percent white.

Race and Pre-Katrina Domicile of Orleans Parish Adults

What is your race? Are you white, black or African American, Asian, or some other race?



Were you living in the New Orleans area at the time Hurricane Katrina hit or not?



⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. "American Fact Finder Fact Sheet, Orleans Parish, LA," *Census 2000*. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

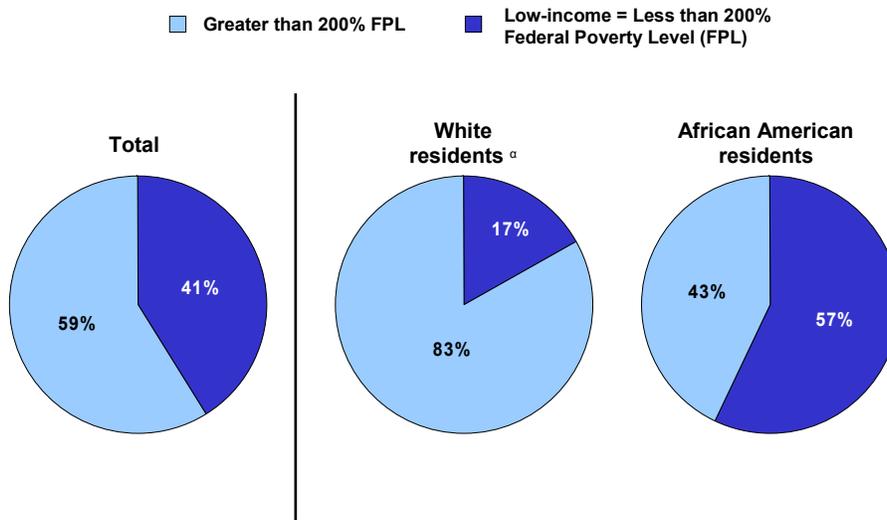
⁹ Census Bureau press release. "New Orleans Population Continues Katrina Recovery," July 10, 2008.

¹⁰ Demographic estimate provided to Kaiser by Claritas.

¹¹ For a more detailed comparison, see Appendix A: Demographics of Orleans Parish Adult Population.

The city also continues to have a sizeable low-income population, one which is disproportionately made up of African Americans.¹² Overall four in ten of those who reported their family’s financial status (equaling roughly a third of all residents) qualify as low income. Before Katrina, in 2005, the ACS found that 39 percent of adults were low income. There are major differences in income by racial group, however. The majority of African American residents (57 percent) report living in a low-income family, compared to 17 percent of white residents. Looked at another way, 78 percent of the city’s low-income population is African American.

Income Varies Substantially by Race



Note: Data shown is based on those who reported family incomes. 17 percent of the total, 15 percent of the white, and 18 percent of the African American populations did not report income and are not represented here.
^a Statistically significant difference from African Americans at p < 0.05

There has been a subtle shift in the age distribution of the city since our 2006 survey, with the group in the middle of the adult age distribution – the 30 to 49 year-olds – making up a slightly smaller share of the population now (32 percent versus 39 percent in 2006). No one age group made up the difference; rather there were small increases in the shares of both the younger and older age groups. New Orleans continues to tilt toward the female, with women making up 54 percent of its adult residents.

In terms of education, fairly similar percentages report having a high school diploma or less (39 percent) as report having a college degree (35 percent). The 2005 ACS, conducted pre-Katrina, found that 46 percent of adult residents had a high school education or less while 30 percent had a college degree.

Finally, nearly 4 in ten residents (37 percent) have at least one child under age 19 living in their homes. Half own their own homes, just over a third rent, and one in ten are staying with family or friends, up slightly from 2006.

¹² In this report, low-income residents are defined as those that reported a family household income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Poor residents are defined as those who reported a family household income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Overall, 83 percent of respondents reported their financial status. Most percentages reported above are based on that 83 percent in order to provide as accurate a picture as possible of the relative size of the low-income population.

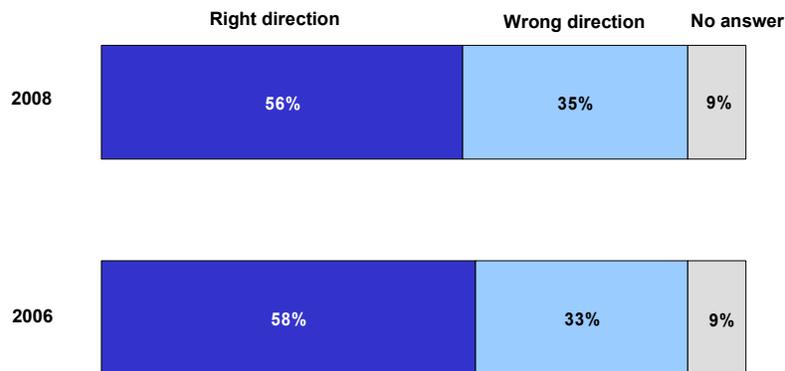
RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON THE CITY AND ITS RECOVERY

Rating the official recovery process: Right direction, inadequate progress

As was true in 2006, a narrow majority of New Orleans residents (56 percent) say that the rebuilding and recovery process is going in the right direction, a welcome verdict for those across the city who have toiled for nearly three years on tasks related to the massive project. At the same time, however, fully half of those living in the parish are dissatisfied with the *pace* of recovery. New Orleans is not becoming its better self quickly enough for this group. Among these are the one in ten residents overall who say they are actively “angry” about the rate of rebuilding, including similarly sized groups of white (15 percent) and African American residents (10 percent), women (11 percent) and men (11 percent), low income (12 percent) and higher income (13 percent) residents. On the other, more positive, side are 35 percent who would describe themselves as “satisfied but not enthusiastic,” and 6 percent who feel enthused about the pace of recovery.

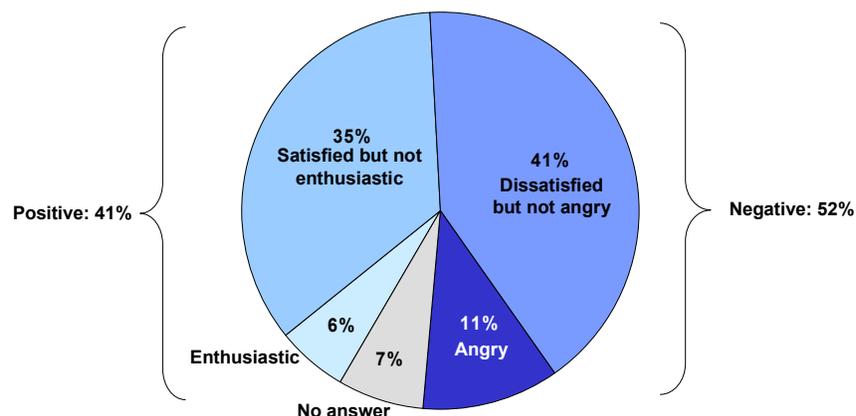
Majority Still Believe Recovery Moving in Right Direction

Would you say that in general the recovery and rebuilding effort in the greater New Orleans area is going in the right direction or in the wrong direction?



But Narrow Majority Dissatisfied with Pace of Rebuilding Efforts

How do you personally feel about the amount of progress that has been made in the recovery and rebuilding effort: would you say you are enthusiastic, satisfied but not enthusiastic, dissatisfied but not angry, or angry?

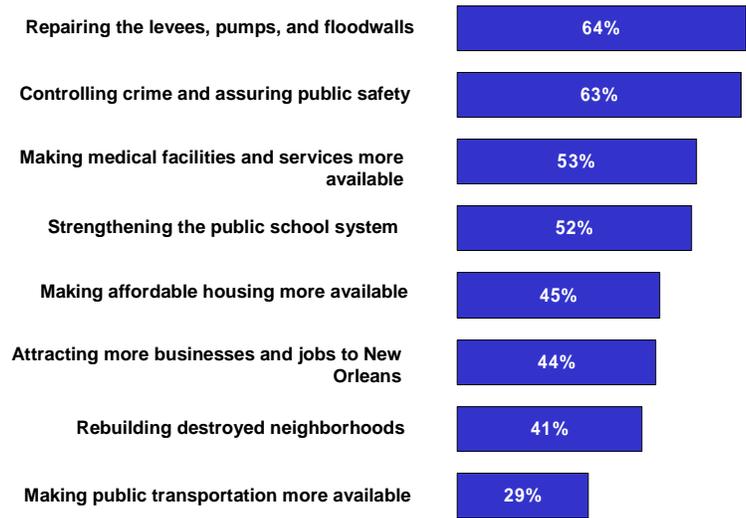


The survey suggests this dissatisfaction with the pace of recovery is linked to a feeling that, on certain tough but high priority issues facing this urban area, progress is not meeting public expectations. As in 2006, storm protection and crime control top the list of priorities for city residents, each of which is named as “one of the top” priorities by more than six in ten residents. In the next tier are expanding access to medical services and strengthening the public school system, followed by housing and job-related issues. This ranking – in terms of the *relative* priority put on different issues – is similar for African American and white residents, though African Americans are more likely than whites to call a number of issues “top priorities,” particularly housing and rebuilding destroyed neighborhoods.

As in '06, Levee Repair and Crime Top Priority List

Thinking about the rebuilding and recovery efforts in the greater New Orleans area, please tell me if each of the following should be one of the top priorities for rebuilding efforts...

Percent saying it is “one of the top” priorities:

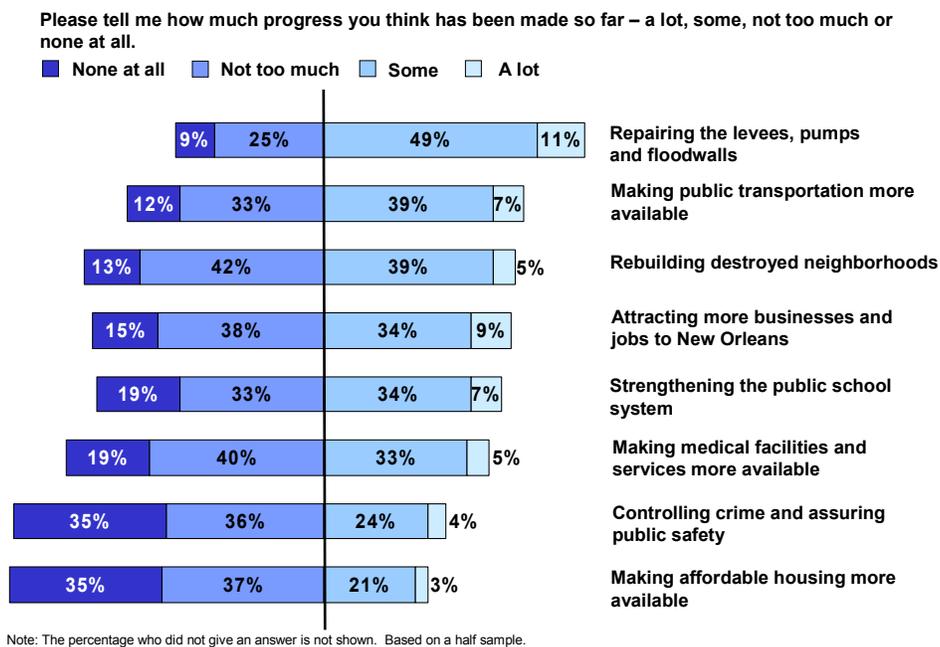


Note: Responses based on half sample.

If you look at progress ratings on the city's top four recovery issues, however, only on one do most residents say there has been at least "some" progress: storm protection. While six in ten say they see at least some progress on this vital issue, seven in ten say they see little or no progress on controlling crime and assuring public safety, a critical priority but also a historical problem for the city.

Of the other top two priorities – access to health care and strengthening public schools, again more than half say there has not been much progress (59 percent and 52 percent, respectively). On each of these, roughly four in ten residents say they see either "some" or "a lot" of progress. The findings on shortcomings in the health care system are bolstered by residents' persistent and widespread belief that there are not enough health care services currently available for uninsured and low-income residents. Nine in ten in New Orleans (89 percent) say this is the case, comparable to 2006. It's worth noting that some of the worst ratings are saved for the issue of affordable housing, where nearly three in four say there has been little progress.

Residents See Progress on Levees, But Not on Housing and Crime



Overall, then, on six of the eight issues on the 'recovery report card' more residents say they see little progress than see forward motion. On one topic, positive ratings significantly outstrip negative, and on one last issue (making public transportation more available), residents are evenly divided.

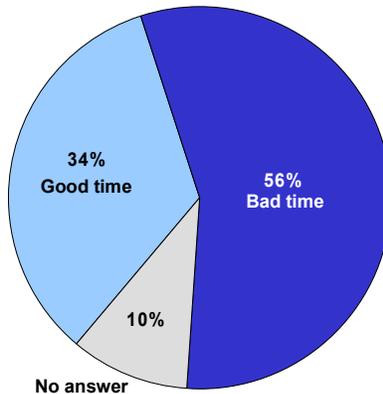
This is not to say that city has made no progress. Certain basic issues facing the public in 2006 are no longer major issues in 2008, and so are not included on the survey. They are goals achieved. One example is the task of getting basic services such as electricity and water functioning. This was a problem immediately after the storm, but by the time of our survey in the fall of 2006, 85 percent of Orleans Parish residents said they saw at least some progress there. As such, we did not include it again on our 2008 survey. The current survey does suggest progress in one related area: higher percentages now report having landline telephone service (from 68 percent in 2006 to 79 percent now) and access to the Internet at home (from 44 percent in 2006 to 64 percent now).

Opportunities in New Orleans currently seen as limited, though future more hopeful

Perhaps as a result of their disappointment with the progress being made on many tough issues, New Orleans residents tilt to the negative when it comes to rating opportunities available in the city. In particular, more than half – 56 percent – say that it’s a bad time for children to be growing up in New Orleans, an opinion that does not differ markedly between parents and non-parents. African American residents with children in their home are significantly more likely than white residents in a similar situation to say it is a bad time for children to be growing up in the city (60 versus 41 percent, respectively), and lower income households with children are more likely to see it as a bad time than those with higher incomes (63 versus 50 percent). This may be because those with more resources are less dependent on public services, such as schools.

Majority Say It’s A Bad Time to Be Growing Up in NOLA

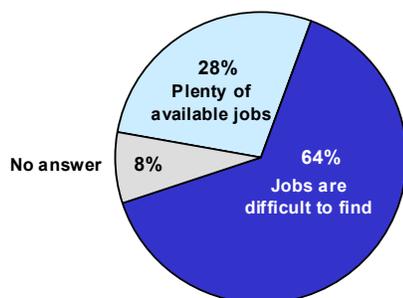
Generally speaking, do you think now is a good time or a bad time for children to be growing up in New Orleans?



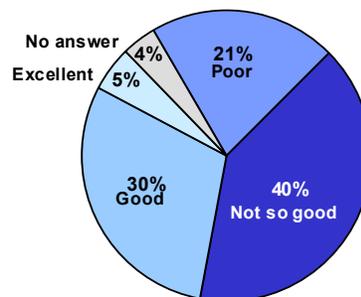
Those living in Orleans Parish are also pessimistic about the job and career opportunities in the city. Nearly two in three say that “good jobs are difficult to find.” And nearly as many (61 percent) would rate New Orleans as “not so good” or “poor” when it comes to career opportunities for young people. These sentiments are likely to be in part specific to the particular challenges facing the city and in part a reflection of the wave of economic unease sweeping the nation in 2008.

Residents Say Good Jobs, Careers Hard to Find

Thinking now about job opportunities in New Orleans, would you say there are plenty of good jobs available or good jobs are difficult to find?



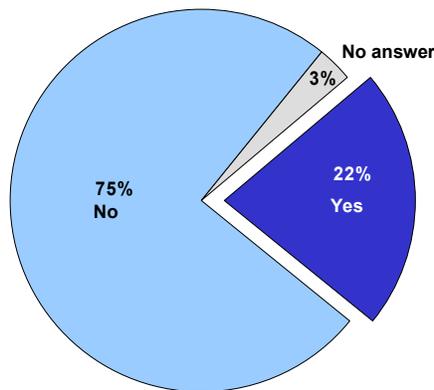
How would you rate New Orleans in terms of career opportunities for young people?



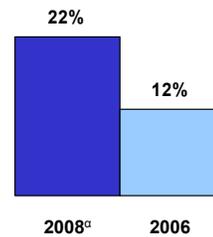
In one of the survey's more disturbing findings, the proportion of residents who say they are considering moving from New Orleans has risen. In 2006, 12 percent of Orleans Parish residents told us they were "currently planning to move or seriously considering moving" from the area. In this 2008 survey, that proportion had risen to 22 percent. The decision to move is strongly related to age, with younger residents – nationally a more mobile group -- significantly more likely to say they are thinking about moving from the city (for example, 41 percent of those under age 30 are thinking about moving, compared to 10 percent of those aged 65 or older).

Majority Still Do Not Plan to Move Away... But The Percent Considering Moving Has Increased

Are you currently planning to move or seriously considering moving away from the greater New Orleans area, or not?



Percent saying yes:



^a Statistically significant difference from 2006 at p < 0.05

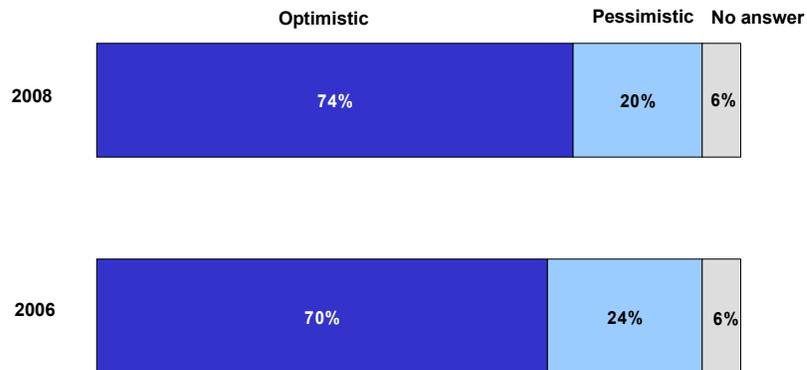
One group whose stability means much to any city is its young professionals, and among this group, 31 percent say they are thinking about moving.¹³ One possible reason: lack of roots in the area. This group is significantly more likely to have come to New Orleans since the storm (23 percent have compared to 8 percent of other residents). And one in five are students, a transient group in any city. Another possible reason: young professionals are no more likely than other residents to see the city as a place with ample career prospects for them. Six in ten give the city poor ratings on this front.

¹³ Young professionals are defined here as those aged 18-34 who have completed at least some college and are working full-time, part-time or are in school.

Despite these downbeat findings, there is one solid bright spot to consider: there is still widespread optimism about New Orleans' future. Three in four – including equally large majorities of African American and white residents – seem to have hope that things will improve. This level of optimism has not faded over the past year and a half despite the increasing frustrations expressed by the populace.

Yet City Residents Remain Optimistic

Considering everything, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the greater New Orleans area?

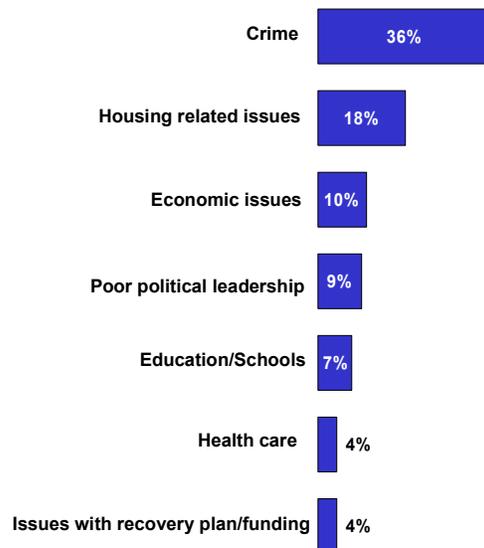


Issues facing the city: Storm protection, yes, but also crime, housing, schools, and health care

Asked in an open-ended question to volunteer their own view on “the single biggest problem facing New Orleans today,” the top responses centered on crime. Crime has been a long-standing concern in New Orleans. A 2004 survey by the University of New Orleans Survey Research Center found crime to be the top issue on the minds of Orleans Parish voters, up significantly from 2002.¹⁴ A recent analysis by the *Times-Picayune* found that per-capita crime rates are even higher now than in the years before Katrina, and that New Orleans had one of the highest murder rates in the country last year, making it no surprise that the issue continues to dominate.¹⁵ Though crime is doubtless a top issue in many urban areas, it is not necessarily always the number one issue, as demonstrated by a recent survey of Washington D.C. residents which found that education outstripped crime as the top issue of concern in that city.¹⁶

Residents' Views of Top Problems Facing New Orleans

Considering everything, what is the single biggest problem facing New Orleans today?



Note: Responses totaling less than 4 percent not shown

¹⁴ University of New Orleans Survey Research Center. “2004 Quality of Life Survey,” conducted March 22-April 1, 2004 among 400 registered voters in Orleans Parish. <http://poli.uno.edu/unopoll/golreport.doc>

¹⁵ McCarthy, Brendan. “Violent Crime in N.O. Soaring, Maybe; TP Analysis Outpaces the Police Statistics,” *The Times-Picayune*, February 18, 2008, p.1. http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/02/violent_crime_in_no_soaring_ma.html

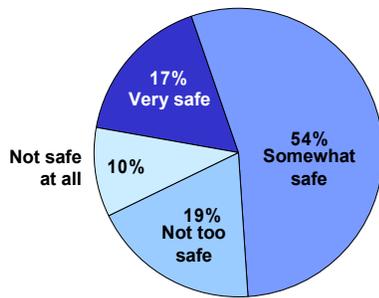
¹⁶ The January 3-8, 2008 survey of 1,000 D.C. residents by the *Washington Post* asked about the biggest problem facing the District, “the one you want the mayor to work the hardest to solve,” and found the largest majority mentioned education and schools (40 percent), with crime coming in second (26 percent). The District is in the process of overhauling its public school system. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/politics/district/fentyoneyear/011308dcpoll.html>

The survey suggests views on public safety issues are decidedly mixed. Although a majority say they feel at least somewhat safe in their own neighborhoods (17 percent say they feel “very safe” and 54 percent “somewhat safe”), this feeling of relative security doesn’t stop people from worrying about the issue. Roughly two in three city residents are at least somewhat worried about becoming the victim of a violent crime.

Residents also hold mixed views on the adequacy and effectiveness of the police presence in their neighborhoods. Roughly half of city dwellers (52 percent) report that their neighborhood has enough police presence, while nearly as many (47 percent) say their neighborhood does not. This latter division is remarkably consistent across socio-economic groups, with lower and upper income residents equally divided. Two in three residents (68 percent) said they have little confidence in the police’s ability to protect them from violent crime.

Security Still An Important Issue for New Orleans Residents, Most Have Little Confidence in Police Protection

These days, how safe from crime do you feel in your neighborhood?



How much confidence do you have in the ability of the police to protect you from violent crime?

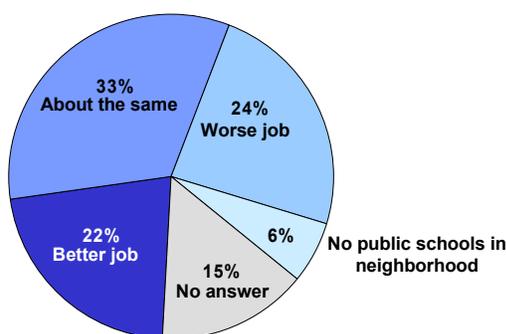


Crime was followed by housing-related problems (18 percent) – clearly an issue in a city where so much of the housing stock was devastated by the storm and flooding and in which the price of housing has risen significantly – and then economic problems (mentioned by 10 percent) and problems with political leadership (9 percent).

Schools also appear on residents' "top of the head" list of important challenges facing the city. In terms of public education, residents' opinions are mixed as to whether their neighborhood public schools are doing a better or worse job than before Katrina: Roughly equal proportions of residents say their neighborhood public schools are better (22 percent) as say they are worse (24 percent). A third say they are about the same. This may be one area where the high expectations that parents and guardians had for the "new" New Orleans – expectations fueled by promises made by policymakers, such as that there would be "a world-class quality system of public education in New Orleans" – might be working against views of progress, since it is also true that even before the storm reading and math scores regularly put New Orleans at the bottom of the rankings, and the public schools received very poor ratings from the populace.¹⁷ In many ways, these residents might also be comparing very different situations, as charter schools have become a prominent part of the post-Katrina educational landscape. Overall, public school enrollment has been on a roller coaster ride, with roughly 66,000 students enrolled in the fall of 2004, dropping down to just over 6,000 students in January of 2006, and now back at 32,887 this spring.¹⁸

Opinion Divided on Progress in Schools

Would you say your neighborhood public schools are doing a better job than before Katrina, a worse job, or are they about the same?



When those who are actually raising children are asked more specifically about their own children's school situation, the balance tilts toward the negative somewhat more. Asked to describe their child's current educational situation now compared to before Hurricane Katrina, more of those who lived in New Orleans before the storm describe the situation as worse now than describe it as better (28 percent vs. 19 percent). Four in ten describe the situation as basically the same.

African American households with children are more likely than whites to describe their children's school situation as having changed in some way. While six in ten whites say their children's school situation is about the same as before the storm, the majority of African Americans say their children's situation is either worse (32 percent) or better (22 percent). Given that nine in ten public school students were African American as of February 2008, it is likely that their opinions are more reflective of the public school experience.¹⁹ Those who are lower income are also more likely than other residents to say their child's school situation is worse now than before the storm (36 percent say worse off, compared to 22 percent among other residents).

¹⁷ Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco quoted: Purnick, Joyce. "Government Money Will Flow to Gulf Coast, but Will Fundamental Change Follow," *New York Times*, September 17, 2005. See also Mathews, Jay. "Charter Schools' Big Experiment; New Orleans' Post-Katrina Test May Offer Lessons for Ailing Systems," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2008, p. A01. See also University of New Orleans Survey Research Center, "2004 Quality of Life Survey," conducted March 22-April 1, 2004 among 400 registered voters in Orleans Parish. <http://poli.uno.edu/unopoll/qolreport.doc>

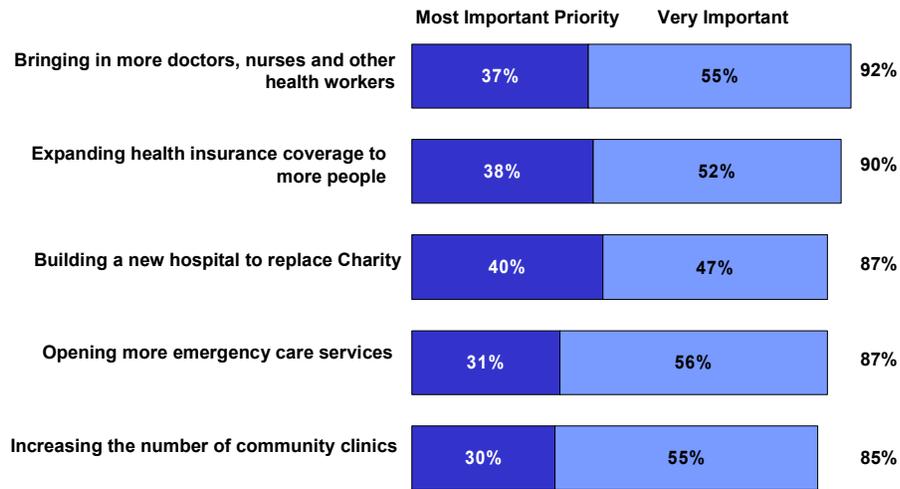
¹⁸ "Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area," *The New Orleans Index*. Brookings Institution/Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, April 16, 2008: 13 <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/08neworleansindex.aspx>

¹⁹ "Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area," *The New Orleans Index*. Brookings Institution/Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, April 16, 2008: 14 <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/08neworleansindex.aspx>

When it comes to the health care system, heavily damaged by the storm, residents place a high priority on a number of possible rebuilding projects.²⁰ Four in ten say building a new hospital to replace Charity – the major urban hospital that served many of the city’s poor and uninsured residents but is now shut down – is the most important priority. But nearly as many say the main focus should be on expanding health coverage or bringing in more medical personnel. In short, several different methods of expanding services are currently welcomed by the city’s population.

Replacing Charity Hospital and Expanding Health Insurance Top Priorities for Residents

Please tell me whether or not you think each of the following should be the most important priority for rebuilding New Orleans’ health care system, very important, somewhat important, not too important for not at all important.

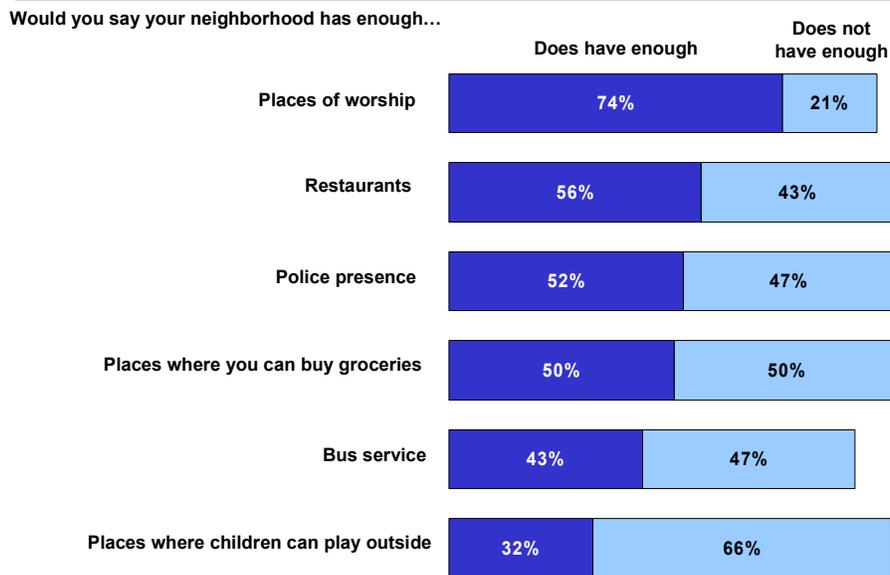


²⁰ For more information on the storm’s impact on the healthcare delivery system, see special focus box “What happened to the New Orleans healthcare system?” later in this report.

The hassle factor: Neighborhood-based services

If there is one thing that may be sustaining city residents through this tough period, it is the city’s churches and other places of worship. Asked to evaluate whether their post-Katrina neighborhoods had enough of the kinds of services many people look for in a city, residents were most satisfied with their opportunities for worship. Overall three in four say that they are content with the opportunities for worship available in their neighborhoods. A smaller majority of city dwellers (56 percent) say their neighborhood has enough places where they can eat out.

Outdoor Spaces Lacking for NOLA’s Children, but Most Residents Satisfied with Opportunities for Worship



Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

But there are other necessary tasks of daily life which might be difficult in certain parts of the city. Residents are divided as to whether their neighborhood has enough grocery stores – half say yes, half say no – though this obviously varies by location. For example, large majorities in Algiers and the Garden District say their neighborhood has enough places where they can buy groceries, while equally large majorities in Uptown and East Orleans report that their neighborhood does not.

Getting around the city may still be difficult for those who, for reasons of convenience or necessity, rely on bus service. Nearly half of city residents (47 percent) say their neighborhood doesn’t have enough bus service, a share that rises to 61 percent among low income residents. Those who are most affected, of course, are the 20 percent of city residents who don’t have a car. Among this group, 66 percent says their neighborhood does not have enough bus service.

The one area in which a clear majority are dissatisfied with their neighborhoods is in the availability of places for children to play outside. Overall, two in three citywide – and majorities in a variety of large neighborhoods across the city – say their area does not have enough outdoor options for youth.²¹

²¹ Each neighborhood was represented in the survey with the number of interviews proportional to its size in the city’s population. So, though all neighborhoods are represented in the survey, we are only able to break out the largest neighborhoods for individual analysis. These include Algiers, the Garden District, Uptown, Midcity, and East Orleans.

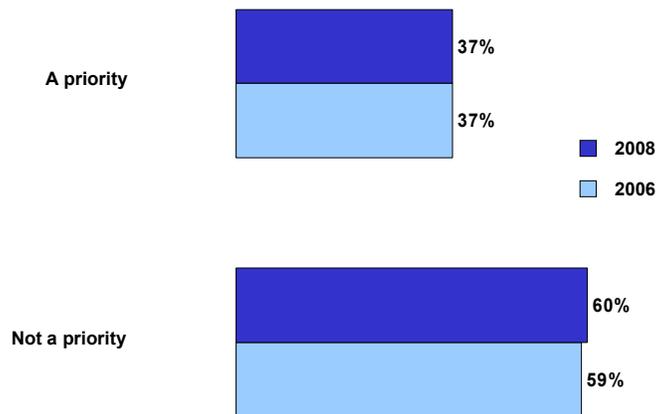
Federal help with recovery falls short; City feels forgotten by nation and its leaders

In many ways, New Orleans residents seem to feel that their nation has let them down in a time of need. They feel ignored by their elected leaders in Washington, underwhelmed by the financial help provided by the federal government, and forgotten by their fellow Americans. They feel ill-served by insurance companies, and have mixed reviews of the way the national media has covered their attempts at recovery. They believe that political corruption, a problem before the storm, continues to be rampant in the city itself. Across a range of public and private organizations, then, many city residents feel disappointed.

Overall, six in ten say they do not think the rebuilding of New Orleans is a priority for Congress and the president, unchanged from the majority who believed this in 2006. An even larger majority (65 percent) say they believe “most Americans have forgotten about the challenges facing New Orleans.

Continued Feelings That Washington Doesn't Care

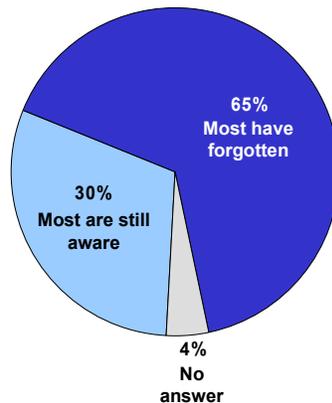
Do you think the rebuilding of New Orleans is a priority for Congress and the president, or is it not a priority?



Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

Most Feel Americans Have Forgotten New Orleans

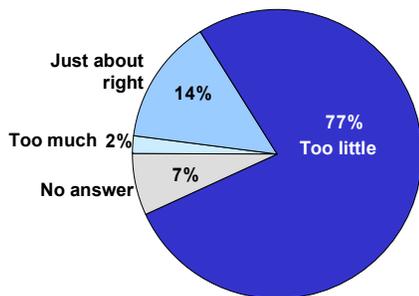
Do you think most Americans are still aware that New Orleans has not fully recovered from Katrina, or do you think most Americans have forgotten about the challenges facing New Orleans?



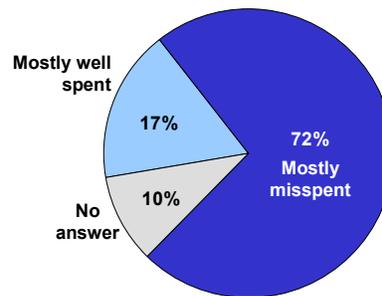
A significant majority are also disappointed by the federal government in general. Three in four say the federal government has not provided enough money and other support to the city. To some extent this may reflect the fact that many funds that have been designated for recovery have not been distributed. As of the spring, for example, nearly all of the \$6.6 billion designated for infrastructure repair by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had been disbursed to Louisiana, but only 35 percent of the funds allocated to New Orleans proper had reached the parish.²²

Federal Support to New Orleans Viewed As Inadequate, Misspent

Would you say that the amount of money and other support that the federal government has provided the city of New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina has been too much, too little or just about right?



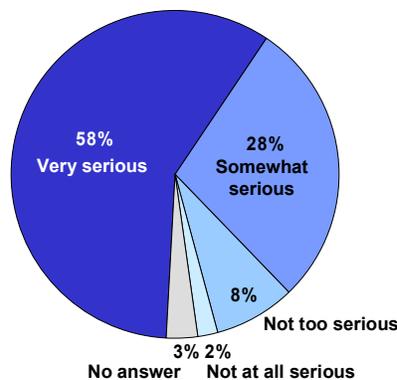
Do you think the federal dollars that have been provided for hurricane recovery have been mostly well spent or mostly misspent?



But blame is spread around: seven in ten say that the federal dollars that *have* been provided for hurricane recovery have been “mostly misspent.” This dovetails with a nearly unanimous view that New Orleans has a problem with political corruption, a view that almost certainly predates the storm (the state’s ethical reputation figured prominently in Louisiana’s last gubernatorial campaign.)²³ Nearly nine in ten (86 percent) say that the city has at least a “somewhat serious” problem with political corruption, and six in ten (58 percent) would call that problem “very serious.”

Political Corruption Seen as Serious Problem In New Orleans

How serious a problem is political corruption in New Orleans today?



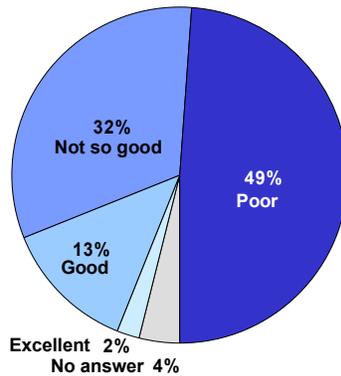
²² “Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area,” *The New Orleans Index*. Brookings Institution/Greater New Orleans Community Data Center April 16, 2008: 9 <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/08neworleansindex.aspx>

²³ See, for example: “La. Winner Vows to Restore Ethics,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 2007.

Other players also come in for critique in the survey. A large majority of New Orleans residents – 81 percent – give insurers low ratings for the way they responded to the needs of the population. Only 15 percent would rate their performance as “excellent” or “good.” Much of this dissatisfaction likely stems from the fact that homeowner’s policies do not cover flood damage, which is available separately through the heavily-subsidized National Flood Insurance Program, overseen by FEMA. Despite this subsidy, only two thirds of single-family homes in New Orleans were covered by flood insurance before Katrina, leaving many homeowners without coverage for their flood-related losses.²⁴

New Orleans Residents Say Insurance Companies Did Not Respond Well to Their Needs

How would you rate the way insurance companies have responded to the needs of people in New Orleans?

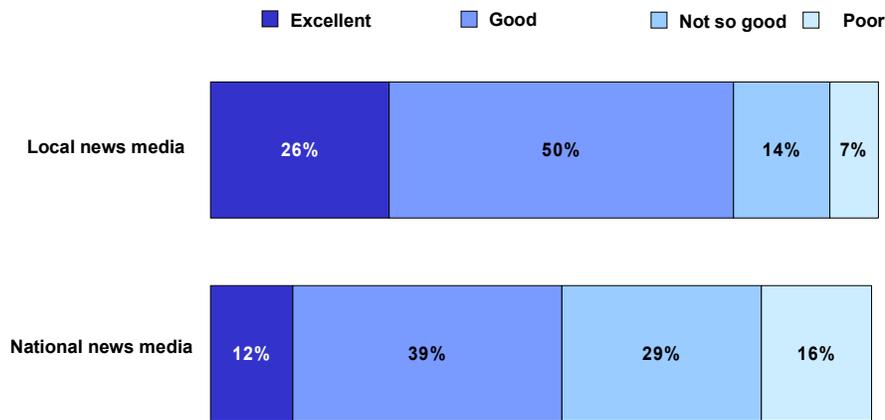


²⁴ Meitrodt, Jeffrey and Rebecca Mowbray, “After Katrina, pundits criticized New Orleans claiming too many residents had no flood coverage. In fact, few communities were better covered.” *The Times-Picayune*, March 19, 2006.

The one player rated in the survey that seems to have fulfilled or exceeded expectations is the local media. Overall, three in four city residents give the local media good marks for their coverage of the recovery process. Residents are less impressed with the national media’s coverage of the situation: 51 percent say they national media has done an excellent or good job, while nearly as many – 45 percent – would rate their job as not so good or poor. To some extent these ratings may reflect the different roles played by the two forms of media, with local outlets appropriately playing a much bigger part in providing residents specific information to help them through the recovery process (i.e., where they could go to receive help with a variety of problems), while the job of the national media might be seen as continuing to keep the country informed as to the progress of the rebuilding process.

Local News Gets Higher Marks Than National News for Covering Rebuilding Effort

How would you rate the job each of the following have done in covering New Orleans’ recovery from Katrina?



Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

Immigration, diversity, and race relations in New Orleans

New Orleans is known for many things, but prominent among them is its racial and ethnic diversity and the strength of its African American community. The conventional wisdom is that this diversity was enhanced by a large influx of Latinos in the wake of the hurricane and flooding, an event which led to local coverage of race relations.²⁵ To that end, issues of race relations have to some extent been a recurring subtext of the recovery effort.

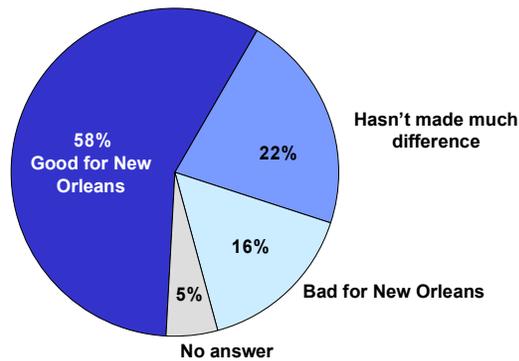
The current survey finds that a well of support for the city’s diversity, along with a welcoming attitude toward its new immigrant workers, exists alongside concerns that income, and to a lesser extent race, keep residents apart from each other in ways that are problematic. At the same time, however, there are signs that race relations have improved over the past year and a half.

²⁵ Note we did not find that the overall percentage of Latinos in the population was substantially different than it was pre-Katrina. According to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, neither did the Census Bureau’s 2006 American Community Survey. <http://www.gnocdc.org/FAQ/latinos.html>

First off, despite a high-pitched national debate over immigration policy, nearly six in ten say that the growing number of immigrant workers in general has been “good for New Orleans,” a more positive result than has been found in at least one national survey, possibly driven by the fact that the city’s labor shortage means there is less competition for jobs.²⁶ An even larger percentage – three in four residents – say that, in general, the diversity of racial and ethnic groups in the city is good for New Orleans. Again, many fewer – 16 percent – say that diversity is bad.

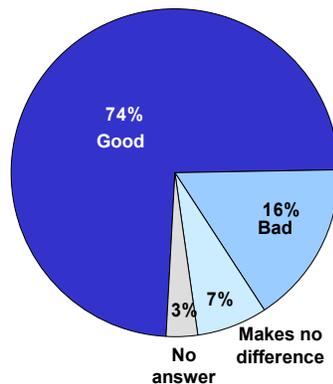
Immigrant Workers Perceived as Generally Good For New Orleans

Generally speaking, do you think the growing numbers of immigrant workers has been good for New Orleans, bad for New Orleans, or hasn't made much difference?



Most See New Orleans' Diversity as Good for City

Do you see New Orleans' diversity in terms of having many different racial and ethnic groups as generally good for the city or generally bad for the city?



²⁶ For example, a Washington Post/ABC News survey, conducted December 7-11, 2006 among 1,005 adults, found that 29 percent of adults nationwide said “newly arrived immigrants from other countries” have been good for their community.

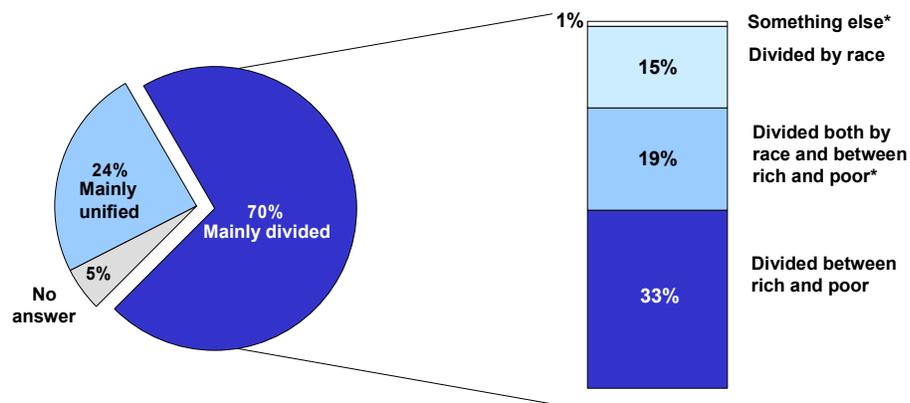
That said, a large majority also demur from describing the people of New Orleans as “mainly unified” in favor of describing them as “mainly divided by things like race or income” (overall, 70 percent see the city as divided, vs. 24 percent who see it as unified). Among those who see the city as divided, most also say that this is a problem.

Asked whether it is race or income which is the bigger divider, significantly more say it is the divide between rich and poor which is the problem (33 percent) than say it is race alone that causes the fracture (15 percent). Roughly two in ten see both as causing divisions.

Most Believe New Orleans Divided by Race and Income Levels

Would you describe the people of New Orleans as mainly unified or mainly divided by things like race or income?

Would you say the city is mainly divided by race or mainly divided between rich and poor?
(Based on total population)

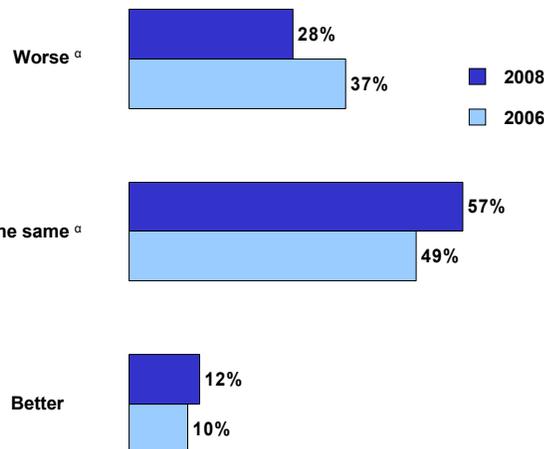


*Voluntary response
Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

The survey suggests that race relations in the city may be improving. This year, the percentage who said race relations are “worse [than] they were before Hurricane Katrina” dropped 9 percentage points from 2006. There was an equivalently sized bump in the percentage who see things as better or about the same.

Some Improvement in Reports of Race Relations

Do you think race relations today in the greater New Orleans area are better, worse or about the same as they were before Hurricane Katrina?

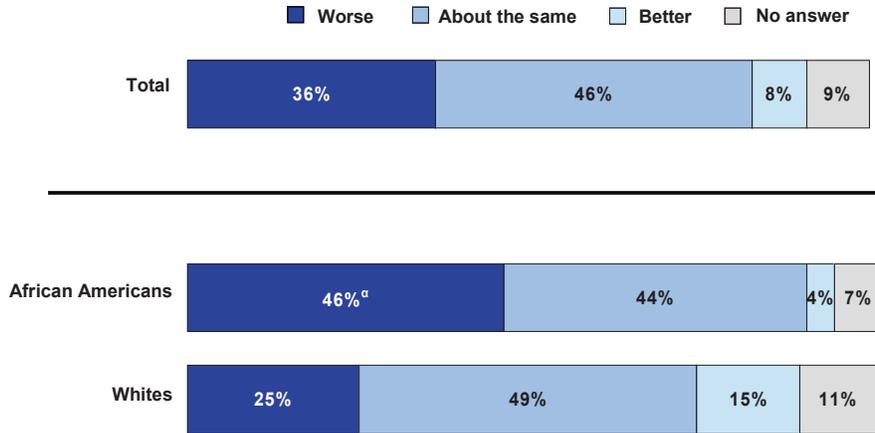


^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05
Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

When it comes to the role of race in the rebuilding process, a plurality of residents (46 percent) believe African Americans and whites are receiving equal treatment in the recovery effort. But just over a third (36 percent) believe that African Americans receive worse treatment. Only 8 percent believe they get better treatment.

Many African Americans Say Rebuilding Process Biased

Do you feel that African Americans in the greater New Orleans area are being given better, worse or about the same treatment and opportunities in the rebuilding process as whites?



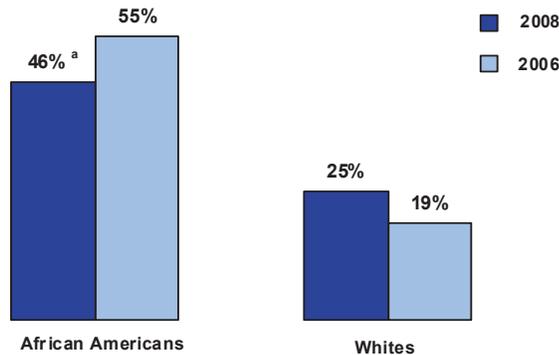
^a Statistically significant difference from whites at p < 0.05

Not surprisingly, there are substantial differences in views between African Americans and whites on this question, with the former more likely to see disparate treatment. Specifically, nearly half of African Americans – 46 percent – say they believe African Americans are getting worse treatment, compared to 25 percent of whites who say the same thing. The silver lining here: the percentage of African Americans who feel the recovery process is racially biased has declined from 2006, dropping from a majority of 55 percent to the current 46 percent.

But Somewhat Fewer African Americans See Bias Now Compared to 2006

Do you feel that African Americans in the greater New Orleans area are being given better, worse or about the same treatment and opportunities in the rebuilding process as whites?

Percent saying worse:



^a Statistically significant difference from African Americans in 2006 at p < 0.05

STORM SURVIVORS: RECOVERY ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

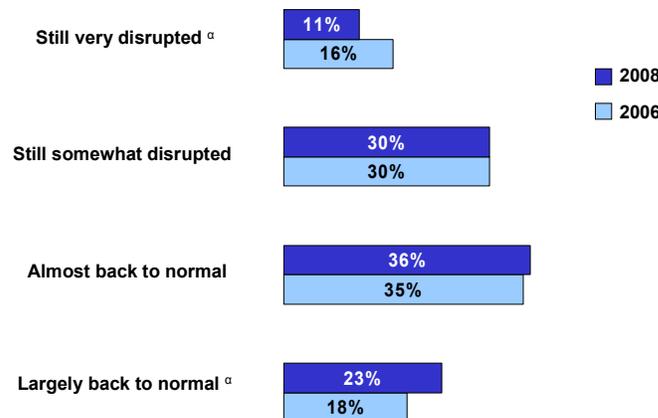
Outsiders who think a three-year old storm – even one of this magnitude – must be ancient history haven’t spoken to anyone in New Orleans lately. Roughly three quarters of New Orleans’ population was affected by flooding, and when all was said and done, the city’s population was halved a year after the storm.²⁷ Analyses have shown that African Americans in the city were disproportionately affected by the disaster, making up 73 percent of the parish’s affected population.²⁸ According to a study done by Brown University sociologist John R. Logan, “almost all of the [New Orleans] neighborhoods that were in the range of 75-100 percent black at the time of Census 2000 were damaged.” In his words, African Americans as well as poor residents had “greater odds of being in harm’s way.”²⁹

Despite the fact that more than a year has passed since we last surveyed the city’s residents, and that nearly three years have passed since the devastating storm swept out of the city, the survey finds the storm-related personal disruption we found in 2006 is relatively unabated in 2008. It also finds that quality of life ratings overall remain depressed.

The large majority of city residents – nine in ten – lived in New Orleans at the time the storm hit, making the city largely a population of Katrina survivors. However, fully four in ten (41 percent) of these survivors currently describe their own personal situation as still at least somewhat disrupted by the storm, not a great improvement on the 46 percent disruption level we found in 2006.

Recovery From Storm: Nearly 3 Years Later, Four in Ten Still Disrupted

Which of the following best describes your personal situation in terms of recovering from Hurricane Katrina? Would you say that your day to day life is largely back to normal, almost back to normal, still somewhat disrupted or still very disrupted?
Based on those who lived in the New Orleans area at the time Hurricane Katrina hit.



Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.
^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

There is some progress on the margins here, though, with a 5 percentage point increase in the proportion who say their lives are “largely back to normal” and a similarly sized drop in the percentage who are “still very disrupted.” And, not to lose sight of the positive finding, a 59 percent majority of residents say they consider themselves effectively recovered from the storm.

²⁷ “Hurricane Katrina Anniversary Data for Louisiana,” *The Louisiana Recovery Authority*. August 2006.

²⁸ Gabe, T., et. al. “Hurricane Katrina: Social-Demographic Characteristics of Impacted Areas,” *CRS Report for Congress*, November 4, 2005. www.gnocdc.org/reports/crsrept.pdf

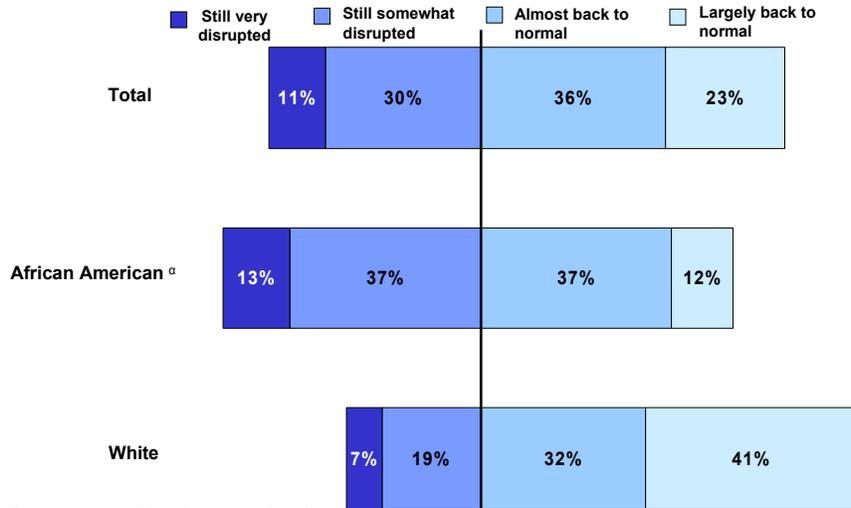
²⁹ Logan, John R., “The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods,” Brown University. <http://www.s4.brown.edu/katrina/report.pdf>

As was true in 2006, the city’s African American population is much more likely than white residents to report their lives still being disrupted by Katrina (50 percent vs. 26 percent), no doubt a reflection of the greater impact the storm had on this population. The survey bears out reports of that disproportionate impact in residents’ own voices: more than half of those current residents who lived in New Orleans at the time of the storm said they experienced “a lot” of hardship due to Katrina. And African Americans – both those with lower and higher incomes – were considerably more likely to report a substantial impact.

White Residents More Likely to Have Returned to Normal

Which of the following best describes your personal situation in terms of recovering from Hurricane Katrina? Would you say that your day to day life is largely back to normal, almost back to normal, still somewhat disrupted or still very disrupted?

Based on the 90 percent of respondents who lived in New Orleans at the time Katrina hit

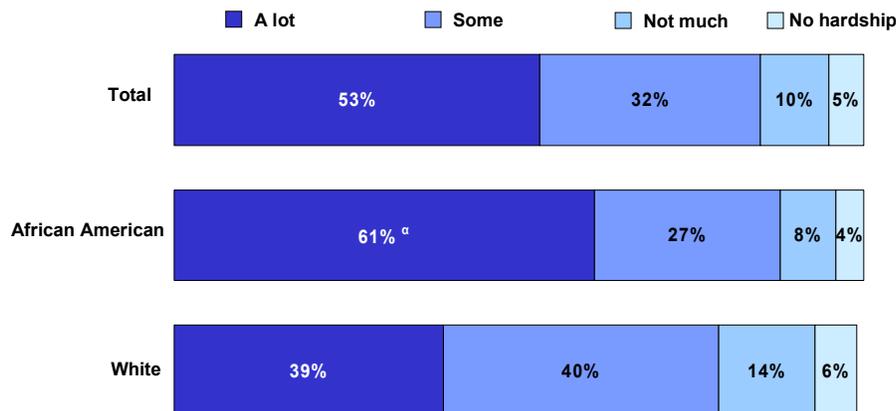


Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.
^a Statistically significant difference between African American and white "largely/almost back to normal" values (49%, 73%) at p < 0.05

Most Suffered Hardship as Result of Storm

Thinking about your own situation, would you say you have experienced a lot, some, not much or no hardship as a result of the storm and its aftermath?

Based on the 90 percent of respondents who lived in New Orleans when Katrina hit



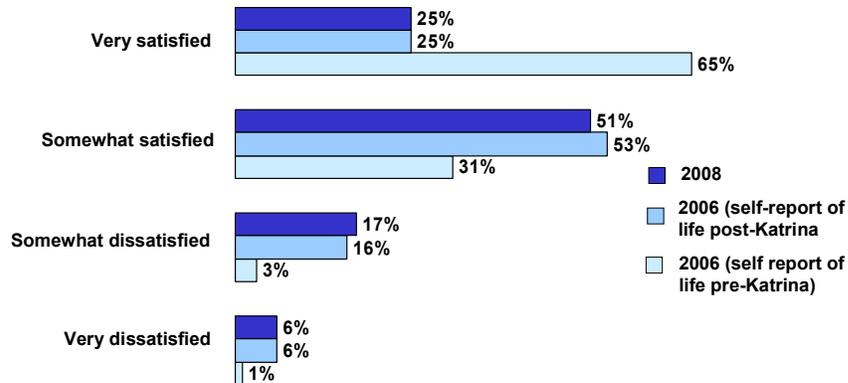
Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.
^a Statistically significant difference from whites at p < 0.05

Overall, then, it is noteworthy but perhaps not surprising that quality of life ratings have not bounced back among New Orleans' population. In our 2006 survey, 65 percent said they would have rated their life pre-Katrina as very satisfying. But only 25 percent said they would have rated life in fall 2006 as very satisfying. That number remains unchanged in 2008.

Quality of Life Ratings Have Not Bounced Back

In general, can you tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with your overall quality of life?

Based on all residents

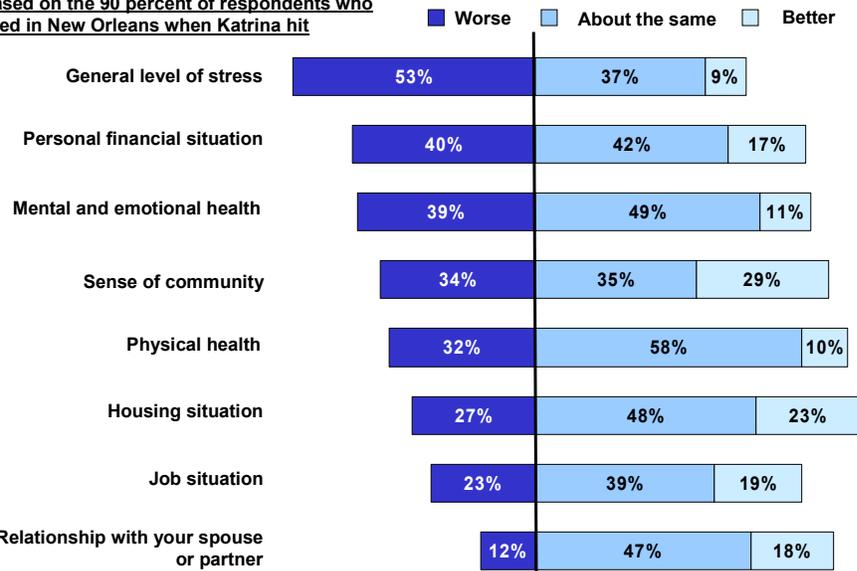


The survey suggests that as much as the dramatic physical damage caused by the storm and flooding, it is Katrina's psychological aftermath that stands out as one of its primary legacies. Asked to speak more specifically about the aspects of their lives that are worse now than before Katrina, those who had lived in New Orleans at the time the storm hit were most likely to report that their "general level of stress" was worse now, with a narrow majority (53 percent) saying so. Similarly, four in ten described their mental and emotional health as worse, nearly four times as many as said their mental health had improved over the period.

Increased Stress Level Most Widespread Toll

Compared to before Hurricane Katrina, is each better, worse, or about the same today?

Based on the 90 percent of respondents who lived in New Orleans when Katrina hit



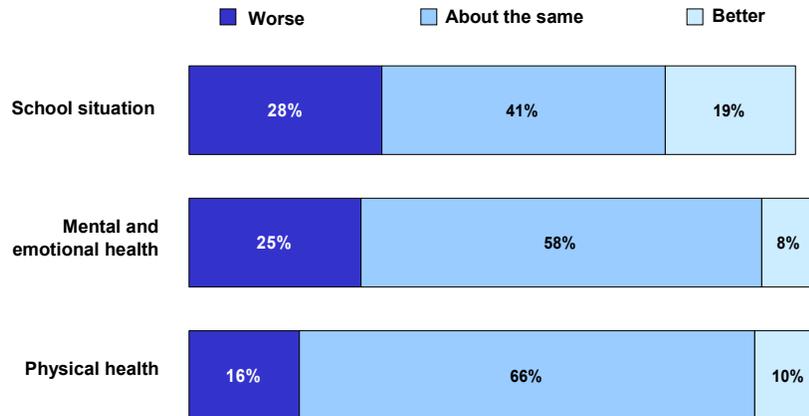
Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

There are also signs of the kind of post-storm emotional distress among children that other researchers have noted.³⁰ Fully one in four storm survivors with children at home report that their children’s mental and emotional health is worse now than it was before Hurricane Katrina, three times the number who say it is better (8 percent).

Children’s Situation

Compared to before Hurricane Katrina, is the... of the children in your household better, worse or about the same today?

Based on those with children under the age of 19 living in their household who lived in New Orleans when Katrina hit.



Note: The percentage who did not give an answer is not shown.

Stress is not the only area where a sizeable group of New Orleans residents judge their lives as worse after Katrina: four in ten also said their financial situation was worse now than before the storm. In this aspect, as in many others, the storm was hardest on the most vulnerable residents: fully six in ten poor residents reported that their financial situation was worse today, roughly twenty percentage points higher than the rest of the population.

Across these measures of life pre- and post-Katrina, it is worth noting that many residents report a good deal of stability: roughly half (48 percent) say their housing situation is the same as before the storm, and the rest divide between it being better (23 percent) and it being worse (27 percent). Similarly, 47 percent say their relationship with their spouse or partner is the same, compared to 18 percent who say it is better and 12 percent who say it is worse.

Interestingly, the hurricane had a very mixed impact on people’s sense of community. While three in ten (29 percent) say their sense of community was stronger now than before Katrina, a slightly larger percentage say it was worse (34 percent). Poor residents are only half as likely as those in households making more money to say their sense of community was better now (19 percent vs. 32 percent of other residents).

³⁰ See, for example, The Children’s Health Fund, “Operation Assist” related research at <http://www.childrenshealthfund.org/publications/academicpubs.php>. Also: Eaton, Leslie. “Many Children Struggling After ’05 Storms,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 2007.

CHALLENGES FACING THE POPULATION: MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, HEALTH CARE ACCESS, AND EMPLOYMENT

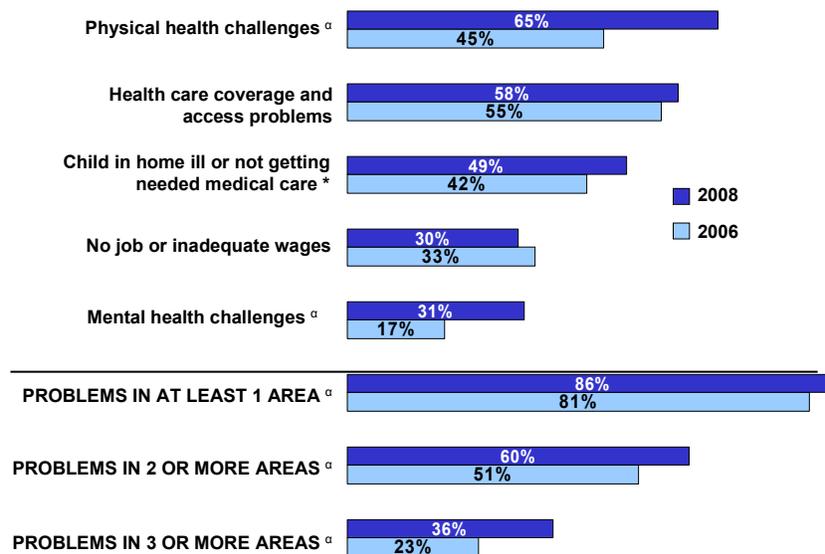
In 2006, we set about to create an aggregate measure of health and employment challenges facing the population, as a way of quantifying the extent to which the city is attempting to recover while also trying to meet the needs of a relatively disadvantaged population. In 2008 we recreated this measure.³¹ The result: though there have been changes in terms of which specific problems are more and less likely to plague the public, overall the city’s residents are just as likely to be experiencing a challenge in at least one or two of these critical areas of daily life as they were a year and a half ago.

In some ways, this inability to make noticeable progress on deeply entrenched problems is not surprising. Even before the storm and flooding, New Orleans was serving a diverse, sicker, and poorer population in comparison to the nation, with roughly half its residents falling below 200 percent of the federal poverty level in July 2005, and a population that ranked low when it came to health statistics.³² Both in terms of income and health status, the city’s pre-storm African American population ranked lower than its white residents. These disparities were exacerbated by the storm and the flooding that followed. Nor are problems with health, insurance coverage, access to needed medical care, and good jobs easily overcome by the enthusiasm, optimism, and hope that fueled the beginning of the massive recovery effort.

In 2008, we find that 86 percent of those adults living in New Orleans say they have a problem in at least one of these five areas: a physical or mental health challenge, a problem with health care coverage or access, a health problem facing a child, or an employment challenge. Even limiting the scale to the four health-related areas, more than eight in ten residents (84 percent) have at least one problem. If anything, somewhat more residents now than in 2006 report facing multiple problems at once: 60 percent say they have a challenge in at least two of these areas, up 9 percentage points from 2006, and 36 percent say they face challenges in three or more areas, up 13 percentage points from 2006.

Health and Employment Problems Facing City Residents

Percent who reported having a problem in each of the following areas:



* Among those with children in the home.
^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

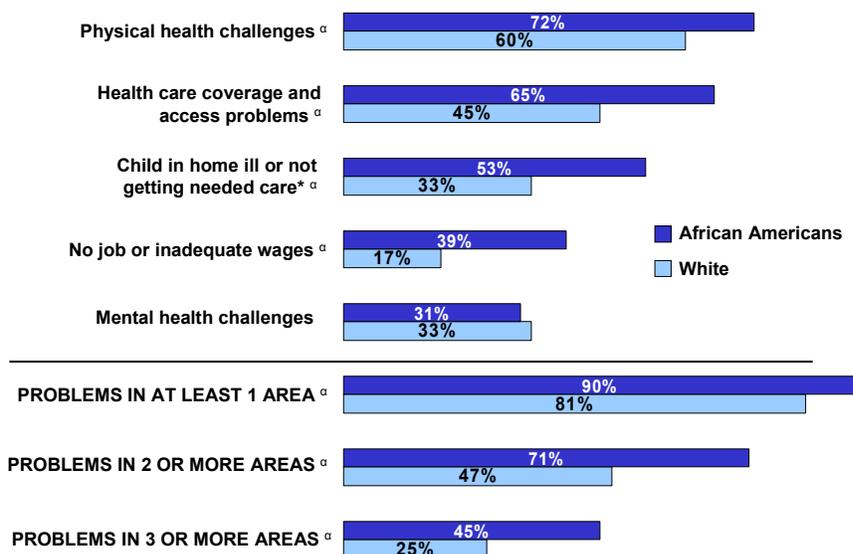
³¹ For a description of how the scales were created, please see Appendix B.

³² R. Rudowitz, D. Rowland and A. Shartzter, “Health Care in New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina,” *Health Affairs* 25, 2006: w394.

As was true a year and a half ago, African American residents – who on average have lower incomes than white city dwellers – are more likely to experience problems in all but one of the five categories. The biggest differences – at least twenty percentage points – are in health care coverage and access issues, children’s health issues, and employment. There are no significant differences in the proportion who report suffering a mental health challenge. Looking at the problem scale by income paints a similar picture, with the largest differences being in the percentage who report at least one health care coverage or access problem (73 percent of low-income residents compared to 45 percent of other residents) and the percentage who report an employment-related challenge (47 percent versus 20 percent).

African Americans More Likely to Experience Multiple Problems

Percent who reported having a problem in each of the following areas:



* Among those with children in the home.
^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

Employment issues and other economic challenges

The employment situation in the New Orleans region is one of relatively rapid change. As of the second quarter of 2007, more than 9,000 employers had closed or relocated post-Katrina, while just over 6,000 new firms had opened or moved to the area.³³ Given the reduced population of the city, this has translated into a relatively low unemployment rate, at least for the present. As we noted earlier, however, a majority of residents (64 percent) still say that “good jobs are difficult to find.”

Looking at the big picture on employment, the survey finds that about three in ten have some sort of employment-related challenge, similar to 2006. African American residents are more than twice as likely as white residents to be experiencing an employment-related challenge. Overall one in ten in the city report being unemployed, not a statistically significant difference from 2006, and a similar percentage (13 percent) report that their job does not pay enough to cover their basic expenses.

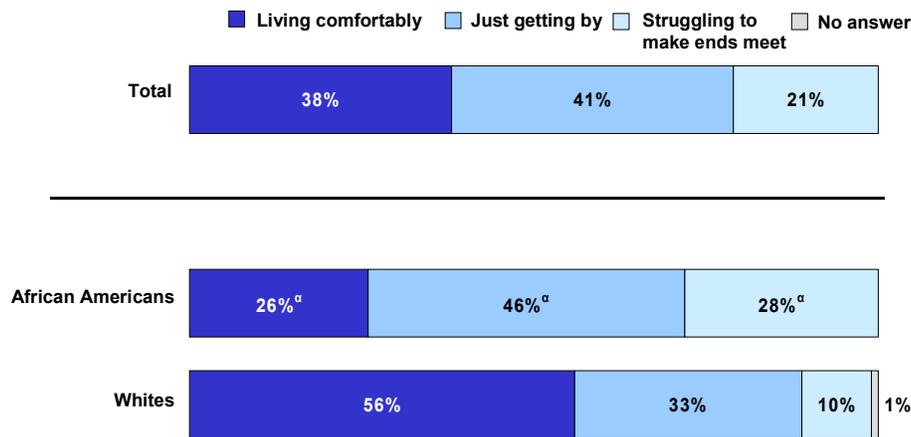
<i>No job or inadequate wages</i>	2008	2006
Job doesn’t pay enough to cover basic expenses	13%	16%
Unemployed	10	12
On disability and can’t work	7	6
Any of these problems	30	33

³³ “Tracking Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area,” *The New Orleans Index*. Brookings Institution/Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, April 16, 2008: 8 <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/08neworleansindex.aspx>

Employment, however, is only one piece – albeit an important one – of people’s larger sense of the economy and the stability of their place in it. The current survey suggests that despite its low unemployment rate, New Orleans is a place where most residents feel economically on the edge, with six in ten describing themselves as “struggling to make ends meet” or “just getting by.” This is particularly true of the city’s African American population, where only one in four (26 percent) would describe themselves as “living comfortably.” Residents’ sense of financial struggle is likely a reflection of the extent to which many people, particularly in the African American community, are making do with relatively little money in the city. Overall, four in ten adult city residents live in families making less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.³⁴ This rises to more than half (57 percent) of the city’s adult African American residents, compared to 17 percent of adult white residents.

Many, Particularly in African American Community, Struggle to Make Ends Meet

Thinking about your family’s financial situation, would you say you are living comfortably, just getting by, or struggling to make ends meet?



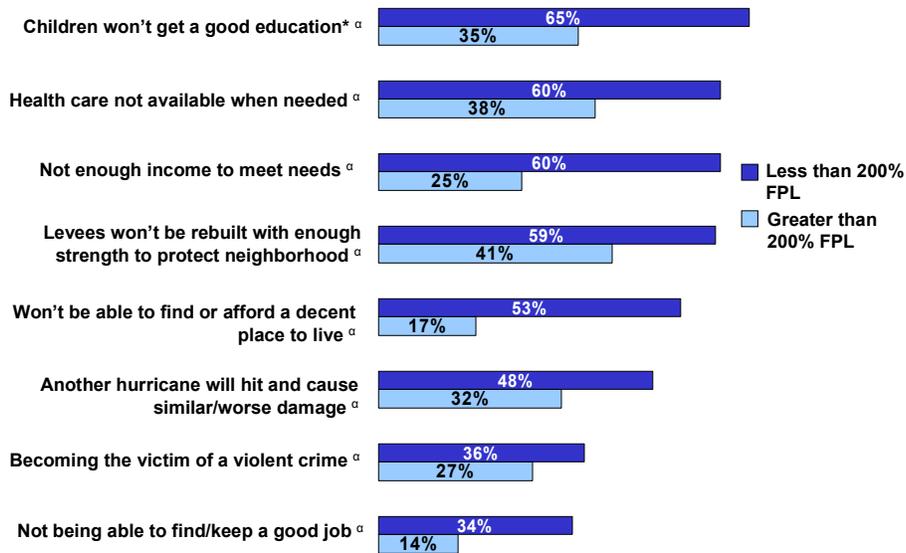
^a Statistically significant difference from whites at p < 0.05

³⁴ This estimate is based on the 83 percent who provided family financial information.

The city’s low-income population – who make up roughly four in ten residents -- are exposed to challenges on multiple fronts, and their worries reflect this onslaught of potential problems. They are substantially more concerned than other residents not only about not having enough income to meet their needs, but about not having access to good health care and educational opportunities, and even about their neighborhoods not being prepared to meet the next big storm.

Low-Income Population Experiences More Worries

Percent who reported being very worried in each of the following areas:



* Among those with children in the home.
^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

Low-income residents are also a group who appear to have been particularly hard hit economically by Katrina and its aftermath. Among the large majority of New Orleans residents who lived in the city at the time of the hurricane, low-income residents are significantly more likely than others to say that their financial situation is now worse than it was before the storm (53 percent of low-income respondents report their life is worse compared to 34 percent of other residents). They are also somewhat more likely to report that their job situation is now worse (30 percent versus 19 percent of other residents).

Mental health challenges more visible

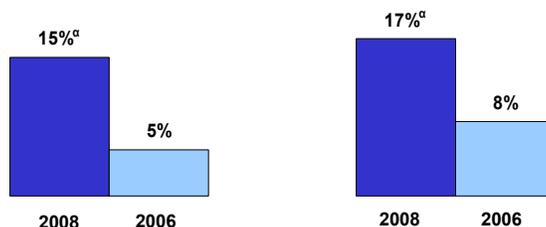
There has been consistent discussion in the academic and popular press about the extent and seriousness of mental health problems in New Orleans in the aftermath of the hurricane and flooding.³⁵ One of the most consistent findings in the new survey is the extent to which reported mental health problems have increased since 2006.

Notable Increase in Reported Diagnosis and Medication for Mental Health Problems

Has a doctor or health professional ever told you that you have a serious mental illness such as depression?

In the past 6 months, have you taken a prescription medication for problems with your emotions, nerves or mental health, or not?

Percent saying yes:



^a Statistically significant difference from 2006 at p < 0.05

Specifically, the survey finds a marked increase in the proportion of residents who say they have been diagnosed by a doctor with a serious mental illness, such as depression, from 5 percent in the 2006 survey to 15 percent now. There is also an uptick in the proportion who report they have recently been taking a prescription medicine for problems with their mental health (17 percent now compared to 8 percent in 2006). Not surprisingly, self-reports of feeling in “fair” or “poor” mental health have also doubled over the time period, from 10 percent to 20 percent now.³⁶ As noted earlier in the report, residents report that a higher stress level is the most widespread of eight possible negative personal effects of the storm.

<i>Mental health challenges</i>	2008	2006³⁷
Mental health “fair” or “poor”	20% ^a	10%
Taking medication for mental health issue	17% ^a	8
Diagnosed with serious mental illness	15% ^a	5
<i>At least one of these problems</i>	31%^a	17
<i>Two or more of these problems</i>	14%^a	5

^a Statistically significant difference from 2006 at p < 0.05

³⁵ See, for example: Weisler, et. al. “Mental Health and Recovery in the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita,” *JAMA*. 296:5, 2006: 585-588. Galea, et. al. “Exposure to Hurricane Related Stressors and Mental Illness after Hurricane Katrina,” *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 64:12, 2007: 1427-1434.

³⁶ This represents the proportion of residents who described their own mental health as “fair” or “poor” on a standard five point scale.

³⁷ Note that the original 2006 scale, as published in the Kaiser Family Foundation report “Giving Voice to the People of New Orleans: The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey” included some measures not carried on the 2008 survey. The version presented here was adjusted to be comparable to the 2008 scale, but may not match the version shown in the original 2006 report. See Appendix B for more information.

These findings come in the context of a drastic reduction, and a slow but steady recovery, in mental and behavioral health services in the city due to the disaster. When Charity Hospital was permanently closed due to flooding, the city lost its primary source of inpatient mental health care.³⁸ Since Katrina, the city and state have made strides in recovering New Orleans' capacity to deal with mental health issues, replacing some of the lost inpatient mental health beds at facilities around the area, making outpatient mental health services more available in the community, and recruiting mental health professionals to the area. However, the availability of services is still far below pre-Katrina levels, leaving gaps for those in the area with mental health needs.³⁹

Though the survey cannot directly tie these reported increases in mental health problems to Katrina-related aftereffects, this is certainly high on the list of plausible culprits. It's possible that, having survived the disaster and the immediate aftermath, the slow recovery is taking a toll on the population, somewhat like the shift from an acute to a chronic illness. But it's equally possible that the increased rates of reported mental health problems are an indication that the health system is at least partially up and functioning again. Residents may have a better opportunity to be diagnosed and treated for any mental health issues, an opportunity that was not as widespread at the time of our 2006 survey.

Unlike physical health problems, which are much more common among older residents, those under age 65 are just as likely to have a mental health challenge (32 percent compared to 26 percent of those age 65 and over). In fact, the increase in reported mental health issues is greatest among those aged 30 to 64.

Despite these increases in reported mental health problems, there was a decrease in the share of adults who report at least one mental health visit in the past 6 months. However, those who are using mental health services appear to be using them more frequently, as there was a small increase in the share with two or more visits (from 2 percent in 2006 to 8 percent now).

³⁸ R. Rudowitz, D. Rowland and A. Shartzter, "Health Care in New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina," *Health Affairs* 25, 2006: w401

³⁹ Shartzter, Adele. "Health Care in New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina" online tutorial. <http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials/katrina/player.html>

What happened to the New Orleans healthcare system?

Before Katrina, Louisiana ranked at the bottom of states in coverage and health status with high levels of chronic illness and poor health outcomes, coupled with below-average rates of employer coverage and very limited Medicaid eligibility for low-income adults. About one in five nonelderly adults in the region were uninsured and dependent on the public hospitals run by Louisiana State University (LSU) – in New Orleans, Charity Hospital and its sister institution University Hospital – for their health care needs. Charity housed a variety of specialty services, notably the Gulf Coast's only Level One Trauma Center and more than 100 inpatient mental health beds, but the ability of the poor to access care in community settings was limited.

Hurricane Katrina and its floodwaters caused extensive physical damage and devastated the health care system in New Orleans. Most of the hospitals in the region closed at least temporarily, along with pharmacies, nursing homes, community clinics, and private doctors' offices, and many health care providers relocated to other areas. Charity, the region's major teaching hospital, was shuttered, leaving health services stretched thin for the poor and uninsured as well as other city residents. Mental health needs in particular were not being met.

Following the storm, state and local leaders sought to rebuild a better, more efficient health care system with a focus on expanding access to primary care in the community, but a year after the storm little progress had been made and the availability of health care services was still very limited. Though many private practices and mainstream services had recovered, only three of Orleans' nine general hospitals were open along with a handful of community clinics to serve the poor and uninsured. LSU was operating a clinic in a renovated department store in downtown New Orleans.

By 2008, capacity had increased in both inpatient and outpatient settings, providing the New Orleans population increased access to care. Though Charity remains closed, in November 2006 LSU began offering limited services at University Hospital. A total of five acute care hospitals are now open in Orleans Parish, and all 6 general hospitals in neighboring Jefferson Parish have reopened. After losing 372 of New Orleans' 507 psychiatric beds in Katrina's devastation, the state reports the number had reached 225 total beds as of February 2008. Additional clinics have begun offering services to the population, bringing the total in 2008 to more than 70 outpatient primary and behavioral health clinics that provide care regardless of ability to pay. Providers have returned as well—for example, there were 300 more registered nurses in Orleans Parish in 2007 than 2006.

Though basic services have been restored, residents do not yet have a fully-functioning, efficient health system and there are still gaps in the availability of health services. The future shape of the New Orleans health care system remains in contention, especially concerning the scope and role of a rebuilt public teaching hospital in downtown New Orleans to replace Charity.

Sources: Louisiana Hospital Association, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

An increase in reports of physical health challenges

The 2008 survey also found a higher proportion of residents reporting a physical health challenge. Overall, 65 percent report either having some sort of chronic condition or disability or being in “fair” or “poor” health, up from 45 percent in 2006. It is not clear to what extent this change is driven by an actual deterioration in health status and to what extent it is driven by other possible factors, including: increased access to care leading to increased diagnoses of problems; the return of a less-healthy segment of the population;⁴⁰ or the simple fact that with the passage of time, and as life crises fade, people are more able to concentrate on their own health.⁴¹ To some extent, it also seems that the 2006 survey may have represented an underreporting of health problems, perhaps reflecting the lack of available health services at that time.

<i>Physical health challenges</i>	2008	2006
Have any chronic condition or disability	61% ^α	42%
Health rated as "fair" or "poor"	30 ^α	14
<i>One of these problems</i>	65^α	45
<i>Both of these problems</i>	26^α	11

^α Statistically significant difference from 2006 at $p < 0.05$

Looking at the individual measures that make up this scale, a significantly larger percentage of residents report that they are in “fair” or “poor” health now than did so in 2006 – 30 percent vs. 14 percent. This rise in self-reported health issues is not confined to one age group, but occurs both among elderly and non-elderly residents. The change from 2006 in self-reported fair/poor health was more prominent among African Americans than among whites, however. There was a 22 percentage point jump in the number of African Americans reporting being in fair or poor health, compared to a 5 percentage point change among whites.⁴² This exacerbates a “health gap” that already existed between the two groups. Finally, lower income residents are much more likely than those with higher incomes to report that their health is not good. Nearly half – 46 percent – say they are in fair or poor health, compared to 19 percent of the rest of the city’s population.

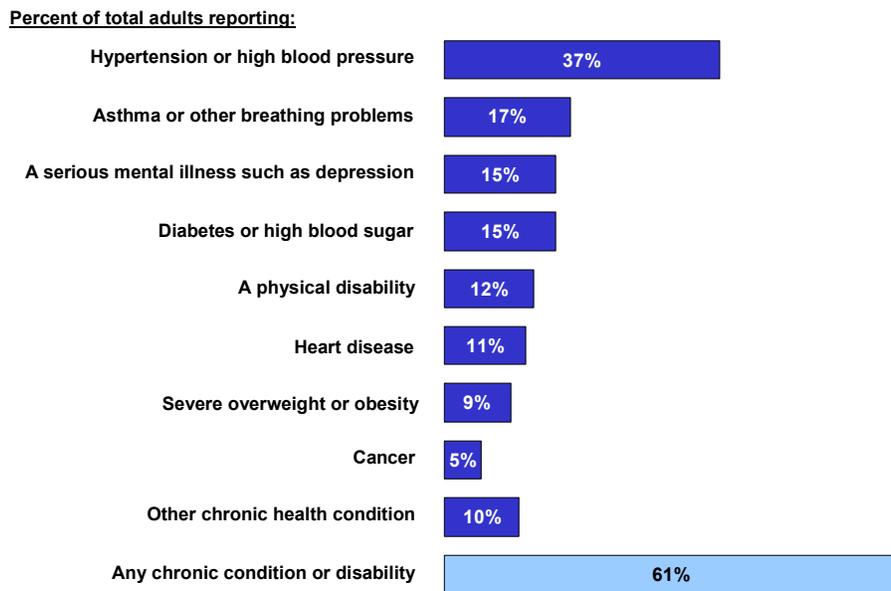
⁴⁰ Note that the Census Bureau estimates that the population of New Orleans went from 210,198 in July 2006 to 239,124 in July 2007, their latest population estimate. Unfortunately, we do not have a way to ascertain whether the newer returnees are disproportionately less healthy.

⁴¹ We also considered whether these dramatic changes might be a survey artifact of some sort, in particular, whether it might be a mode effect. If respondents are more likely to report health problems over the phone than they are in person, then this could explain at least part of the increase, since a portion of the interviews were conducted by phone in 2008. We did not, however, find evidence that this was the case. In 2008, for example, 31 percent of in-person respondents reported fair or poor health status, compared with 29 percent of phone and web respondents.

⁴² The change among whites is not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

The number of residents with some sort of chronic illness is now at 61 percent, up roughly 20 percentage points from 2006. Overall, hypertension is the most commonly reported condition, experienced by 37 percent of adults. It is also one of the conditions that is more widely reported now than in 2006 (up ten percentage points from 27 percent in 2006), along with asthma (17 percent versus 9 percent in 2006), serious mental illness (see above section), and physical disabilities (12 versus 7 percent in 2006). Though it is difficult to find comparable, direct national comparisons for every measure, the survey data suggests that the rates of high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes in New Orleans are higher than the national average.⁴³ Not surprisingly, elderly residents are more likely to report having a chronic health condition. The number of residents who report taking prescription medicine on a daily basis is at 52 percent, compared to 40 percent in 2006.

Self-Reported Prevalence of Chronic Conditions

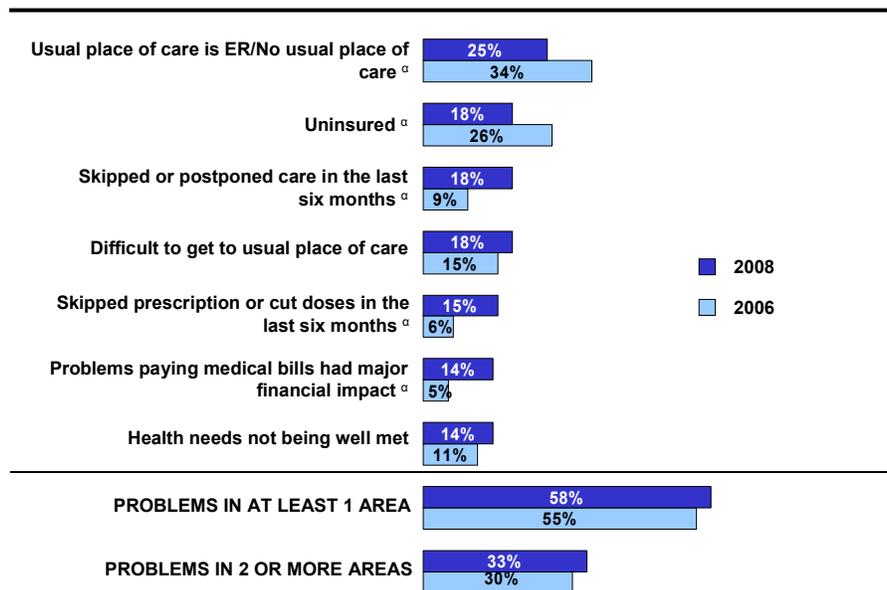


⁴³ According to the CDC's *Chronic Disease Indicators Report* in 2007, 28 percent of Americans report having been diagnosed with high blood pressure and 8 percent with diabetes. According to the CDC's 2006 *Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults: National Health Interview Survey*, 12 percent of adults report having been diagnosed with asthma.

Health care coverage improves but access issues worsen

The survey found that just as many residents have some sort of health care coverage or access problem in 2008 as a year and a half ago, but the nature of those problems have changed somewhat. On the positive side of the ledger: more residents report having health insurance, and fewer say that they are depending on a hospital emergency room as their primary source of care. On the negative side: affordability seems to be a bigger issue. Substantially more are having problems paying their medical bills, and there is a corresponding increase in the percentage who are skipping needed care or medicines because of cost concerns.

Some Improvements in Coverage and Access, but More Problems Paying



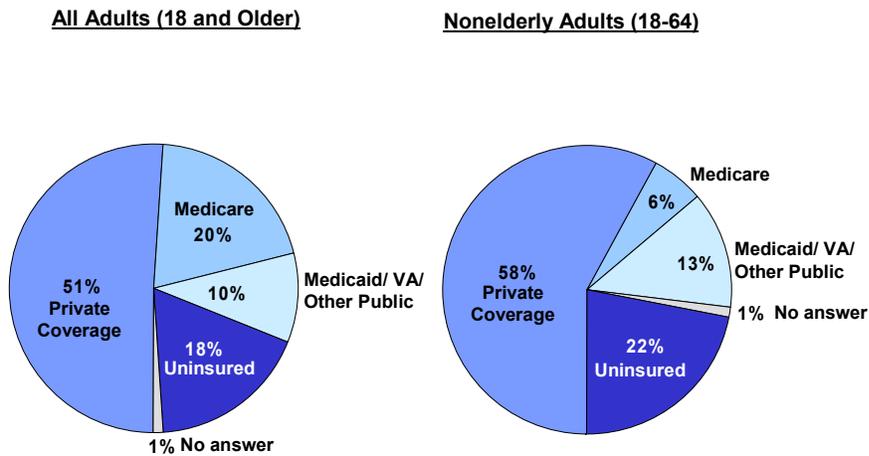
^a Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

Overall, more than half the city’s adult population has some sort of coverage or access problem, and a third have two or more problems. These proportions are unchanged from our 2006 survey. Lower income residents are much more likely to report experiencing at least one of these problems (73 percent do compared to 45 percent of other residents).

One positive development over the past year and a half: the percentage of all adults in New Orleans who are uninsured has dropped from 26 percent in 2006 to 18 percent now. (Among adults ages 18 to 64, the nonelderly population, the reported uninsurance rate is 22 percent.) The drop in uninsurance seems mostly driven by a bump up in the number of people who report getting private coverage through an employer, which went from 37 percent in 2006 to 42 percent now.

Overall, low-income residents are less likely to report having health insurance. Just over one in four low-income adults (27 percent) say they are uninsured.

Health Insurance Coverage of Adults in New Orleans



Who are the uninsured adults in New Orleans?

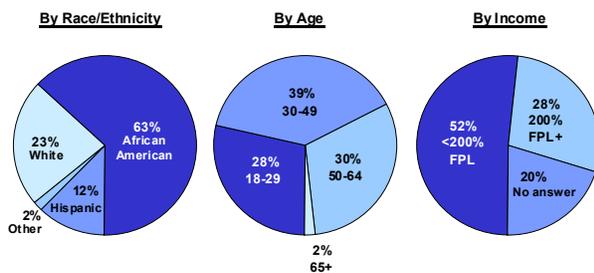
As New Orleans continues its rebuilding and recovery, one of the key areas of focus is improving access to health care. Having health insurance coverage makes a significant difference in whether and when a person obtains necessary medical care, where he or she gets care, and, ultimately, in an individual's health and financial security.

Lack of health insurance coverage remains a pressing challenge for many adults in New Orleans in 2008. Although the reported uninsured level fell since 2006, as of 2008, 18 percent of all adults and 22 percent of non-elderly adults in New Orleans report being uninsured. Nationally the rates are 16 percent and 20 percent, respectively as of 2006.

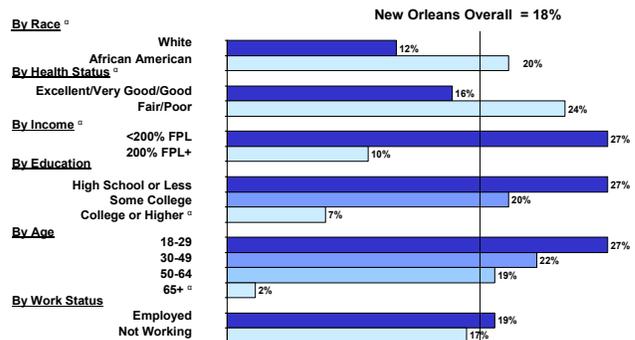
African American adults are significantly more likely than white, non-Hispanic adults to be uninsured, and comprise six in ten of the city's uninsured adults. As is true nationwide, low-income adults (those with family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and those in fair or poor health are at particular risk of being uninsured. Nearly six in ten (58 percent) uninsured adults are working on at least a part-time basis.

Overall, these findings paint a portrait of uninsured adults that is largely reflective of today's health coverage problems nationally. Those most at risk for being uninsured, especially the low-income and those with health problems, have the fewest resources to pay for health care on their own and may face some of the most significant consequences if they are unable to obtain needed care. As families face increasing financial strains due to the recent economic downturn and escalating living expenses, improving coverage for New Orleans' uninsured population can both help to assure that families can access the care they need as well as help provide needed resources to rebuild New Orleans' health infrastructure.

Uninsured Adults in New Orleans by Selected Characteristics



Uninsured Rate Among All Adults in New Orleans by Selected Characteristics



^o Statistically significant difference at p < 0.05

Orleans Parish residents seem to be increasingly successful in finding their way to care as well. In another positive development, the percentage who say that they have no usual place to go for care, or that their usual source of care is a hospital emergency room, has dropped from 34 percent in 2006 to 25 percent now. Concurrently, the proportion who say they had visited the emergency room during the last six months dropped from 28 percent to 19 percent. There was an increase in the percentage that say they visited a doctor sometime in the past six months, from 52 percent to 61 percent. Among those who have a regular place of care, fully two in three (67 percent) say they see a particular doctor or nurse, compared to half (50 percent) who said the same in 2006.

There are still problems in physically getting to a place of care, however. Nearly one in five (18 percent) say it is at least “somewhat” difficult for them to get to their regular source of health care.

The negative development in the area of access and use comes in the shape of affordability issues. Overall, fully one in four (25 percent) say they or another family member had a problem paying for medical bills in the past six months, up dramatically from 9 percent in 2006. More than half of those who report a financial problem say these medical bills had a “major impact” on their household.

There were other signs that residents were finding it difficult to afford health care, even when it came to needed treatments. At least twice as many as in 2006 report that they recently skipped or postponed needed care (18 percent now vs. 9 percent in 2006) or skipped needed doses of medication due to cost (15 percent vs. 6 percent). The changes bring New Orleans residents more in line with recent national survey results on these issues.⁴⁴

The increased percentage reporting difficulty paying for health care may be in part due to the difficult economic climate gripping Louisiana and the rest of the nation in 2008, or else the fact that the free care available in the short-term aftermath of the disaster may be reduced. The survey also suggests that more residents were gaining access to health insurance and health care during this time period, and it is possible that greater access is translating into higher costs.

⁴⁴ Kaiser Family Foundation, “Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008,” *Health News Index*. April 3-13, 2008

Child-related health issues

The survey is of adults, but of course the storm and its aftermath impacted the city's children every bit as much, if not more. Earlier in the report we noted that most adults don't imagine it is a good time to be a child growing up in New Orleans. We also noted that residents' most widespread complaint about their neighborhoods is that there are not enough safe places for children to play.

The survey suggests that New Orleans' children are also facing a number of problems when it comes to health and health care. Though we did not measure these directly in the survey, we did ask the adults in the household to report on the status of the children who live with them. Overall, half of those with at least one child under age 19 in their homes report a health or health care challenge facing a child.

<i>Child in home has health challenge or is not getting needed care (among those with children in household)</i>	2008	2006⁴⁵
Child in home with chronic condition or disability	31% ^α	21%
Any child didn't get needed health care in last 6 months	13	17
Uninsured child in home	12	11
Children's health needs not being met well	6	5
<i>At least one of these problems</i>	49	42
<i>Two or more of these problems</i>	12	10

^α Statistically significant difference from 2006 at $p < 0.05$

As was true with the adult population, the survey finds an increased percentage reporting that there is a child in the home with a chronic condition or disability (31 percent compared to 21 percent in 2006). Just over one in ten reports that there is a child who did not get the health care they needed in the past six months for cost reasons. And though reported health insurance coverage improved for adults over the time period, there was no change from 2006 in the percentage who report having at least one uninsured child in the home (currently 12 percent of those with children).

⁴⁵ Note that the original 2006 scale, as published in the 2006 Kaiser Family Foundation report, "Giving Voice to the People of New Orleans: The Kaiser Post-Katrina Baseline Survey" included some measures not carried on the 2008 survey. The version presented here was adjusted to be comparable to the 2008 scale, but may not match the version shown in the original 2006 report. See Appendix B for more information.

CONCLUSION

The Kaiser Family Foundation 2008 survey of New Orleans – the second of at least three planned surveys – is an attempt to better understand residents' views at this point in the recovery process which is neither determined beginning nor satisfying terminus, but somewhere in the long slog in between. Like most surveys of complex topics, it holds both good and bad news for those local and state leaders and organizers who are tasked with the rebuilding process.

On the one hand, the survey suggests that, from the perspective of residents themselves – the key players in this process and the ones with on-the-ground experience – progress across a variety of key quality of life issues has been limited. On the other hand, most say that the recovery overall is moving in the right direction and there is a hardy well of optimism about the city's future amongst the population, one on which leaders can continue to draw moving forward.

The issues on which people see the least progress are problems familiar to much of urban America, and exacerbated in a city whose infrastructure – both bricks and mortar as well as its people – was so devastated in the recent past. Many of the areas where residents don't see satisfactory progress – such as crime control, health and health care, and education – are also issues with which New Orleans struggled even before the hurricane. To some extent, then, these findings of dissatisfaction suggest that officials are facing a moving target in terms of expectations: once a problem is taken care of, residents turn to the next one on their list. It may simply be too much to expect an incremental, post-hurricane recovery process to make tangible improvements across such a wide range of serious issues in a two to three year time frame.

The survey also quantifies the extent to which people in the city feel let down by a variety of actors– from the president and Congress to insurance companies – as well as the extent they feel that the rest of the country has forgotten that they are still, nearly three years later, facing important challenges.

Finally, the results of the survey highlight the extent to which the city's slowly recovering health care system is facing a major challenge, not just to reorganize and rebuild an infrastructure, but in terms of meeting the needs of a population reporting significant mental and physical health challenges. This second installment of the Kaiser New Orleans survey series found a marked rise in self-reported health problems. In some ways, these increased levels may be indications of better access, so that as residents are more likely to get in to see physicians they are more likely to be diagnosed and treated. In other ways, it may be a sign that the psychological scars of Katrina are still raw and that the population is fatigued by the ongoing challenges of living in a changed, recovering city.

The Foundation remains committed to revisiting these and any new issues that arise in New Orleans in the next installment of our in-depth, post-Katrina survey project.