
Fact Sheet

Baton Rouge Welcomes Katrina Evacuees

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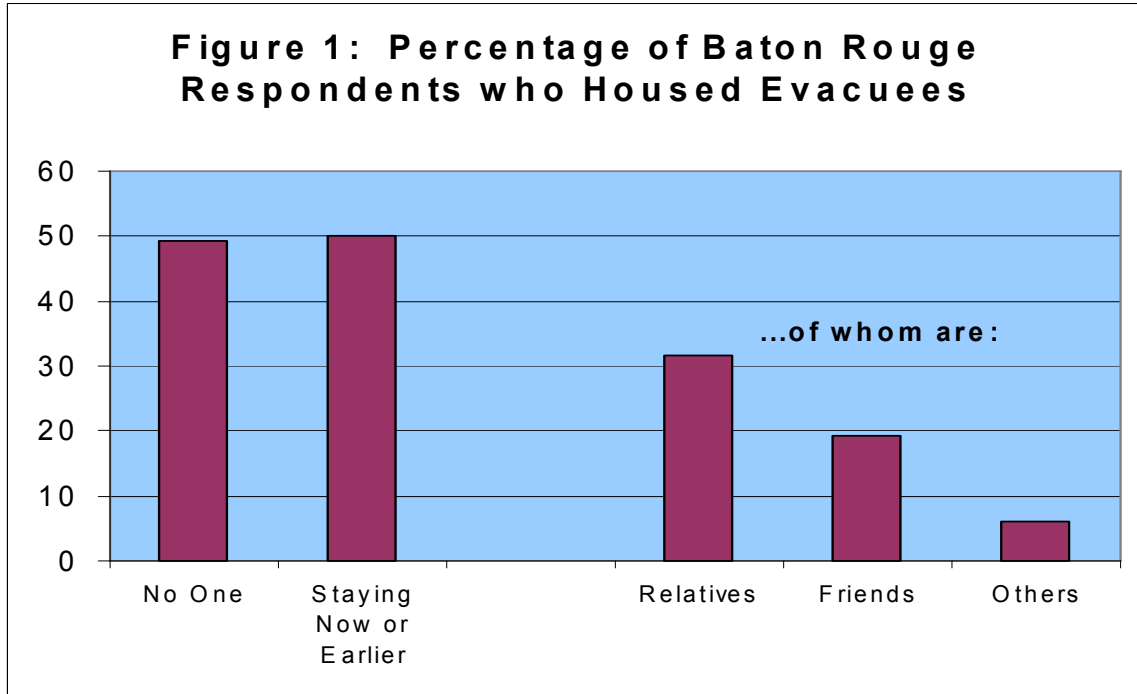
Hurricane Katrina forced many individuals and families from New Orleans and the surrounding areas to evacuate their homes. Cities from all over the country absorbed evacuees, but none more than Baton Rouge, which is located only about 60 miles from New Orleans.

The Figure illustrates the proportion of households in Baton Rouge that took in evacuees. According to the Baton Rouge Survey, about half of all households in the area took in people. This is a surprisingly large number. Indeed, if it is true that the population of the Baton Rouge area surged by roughly a quarter million immediately after Katrina, then by implication Baton Rouge

households helped absorb over 100,000 evacuees. Whatever the exact number, Baton Rouge residents played a major role in blunting the effects of homelessness and overcrowding caused by Katrina.

According to the results, those who were housed were mainly relatives and friends. Only a small proportion (about 5%) were strangers. This may be instructive for disaster planning here and in other regions of the country. For as we know, family and kinship networks are more extensive in the South, which explains why so many households in Baton Rouge housed evacuees. Should a disaster befall another part of the country, where

family and kinship is not as central as it is here in the South, the outcome may be somewhat different.



* Figure 1 methodological note: The post-Katrina data in Figure 1 are from a survey conducted by Frederick Weil, Edward Shihadeh, and Matthew Lee of the Sociology Department at Louisiana State University. Interviews were done September 27 to November 29, 2006. Data are based on a random-digit-dialed telephone sample, representative of the general population age 18 and over in East Baton Rouge Parish, LA, *who already lived there before the hurricanes*. Survey includes 1,349 completed interviews. The results are weighted to reflect the combined age-gender-race/hispanic distributions, according to U.S. Census estimates for 2004. Data collection was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

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