

Fact Sheet

Six Months After Katrina, Baton Rouge Residents Hold Positive Outlook on Crime, Safety, and the Authorities

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From February to March of 2006, researchers with the Crime and Policy Evaluation Research group at Louisiana State University conducted a scientifically sampled telephone poll of 1,008 East Baton Rouge parish residents age 18 and older. Included in this study was a module on attitudes toward the police, perceptions of crime in respondents' neighborhoods, and perceptions of safety within respondents' neighborhoods and within Baton Rouge more generally. This report summarizes the frequency distributions from this data collection effort, and highlights the optimism survey respondents expressed on these issues.

Figure 1 summarizes responses on how much survey respondents trust the police in their local neighborhoods. This figure also provides the results for trust in the clergy, the federal government, and people the respondents work with, to provide various points of comparison. As this figure illustrates, the police fare extremely well, with 81% of respondents indicating they trust the police in their local community 'a lot' or 'some.' This is nearly as high as the level of trust people hold in the clergy, and

dramatically higher than the level of trust expressed in the federal government.

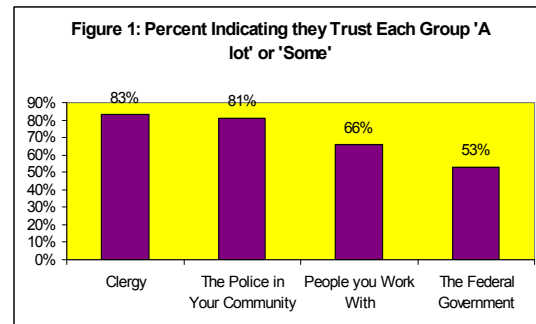


Figure 2 depicts responses to the question "How often would you say purse snatching, robbery, or other street crimes occur around your neighborhood?" These data indicate that 75% of respondents perceive these activities are somewhat seldom or very seldom. Likewise in Figure 3, 78% of respondents indicate that they see drug dealers or drug users on the streets around their neighborhood somewhat seldom or very seldom, and only 10% indicate very often.

Figure 2: Percent Responding to "How often would you say purse snatching, robbery, or other street crimes occur around your neighborhood?"

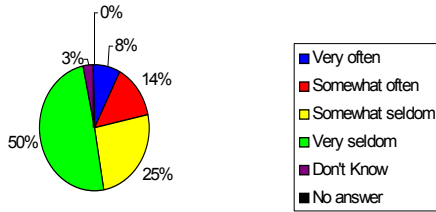
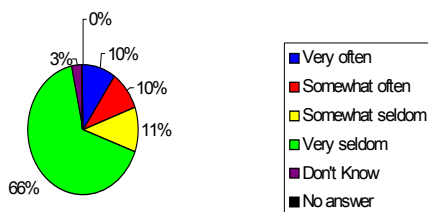


Figure 3: Percent Responding to "How often do you see drug dealers or users on the streets around your neighborhood?"



These limited perceptions of criminal activity among survey respondents are reflected in the high levels of personal safety expressed by the survey respondents depicted in Figures 4 and 5. Specifically, within their neighborhood, a full 92% of respondents indicate that they feel very or fairly safe, while a smaller but still substantial proportion indicated that they felt very or fairly safe outside of their neighborhood but still in Baton Rouge (77%).

Figure 4: Percent Responding to "How about your neighborhood? How safe do you feel it is?"

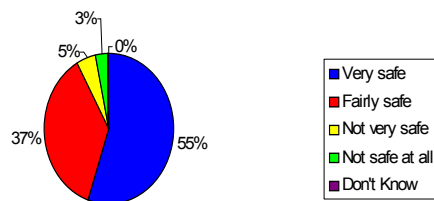
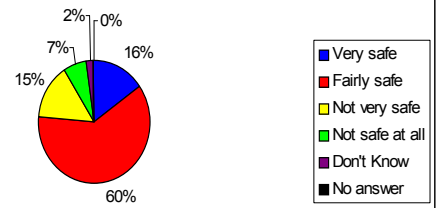


Figure 5: Percent Responding to "As far as crime is concerned, how safe do you feel in Baton Rouge, outside your neighborhood?"



The rapid population influx experienced by Baton Rouge after Hurricane Katrina spawned significant discussion and speculation on crime, fear of crime, and personal safety among the media and the lay population. Our data provide a benchmark roughly six months after this significant population event. By this time things had settled down some in East Baton Rouge Parish, but it was not completely clear how much the population had grown or whether crime and other social problems would increase or stay level.

We consider the results from this study encouraging, in the sense that trust in the police is very high, at least three quarters of respondents perceive that criminal activity seldom occurs in their neighborhoods, and between three quarters and nine-tenths of the respondents express feeling safe in their neighborhoods and the broader community of Baton Rouge.

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Technical Note:

Survey conducted by Frederick Weil, Edward Shihadeh, and Matthew Lee of the Sociology Department at Louisiana State University. Interviews were done February through March, 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. Survey includes 1,008 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 grant number 0554572 from the National Science Foundation. The funding agency bears no responsibility for the interpretations provided herein.

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