



**Evacuation Behavior
*in Orleans and
Jefferson Parishes*
*Hurricane Georges***



**The University of New Orleans
Survey Research Center
poli.uno.edu**

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Summary

- **Only about a third of the residents of Jefferson and Orleans actually left the two-parish area during Hurricane Georges, and even this number produced tremendous traffic jams on the interstates.**
 - **A majority of those who left town waited until the last 24-30 hours before the projected arrival of the storm.**
 - **In New Orleans, poor black residents and older white residents were highly unlikely to leave the city.**
 - **Respondents in both parishes rated their public officials very positively for their handling of the hurricane and evacuation.**
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The Survey

The UNO Survey Research Center included as part of its 1998 Quality of Life Survey a number of questions about behavior during the recent hurricane. It was a unique opportunity to assess evaluation of public officials during a crisis and to obtain some quantitative estimates of evacuation behavior and patterns. The findings below represent an analysis of the "hurricane" component of the Quality of Life survey. A complete report on the traditional quality of life questions will be released later.

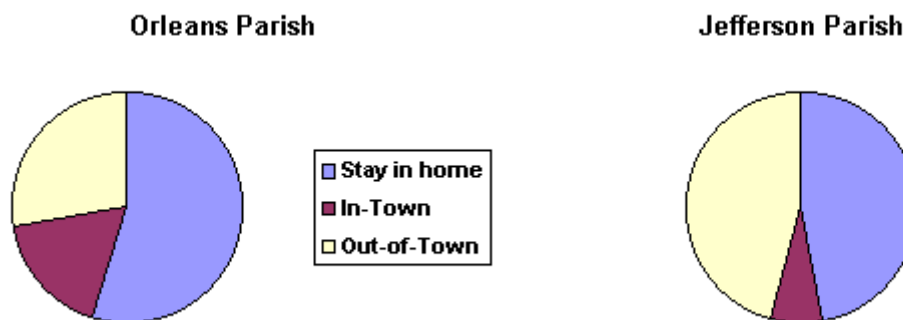
Orleans Parish Respondents: 442 registered voters
 Jefferson Parish Respondents: 417 registered voters

Dates of Interviewing: October 14 –26, 1998
 Sampling error: 4.6%, Orleans, 4.8%, Jefferson

The Findings

General Evacuation

- *Forty-four percent of the registered voters in Orleans Parish and 52% in Jefferson Parish left their homes during the recent hurricane.*
- *However, Jefferson residents were more likely than Orleans residents to actually leave the two-parish area (45% compared to 27%).*



"Did you evacuate your home during the hurricane?"

	Orleans	Where to?	Jefferson	Where to?
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Yes	44%	In 2-par area 17% Out of town 27	52%	In 2-par area 7% Out of town 45
No	53		46	
Refused to say	3		2	
	(442)		(417)	

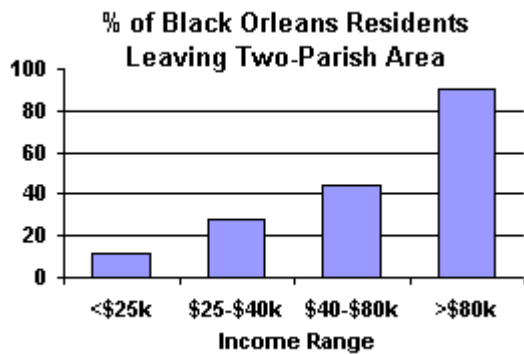
Income and Evacuation

- ***Within New Orleans, evacuation from the city was closely related to income. Only 16% of those with family incomes below \$25,000 left town, while 54% of those with incomes over \$80,000 left.***
- ***Lower income families who did evacuate their homes tended to go to other people's homes or businesses, rather than get out of the city.***
- ***In Jefferson, income was not related to leaving the city. In fact, the demographic factors related to evacuation in Jefferson are not at all clear. We suspect that the decision to evacuate in that parish may have been more a function of either car ownership (a near necessity in the suburbs) or location in neighborhoods prone to flooding.***
- ***Low income residents in Jefferson were much more likely to evacuate the city than low income residents in Orleans, again possibly due to a lower incidence of car ownership among low income families in Orleans. Ironically, the availability of public transportation in New Orleans may have reduced the ability of low income residents to evacuate.***

	Orleans				Jefferson			
	Evacuation by Income				Evacuation by Income			
	<\$25,000	\$25,000-40,000	\$40,000-80,000	>\$80,000	<\$25,000	\$25,000-40,000	\$40,000-80,000	>\$80,000
Did not leave home	54%	54%	45%	37%	40%	52%	42%	52%
In town	26	16	13	4	12	5	6	6
Out of town	16	27	40	54	45	39	51	42

Refused to say	4	3	2	5	3	4	1	0
	(145)	(92)	(97)	(43)	(79)	(79)	(133)	(40)

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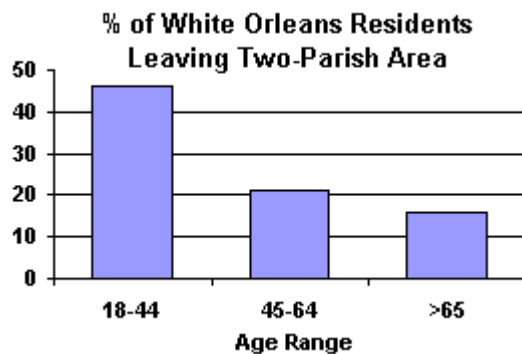
The relationship of income to evacuation of the city was particularly evident among black residents. Only 12% of low income black residents left the city, while 32% went to homes of friends or relatives or to shelters. A family income of \$40,000 seemed to be the threshold where evacuation from the city became more likely than staying home.

ORLEANS BY INCOME				
(Among Blacks)				
	<\$25,000	\$25,000-40,000	\$40,000-80,000	>\$80,000
Did not leave home	53%	45%	35%	(Only 10 cases, but 9 left town)
In town	32	22	19	
Out of town	12	28	44	
Refused to say	3	5	2	
	(115)	(57)	(49)	

Race/Age and Evacuation

- ***About half of black residents of both parishes evacuated their homes, but blacks were more likely than whites to go to homes of friends and relatives or to shelters.***

	ORLEANS		JEFFERSON	
	Evacuation by Race		Evacuation by Race	
	White	Black	White	Black
Did not leave home	59%	49%	45%	49%
In town	7	24	6	13
Out of town	31	24	47	37
Refused to say	3	3	2	1
	(156)	(274)	(329)	(67)



Among white residents of New Orleans, age, not income, was the best predictor of evacuation. White residents over 45, regardless of income, were likely to stay in their homes. Thus, in spite of the fact that white residents tend to have higher incomes, more white residents than black residents stayed in their homes. This pattern among whites may be due to the absence of children in the homes of the 45-64 year olds, the security of a "better" house, or the unavailability of someone to evacuate the over-65 residents.

ORLEANS BY AGE			
(Among Whites)			
Age	18-44	45-64	> 65
Did not leave home	49%	68%	69%
In town	3	6	12

Out of town	46	21	16
Refused to say	2	5	3
	(66)	(57)	(29)

Destination

- *Among those who left their homes in both parishes, the most likely destination was out of state, particularly Mississippi, Texas and Alabama. A number of Jefferson residents stayed in Louisiana, possibly because they had friends or relatives across the lake or in southeastern Louisiana. In contrast, Orleans residents who did not leave the state tended to stay in the city in others' homes. These, of course, are the lower income black residents.*

"Where did you go?" (among those who left their homes)

*About how many miles away did you go?
(Among those who went out of town)*

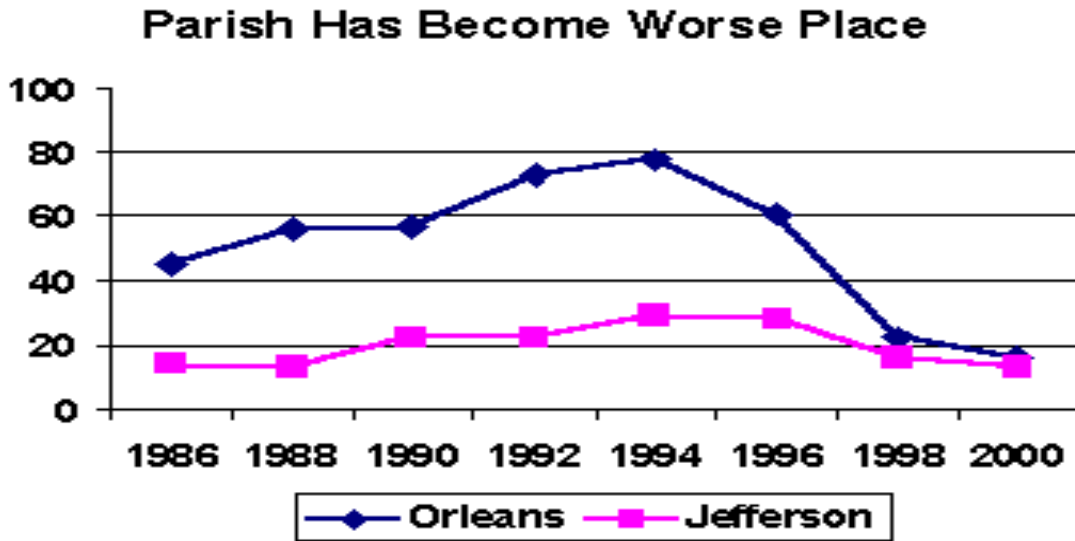
	ORLEANS	JEFFERSON
Less than 100	23%	27%
101-300	37	38
301-500	26	24
Over 500	11	5
Refused to say	3	6
	(121)	(187)
	Median: 250 miles	Median: 200 miles

Timing

- *The timing of the evacuation is worrisome for future evacuations. A majority of those who evacuated did so Saturday afternoon or later, that is, within 24-30 hours of the projected arrival of the hurricane. The tremendous traffic problems that we observed were created with only one-third of the residents*

evacuating the city. Imagine the problems with more people trying to leave and waiting for the last day.

- *Jefferson residents were quicker to react than Orleans residents; a greater number left town before noon on Saturday.*



"When did you leave your home?"

	ORLEANS		JEFFERSON	
	Out of Town	In Town	Out of Town	In Town
Fri PM	8%	15%	14%	13%
Sat AM	21	12	29	22
Sat PM	41	21	31	29
Sun AM	26	41	23	20
Sun PM	2	7	3	13
Refused to say	2	4	1	3
	(121)	(75)	(187)	(30)

Motivating Factors for Evacuation

- *When we asked those who evacuated what convinced them to leave, the most common answer was that the storm was headed directly toward the city. Fear of flooding and the influence of friends or relatives were other frequent responses.*
- *New Orleans evacuees were more likely to mention the recommendation of their officials (the Mayor) as a motivating factor in their decision to leave their homes than evacuees in Jefferson. This may be a result of the more centralized government in Orleans, making the New Orleans Mayor a more visible official than the various executives in Jefferson Parish.*

"Was there any particular thing that you heard that convinced you that you should evacuate? What was that?"

	ORLEANS	JEFFERSON
Storm coming directly at New Orleans	30%	31%
Mayor/officials said to evacuate	14	6
Info about how high water would be/flooding	16	21
Severity of storm	10	6
Friend/relative told me to evacuate	10	13
Personal fear/live alone	3	2
No electricity/roads	7	14
Misc. Other	10	4
No, nothing in particular	0	3
	(196)	(217)

*"Would you evacuate again under similar circumstances?"
(Among those who left their homes)*

	ORLEANS	JEFFERSON
Yes	87%	84%
No	6	8

DK/Refused to Say	7	8
	(196)	(217)

Evaluation of Public Officials

- *Officials in Orleans and Jefferson received high marks from the public on their handling of hurricane response. Eighty percent in Orleans, and 74% in Jefferson gave the officials a positive rating for their performance during the storm.*
- *What residents particularly liked was that their officials appeared on TV frequently and provided important information. Residents also appreciated the recommendation to evacuate in time and the cooperation between parishes. The opening of the Superdome was mentioned specifically as a positive among Orleans residents.*

"How would you rate Orleans/Jefferson Parish officials' handling of the recent hurricane?"

	Orleans			Jefferson		
		Blacks	Whites		Blacks	Whites
Excellent	40%	49%	26%	37%	37%	38%
Good	40	34	50	37	36	37
Only Fair	11	10	14	17	14	17
Poor	6	4	7	6	10	5
DK/Refused to say	3	3	3	3	3	3
	(442)	(274)	(156)	(417)	(67)	(329)

"Was there anything in particular that you liked about what your parish officials did during the hurricane?"

	Orleans	Jefferson
Gave lots of info/on TV a lot	36%	28%

They said evacuate/evacuate in time	15	13
Opened Superdome	11	2
Organized/inter-parish cooperation/took control	10	11
Showed true concern	5	5
Reacted quickly	4	4
Generally positive	7	10
Nothing in particular	5	22
Misc. Other	7	5
	(343)	(293)

- *The only serious negative remark about public officials involved opening closed roads before the hurricane and directing traffic better.*

"What do you think should be done differently next time?"

	Orleans	Jefferson
Open roads/direct traffic better	34%	35%
Better handling of electricity problems	11	3
Evacuate sooner	9	8
Don't overreact	4	7
Take steps to prevent flooding	10	1
Generally negative	0	4
DK	0	9
Misc. Other	32	33
	(71)	(89)