A Survey of the Jewish Community of Greater New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina

Conducted June-December, 2006
N = 707

Frederick Weil, LSU
www.fweil.com
Almost 80% of Jewish Community members have come back to New Orleans
Where did the 20-something percent of people who moved go?

Where Did the 22% Who Moved Go?

- Northern States
- Western States
- Texas
- GA incl Atlanta
- Baton Rouge
- Other LA
- Florida
- Tenn, VA, Carolinas
- Alabama, Miss.
- Arkansas
Where did members of the Jewish Community live before the storm?

Pre-Katrina Neighborhood of Residence

- Uptown, Garden District, Broadmoor
- Jefferson
- Lakeview, Lakewood, Lake Vista
- All Others

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Most people experienced at least some damage, and had at least some flooding.
Yet, while they are not satisfied with New Orleans’ economy and crime rate, they doubt that they could find another community they like as well.

Another Place has ... than New Orleans

- Better economy
- Less crime
- As close-knit a community
- A Synagogue I like
- As many family ties
- As many good friends
The vast majority of people want to come back to live in Greater New Orleans.
And they are optimistic that their neighborhood *can be* protected from flooding and will recover.
People understand that recovery and protection will take time, but most people think it will happen within the coming five years.
Most people already have the resources to repair or replace most of the damage, or believe they soon will.
Most of the money for repair has come from insurance. People have also used their own money and received help from government programs. Close to half of community members received at least something from Jewish organizations. There are other, smaller sources.
A moderate number of people plan to take out loans, mostly from a government agency or a commercial lender. About 5% are considering a loan from within the Jewish Community.
Most people feel their household has recovered and that their neighborhood is recovering. They see some progress in their congregation and in the Jewish community. They are much more worried about the city’s recovery.
Most people also experienced at least some damage to their businesses; over a third, major damage or destruction.
Yet while business has been challenging since the storm, a large majority of community members expect improvement in the next 2 to 5 years.

Your Business Became/Will Become...

Since Katrina
- Better
- About the Same
- Worse
- Went/Will Go Out of Business

Next 2 to 5 years
- Better
- About the Same
- Worse
- Went/Will Go Out of Business

Percent of Sample
Almost 40% of Jewish community members received job offers from elsewhere. Clearly, not all of them accepted.
Nor did many people in the Jewish community retire or become unemployed since the storm.
People are optimistic about New Orleans’ economic outlook.

![Optimism about the New Orleans Economy](chart)

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They also believe that New Orleans will get better as a place to live in the short and near term.
Community members feel their leaders did a very good job responding to the Hurricane and its aftermath … but that government leaders did not.

![Job Responding to Katrina](chart)

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They are also happy with their Congregational Leadership.

Job done by Your Congregational Leadership

- Accepting input from all congregational members
- Providing material assistance fairly to all congregational members
- Providing spiritual support
- Providing community or social support

Percent of Sample

Great  
Good  
Middle  
Bad  
Terrible

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People are cautiously optimistic about how the Jewish community will develop over the next 5-10 years.

N.O. Jewish Community Became/Will Become...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percent of Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last 5-10 years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>30</td>
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Most people in the sample are/were Synagogue members before or after the storm.
Use of Jewish Services declined after Katrina – presumably because some people moved away. But why do people predict a further decline for the coming year?
Probably because they used the Jewish Family Service after the storm, but predict they won’t continue to need it as recovery proceeds.
People have strong feelings about the hurricane. They feel depressed, angry, and anxious. But most of all they feel – Hopeful.
People have many physical symptoms of stress – especially, trouble concentrating or sleeping, loss of energy, worrying, and eating too much.
What Effect did Storm Damage have on Stress?
People whose Houses were Damaged Suffer more Stress

![Graph showing the relationship between the extent of damage to a residence and the incidence of nervousness and trouble settling down. The graph indicates that the percentage of individuals experiencing nervousness and trouble settling down increases as the severity of damage increases.]
The Same is True for People Whose Houses were Flooded

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Damage Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>No flood damage</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 4 feet</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 4 feet</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Nervous; Trouble Settling Down

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The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

**Trouble concentrating**

![Graph showing the relationship between different levels of damage and trouble concentrating.](image)
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

Trouble Sleeping

![Graph showing the relationship between damage to residence and trouble sleeping.](image)
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

Tired all the time; loss of energy
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

Eating too much, gaining weight

![Graph 1](Eating too much, gaining weight)

![Graph 2](Eating too much, gaining weight)
What might help?

• Social support:
  – Family support
  – Community support
  – Congregational support
  – Friends, neighbors

• Beliefs and spiritualism

• Therapy

• Material support
Going to Synagogue Reduces or Removes this Stress.
This is the only type of social support we measured that consistently helps.

![Graph showing the relationship between trouble concentrating and flood damage with different levels of synagogue attendance.

- Green line: Attend Synagogue almost Every Week or more
- Orange line: Once or twice a month
- Red line: A few times per year or Less

The graph illustrates that as the level of flood damage increases, the percentage of individuals experiencing trouble concentrating also increases, with the highest concentration rates among those who attend less frequently.
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

**Trouble concentrating**

![Graphs showing the pattern of trouble concentrating for different levels of damage and frequency of synagogue attendance.](image-url)
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

**Trouble Sleeping**

![Graph depicting the relationship between trouble sleeping and different levels of damage to residence and flood damage. The graphs show that the percentage of people experiencing trouble sleeping increases with the severity of damage, regardless of whether the damage is to a residence or flood damage.]

- **Attend Synagogue**
  - Almost Every Week or more
  - Once or twice a month
  - A few times per year or Less

Graphs showing:
- **Little or No Damage to Residence**
- **Some physical damage**
- **Major damage, Unsalvageable**

- **No flood damage**
- **Up to 4 feet**
- **Over 4 feet**

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The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

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- Up to 4 feet
- Over 4 feet

- Attend Synagogue almost Every Week or more
- Once or twice a month
- A few times per year or Less
The Same Pattern is Repeated for Different Symptoms of Stress:

Nervous, excitable; trouble settling down

![Graph showing the relationship between different levels of damage to residence and attendance patterns at Synagogue.](image-url)
The same pattern also appears for Christians in Greater New Orleans

![Graph showing trouble concentrating and damage to residence](image1)

![Graph showing tired all the time and loss of energy](image2)
Summarizing people’s feelings

- Close to family, friends, & loved ones
- Close to those who have helped us
- Close to those who suffered
- Close to Jewish community
- Most recent in History of Disasters that Unite Us
- Opportunity to improve or repair the world
- Spirituality, religiousness, or closeness to God
- Feeling that faith & commitment being tested
- Conflict w family, friends, & loved ones
- Feelings of guilt my family was not harmed
- Irritation toward those who have helped us
- Fear that others may want to take from us
- Conflict w members of Jewish community
- Feelings of abandonment by God
- Disaster not God’s doing, but Evil at work
- Feeling that God is punishing us

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Are some people still thinking about coming back ... or leaving?

And what are the reasons that people stayed or left?
Most people are holding to their decision. But a few might still change their minds.

### Staying in or Leaving New Orleans

- **Very unlikely to Leave**: [Bar graph showing high percentage]
- **Somewhat unlikely to Leave**: [Bar graph showing moderate percentage]
- **Haven't decided to Leave**: [Bar graph showing low percentage]
- **Somewhat likely to Leave**: [Bar graph showing moderate percentage]
- **Very likely to Leave**: [Bar graph showing high percentage]
- **Very likely to Return**: [Bar graph showing low percentage]
- **Somewhat likely to Return**: [Bar graph showing moderate percentage]
- **Haven't decided to Return**: [Bar graph showing low percentage]
- **Somewhat unlikely to Return**: [Bar graph showing moderate percentage]
- **Very unlikely to Return**: [Bar graph showing high percentage]
The main reasons that people have stayed in New Orleans:
Family, Community, and Optimism.

Staying in New Orleans: Reasons

- Grown Kids Living in N.O.
- Many Family, Friends, Jews Stayed
- Optimistic about New Orleans Future
- N.O. Problems (crime, econ, floods) (-)
- Job offers (-)
- Damage to Business (-)
- Age (older)
- Higher Income
- Family is Rooted in New Orleans
- Most Jewish evacuees will return
- Neighborhood will Recover

(Standardized Multiple Regression Coefficients)
But are we threatened by a “Brain Drain?”

“New Orleans Threatened by 'Brain Drain,“”

“…New Orleans is losing an alarming number of young professionals in Katrina’s aftermath. Many doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers and other highly educated people are gone. Some left during the storm and never came back. Others came back, but soon gave up and moved out altogether. Whether a full-blown brain drain is under way is unclear. But some suspect so, and fear the exodus will only get worse.”
There is no “Brain-Drain” in the Jewish Community. Professionals are returning in the same numbers as other members of the Jewish Community.

Staying in New Orleans: Professions
(Average staying = 77%)
Survey and Analysis
...and cartoons...
by
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