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# Measuring Our Progress

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2002 Special People's  
Agenda Report Card:

NewOrleans



### **The Council for A Better Louisiana**

is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working on issues in the public interest. It was founded in 1962 with the goal of improving the quality of life for all citizens of Louisiana.

### ***The People's Agenda***

is an ongoing voter education and legislative watchdog initiative sponsored by CABL. It is a multi-faceted, non-partisan effort established to ensure that the common concerns of Louisiana citizens become the focus of political debate during state elections, and that those concerns are addressed by elected officials after the elections.

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# Measuring Our Progress

2002 Special *People's Agenda* Report Card:

## New Orleans

Since 1994, the Council for A Better Louisiana, through its *People's Agenda* project, has been asking citizens about their priorities for our state. Our goal has been to find out what issues concern them most, where we need to focus as a state, and how effective they believe state government has been in addressing their concerns. Over the years, their answers have not been surprising. People want a quality public education system, opportunities for their children, jobs that pay a good wage and elected officials who act ethically and focus on the things that will make Louisiana a better place to live. On a regular basis, we compile this information and publish it as a “report card” from the people rating the performance of state government.

In 2000, we expanded on this effort by incorporating a list of more than 30 indicators which, taken as a whole, offer a snapshot of the quality of life in Louisiana. From education and economy to health and population trends, they tell us things we need to know about the vitality of our state. CABL continues to track these indicators of progress on an annual basis. In 2001, we added a special focus on Louisiana's relationship with states in the rest of the South and its place in the “New Economy.”

In 2002, as an outgrowth of the statewide initiative, CABL is publishing a similar report on Louisiana's largest metropolitan area. With funding from an independent nonprofit foundation in New Orleans, CABL was asked to produce a “parallel” *People's Agenda* Report Card on the city. The goal was to develop a report that allowed citizens to assess the effectiveness of local government in addressing critical issues, while beginning the process of tracking a core group of key indicators that measure the city's economic standing and quality of life. The focus of the data is on the city of New Orleans as the core of an eight-parish metropolitan area, but where information is available on both, it is included.

### **New Orleans**

New Orleans is one of America's most culturally unique cities, attracting millions of tourists every year. It has a quality of life that is special – hard to quantify, but undeniable once it is experienced. It also has a number of important economic assets. New Orleans boasts several universities, both private and public, and one of the largest ports in the nation. It possesses strong international ties through a vital import and export sector, and holds major employment in

the shipbuilding and defense industries. As an anchor of the New Orleans-to-Baton Rouge corridor, it possesses potential for growth in information technology because of the high concentration of digital communications networks and universities in the corridor.

Yet even with these clear strengths, there are also serious concerns. Just as Louisiana has failed to keep up with the economic growth of many southern states, New Orleans has lagged behind the progress of many southern cities. Reversing some of the economic trends of the last two decades is a critical issue for both Louisiana and New Orleans. Of course, it is hard to know if we are making progress on a journey unless we know exactly where we stand when we start. This report seeks to provide a baseline of important indicators that will help citizens measure that progress over the years.

### **I. New Orleans People's Agenda Voter Survey**

The indicators that gauge public confidence in local government and its effectiveness in addressing critical issues are obviously extremely important. Cities face many challenges and there are no easy solutions. To succeed in any effort to address public issues requires that citizens trust their leaders. They must have confidence that when their leaders try to do the hard things, they're also the right things. Otherwise, positive change will always be slow to come.

During the fourth quarter of 2001, CABL conducted a scientific survey of Orleans Parish voters that mirrored a statewide study released by CABL in December 2001. The results reveal a citizenry concerned about fundamental economic issues and less optimistic about the future than residents in other parts of the state.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the way citizens felt at the end of 2001 about the direction the city is headed. Forty-seven percent of those surveyed said New Orleans is moving in the "right direction," but 41 percent believe it is off on the "wrong track." These results are in sharp contrast to the way state voters feel about the prospects for Louisiana as a whole. In a CABL statewide survey conducted at the same time, 59 percent of voters across Louisiana said the state is headed in the right direction, compared to just 28 percent who believe it's on the wrong track.

This difference in outlook expresses itself in other areas of the CABL survey as well. Across Louisiana, about three out of ten voters say they would leave Louisiana today if they had the means and opportunity, but that sentiment was expressed by nearly four in ten voters from Orleans Parish.

In fact, there is reason to believe that local politics is a *significant* concern among New Orleans voters, and they link it to the difficulties the city has had in growing new jobs. CABL asked voters what kind of impact, if any, they thought local politics had in attracting quality jobs outside of the tourism industry. Nearly two-thirds felt it hurt those efforts. Twelve percent said politics had no impact on attracting jobs, and 21 percent said it had a positive one.

Another economic area where voters believe attention is needed is job training. While the New Orleans area is fortunate to have a large number of job training programs, citizens aren't convinced they are doing a good job. When asked to rate the quality of job training programs available locally, 54 percent of Orleans Parish voters said they were "not very good" or "poor." Only 39 percent felt the same way statewide.

Figure 1A

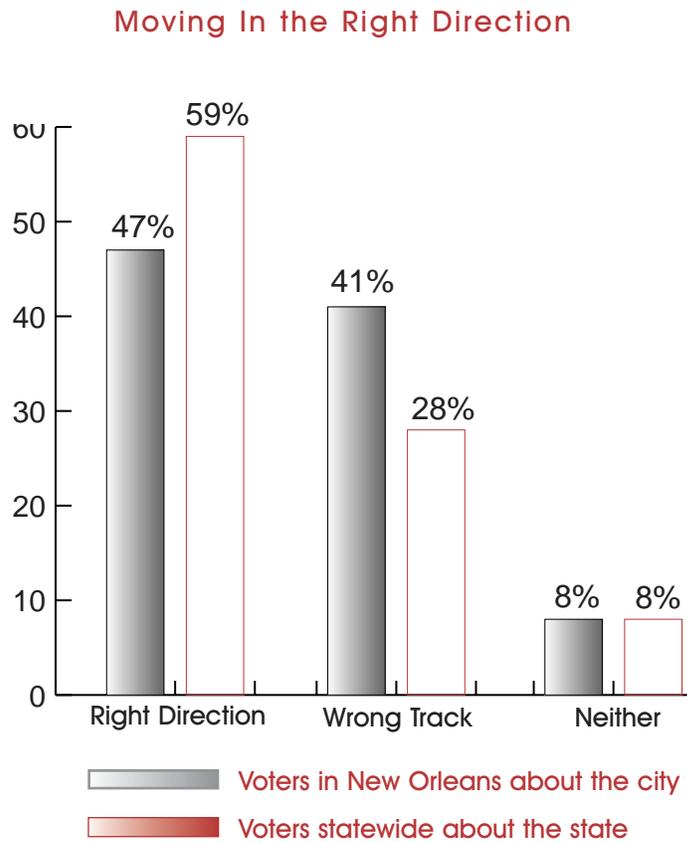
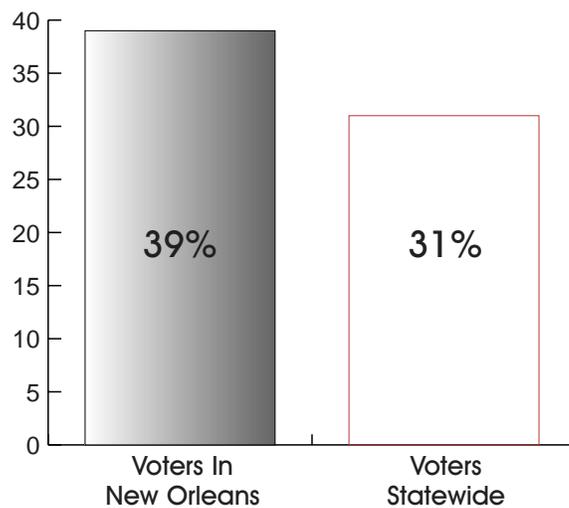


Figure 1B

### Would Leave the State if Had Means and Opportunity



When asked why they would consider leaving, the city's economy and lack of job opportunities were the most common reasons given by Orleans Parish voters. They also mentioned the local education system and politics.

**Table 1.**

**Reasons New Orleans Voters Would Consider Leaving State**

35%	Poor Economy, Lack of Job Opportunities and Security, Low Salaries/Wages
20%	General Quality of Life, Attitudes of People
13%	Education System
11%	Government, Politics
8%	Crime
4%	Infrastructure
1%	Environment
8%	Other

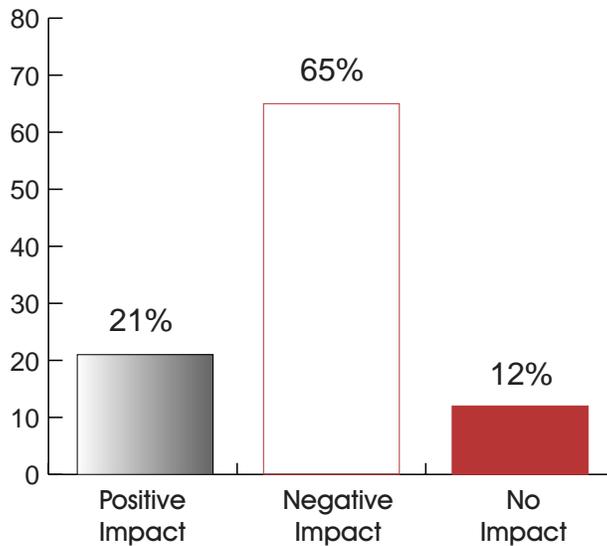
While this CABL survey provides only a snapshot of some of the concerns of voters, one of the keys to addressing all of the city’s critical issues is the performance of local government. In this regard, voters give mixed reviews.

On a grading scale of A to F, the best marks went to law enforcement, which received an average

grade of “B-minus.” City government earned a grade of “C-minus,” while voters gave the Orleans Parish School Board only a “D-plus.” Results from this and other recent surveys clearly show that jobs and the local economy, along with education, remain critical issues. What voters seem to be adding to the equation is that any plan to improve the city’s economic vitality should

**Figure 2.**

**Impact of Local Politics On the City’s Ability to Attract Quality Jobs**



also include recommendations for reforming its politics.

## II. Economic Standings

### *Voters Responding to Real Conditions*

While many of the opinions expressed by voters in the survey are disconcerting, it is also likely they were simply reacting to things they themselves have experienced in the local economy. Over the last decade, neither the state nor the New Orleans area kept pace with the economic growth that was occurring in the rest of the South. This story is told in the CABL report *Measuring Our Progress: Louisiana's Place in the New Economy*, released in December 2001. It is available on CABL's website at [www.cabl.org](http://www.cabl.org) and contains information about Louisiana's recent economic performance, particularly as it relates to other southern states and the nation.

While CABL typically focuses on these issues at the state level, the economic prosperity of Louisiana as a whole and the city of New Orleans are inextricably connected. The New Orleans metropolitan area is the largest in the state and its economic ebb and flow will always have a significant influence on Louisiana's overall economic standing.

### **The Economy of the 1990s**

During the 1990s, the South proved to be one of the most dynamic regions in the country – a “New South” adapting to what is now being referred to as the “New Economy.” The South outpaced the nation in the creation of new jobs, experienced a population growth greater than that of the nation, drew closer to the national per capita income level and reduced its traditionally high rate of poverty – closing the gap with the national rate. It is clear that despite some bumps

“Metropolitan growth leads the way across the South, the stepped-up activity of the New Economy cities has resulted in their surging ahead of other metro areas in the region.”

The State of the South, 2001,  
MDC, North Carolina

along the way, the “New South” as a whole has made significant progress.

The prosperity of the region, however, was not felt equally across all states or urban centers. Louisiana remains one of a handful of Southern states that lagged significantly behind in many areas of economic importance. The state's job growth was the second lowest in the South; it was the only southern state to have more people moving out than moving in; and while our poverty rate declined during the period, we failed to close the gap with the rest of the nation.

Unfortunately, the city of New Orleans and the eight-parish metropolitan area also lagged on many of these same indicators of economic progress. In some cases, the region did not progress as much as Louisiana as a whole. This is most evident in such key indicators as population trends, job growth, household income and poverty rates.

## Population

According to the most recent census data, the population of the city of New Orleans declined by more than 12,000 residents during the 1990s. This was due in large part to the fact that between 1990 and 1999, many more people moved out of the city than moved in – 68,278 more according to the Census Bureau. The metropolitan area as a whole fared better, posting a modest population growth of 5.3%. But that is far behind the South's 17.7% population growth and just under the state's rate of 5.9%. It is also significantly lower than other Southern cities such as Atlanta (39%), Birmingham (10%), Charlotte (29%), Houston (25%) and Nashville (25%).

## Job Growth

Trends in job growth often reflect the overall economic condition of a region, and this is an area of growing concern in New Orleans. Between 1991 and 2001, job growth in the New Orleans metro area was 5% – less than half the state's growth rate and less than a third of the growth for the South as a region (18.2%). The 20-year picture between 1978 and 1997 tells an even more discouraging story as employment exploded in cities across the South, while New Orleans fell behind.

If there is some good news, it appears that New Orleans has to some degree been insulated from the worst of the most recent downturn in the

**Table 2.**

### General Economic Indicators for Louisiana, Orleans Parish and New Orleans Metropolitan Area (eight-parish region)

	Louisiana	New Orleans Metro	Orleans Parish
Population Growth 1990-2000	5.9%	5.3%	-2.5 %
Job Growth Jan. 1991-Jan. 2001	11.3%	5.0%	-3.1%
Poverty Rates \$17,605 family of 4 (1998)	18.2%	17.8%	26.8%
Children Living in Poverty, 1998 (< Age 18)	25.7%	27.9%	38.1%
Per Capita Personal Income, 1999	\$22,839	\$25,960	\$26,551
Median Household Income, 1998	\$30,894	—	\$26,890
Homeownership rate, 2000	67.9%	61.8%	46.5%

*Sources: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Louisiana Department of Labor*

**Table 3.**

**Employment Growth 1978-97, Selected Metropolitan Areas in the South**

Atlanta	105.3%
Nashville	83.1%
Charlotte-Gastonia- Rock Hill	72.2%
Houston-Galveston	59.4%
Baton Rouge	52.0%
Memphis	44.4%
Birmingham	36.5%
New Orleans	17.4%
U.S. Metro Total	45.5%

*Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis; MDC, Inc. (State of the South, 2001)*

economy. Recent data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that national employment declined by 7% percent during 2001 as recession set in. In New Orleans, employment fell also, but only by a minimal 0.8%. Other metropolitan areas in Louisiana managed to continue experiencing modest job growth.

### **Poverty**

For most of its existence, Louisiana has suffered with a high rate of poverty. Although progress has been made, we have been unable to close the gap that keeps us as one of the most impoverished states in the nation. Twenty years ago, Louisiana's poverty rate was one-and-a-half times the national rate. It still is today. In contrast, the South as a region has fared much better, moving significantly closer to the national average.

The story in New Orleans parallels that of the state, though the numbers are higher in the city. In 1998, the poverty rate in New Orleans was 26.8% compared to 18.2% for Louisiana. At 17.8%, the poverty in the metropolitan area is somewhat below the state average.

One of the tragic consequences of poverty is the

impact it has on the city's children. At 38.1%, the rate of children in poverty in New Orleans is more than twice as high as the average of other southern states and significantly higher than that of Louisiana (25.7%).

A hopeful sign, and an important item to note, is that the latest census data continue to show that the number of children living in poverty is declining at the state level. Although more recent parish-level data have not been reported, Orleans is expected to follow this downward trend

### **Income**

The income picture in New Orleans is somewhat complicated, and seems on the surface contradictory. When pieced together, though, it is also revealing. In 1999, per capita personal income in Orleans Parish was \$26,551 – higher than both the state and the South as a whole. Yet the parish's 1998 median household income of \$26,890 was significantly lower than the state and the South.

Why the seemingly conflicting numbers? The relatively high per capita income in Orleans Parish is a reflection of the concentrations of

“The city's greatest potential for meaningful change lies in its ability to improve the lives of the working poor and underemployed.”

Committee for A Better New Orleans,  
May 2001

wealth in New Orleans. When you see a parish with a high poverty rate like Orleans, you expect to see generally low personal income. In Orleans, you don't because the pervasive poverty is offset by a much smaller group of households that earn substantial incomes.

But the low median household income adds another important wrinkle. Median income isn't an average, it's a measure of how income is distributed. In this case, it shows that Orleans Parish has a higher concentration of low-income households than the state as a whole.

All of this has tremendous implications for the entire state. In its latest report, the economic research group MDC of North Carolina, showed that the most prosperous “New South” state economies were being driven by growth in major urban centers. Stated another way, the prosperity of the state depends heavily on the economic vitality of its major cities. Baton Rouge, the state's

second largest metropolitan area, has enjoyed a lengthy period of sustained growth. That, coupled with the economic activity in some of Louisiana's smaller urban areas, has fueled much of the modest growth the state experienced in the 1990s. But New Orleans' importance to Louisiana as a whole cannot be overstated. If Louisiana is to accelerate its own progress, then New Orleans' economy weighs heavy in its potential to do so.

### III. Education Indicators

#### *Hopeful Progress Noted in Public School Achievement Levels*

There are strong signs that Louisiana as a whole is making progress on many indicators of educational attainment. The same is true in Orleans Parish. While this progress is welcome and encouraging, it must also be pointed out that both the state, and Orleans Parish in particular, still have many students scoring at very low levels of academic achievement.

In 1998, Louisiana's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education established a major new school accountability plan based on higher academic standards and improved student performance on standardized tests. Among its features is the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program, or LEAP 21. It is a test given to students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades to measure their math and English/reading skills. In alternate years, students take the national norm-referenced Iowa Basic Skills Test. These scores, combined with attendance and dropout data, are used to calculate a School Performance Score every two years for each public school in Louisiana.

#### **School Performance**

As part of Louisiana's overall school accountability program, the state has set a 10-year academic

goal that every public school must meet. Among the requirements of this goal is that students in every school in Louisiana must, on average, score at the modest level of “basic” on the LEAP 21 tests. On the way to the 10-year goal, schools are given two-year growth targets which they are expected to meet as they go. Since the 1999 baseline, nearly 69 percent of Louisiana’s K-8 schools met or exceeded their two-year growth targets. In Orleans Parish, 63.6 percent of the schools met that mark.

That translates to improved student performance in most schools. In 1999, for example, 48 percent of the K-8 schools in Orleans Parish were performing at the “academically unacceptable” level – the lowest performance rate on the scale and an indication of overall failure. By 2001, the number had been cut in half to 24 percent. That is a major improvement and an indication that progress is possible, but the real work is just beginning. Nearly two-thirds of the schools in Orleans are still scoring “academically below state average” – not a desirable score to earn. In fact, when comparing School Performance Scores to the baseline year, there are fewer schools in the bottom category of “academically unacceptable,” but more schools fell below the state average. In other words, more of the worst schools did better, but a number of the average schools did worse. The bottomline – only 12.5 percent of the schools in Orleans Parish are at or above the state average academically.

### Student Performance

While students in Orleans Parish did improve their performance on the LEAP tests for 2001, there are still significant causes for concern. Approximately 62 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders still scored below “basic” in English language arts, and 70 percent below “basic” in math. At the 8<sup>th</sup>

““ A call to action-  
A call to reform:  
Galvanizing the public  
education community to  
understand and  
embrace the reform  
effort and showing  
concrete results of the  
reform process are  
critical first steps.””

Committee for A Better New Orleans,  
May 2001

grade level, even fewer students have reached the “basic” level. This is even more significant to the local school system because the state’s 10-year goal in school accountability is to have students in every school score, on average, at the “basic” or higher on the LEAP test.

On the other major measure of student performance, the Iowa Basic Skills Test, Orleans schools posted gains in all grades in which the test is given – with grades 5 and 9 showing major improvement. Even with this progress, however, Orleans students score at significantly below the state average on the Iowa Test.

To summarize, Orleans Parish K-8 public schools and students have demonstrated real progress since 1998-99. They are yet another sign that school accountability is working in Louisiana. The issue facing Orleans schools is whether they will be able to maintain and accelerate this progress, since large percentages of students have

Table 4.

Academic Indicators for New Orleans Elementary/Middle Public Schools

	Orleans 98-99	Orleans 00-01	Louisiana 00-01
<b>% Students At or Above</b>			
<b>“Basic” Level on LEAP test</b>			
4 <sup>th</sup> grade English language arts	33%	38%	58%
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	19%	30%	53%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade English language arts	23%	21%	49%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	17%	17%	45%
<b>IOWA Test Percentiles</b>			
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	23 <sup>rd</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> grade	23 <sup>rd</sup>	38 <sup>th</sup>	52 <sup>nd</sup>
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	26 <sup>th</sup>	30 <sup>th</sup>	48 <sup>th</sup>
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	24 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	47 <sup>th</sup>
<b>% Schools Met/Exceeded Growth Target on School Performance Scores</b>	baseline	63%	69%
<b>Number of “Academically Unacceptable Schools”</b>	48%	21%	2%
<b>Number of Schools “Academically Below the State Average”</b>	40%	70%	50%

yet to reach even “average” academic levels. It will take sustained focus and commitment by all involved in education at the local level for Orleans Parish students to achieve their state-mandated 10-year-goal.

### High Schools

Just as in the earlier grades, there is some encouraging news about the progress of students at the high school level in Orleans Parish, but the situation is a bit more complex. While some indicators did show improvement, others just held steady or registered declines. For example, high school scores on the Iowa tests improved significantly

over the previous year, and fewer of the parish’s college-bound students had to enroll in developmental courses at the university level. At the same time, however, student performance declined on both the state’s Graduation Exit Exam and the ACT college entry test. In addition, the education system in Orleans Parish faces a tremendous challenge in improving school performance scores at the high school level. In 2000-2001, they received their first scores in the accountability program, and over 80% of Orleans Parish high schools fared poorly. Only 18% of the high schools are performing at or above the state average. A significant majority of 9-12 students are at educa-

tional attainment levels well below basic skills.

### Higher Education

New Orleans is the home of several private and public universities. It also has the largest community college in the state. Six-year graduation rates at its two public institutions, however, are among the lowest for Louisiana’s public colleges and universities, 30% and 11% in 2001. Most studies on the New Economy point to successful universities as key elements to increasing a region’s ability to attract businesses and jobs. New Orleans’ recent TechVision2020 report described the city’s largest public institution “as a tremendous asset as yet underutilized.” The many private universities in New Orleans add

significantly to the “intellectual capital” of the region as well.

The city’s community college boasts several campuses and was recently ranked 82<sup>nd</sup> out of 1,200 American community and technical colleges in the total number of associate degrees conferred. This engine of workforce training continues to experience enrollment growth and serves as a key partner in efforts to expand the region’s workforce.

### IV. Public Safety, Health and Other Indicators

Generally, crime is down in New Orleans, but it is still high. The city’s overall crime rate declined

**Table 5.**  
**Academic Indicators for New Orleans Public High Schools**

	Orleans 1999-00	Orleans 2000-01	Louisiana 2000-01
<b>IOWA Test Percentiles 9<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	29 <sup>th</sup>	39 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>
<b>% Passing Rate Grade 10 Graduate Exit Exam*</b>			
English Language Arts	60%	54%	78%
Math	49%	38%	66%
<b>Number of High Schools “Academically Unacceptable”</b>		44%	6%
<b>Number of Schools “Academically Below State Average”</b>		38%	50%
<b>Annual Dropout Rate</b>	7.6%	10.3%	6.5%
<b>ACT Composite Score</b>	17.5	17.2	19.6
<b>First-time College Freshmen in Developmental Courses</b>	64.5%	58%	41%

\* 2000-2001 10<sup>th</sup> graders passing rate equates to at or above the “approaching basic” level on the LEAP 21 test.

from 1999 to 2000, following similar trends for the state and nation. So did its rate of violent crime. According to the FBI, violent crime in Louisiana fell by 7.1 percent. Statistics from the New Orleans Police Department show a 13.1% decline for the city. Amidst this overall decline in violent crime, however, was a 28 percent increase in the number of murders. The New Orleans police also report a 3.9 percent decline in the total number of non-violent crimes from 1999 to 2000.

While that news is encouraging, some perspective is needed. There is still a lot of crime in New Orleans. Morgan Quitno Press, which publishes a series of rankings for cities and states, called New Orleans one of the “most dangerous” cities in America. In its 2001 report, Morgan Quitno ranked New Orleans as the 11<sup>th</sup> most dangerous city in the country, out of 327 metropolitan areas surveyed. The ranking is based on a formula comparing rates for various crimes against the national average.

Crime, of course, has long been a concern in New

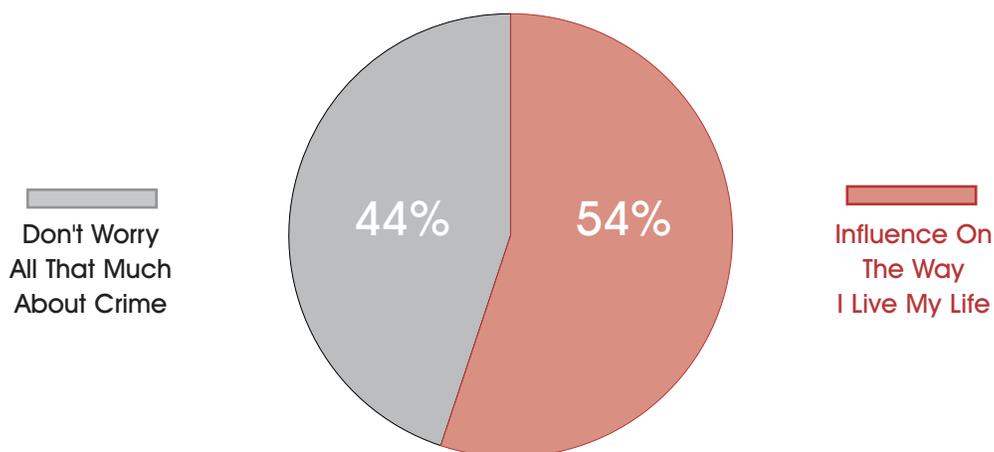
Orleans. In the 2001 *People’s Agenda* survey conducted in Orleans Parish, voters were asked to think about their own sense of personal safety and how much crime influenced their lives. Like some other responses to the survey questions, voters had mixed views on this, but more than half said concern about crime does influence the way they live their lives.

When it comes to indicators of health, Louisiana generally ranks near the bottom compared with other states. Our high poverty rate is no doubt a factor in this, which means that public health is a major issue for New Orleans. Compared to the rest of the nation, many of the babies born in New Orleans are of low birthweight. Many are born to teen mothers. Many will die before their first birthday. At the other end of the age spectrum, death rates for heart disease, cancer and strokes are extremely high.

The good news is that in a number of areas, health indicators are showing some improvement. The relatively high percent of low-birthweight

Figure 3.

Personal Safety: Worrying About Crime.



babies, however, has remained fairly constant over the last decade, and the number of births to unmarried women continues to rise. In 1999, nearly two-thirds of the babies born in New Orleans were to women who were not married. This has tremendous economic significance since these families face enormous obstacles, both in raising their children and finding and keeping a job.

Improving access to health care for men, women and children in poverty must remain a major focus of attention for Louisiana and New Orleans in the years to come.

### V. Toward the Future

Now that the voters of New Orleans have chosen a new mayor, CABL believes it is an opportune time to focus anew on the fundamental issues that affect the city. We see the indicators contained in this report as guideposts for community and gov-

ernmental leaders to do just that. We do not suggest that the list is comprehensive or that other indicators are not equally valid. But they do represent significant factors in measuring the economic vitality of an area and its quality of life. They also serve as an important framework for future public policy change.

In publishing this same type of work at the state level, CABL included ten strategies for state government and its citizens to accelerate economic growth in this decade. Many of these recommendations focus on increased educational attainment and training at all levels. Others concentrate on efforts to diversify and build a more forward-looking economy. All have implications at the local level as well.

To succeed in the New Economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, CABL believes Louisiana must:

**Table 6.**  
**Selected Health Indicators, Orleans Parish and Louisiana**

	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>
% Low-Birthweight Babies (1999)	13%	10%
Infant Mortality Rate (1999)	9.4	9.2
% Births to Teenagers Age 15-19 (1999)	19%	17%
Mortality Rate per 100,000 Heart Disease (1997)	274	273
Mortality Rate per 100,000 Cancer (1997)	247	214
Mortality Rate per 100,000 Strokes (1999)	74	61
% Babies born to Unmarried Mothers (1999)	64%	45%

“The New Orleans area is steeped in tradition, but it is also a place that re-invents itself when need be.”

New Orleans,  
Times Picayune,  
March 30, 2002

- Provide more funding for early childhood education for “at-risk” 4-year olds
- Maintain the public school accountability system while improving teacher quality and keeping more kids in high school
- Continue to invest in higher education (especially in targeted areas of natural institutional strength), raise graduation rates and increase the role of universities in economic development
- Expand the reach and program quality of Louisiana’s new community and technical college system
- Change Louisiana’s tax structure into a more progressive one
- Increase international trade to expand markets for our goods and services and increase foreign investments to grow jobs
- Encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and diversification through research and development
- Forge strong partnerships between state gov-

- ernment and business to market Louisiana
- Continue to invest strategically in physical and technology infrastructure
- Insist on a state government that is ethical, performance driven, and accountable.

Again, while these recommendations are focused on state government, the local impacts, particularly in New Orleans, cannot be overstated. State policies involving school accountability, investment in higher education, and expansion of workforce training opportunities touch everyone. Yet CABL’s past voter research indicates that far too many citizens in the city fail to grasp how the things that happen at the State Capitol affect the fabric of life in New Orleans. This is problematic because it is difficult for individuals to hold their local legislators accountable when they do not fully understand the issues that are at stake. This is a “disconnect” that must be overcome.

At the same time, citizens should become more active in scrutinizing the performance of city government, the school board, university officials and others – creating an expectation among them of meaningful progress. CABL hopes this list of indicators will be a tool in that process.

All of these things are at the heart of CABL’s *People’s Agenda* project. *The People’s Agenda* is about articulating the shared concerns of citizens and then holding those in public trust accountable for addressing the issues critical for moving Louisiana forward. To succeed it must truly be a civic undertaking. It is CABL’s desire, through this and subsequent tracking reports, to give the citizens of New Orleans an objective way to measure the success of government leaders in overcoming the obstacles the city faces. We say success, because as this report also makes clear, failure cannot be an option.

# THE INDICATORS

## *New Orleans People Agenda Report Card*

### **I. Citizen Attitudes**

a) Think New Orleans is headed in the right direction	47%
b) Would leave Louisiana given the means and opportunity	39%
c) Believe local politics has a negative impact on attracting quality jobs outside of the tourism industry	65%
d) Voter grade for Performance of Local Government	
New Orleans Police Department	B-minus
New Orleans City Government	C-minus
Orleans Parish School Board	D-plus

### **II. Economic Standings**

a) New Orleans Population Growth 1990-2000	- 2.5%
b) Job Growth 1991-2001	- 3.1%
c) Poverty Rate 1998	26.8%
d) Children in Poverty 1998	38.1%
e) Per Capita Personal Income 1999	\$26,551
f) Median Household Income 1998	\$26,890

### **III. Education Indicators (2001)**

a) Percentage of Schools Meeting or Exceeding Two-Year Growth Target on School Performance Scores	63%
b) Number of "Academically Unacceptable" K-8 Schools	21%
c) Number of K-8 Schools "Academically Below the State Average"	70%
d) Percent of Students At or Above the "Basic" Level on LEAP Tests	
4th Grade English	38%
4th Grade Math	30%
8th Grade English	21%
8th Grade Math	17%

# THE INDICATORS

—continued

e) IOWA Test Percentiles (Top Percentile = 100)	
3rd Grade	28th
5th Grade	38th
6th Grade	30th
7th Grade	25th
9th grade	39th
f) Percent Passing Grade 10 Graduate Exit Exam	
English/language arts	54%
Math	38%
g) Percent of “Academically Unacceptable” High Schools	44%
h) Percent of High Schools “Academically Below the State Average”	38%
i) Annual Dropout Rate	10.3%
j) Average ACT Score (Top Score = 36)	17.2
k) Percent of First-time College Freshmen Enrolled in Developmental Courses	58%
l) 6-Year Public University Graduation Rates 2001	
University of New Orleans	30%
Southern University New Orleans	11%

## IV. Public Safety, Health and Other Indicators

a) Murders in 2000	203
b) Violent Crimes in 2000	5153
c) National Ranking for “Most Violent Cities” 2001 (out of 327)	11th
d) Percent of Citizens Who Say Crime in New Orleans Influences the Way They Live Their Lives	54%
e) Percent of Low-Birthweight Babies in 1999	13%
f) Infant Mortality Rate in 1999	9%
g) Percent of Births to Teenagers in 1999	19%
h) Percent of Babies Born to Unmarried Mothers in 1999	64%

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Wirthlin Worldwide in McLean, VA conducted CABL's *Peoples Agenda* voter survey  
October 22-25, 2001.

We surveyed 600 voters statewide and 300 voters in Orleans Parish with a margin of error of +/- 4.0%.



**Council for A Better Louisiana**

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