

Crime and Safety

Crime and Safety has become a major source of anxiety for Central City residents following Hurricane Katrina. One resident, an African American female in her mid-60's, expressed the common concern that the crime situation is bigger now following the storm and that the killing is out of hand. An African American female in her late 50's responded, "It's gonna take 7 to 8 years to get better." There has been a stark change in the overall perception of safety among the households surveyed in Central City. Prior to Katrina

"Crime is doubling and tripling because everyone is pushing uptown since downtown is destroyed. Its like jail when the jails get overcrowded that is when the tension comes. It's turf wars."

- African American male late 50's

83.1% of the responding households expressed feeling safe in their neighborhood out alone during the day and 68.5% felt safe alone at night. Following Katrina, only 60.7% felt safe during the day

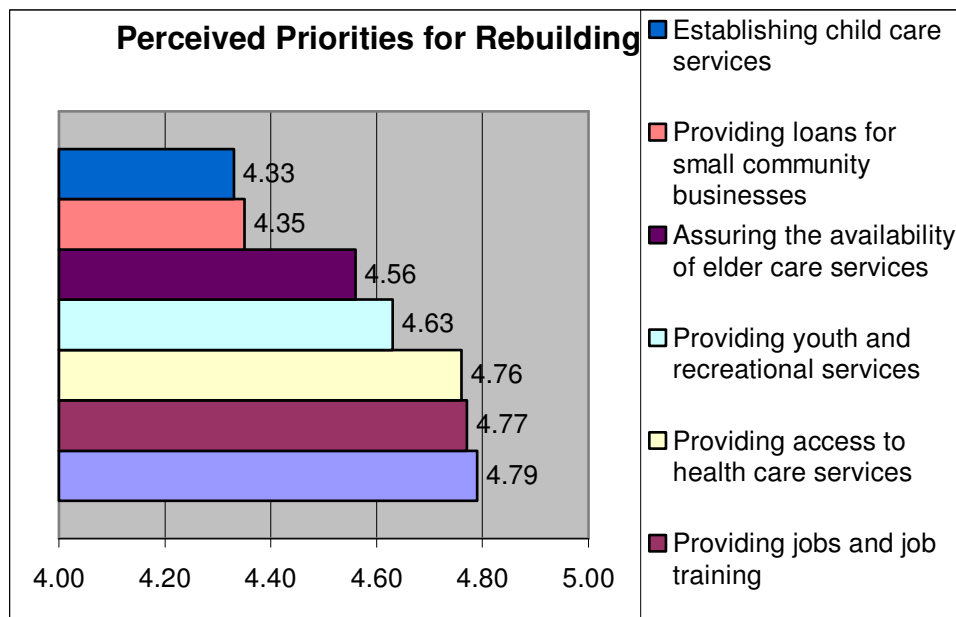
and mere 34.8% felt safe out alone in Central City during the night (Annex B, Table 14). This trend is accentuated by the Metropolitan Crime Commission's preliminary results from their Central City Community Survey conducted in August of 2006. They found that 42% of households felt somewhat or very safe prior to Katrina and that only 28% felt somewhat or very safe following the Hurricane¹⁴. The results from this survey also show that 80% of Central City households are afraid of crime in their neighborhood.

Responding households indicated that *crime prevention is the most important priority for them when it comes to rebuilding their community* (Chart B). Those surveyed also expressed that a low crime rate (at a mean of 4.82) and good street lighting at night (at a mean of 4.85) are important neighborhood features (Chart C). Good street lighting can be a valuable source for deterring

¹⁴ Metropolitan Crime Commission, Preliminary Results. "Central City Community Survey." August 2006.

crime. These features were also expressed as being important during a city wide survey of households conducted by the Prevention Research Center of Tulane University. This study's results produced a mean of 4.72 for the importance of low crime rate and a mean of 4.68 for the importance of good street lighting¹⁵. The main crime concerns of Central City residents were solicited by the Metropolitan Crime Commission's survey, from which they determined that 86% of the residents feel as if killings/murders are the main problem in Central City. Independently, another 86% feel as if drug dealing is a main problem in Central City¹⁶.

Chart B: Perceived priorities for rebuilding Central City by importance.

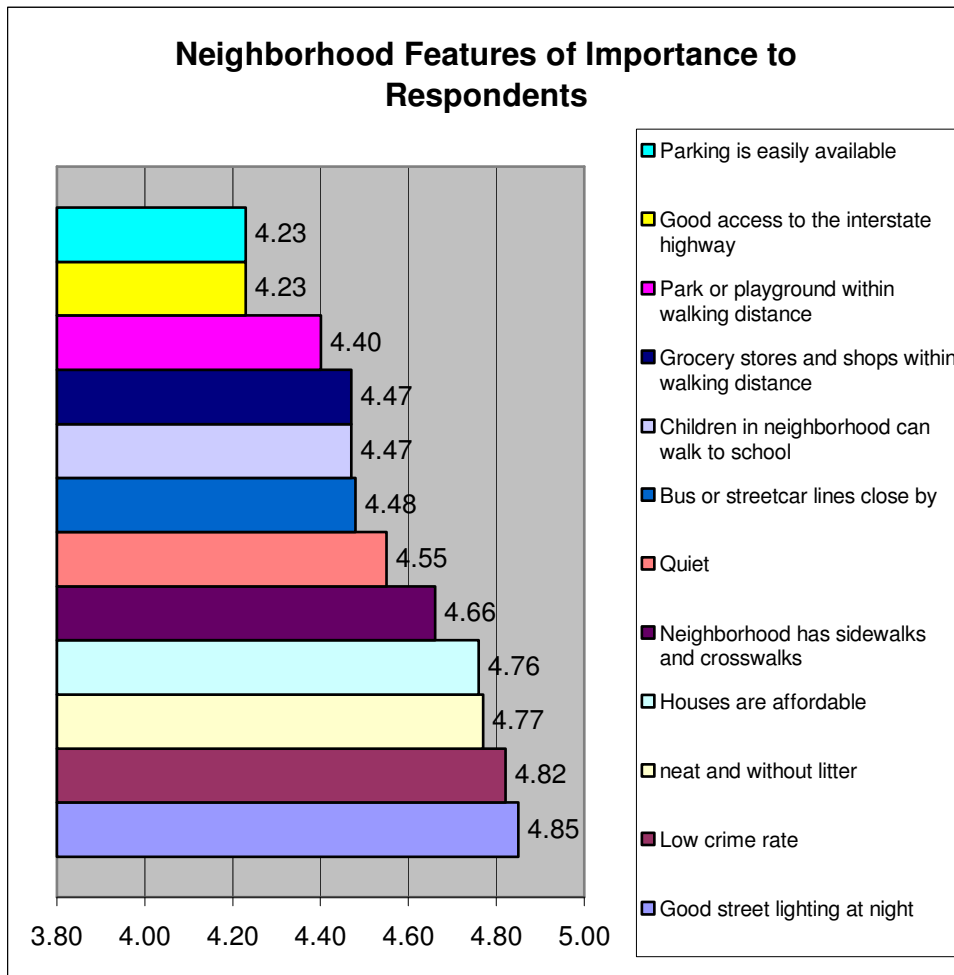


* Range is from 1 to 5 where 1 is not important and 5 extremely important.

¹⁵ Prevention Research Center of Tulane. "What Do New Orleans Residents Want in Their Neighborhoods?" 2006.

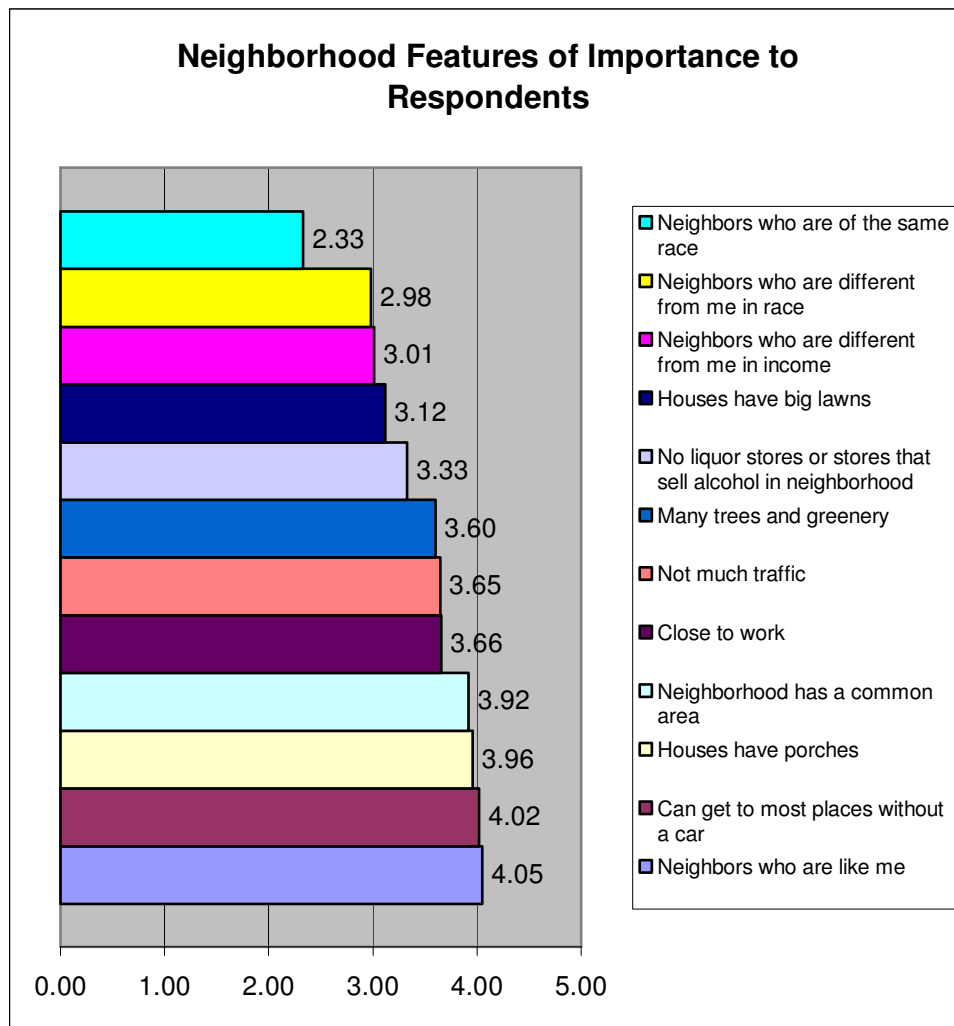
¹⁶ Metropolitan Crime Commission, Preliminary Results. "Central City Community Survey." August 2006.

Chart C: Top twelve neighborhood features by importance.



* Range is from 1 to 5 where 1 is not important and 5 extremely important.

Chart D: Lowest twelve neighborhood features by importance.



* Range is from 1 to 5 where 1 is not important and 5 extremely important.

Several sub-populations within the neighborhood also reflect this downward trend in the perception of feeling safe in Central City following Hurricane Katrina. One such sub-population consists of new households to Central City as compared to those households that lived in the neighborhood prior to the hurricane. Half (50.0%) of new households reported feeling safe alone in Central City after Katrina during the day, and only 25.0% feel safe in the neighborhood at night. Of the households that lived in Central City prior to

Katrina, 65.6% feel safe alone during the day and 37.9% during the night. More than 84% of the households that lived in Central City prior to Katrina felt safe during the day alone, and 70.7% felt safe at night (Annex B, Table 34)

As would be expected, households with school age children also report feeling unsafe in Central City after hurricane Katrina more so than households without school aged children (52.6% as compared to 66.7%, respectively). During the night only 26.7% of households with school aged children feel safe in Central City while 39.2% of household without school aged children feel safe in the neighborhood at night (Table F).

Table F: Percent of households that feel safe in Central City by households with and without school age children.

| Feel Safe Out Alone in Central City | | Households with school age children | | Households without school age children | |
|--|------------|--|--|---|--|
| | | | | | |
| After Katrina | | | | | |
| <i>During the day</i> | % | 52.6 | | 66.7 | |
| | N | 20 | | 34 | |
| | Con. Int.* | (35.8, 68.9) | | (56.9, 75.2) | |
| <i>At night</i> | % | 28.9 | | 39.2 | |
| | N | 11 | | 20 | |
| | Con. Int.* | (18.0, 43.0) | | (26.9, 53.1) | |

* Confidence Interval (Con. Int.) at 95%

More than 66% of female-headed households report that safety is a problem in Central City after Katrina as compared to only 30.8% of male only households and 59.6% of mixed sex households (Annex B, Table 20). Only 41.7% of these female-headed households report feeling safe out alone in their neighborhood during the day. This percentage drops to zero when they are asked if they feel safe out alone in Central City during the night (Annex B, Table 21). One concerned female resident expressed her feelings with regards to the relationship between the abandoned homes and crime by saying:

They should really tear down the houses that can't be fixed, and some houses are real nice, but the old abandoned houses are for the drug dealers to sell their dope in and they can pull in us old ladies off the street and do what they want. So they need to tear them down.

There is a wide spectrum of ideas from respondents in focus groups and the survey with regards to dealing with crime and safety in Central City. Most responding households felt that educating youth would deter crime (88.5%). Eighty-seven percent of the households surveyed felt that improving policing techniques would reduce crime (Table G). This opinion was also reinforced in the focus groups and expanded upon, with ideas of how to improve the policing techniques. An African American female in her mid-60's said, "Police should walk the street like they used to."

A concern that must be addressed is the prevailing inconsistency of respondents wanting a higher police presence (86.2%) but their unwillingness to report crimes. One

respondent in a focus group, an African American female in her late 50's, expressed the fear of retaliation by those that report on, "To tell you the

And sometime the police will tell them that your neighbor called and that puts you in trouble!
- African American female in her late 60's

truth, a lot of people see what's going on but they are afraid to talk. Their friends will kill you if they looking at you talking to the police." This inconsistency between not being willing to report a crime but still wanting more police in the neighborhood is not rooted in a fear of retaliation but rather stems from the relationship between police in the community and the residents. "They (police) pass you like they don't even see you," an African American female in her mid-60's, exclaimed. Only 45% of the households in

Central City feel the NOPD are trustworthy and only 51% feel they act professionally¹⁷.

Residents of Central City discussed solutions to these issues in the focus group. One resident, an African American female in her mid-60's, replied to the notion that holding a community meeting with the police would help. She said, "Yes, not just one time but once a month, and maybe bring in different officers. We get familiar with each other, they get familiar with us."

Table G: Households' opinions on managing crime and safety in Central City.

| What should be done about crime and safety | | |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Increased Police Presence | % | 86.2 |
| | N | 75 |
| | Con. Int. | (80.5, 90.5) |
| Supervise youth | % | 81.6 |
| | N | 71 |
| | Con. Int. | (73.4, 87.7) |
| Educate youth | % | 88.5 |
| | N | 77 |
| | Con. Int. | (80.6, 93.4) |
| Establish Neighborhood Watch | % | 78.2 |
| | N | 68 |
| | Con. Int. | (70.8, 84.1) |
| Establish rehab programs | % | 76.7 |
| | N | 66 |
| | Con. Int. | (68.3, 83.5) |
| Improve policing techniques | % | 87.2 |
| | N | 75 |
| | Con. Int. | (80.8, 91.7) |
| Improve street lighting | % | 69.8 |
| | N | 60 |
| | Con. Int. | (60.7, 77.5) |

* Confidence Interval (Con. Int.) at 95%

¹⁷ Metropolitan Crime Commission, Preliminary Results. "Central City Community Survey." August 2006.

Community Center/Safe Haven

An overwhelming 86.9% of the responding households felt that a Safe Haven should be established in Central City (Annex B, Table 15). A Safe Haven, as defined by Operation Weed and Seed is a multi-service center for youth and adults free of drug and violence. Preferred locations for the Safe Haven, but no prevailing, definitive location, included the YMCA, schools, churches, and abandoned buildings in Central City. The services that respondents indicated they wished would be offered at the Safe Haven included organized sports, tutoring/homework assistance, and adult social activities. Similar to the desire for a neighborhood Safe Haven, 87.0% of the responding households felt the neighborhood needed an organization to help facilitate the recovery process (Annex B, Table 16).

| Table H: Percentage of respondents and their agreement with the utilization of a neighborhood community center. | | | |
|---|----------|----------|------------------|
| I would use a community center if it was in my neighborhood. | | | |
| | % | N | Con. Int. |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | 2.8 | 6 | (1.4, 5.5) |
| <i>Disagree</i> | 7.5 | 16 | (5.1, 11.0) |
| <i>Agree</i> | 38.2 | 81 | (32.0, 44.9) |
| <i>Strongly Agree</i> | 47.6 | 101 | (41.4, 54.0) |
| <i>Uncertain</i> | 3.8 | 8 | (1.9, 7.5) |

* Confidence Interval (Con. Int.) at 95%

A great majority of households (85.8%) also indicated that they agreed (strongly or otherwise) with the statement that they would use a community center if it was in their neighborhood.