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Facts for Features: Hurricane Katrina Recovery

NEW ORLEANS — August 12, 2015 — Ten years after Hurricane Katrina, what does the very latest data say about how the city and region are doing?

New Orleans is a smaller city but continues to grow nearly ten years after Katrina.

- As of July 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau has estimated New Orleans’ population at 384,320, or 79 percent of its 2000 population of 484,674. The metro area, with 1,251,849 residents, has 94 percent of its 2000 population of 1,337,726.1

- According to the Census Bureau, the population of New Orleans and the metro area grew by 5,314 people and 9,900 people, respectively, between July 2013 and July 2014.

- As of June 2015, Valassis, Inc. data on households receiving mail indicates that more than half (40) of New Orleans’ 72 neighborhoods have recovered 90 percent of their June 2005 population, and 16 neighborhoods have more population than they did in June 2005.

Metro New Orleans is taking the first steps toward a new path, with signs of a more competitive economy and expanded amenities.

- New Orleans' sales tax revenue for Jan-May 2015 was 29 percent higher than for the same months in 2005 pre-Katrina (despite the city’s smaller population today), and 49 percent higher than in 2009 at the depth of the Great Recession.2

- Metro New Orleans has rebounded from the Great Recession impressively. As of 2014, metro New Orleans had reached 5 percent above its 2008 recession-era employment level while the nation had reached just 1 percent above its 2008 job level.
Entrepreneurship in metro New Orleans at 471 business startups per 100,000 adults in the three-year period ending in 2013 exceeds the nation by 64 percent.

Bikeways and trails (including shared lanes) are growing exponentially in New Orleans. As of 2014, the city had 92.4 miles of bikeways as compared to the 10.7 miles that existed in 2004.

But it’s important to remember that New Orleans has sustained several shocks since 2005, including the Great Recession.

The poverty rate in metro New Orleans declined from 18 percent in 1999 to 15 percent in 2007, but then increased to 19 percent in 2013, such that it is now statistically unchanged since 1999. In New Orleans itself, the 2013 poverty rate of 27 percent is also statistically the same as in 1999 after falling to 21 percent in 2007.

Like the overall poverty rate, child poverty rates in the city and the metro area dropped in 2007 but have since increased. In 2013, the child poverty rate was 39 percent in New Orleans (statistically unchanged since 1999) and 29 percent in the metro (higher than in 1999) — both higher than the U.S. rate of 22 percent.

Key economic, social, and environmental trends in metro New Orleans area remain troubling.

Adult educational attainment, a key factor influencing success in today’s economy, is not being advanced in metro New Orleans at the same rate as in the nation. The share of the population 25 years and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher increased from 23 to 27 percent in metro New Orleans from 2000 to 2013, while across the U.S. it increased from 24 to 30 percent.

During the same 2000 to 2013 period, black men in metro New Orleans experienced no improvement in the percent obtaining bachelor’s degrees or higher. As of 2013, only 12 percent of black men, compared to 35 percent of white men and 19 percent of black women, had a bachelor’s degree. Meanwhile, 34 percent of white women in the metro had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Post–Katrina housing is unaffordable with 37 percent of renters in the city paying more than 50 percent of their pre–tax income on rent and utilities in 2013, up from 24 percent of renters in 2004.

Between 1932 and 2010, the New Orleans region lost 948 square miles of
coastal wetlands, which is nearly 30 percent of the wetlands that protect the New Orleans area from hurricane storm surge.

The city and region have experienced demographic shifts post–Katrina.

- Metro New Orleans area is more diverse than in 2000 with a gain of 47,649 Hispanics and 7,623 additional Asian residents. The Hispanic population in the metro spiked 81 percent between 2000 and 2014.

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014 population estimates, there are now 97,385 fewer African Americans living in the city of New Orleans compared to 2000, but there are also 9,006 fewer whites. Meanwhile, the number of Hispanics grew by 6,474. In New Orleans, the share of the 2013 population that is African American — while lower than in 2000 when it was 66.7 percent — continues to represent the majority of city residents at 58.8 percent.

- While the city has 97,395 fewer black residents, the metro area as a whole has only 66,752 fewer black residents, revealing that the suburban parishes have gained more than 30,000 blacks. Moreover, the metro area as whole has had a net loss of 75,228 white residents. In short, the metro area as a whole is increasingly diverse with gains in blacks, Hispanics, and Asians and losses of white residents in nearly every parish.  

Be sure to cite The Data Center: your source for the most up-to-date, reliable data.

For further analysis and recommendations from The Data Center, see The New Orleans Index at Ten at www.datacenterresearch.org;

About The Data Center
The Data Center is the most trusted resource for data about greater New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana. Since 1997, The Data Center has been an objective partner in bringing reliable, thoroughly researched data to conversations about building a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable region. The Data Center (formerly known as the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center) became the local authority for tracking post-Katrina recovery with The New Orleans Index, developed in partnership with the Brookings Institution.
Notes

1. Metro New Orleans is defined according to the 2013 delineations of the Office of Management and Budget, which is the 8-parish area including Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, St. James, and St. Tammany parishes.
2. These figures are not adjusted for inflation.
3. “African American/ Black,” “Asian,” and “white” refer to individuals who report to be only one race and not Hispanic. However, “Hispanics” can be of any race(s).