

Fact Sheet

Fear, Trust, and Crime Policy in East Baton Rouge

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INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet describes trends in fear of crime, trust, city government, and priorities among East Baton Rouge Parish residents between 2005 and 2013. It also highlights trends in the number of violent crimes committed throughout the parish. The data on the public's opinions were obtained from the Baton Rouge Community Survey (BRCS), which was conducted by students in Dr. Fredrick Weil's Sociological Methods course at Louisiana State University. The survey questions asked each year were based on student interests, so responses to some questions were not available for all years.

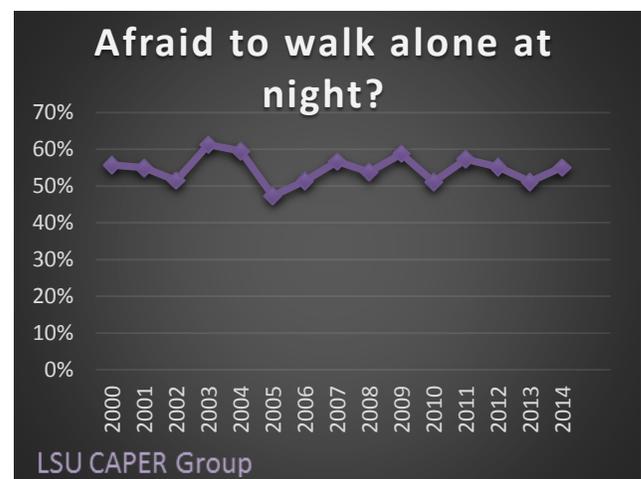
KEY FINDINGS

- Fear of crime is high but remains steady, but can be influenced by violent events.
- Trust of neighbors and police are high.
- Violent crimes are declining.
- Fighting crime remains an important issue for East Baton Rouge Parish Residents.

FEAR

Fear of crime was measured by asking respondents whether or not they were afraid to walk alone at night. Of the 8091 total respondents who responded to the BRCS between 2000 and 2013, 53% responded yes. The percent of respondents reporting to be concerned about walking alone at night was relatively stable over the study period. The peaks were in 2003 and 2004 with 61.3% and

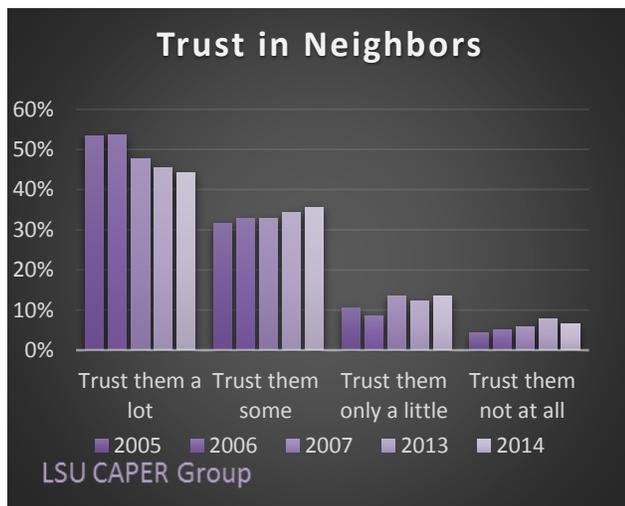
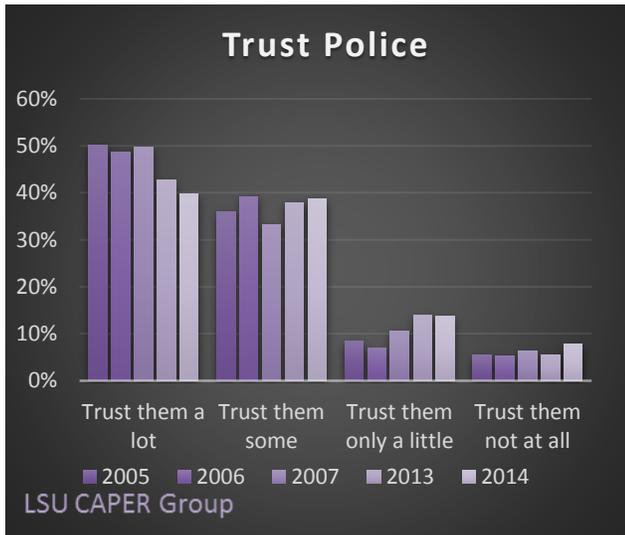
59.5%, respectively, responding yes. These peaks coincide with the years two serial killers were arrested in Baton Rouge. This shows that fear of crime can be influenced by violent events in the area and fear of crime remains an important issue for EBR residents.



TRUST

Neighborhood trust was measured by asking respondents how much they trusted various groups with response options being: trust them a lot, trust them some, trust them only a little, and trust them not at all. For the purposes of this fact sheet, the responses to trust of community police and trust of neighbors are highlighted. Of the 4083 respondents who answer the question about trust of community police, 84.8% reported either some trust or a lot of trust in the local police. Of the 3661 respondents who responded to the question about trust in their

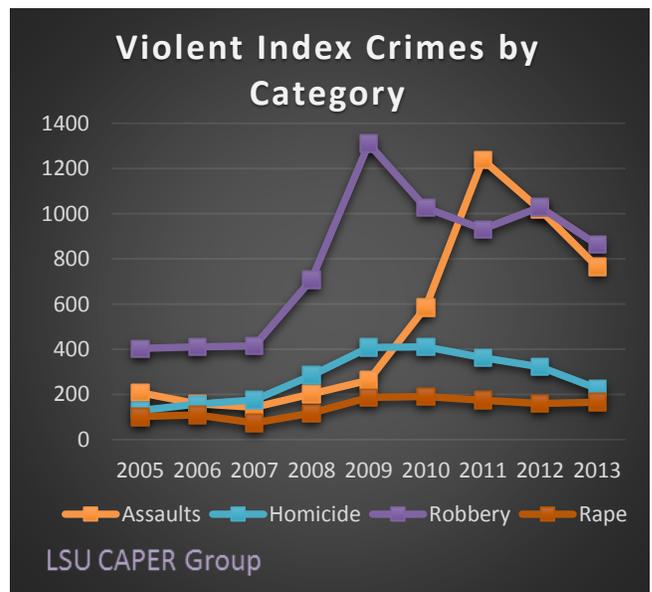
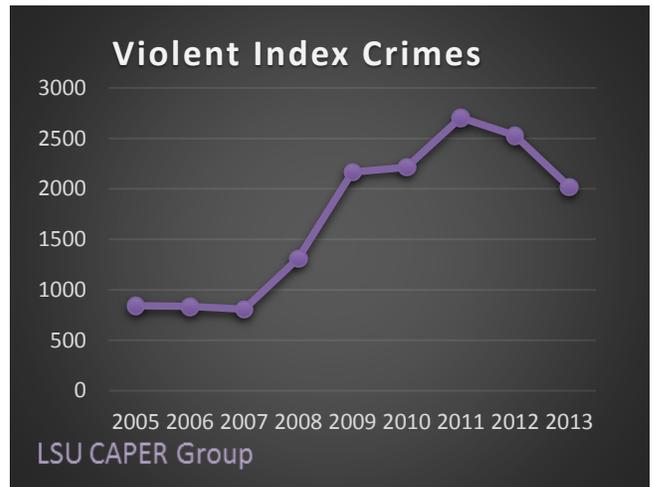
neighbors, 83.6% reported some or a lot of trust in their neighbors. This suggests that the residents of EBR are connected to their neighbors and the local police, which is important because research has frequently found that trust in neighbors and the police were important for neighborhood crime reduction.



VIOLENT CRIME

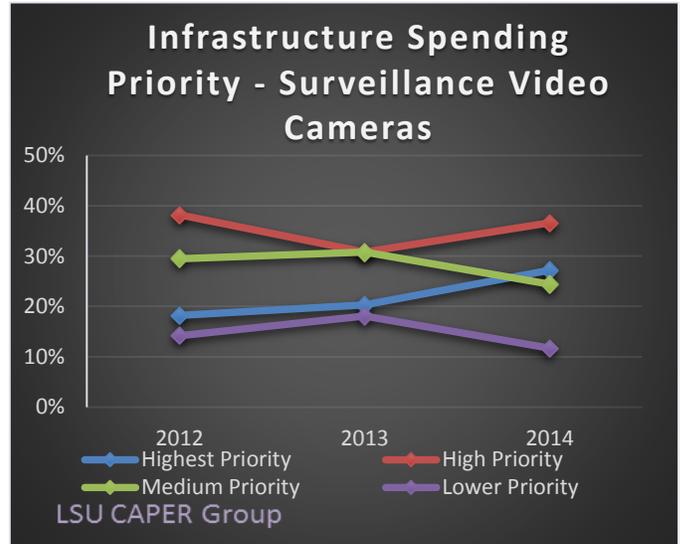
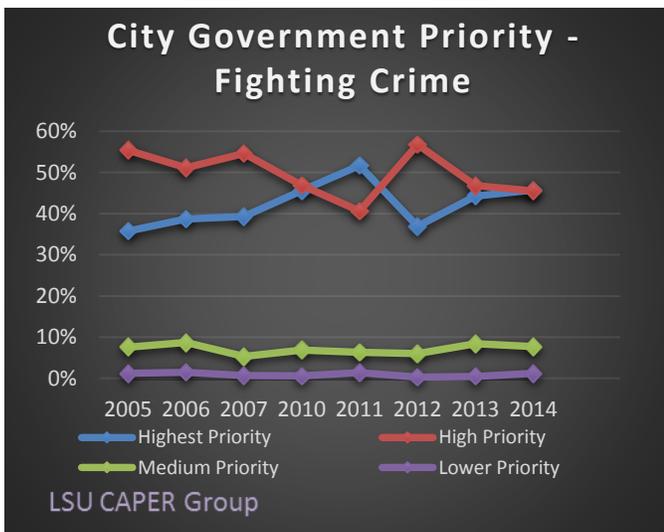
This section highlights the trends in counts of violent index crimes (assault, homicide, rape, and robbery) in East Baton Rouge Parish since 2005. A few things to note about these data. First, we are grateful to the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office for sharing this data. Second, crime counts for Zachary were not included until 2010.

Even though fear of crime remained steady, the number of violent crimes has declined since their last peak in 2011. Exploring variation in individual crimes shows that the number of rapes increased between 2012 and 2013, but the number of homicides declined dramatically between 2010 and 2013. Possible reasons for this decline include improved policing practices and efforts by the Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE) task force, which were influential in reducing the prevalence of gang violence.



CRIME POLICY

Respondents were also asked about city government action and spending priorities. The action priority of fighting crime and the spending priority of placing video surveillance cameras in high crime areas reflect the public's opinion about the importance of fighting crime in East Baton Rouge parish. Of the 5584 respondents who answered questions about government priorities, 91.7% responded highest or high when asked about the importance of crime fighting for city government. The question on spending priorities of city government began in 2012, it has since received 1111 responses 57.5% of which were highest or high. Together, these statistics suggest that crime is a very important issue for EBR residents and lowering crime should remain a high priority for government agencies.



AUTHORS

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ABOUT CAPER

CAPER is an interdisciplinary group of scholars who examine issues related to crime, law, and public policy at Louisiana State University. The research presented in this fact sheet was conducted by the authors. The views expressed here are solely those of the authors, and do not represent the views of other CAPER members, or Louisiana State University. Visit CAPER on the web at www.lsu.edu/capergroup/

For more information regarding the survey data on which this fact sheet is based, please see <http://www.fweil.com/s2211/>