Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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Contact: Mukul Verma, director of communications, (225) 362-9260, mverma@braf.org.

BRAF Survey: EBR Residents Uneasy About Pandemic

Majority don't want to attend big events and fly; nearly one-fourth shifted to working from home

A majority of Baton Rouge residents don't want to attend large events during the pandemic. They don't want to fly from the local airport either. Parents are okay with sending their children to school.

These are some findings from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's annual survey for its CityStats project, which has measured the quality of life in East Baton Rouge Parish for 12 years.

The full report is in production for release in coming weeks. The Foundation is releasing some survey responses early because they are timely during the pandemic.

In the field in late June, the survey sampled 500 people by land line and cell phone. Conducted for the Foundation by LJR Custom Strategies, the poll is representative of the people who live in East Baton Rouge Parish. The error margin is plus or minus 4.3%.

The survey shows a majority of residents are uneasy during the pandemic. They have changed their consumer and social behavior. Many are, for instance, substituting online shopping for in-store purchases, and plan to continue buying online after the outbreak is over. More than one of four say they are getting more work done at home, but more than half feel less connected to their workplace. Parent are tech-ready for distance learning for their children.

Select results from the CityStats poll:

- 49% are not likely to attend large events, such as **festivals and football games,** without social distancing. 21% more are unsure. Of the rest, only 5% are very likely to attend a big group meetup. Add in social distancing and the results change much, as 35% still say they are not likely to attend big community events, with only 12% saying they would go.

- 49% of people who **travel from Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport** aren't likely to take a flight during the pandemic, including 28% who said they won't fly at all. Merely 17% say they will fly from BTR. (The pandemic ended three consecutive years of higher passenger traffic at BTR. Passenger traffic in June was down nearly 80% compared to June of 2019.)

- 27% of parents said their **children learned less at home after school closed** in spring. That rate held for African American and white parents. But homes with schoolchildren are now prepared for distance learning, with 99% of parents reporting they have high-speed internet access and, on average, more than two computers that can handle broadband data. (For all respondents, 90% said they had high-speed internet in their home.).

- Only 5% of parents said they wouldn't send their **children back to school** in autumn in light of the pandemic, while 29% more were either undecided or not very likely to. African American parents were more worried, with 9% saying no to in-person schooling, compared to 2% of white parents. The pandemic has disproportionately affected African Americans.

- 22% of EBR residents decamped to **work from home** during the pandemic, while 71% remained at their job site. 7% told us they were already working from home.

- Of the 22% who shifted to off-site work, 56% were told by employers that they could **continue working from home** after the pandemic. That translates to about 10% of the EBR workforce. 26% said they were more productive from home, while 8% were less so. 66% said their level of productivity was the same.

- The downside: 54% of off-site workers felt **less connected to their workplace**.

- 11% said they **couldn't afford food** during the pandemic, but that's far lower than in previous surveys for the CityStats report, which consistently showed about 25% of residents couldn't afford food sometime during the previous year. The lower hunger level may be attributed to expansion of feeding programs during the outbreak.

- Another welcome disruption – 7% of respondents in our survey said they were **victims of crime** during the pandemic, down from 25% during normal times, as per our previous surveys. That tracks a national shift to lower property and other nonviolent crimes during COVID-19. Crimes have declined because people are moving around less, and residents working from home are watching over their neighborhoods. (Note: the murder rate nationally and in East Baton Rouge Parish has been higher during the outbreak.)

- EBR public data shows that **traffic accidents dropped** 53% during the stay-at-home order. During that same time, traffic congestion – the extra amount spent during a trip - declined 29%.

- The CityStats survey included **questions about online shopping** during the outbreak. 48% replaced some of their in-person shopping with online ordering. 33% of them plan to continue ordering online after the pandemic. The three most common online purchases were home goods, groceries and clothing.

The full report and another release will be issued in coming weeks. The CityStats project is underwritten by Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation, a supporting nonprofit of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.