BATON ROUGE CITYSTATS TRACKS the quality of life in East Baton Rouge, using public data and a poll that represents the residents of East Baton Rouge Parish. The project is a roadmap for community improvement, telling residents where we are, how far we’ve come and where we need to go as a parish.

Special to this year’s report is a section on COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. The section provides data and responses to the survey that tell how different life was in the parish during the outbreak, with an attempt to predict which changes during the pandemic may alter the direction of our parish.

CityStats began in 2008, when hundreds of people joined the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to help us choose indicators in health care, public safety, well-being and other categories. The Foundation has issued this report each year since 2009, with all copies available at BRCityStats.org.

The CityStats project is underwritten by the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation, which is a nonprofit that works in concert with the Foundation. We thank Mr. Thomas for his unwavering support for this report.
The Baton Rouge Area Foundation began CityStats in 2008 with a call for public meetings to create an indicators project. Our goal was to measure East Baton Rouge’s strengths and weaknesses, a means to guide our fund donors and the Foundation’s efforts to create a better, more equitable East Baton Rouge Parish.

The Foundation hires the Baton Rouge Area Chamber to gather the public data for this annual report, and LJR Custom Strategies conducted the companion poll. The poll is representative of East Baton Rouge Parish. Results were weighted by age, race and gender to more closely resemble the demographic makeup of the most recently available census data on East Baton Rouge. The latest survey was taken in late June 2020. Interviewers polled 500 residents of East Baton Rouge, 32% via landline and 68% via cell phone. The poll has an error margin of plus or minus 4.3%.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Chair</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview: East Baton Rouge Parish</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic Trends</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government &amp; Civic Participation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Well-Being</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators Index</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With CityStats, we give you data and analysis that’s not only current but also timely. For this report, our survey questions are weighted toward COVID-19. Our goal was to gather data that could assist policymakers and organizations. Living in the most uncertain times within memory, decision-makers are trying to craft policies that will benefit the communities they serve. We believe the information in this CityStats report will help. The Baton Rouge Airport was enjoying three years of steadily increasing passenger numbers until the pandemic wiped out more than 80% of travel. We wondered whether those numbers might recover quickly and found the answer to be probably not. Half of Baton Rouge residents who travel from the local airport told us that they’re not likely to fly now because of the pandemic. The COVID concerns that are keeping passengers grounded largely vanish, however, when it comes to putting kids back in the classroom. Only 5% of parents said they would not be sending their children to school during the pandemic, with mothers far more worried than fathers. African Americans, who have been disproportionately affected by the virus, express more concerns about the risk to their kids than the white parents surveyed. A majority of EBR residents said they won’t be attending large community events like festivals in light of the pandemic. Even with social distancing, more than half said they’d be sitting out big event gatherings.

There’s more about COVID-19 in the report, including related shifts in consumers’ shopping habits; in the long term, these changes could rearrange current development patterns in the parish and, sadly, put many retailers out of business. We always find some good news in the survey. For example, East Baton Rouge’s library system upgraded its Wi-Fi and, subsequently, there’s been a surge in the number of people logging in at libraries. You can find these patrons pecking away on their keyboards at the new library downtown as well as in the courtyard of the main library on Goodwood Boulevard. It’s a good sign that people want to stay informed and use the resources libraries provide. Sociologists would cheer our libraries for building social capital—an important factor in improving social justice.

Our survey also confirms strong public support for justice reform, especially when it comes to issuing warrants for small, nonviolent crimes instead of putting people in jail. We find this encouraging because justice reform has become a primary civic project for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. We hope you’ll read the report for other important findings, such as whether people want to preserve the Electoral College and how they feel about voting by mail. There’s also the question of letting Americans opt for public health insurance, like Medicare.

This is the 12th year the Foundation has measured the quality of life in the parish. CityStats tells us where we are, how far we’ve come, and where we need to go from here. In uncertain times like ours, reliable information is more valuable than ever. We’re optimistic that a vaccine will
arrive and be made widely available before we publish the next report. By then, we hope, our research will make clearer whether the disruption of the pandemic has fundamentally altered how our region functions as a community, from retail to health care to football games.

Let me close by thanking Newton B. Thomas. His nonprofit, a supporting organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, underwrites CityStats’ data collection and related research projects.

Bill Balogh

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation works to improve the quality of life for all people in South Louisiana.

We do so in three ways.

1. We serve philanthropists, connecting them with the causes they care about most. The Foundation manages charitable accounts for our fund donors and makes grants on their behalf to nonprofits. Together, we’ve granted more than $500 million since starting operations in 1964.

2. The Foundation takes on projects for civic good. These include neighborhood redevelopment, building a Water Campus for scientists who are taking on coastal water issues, improving mobility across the Baton Rouge metro area, partnering to improve behavioral health services and coordinating services for people with developmental disabilities.

3. The Foundation offers strategic consulting services to nonprofits. We advise on development strategies that help local organizations grow their internal capacity to serve the community.

We are among more than 700 community foundations in the country and among the largest in the Southeast. Our asset base was more than $719 million at year-end 2019. Our affiliates are the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana in Lake Charles and the Northshore Community Foundation in Covington.

our mission

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation unites human and financial resources to enhance the quality of life in South Louisiana. To achieve our mission, we:

Serve our fund donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions

Engage community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges

Partner with entities from our service area, as well as with other community foundations, to leverage our collective resources and create the capacity to be a stimulus of positive regional change

Evaluate our work and share the results with stakeholders
PARISH OVERVIEW

East Baton Rouge

2019 POPULATION: 440,059

POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE: 967

WOMEN: 52.3%  MEN: 47.7%

WHITE: 44.0%  BLACK: 47.2%
HISPANIC: 4.4%  ASIAN: 3.4%
OTHER: 1%

USA BORN: 94.5%  FOREIGN BORN: 5.5%

NATIONAL AVERAGE FOR FOREIGN BORN: 13.7%

96.2% OF RESIDENTS ARE U.S. CITIZENS

SQUARE MILES

455 LAND  15 WATER  470 TOTAL

TOTAL SQUARE MILES
Military service
(2018)
- VIETNAM: 6,726
- GULF WAR (1990s): 3,415
- GULF WAR (2001-): 3,074

Top industries
- Education and health care: 25%
- Retail: 12%
- Professional and science: 11%
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation: 10%
- Manufacturing: 8%

How we live
- Total households: 165,939
- Rent home: 40%
- Own home: 60%
- People per household: 2.62

Unusual facts
- Golf courses per 100,000 residents: 5.25, higher than all peer cities but Birmingham.
- Baton Rouge was named one of the most “well-groomed” cities based on concentration of barber shops and hair stylists, according to National Geographic’s list of 29 “Cities on the Rise.”
The CityStats survey’s main focus this year was the pandemic and how it might change the future. This section is devoted to questions in the survey about COVID-19 and has been supplemented by additional public data.

**Pandemic prevention**

The virus has changed how people take care of themselves, with a very high rate of people washing hands, though they are not as diligent about wearing a mask. Studies indicate that an 80% rate of wearing masks can reduce infections to near zero. In EBR, less than half were wearing masks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Middle-income were more likely to mask up than low-income and high-earners.

**Percent who always wear a mask by household income**

- **UNDER $25K**: 44%
- **$50K-$99K**: 50%
- **$100K+**: 38%

CITYSTATS2020

Are you wearing a mask to shop, at work or in public?

91% are washing their hands more often than before COVID-19.
Contact tracing

Said they would identify a person who they were in contact with for tracing COVID-19 infections. 15% said no, and the rest were undecided or didn’t answer.

Online shopping

The pandemic has dramatically accelerated the rate of online shopping nationwide, and East Baton Rouge is no exception. Nearly half in the parish shopped online instead of in stores during the pandemic, and a big majority of them plan to continue buying from online retailers after the outbreak is over.

48% Replaced some in-person shopping with online ordering during the pandemic.

33% Shoppers who switched some shopping to online say they will continue ordering online when times are normal again.

Top three items EBR online shoppers were purchasing during the pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home goods</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breakdown of EBR online shoppers during the pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or 2-yr degree</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Air travel: Flying BTR

Airport traffic dropped by about 80% in BTR during the pandemic. A slight majority of passengers in our survey say they aren’t planning to fly soon. In the survey, 22% said they flew from the Baton Rouge airport in 2019, with 5% flying at least three times. Flying from BTR depends on income, with half of people earning more than $100,000 flying at least once from the airport. But, as seen below, people who fly BTR aren’t taking a plane in the next few months.

Q: In light of coronavirus, will you fly on an airplane in next few months?

**All respondents**

- **Not likely at all**: 42%
- **Not very likely**: 24%
- **Somewhat likely**: 21%
- **Very likely**: 5%
- **Unsure/didn’t say**: 8%

**Frequent travelers**

Respondents who flew from BTR in 2019

- **Not likely at all**: 28%
- **Not very likely**: 21%
- **Somewhat likely**: 31%
- **Very likely**: 17%
- **Unsure/didn’t say**: 3%

**All Respondents who say “Not likely at all” or “not likely”**

- **By age**
  - Overall: 66%
  - 18-29: 69%
  - 30-49: 55%
  - 50-65: 66%
  - 65+: 75%

- **By political ideology**
  - Conservatives: 55%
  - Moderates: 68%
  - Liberals: 74%

- **By race**
  - Whites: 61%
  - African Americans: 70%
  - Others: 56%
With or without social distancing, more than half of residents aren’t likely to go to a large event, like a concert or a football game, during the pandemic. The older they are, the less likely they are to attend a big event, though people in the 18-29 category—millennials—are not enthusiastic about attending big events with a lot of people either.

Q: In light of coronavirus, will you attend a large event, like a football game or concert?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With no social distancing in the venue</th>
<th>With social distancing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT LIKELY AT ALL</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT VERY LIKELY</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMEWHAT LIKELY</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY LIKELY</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSURE/DIDN’T SAY</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT LIKELY AT ALL/NOT LIKELY: RESPONDENTS BY AGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-65</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT LIKELY AT ALL/NOT LIKELY: RESPONDENTS BY AGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-65</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most parents want to send their children back to school in the fall, though there is a sizable gap between African American and white parents. 6% of white parents are hesitant about sending their children back to school, compared to 22% of black parents.

Kids back in school
Most parents want to send their children back to school in the fall, though there is a sizable gap between African American and white parents. 6% of white parents are hesitant about sending their children back to school, compared to 22% of black parents.

Crime
Overall, crime has been reported down across the country during the pandemic. Our survey backs up that claim. 7% said they were a victim of a crime since the start of the coronavirus outbreak. In annual surveys before the pandemic, about 25% said they were victim of crime.

Food & health security
11% couldn’t afford to pay for food for themselves or their family during the pandemic. 10% couldn’t afford medicines or health care for themselves or their family during the pandemic.

Distance learning
Meanwhile, roughly one-fourth of parents said their children fell behind—they learned less—when they were at home during the pandemic. This rate is the same for black and white parents, and about the same for fathers and mothers interviewed by our pollsters.

Q: (Parents with kids in K-12): When schools closed during the pandemic, did children learn more, less or about the same at home?

Q: Are you very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not likely at all to send your child or children back to their school building in August?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY LIKELY</th>
<th>SOMETHOW LIKELY</th>
<th>NOT VERY LIKELY</th>
<th>NOT LIKELY AT ALL</th>
<th>UNSURE/NO ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL PARENTS</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE PARENTS</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools
In our survey, nearly every home with a child in school had high-speed internet access and computers able to access the web, both tools necessary for distance learning.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average number of computers in households with schoolchildren
Home work
Where employed residents were working during the pandemic

Of the 22% temporarily working from home:

Q: Do you expect your employer to allow you to continue working from home after the pandemic is over?

- Yes: 56%
- No: 22%
- Unsure/Didn’t Say: 22%

Q: Would you say you get more work done, about the same amount of work, or less work done working from home?

- Same: 66%
- More: 26%
- Less: 8%

Q: Does working from home make you feel more connected to your workplace, less connected, or is it about the same?

- Same: 38%
- More: 4%
- Less: 54%
- Unsure/Didn’t Say: 4%

PEOPLE WHO REMAINED AT WORK SITE

- High school or less: 83%
- Income < $25,000: 84%
- Live in North BR: 82%
- Ages 18-29: 84%

PEOPLE WHO TEMPORARILY WORKED FROM HOME

- Income > $100,000: 28%
- Ages 30-49: 26%
- College graduates: 30%
- Liberals: 32%
Attendance at cultural facilities

This indicator includes visitor data for USS Kidd, Manship Theatre, Baton Rouge Zoo and Louisiana Art and Science Museum. All venues except Manship had more visitors in 2019 over 2018. Zoo attendance rose the most, from 177,131 in 2018 to 191,740 in 2019. In the last decade, zoo attendance peaked at 266,260 in 2010.
Miles of public trails  

59

Library usage

Circulation of digital and printed books, DVDs and other digital materials continued rising to a record number in 2019. A prime reason is growing demand for digital downloads, which jumped 15% to 921,333 in 2019. Still, physical books and other materials represent more than 70% of total circulation.

2019 TOTAL CIRCULATION

3,105,034  +4%

Digital circulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>483,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>577,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>664,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>803,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>921,333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computer logins (2019)

1,751,328  +32%

The increase is due to the substantial uptick in Wi-Fi logins from personal computers after the library system upgraded its service.

The amount of public trails has grown very slowly over time, but that may change. BREC is adding more trails to its network and the parish has a new bike and pedestrian master plan that recommends 250 miles of off-road paths and trails. We’ll keep track to see if the recommendations are implemented in coming years.
Employment

Employment in East Baton Rouge Parish has barely grown in the past decade, only 3.7% during that time. Worse, total jobs have declined four of the last five years. The reasons: Jobs were lost when Albemarle moved out of town and Georgia Pacific closed its plant, and when state government reduced payroll. Also, a smaller parish population has reduced demand for retail, which is also shifting online at the same time.

East Baton Rouge Parish: Ten-year total jobs and job growth 2010 to 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Jobs</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>255,718</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>258,051</td>
<td>+0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>262,846</td>
<td>+1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>265,851</td>
<td>+1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>273,913</td>
<td>+3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>272,062</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>269,645</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>266,248</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>270,823</td>
<td>+1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>265,366</td>
<td>-2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate in Baton Rouge has generally declined since the 2008 recession.

Median household income

EBR median household income (2018)

$52,947

10 YEAR GROWTH
Total $52,947 +3%
White $75,866 0%
African American $37,627 +5%

Note: Latino and Asian earnings are not included because the sample sizes in the federal survey are too small.

Income inequality

49¢

Amount earned by an African American household for every dollar earned by a white household in East Baton Rouge Parish.

East Baton Rouge net migration

In recent years, more people moved into the parish than migrated elsewhere.
High school graduation rate
Nearly nine of every 10 living in the parish have a high school diploma. They include graduates who earned their GED. The rate has been rising ever so slowly. It was 85.8% in 2005.

EBR college graduates
Total college graduates have been inching up, and are up a full percentage point from 2013 to 2018. The rate increased from 30.5% in 2005 to 35.2% in 2018.

EBR residents with a high school diploma 89.7%
School enrollment

K-12 school enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019 ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>CHANGE FROM 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private schools</td>
<td>16,379</td>
<td>↓2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBRPSS (includes charters)</td>
<td>41,637</td>
<td>↑6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>5,595</td>
<td>↑5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Community</td>
<td>4,833</td>
<td>↑4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Baker</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>↑4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EBR pre-K enrollment (2018)**

Enrollment in pre-K was **higher in 2018 in EBR than in Louisiana (51%) and the U.S. (48%)**. Pre-K enrollment strongly correlates with future success, but all kids enrolled in a program before they start school has been elusive around the country. Only a few communities fully fund pre-K.

65%
Global warming as an issue

Our previous surveys have revealed that a strong majority of EBR residents believe global warming is real and want governments to do more to curb greenhouse emissions. This year, we only asked about the importance of global warming as an issue. Only 22% say global warming is not an important issue, while 39% say it’s at least a very important issue.

How important is global warming as an issue to you?

University/City Park lakes plan

EBR residents support a plan to restore the University/City Park lake system. The Foundation led and paid for a master plan, and state and local partners pledged $50 million last year to implement it. Dredging of the lakes will begin in 2021.

Do you support or oppose the state- and local-funded plan to restore the University/City Park lakes?
EPA Toxics Release Inventory

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH 2008-2018

The Toxics Release Inventory tracks the management of certain toxic chemicals that may pose a threat to human health and the environment. Release of a chemical means that it is emitted to the air or water or placed in some type of land disposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Millions of Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13,019,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>12,053,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10,672,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>9,183,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7,690,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>8,965,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>9,907,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>11,097,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10,082,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>10,170,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>6,829,281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Residents had been reporting record levels of displeasure with the pace of progress in the parish. Amid the pandemic and social justice reform protests, the sentiment shifted in 2020: A smaller number are unhappy with the pace of progress, though it’s still in the plurality. Moreover, nearly one of every five didn’t know or didn’t answer, a possible reflection of uncertain times. Is this a pattern? We’ll know from next year’s poll.

Q: Do you feel the pace of progress and change in Baton Rouge is too slow, about right, or too fast? (2020)

- TOO SLOW: 38%
- ABOUT RIGHT: 33%
- TOO FAST: 10%
- UNSURE/DIDN’T SAY: 18%

Pace of progress is “too slow”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ordinary citizens’ level of influence over elected officials

This is the second year we’ve asked this question, and got about the same result as last year.

- **42%** RIGHT DIRECTION
- **38%** WRONG DIRECTION
- **20%** UNSURE/DIDN'T SAY

Parish going in the right or wrong direction

- **53%** AGES 65+
- **52%** INCOME <$25K
- **51%** INCOME >$100K

Biggest groups who say parish is going in the wrong direction

Biggest groups who say parish is going in the right direction

- **49%** CONSERVATIVES
- **47%** AGES 50-64
- **46%** WOMEN

- **4%** HIGH INFLUENCE
- **23%** MODERATE INFLUENCE
- **35%** LITTLE INFLUENCE
- **33%** NO INFLUENCE
- **5%** UNSURE/DIDN'T SAY

Four years in a row, we’ve set a record for this question. In 2020, 68% said they have little or no influence over elected officials.

- **2012**
  - 55%
- **2013**
  - 51%
- **2014**
  - 56%
- **2015**
  - 58%
- **2016**
  - 63%
- **2017**
  - 66%
- **2018**
  - 70%
- **2019**
  - 74%
- **2020**
  - 78%

No influence at all by political identification

- **44%** LIBERALS
- **34%** MODERATES
- **24%** CONSERVATIVES
Political ideology
A political shift in EBR over last year toward moderates. People who identified themselves as conservatives dropped 7 points from 2019, while moderates increased 7 points. The parish is right of center, but less so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY CONSERVATIVE</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERATE</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMEWHAT LIBERAL</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY LIBERAL</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSURE/DIDN’T SAY</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vote by mail
A strong plurality are for letting all Louisiana voters cast their ballots by mail, as is allowed in five other states and has become a political issue in this pandemic year.

Q: Should Louisiana allow voting by mail for all voters?

- **YES**: 48%
- **NO**: 36%
- **UNSURE/DIDN’T SAY**: 15%
Electoral College vs. popular vote?
A majority are for keeping the current method for electing a president by Electoral College versus a popular vote.

Support by EBR residents for keeping the Electoral College system

- 68%Conservatives
- 64%Moderates
- 32%Liberals

Nationally though, a clear majority want to switch to a popular vote, with Democrats in strong favor and Republicans against.

Public option health plan
Residents clearly support letting a government-administered health plan, such as Medicare, compete with private insurance. Plus, the idea is popular among almost all demographics, with only conservatives divided. This is the first time we’ve asked this question in the CityStats poll.

Q. Do you support or oppose a government-administered health plan as an option for all Americans?

- **49%** Support
- **29%** Oppose
- **22%** Unsure/Didn’t Say

**Strongest support**
- **64%** Liberals
- **57%** African Americans
- **67%** Age 18-29
- **51%** Income $25K-$49K

**Strongest opposition**
- **40%** Conservatives
- **39%** Income $100K+
- **38%** White
Infant health

Infant mortality rate

The rate is the number of infants who died before their first birthday per 1,000 live births. EBR’s high infant mortality rate is partly attributed to unsafe sleeping conditions and co-sleeping, where parents or guardians accidentally suffocate children. In 2019, nine babies died because of co-sleeping or unsafe sleeping conditions.

Newborns with healthy birth weight

(2018)

The rate has slowly declined in the last decade, with the high of 88.5% in 2016.
Sexually transmitted diseases

New cases of HIV

Baton Rouge still has one of the highest rates of new HIV cases in the nation, but the number dropped in 2017 and 2018. Since 2004, cases peaked in 2007 at 259.

Other sexually transmitted diseases in EBR

Sexually transmitted disease infections have been rising in Baton Rouge and around the nation. The CDC attributed the increase to several factors, including a decline in condom use among young people and increased screening among some groups; and cuts to sexual health programs at the state and local level, which led to clinic closures and fewer opportunities for counseling or testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

Deaths by disease (per 1,000 EBR residents) (2018)

The rates for deaths by cancer and heart disease have been relatively unchanged for 15 years. But the rate for deaths caused by diabetes has been cut by nearly one-half in the last decade even while the number with the disease has increased.

Adult obesity

The National Institutes of Health define obesity as a Body Mass Index of 30 or more. (A BMI of 30 is about 30 pounds overweight.)

32% ADULT OBESITY RATE IN EBRP

CHLAMYDIA

GONORRHEA

SYPHILIS

CANCER

DIABETES

HEART DISEASE
CITYSTATS 2020

Public Safety

Crime

Homicides

(VBR, East Baton Rouge Sheriff and Zachary police department data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Violent Crimes</th>
<th>Nonviolent Crimes</th>
<th>Total Crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>21,962</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>21,815</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,771</td>
<td>25,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>23,034</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>22,874</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,874</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[CITYSTATS 2020]

[EBR, East Baton Rouge Sheriff and Zachary police department data]
Traffic accidents

Baton Rouge has among the highest traffic accident rates in the nation, an underlying driver of high insurance rates. Parish government has reduced speed limits in neighborhoods and the state’s reworking of Government Street could be examples of how to reduce traffic accidents by slowing down traffic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Accidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>23,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>25,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>22,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>22,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>22,043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57 number of traffic deaths in 2019, including 24 attributed to drinking and driving. Traffic deaths have been as low as 41 in 2013 and as high as 69 in 2017.

Summons instead of arrest

EBR residents clearly want law enforcement officers to issue summons instead of arresting people for low-level, nonviolent crimes. A summons requires the arrested to go to court later, but eliminates the costly and time-consuming process of putting people in jail.

- **BY POLITICAL IDEOLOGY**
  - **CONSERVATIVES**
    - SUPPORT 45%
    - OPPOSE 39%
    - UNSURE 9%
  - **MODERATES**
    - SUPPORT 72%
    - OPPOSE 13%
    - UNSURE 14%
  - **LIBERALS**
    - SUPPORT 84%
    - OPPOSE 9%
    - UNSURE 14%

Property tax for a new parish prison

Baton Rouge needs a new parish prison. Are voters willing to pay for it? They are divided, and many of them are uncertain. (Note: We asked this question in two ways and got about the same result.)

- **STRONGEST SUPPORT**
  - AGE 50-64 46%
  - AGE 18-29 44%
  - NORTH BR RESIDENTS 43%

- **STRONGEST OPPOSITION**
  - AGE 65+ 58%
  - INCOME $50-99K 58%
  - COLLEGE GRADUATES 55%
Social Well-Being

Personal income

Q: Which one of these phrases comes closest to your own feelings about your household’s income these days?

- LIVING COMFORTABLY: 45% (2019), 42% (2020)
- WE ARE GETTING BY: 38% (2019), 51% (2020)
- WE ARE FINDING IT DIFFICULT: 9% (2019), 4% (2020)
- WE ARE HAVING A VERY DIFFICULT TIME: 8% (2019), 3% (2020)

Poverty

79,462
NUMBER OF EBR RESIDENTS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE IN 2018

- EBR PARISH: 18.3%
- US: 11.8%
- SENIORS: 9%
- CHILDREN: 25.4%
- WHITE: 11.4%
- AFRICAN AMERICAN: 25.5%
Companion Animal Alliance has dramatically reduced the animal euthanasia rate by placing homeless pets with families that want them. The save rate in 2019 was a record 77%. CAA euthanizes animals that are dangerous or gravely ill.

Better education and access to birth control have lowered the percentage of teens who give birth to historical lows in the country and in East Baton Rouge. Except for a spike in 2015, the EBR rate has been declining for several decades to a low of 2.3% in 2018.

The percentage of poor in East Baton Rouge has been slowly decreasing since 2015. But the rate of 18.3% in 2018 was far greater than the national rate of 11.8%.

Animal euthanasia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ANIMALS EUTHANIZED BY THE CAA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1,507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disclosed: The Baton Rouge Area Foundation created and supports CAA, which took control of the animal shelter from the parish in 2012. It’s governed by an independent board.

EBR overall poverty over time

EBR overall poverty over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teen birth rate

Teen birth rate

Better education and access to birth control have lowered the percentage of teens who give birth to historical lows in the country and in East Baton Rouge. Except for a spike in 2015, the EBR rate has been declining for several decades to a low of 2.3% in 2018.
Traffic

Hours wasted in traffic

Average travel time to work (in minutes)

Motorists are stuck for far more hours in traffic, but there may be a bit of a solution in coming years. The city-parish is spending more than $1 billion in new taxes for road and infrastructure upgrades, including $40 million to sync traffic signals to reduce travel times 10% to 50%, depending on where you are driving.

Weekly traffic congestion in Baton Rouge

The following heat map shows the congestion level for each hour of each day of the week, on average across the entire year of 2019. Darker areas indicate more traffic congestion.
Transit

CATS weekly bus ridership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>10K</th>
<th>20K</th>
<th>30K</th>
<th>40K</th>
<th>50K</th>
<th>60K</th>
<th>70K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50,716</td>
<td></td>
<td>73,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BTR airport passengers

The Baton Rouge airport was ascending, with three consecutive years in which more people were flying in and out of BTR. But the pandemic has disrupted air travel everywhere. Next year’s report will likely show traffic at less than 25% of 2019. See the COVID-19 section of this report for survey data on possible future air travel from BTR.
**PANDEMIC TRENDS**
(all survey questions were asked to a representative sample of EBR residents)

**Pandemic prevention** Residents wearing a mask to shop, at work or in public

Residents washing their hands more often since COVID-19

**Contact tracing** Residents who said they would comply with COVID-19 tracing by public agencies

**Online shopping** Shoppers who replaced some in-person shopping with online during the pandemic

New online consumers who expect to continue shopping online when times are normal again

**Air travel** Residents who say whether they will or won’t fly in the next few months in light of the pandemic

BTR fliers who plan to fly or not fly in the next few months in light of the pandemic

**Festivals and football** Residents who are likely or not likely to attend large events, like football games or concerts, because of the coronavirus

**Distance learning** EBR household adoption of high-speed internet among parents with children in school

Average number of computers in households with schoolchildren

Parents rate whether their children fell behind during the pandemic, or learned about the same or learned more

**Kids back in school** On a range, parents who said they would send or not send their children to school during the pandemic.

**Food and health security** Percent who couldn’t pay for food for themselves or their families during the pandemic

Residents who said they couldn’t afford medicines or health care for themselves or their families during the pandemic

**Crime** Level of crime during the pandemic

**Home work** Where residents worked from during the pandemic

Percentage of people temporarily working from home who said their employer would allow them to continue working offsite after the pandemic is over

Residents level of productivity while working from home

Whether residents are less more connected to their workplace when they work from home

**CULTURE AND RECREATION**

Total attendance at cultural facilities (CityStats survey) Combined annual total attendance at the Louisiana Art and Science Museum, USS Kidd, LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge Zoo and Manship Theatre.

**Miles of public trails** (BREC)

**Acres of public parks** (BREC)

**Library circulation** (EBR Library system) Number of library books and other materials checked out annually through the East Baton Rouge Library system. The statistic includes all digital downloads.

**EBR Library digital circulation** (EBR Library system) Number of digital downloads of books, music and videos from the East Baton Rouge Library system.

**Computer use at EBR libraries**, including Wi-Fi logins via personal computers.

**ECONOMY**

**Total employment** (Louisiana Workforce Commission) Number of people employed in East Baton Rouge Parish.

**EBR unemployment rate** (Louisiana Workforce Commission) Percent of people looking for work at year-end.

**EBR job growth** (Louisiana Workforce Commission) Rate of job growth over time.

**Median household income** (U.S. Department of
Labor) Median is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half with income above and half with income below. Family is a household related through blood, marriage or adoption.

EDUCATION
High school graduation rate by school system (Louisiana Department of Education)
Percent of students who graduate in, at most, four years. (Louisiana Department of Education)
Population with a high school diploma (Louisiana Department of Education)
Percent of EBR residents who are 25 and older with at least a high school degree.
Population with a bachelor’s degree (Louisiana Department of Education)
School enrollment (Louisiana Department of Education) Total enrollment in public school systems and all parish private schools.
Pre-K enrollment (U.S. Census Bureau survey) Percent of EBR 3- and 4-year-olds in school.

ENVIRONMENT
Global warming as an issue to respondents (CityStats survey)
Toxic Releases (Environmental Protection Agency) Release of chemicals into the air or water or disposed of on land.
Support for restoring University/City Park Lakes (CityStats survey)

GOVERNMENT/CIVIC PARTICIPATION
Support for letting a government option health plan, like Medicare, compete with private insurance (CityStats survey)
Pace of Progress (CityStats survey) From the survey, respondents say whether the pace of progress is “too slow,” “about right” or “too fast”.
Is the parish going in the right or wrong direction? (CityStats survey)
Political influence (CityStats survey) From the survey, residents’ belief of their influence—or lack thereof—over elected officials.
Political ideology (CityStats survey) Respondents who identify themselves on a political spectrum from “very conservative” to “very liberal.”
Vote by mail – Should Louisiana voters be allowed to cast their ballots my mail (CityStats Survey)
Electoral college versus popular vote – Should the president be elected by popular vote or the electoral college (CityStats survey)

HEALTH
Infant mortality rate (Louisiana Department of Health) Number of deaths per thousand of infants under 12 months of age.
Newborns with healthy birth weight (Louisiana Department of Health) Percent of babies weighing more than 5 pounds, 8 ounces, at birth, which is considered a minimum healthy weight.
HIV (Louisiana Office of Public Health) New cases of HIV.
New cases of sexually transmitted diseases (Louisiana Office of Public Health) New cases of syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.
EBR adult obesity (Louisiana Department of Health) Percent of adults who are overweight.
Mortality rates (Louisiana Department of Health) Deaths per thousand of parish residents who die from cancer, heart disease or diabetes.

INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION
Time wasted in traffic (Texas Urban Mobility Scorecard)
Commute time (U.S. Census Bureau) Average time to drive to work.
Bus ridership (Capital Area Transit System) Weekly ridership on Capital Area Transit System buses.
Airport use (Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport) Number of passengers to and from Baton Rouge Metro Airport.

PUBLIC SAFETY
Total homicides (EBR law enforcement agencies)
Traffic accidents (LSU Highway Safety Research Group) Number of accidents in the parish.
Traffic fatalities (LSU Highway Safety Research Group) Number of traffic deaths in the parish.
Summons instead of arrest (CityStats survey) Support or opposition to issuing summons instead of arresting people who commit small, nonviolent crimes.
Prison Tax (CityStats survey) Whether residents are for or against a tax to fund a new parish prison Support for not requiring cash bonds for people who are charged with nonsexual, nonviolent crimes.

Violent crimes (EBR public security departments) Total violent offenses in East Baton Rouge, as reported by all police departments and the sheriff’s office, except LSU, Southern and Baker.

Nonviolent crimes (EBR public security departments) Total non-violent offenses in East Baton Rouge, as reported by all police departments and Sheriff’s Office except LSU, Southern and Baker.

Total crimes (EBR public security departments) The sum of violent and non-violent crimes.

SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Personal income (CityStats survey) From our survey, respondents say whether personal income is letting them live comfortably, get by, or if it’s difficult to get by or very difficult to get by.

Poverty rates (U.S. Census Bureau survey) Percent of people living in poverty under the federal definition. Federal thresholds for poverty include age of family members and size of family. (U.S. Census Bureau)

Teen birth rate (U.S. Centers for Disease Control) Live births to every 100 girls who are 15- to 19-years-old.

Animal euthanasia (Companion Animal Alliance) Number of animals put down by the local animal shelter.

Image credits

Shaw Center photo on cover and p. 16 by Jordan Hefler
Downtown library photo on p. 17 by Tim Mueller
Downtown photo on cover by Tim Mueller
LSU football photo on p. 13 by lsusports.net