

Executive Summary: Community Safety and Justice Survey Findings & Strategic Recommendations

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) commissioned LJR Custom Strategies to perform a telephone survey of randomly selected East Baton Rouge Parish (EBRP) residents. The survey was conducted from August 4 – 9 of 2020 and resulted in the collection of 450 responses from EBRP residents who responded to various questions regarding perception of safety, recognition of justice agencies and rating of possible justice reform initiatives.

Purpose:

Over the past few years, several strategies implemented by the CJCC have helped to establish fertile ground for extensive improvements to the EBR justice system. However, the CJCC recognizes that it is lacking community perspective and discourse – without which the CJCC will never truly be an organization based in equality and inclusivity.

Goals:

Results of the survey will be used to guide the CJCC as it continues to strengthen its community engagement efforts in the hopes of establishing a meaningful dialogue between the citizens of East Baton Rouge and it's justice leaders while also guiding forthcoming justice reform efforts.

Findings:

- Most Baton Rouge residents say their neighborhood is very safe or safe and a majority say the police presence in their neighborhood is about right. One-third call for a greater police presence and no one says it is too much.
- About one-third of respondents report someone in their household has been a victim of a crime in EBR Parish; about one-fifth live in a household where someone has been accused of or arrested for a crime in Baton Rouge.
- None of the justice system entities in Baton Rouge garner much negative sentiment at all. Entities like the Sheriff and Police Departments are well known, while there is less familiarity with others.
- Currently and expectedly, CJCC has very low recognition.
- Respondents offer a mixed reaction to proposals related to changing current bail/pre-court appearance practices.
- There is universal agreement that the justice system should be designed to meet the needs of all people regardless of socio-economic status.

- About one-third of respondents report someone in their household has been a victim of a crime in EBR Parish; about one-fifth live in a household where someone has been accused of or arrested for a crime in Baton Rouge.
- Respondents offer a mixed reaction to proposals related to changing current bail setting/pre-trial appearance practices.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Build connections with community members, starting in the city region/underserved zips under the awareness that most consider their neighborhood safe and want to hear how CJCC can help them to keep it that way.
- Identify smaller pockets of unsafe neighborhoods and those seeking a greater police presence and partner with them to seek change.
- Work to grow CJCC's profile through community outreach and by highlighting its work with the very well-known Sheriff and Police Departments.
- Increase public awareness on lesser known justice system agencies, i.e. EBR Public Defender's Office.
- Weave the overwhelmingly well received language about designing a justice system that meets the needs of all people, regardless of socio-economic status into CJCC's description and vision for the future.
- Due to the low ranking priorities on changing bond/bail reform, reframe the bond discussion around shortening the length of time it takes to bring a case to justice and reevaluate the current procedures in place to reduce the cycle of repeat arrests/convictions.

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