

The New Orleans Index at Twenty

Measuring Greater New Orleans' progress
toward resilience

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THE DATA CENTER

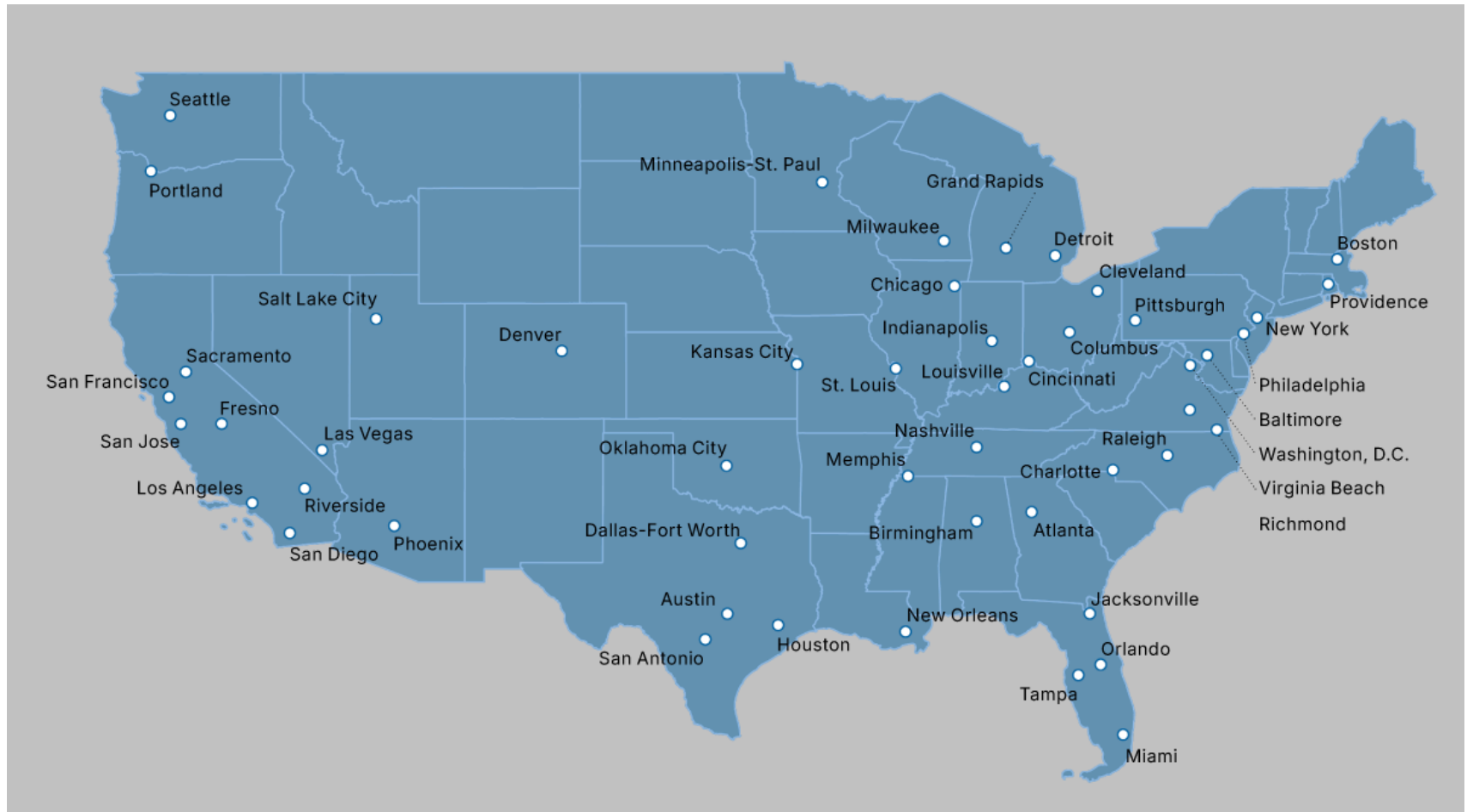
Independent Analysis for Informed Decisions in Southeast Louisiana

B | Brookings Metro

Reference Map – Metro New Orleans



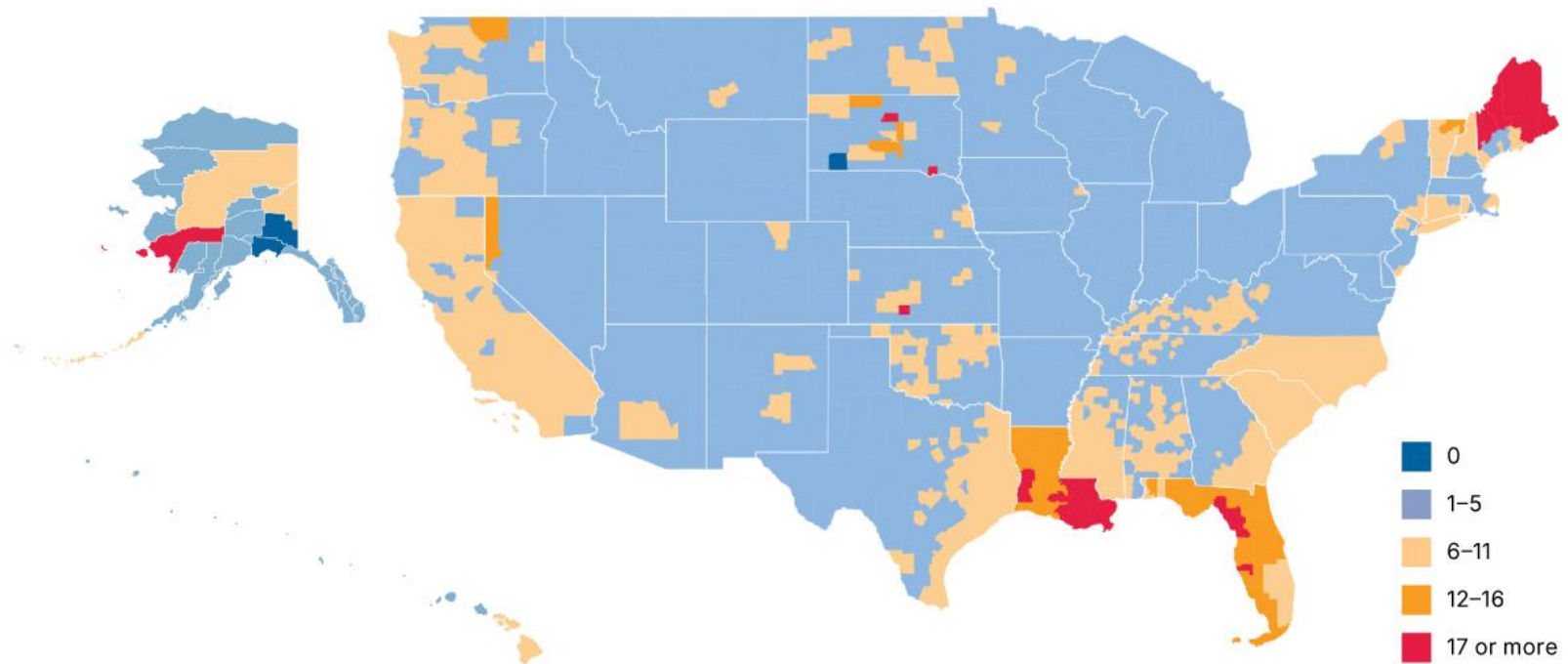
Reference Map – 50 Largest Metros



Each parish in Metro New Orleans has had at least 17 declared disasters since 2020 — 4X the national average—making Metro New Orleans a national outlier.

Number of FEMA disaster declarations by county

Cumulative January 2020 through December 2024

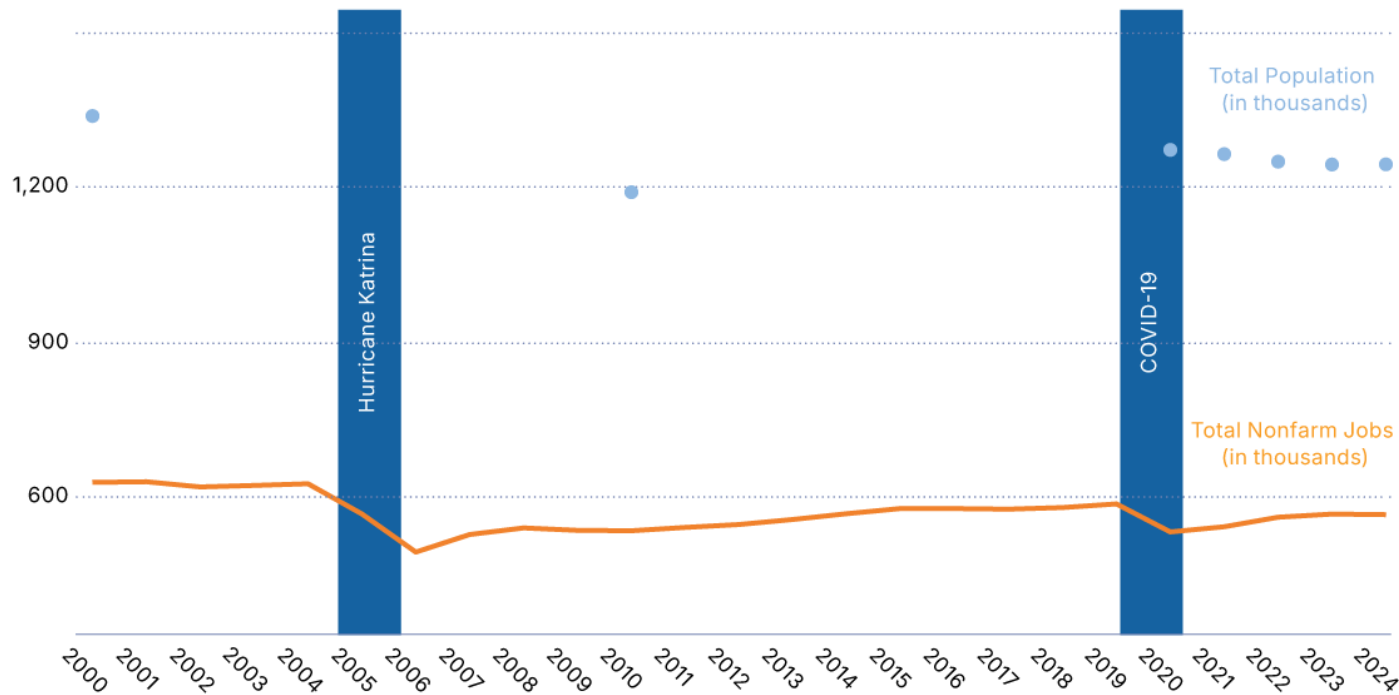


Source: FEMA

Hurricane Katrina and COVID were significant blows to Metro New Orleans, which now has 10% fewer jobs and 7% smaller population than in 2000—suggesting significant weakness in resilience capacity.

Metro New Orleans Jobs and Population

Annual averages

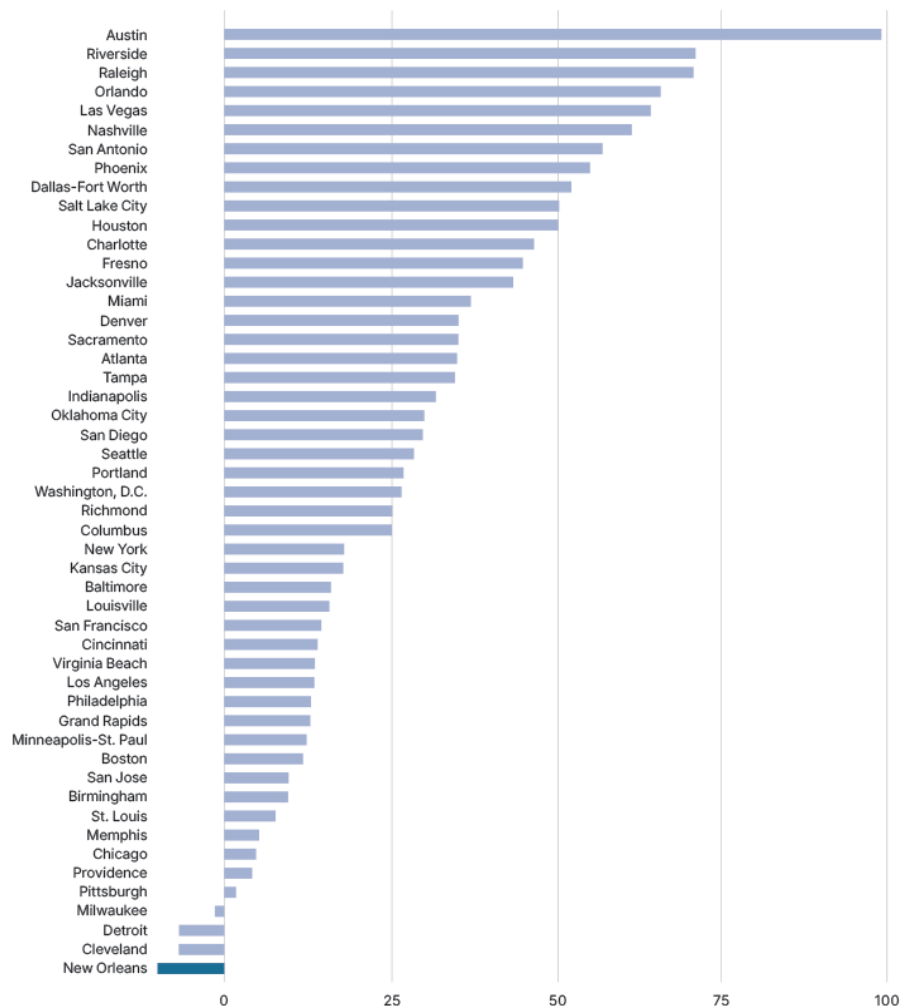


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial 2000, 2010, 2020, Population Estimates 2001-2024, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Moreover, the economic shrinkage in Metro New Orleans took place during a context of robust growth in many other metros, many of which also were hit by disasters and all of which grappled with COVID.

Job growth and decline, by 50 largest metropolitan areas
2000 to 2024 (Annual averages)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



A resilient metro is one that isn't trapped in a cycle of disaster response and recovery, but is able to adapt to reduce future risks. Factors that strengthen a region's ability to adapt to and mitigate shocks include:

- Strong infrastructure and housing
- (Sectorally) diverse economy
- Robust entrepreneurship
- Large shares of skilled and educated workers
- Wealth that can provide adaptive cushion (government, philanthropic, or individual)
- Wellness
- Strong attachment to place
- Small gap between incomes of high and low-income residents
- Social cohesion
- Community problem-solving ability



Housing and Infrastructure Economy and Workforce



Wealth People

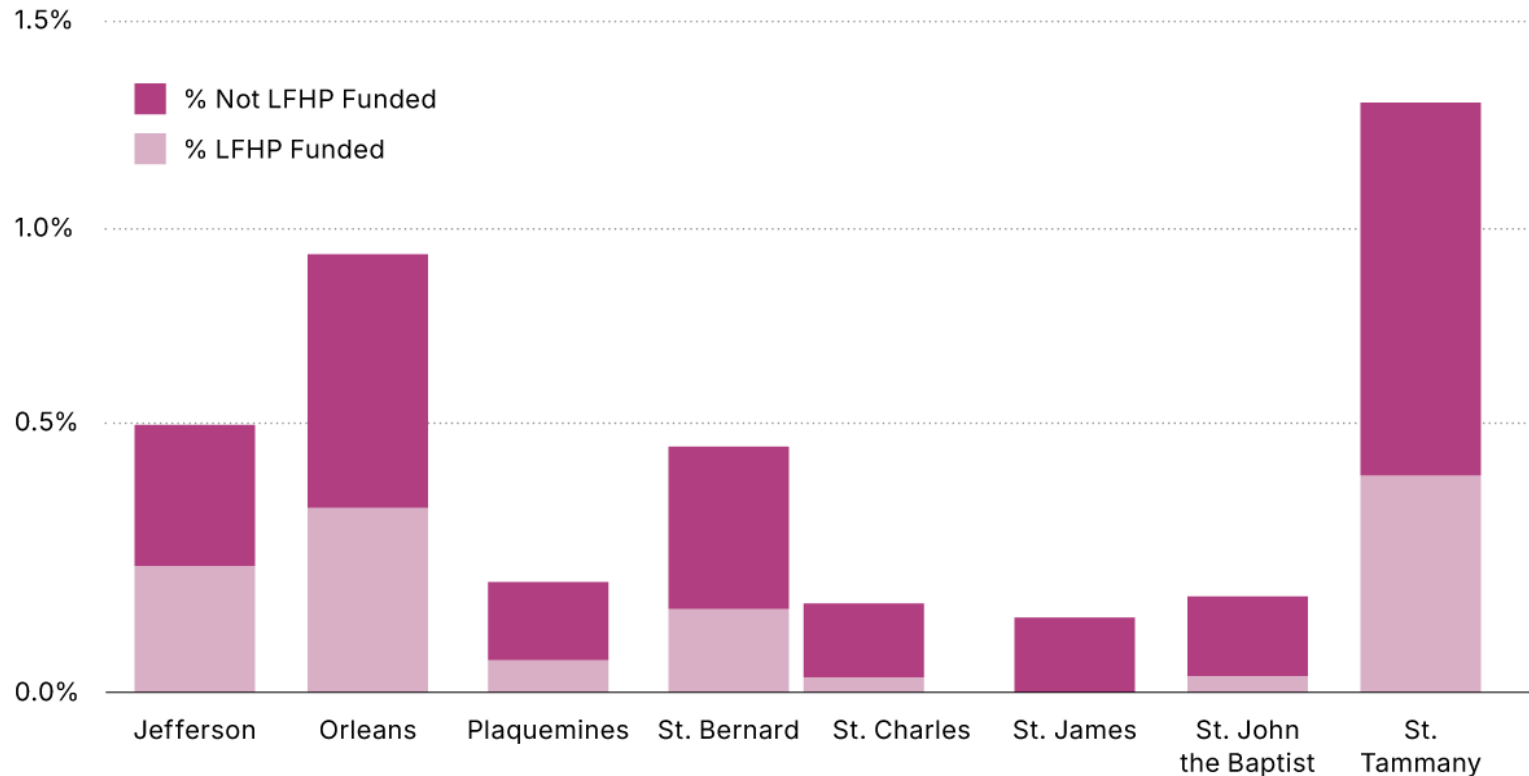




Housing and Infrastructure

Since October 2023, just over 4,000 roofs have been FORTIFIED in Metro New Orleans, representing <1% of all properties. Roughly 1,600 received state grants.

Percent of properties with FORTIFIED roofs
Cumulative October 2023 through February 2025

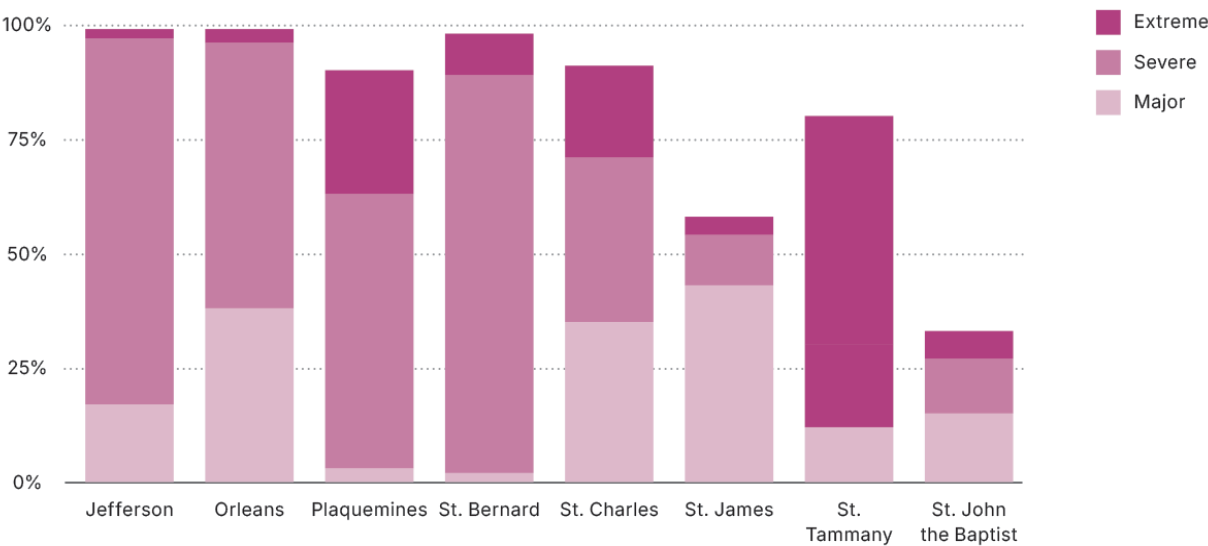


Source: Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety and the First Street Foundation



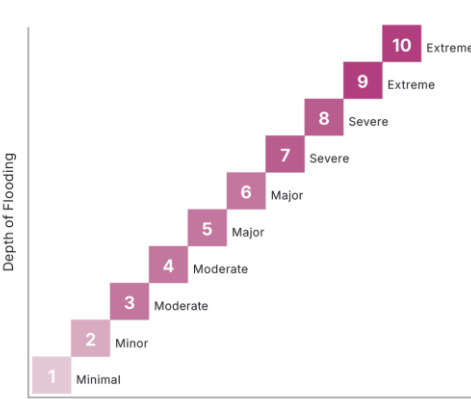
85% of properties in Metro New Orleans face a “major” or greater risk of experiencing some level of flooding in the next 30 years.

Share of properties at Major, Severe, or Extreme risk of flooding
Based on 30-year cumulative flood likelihood as of January 2024



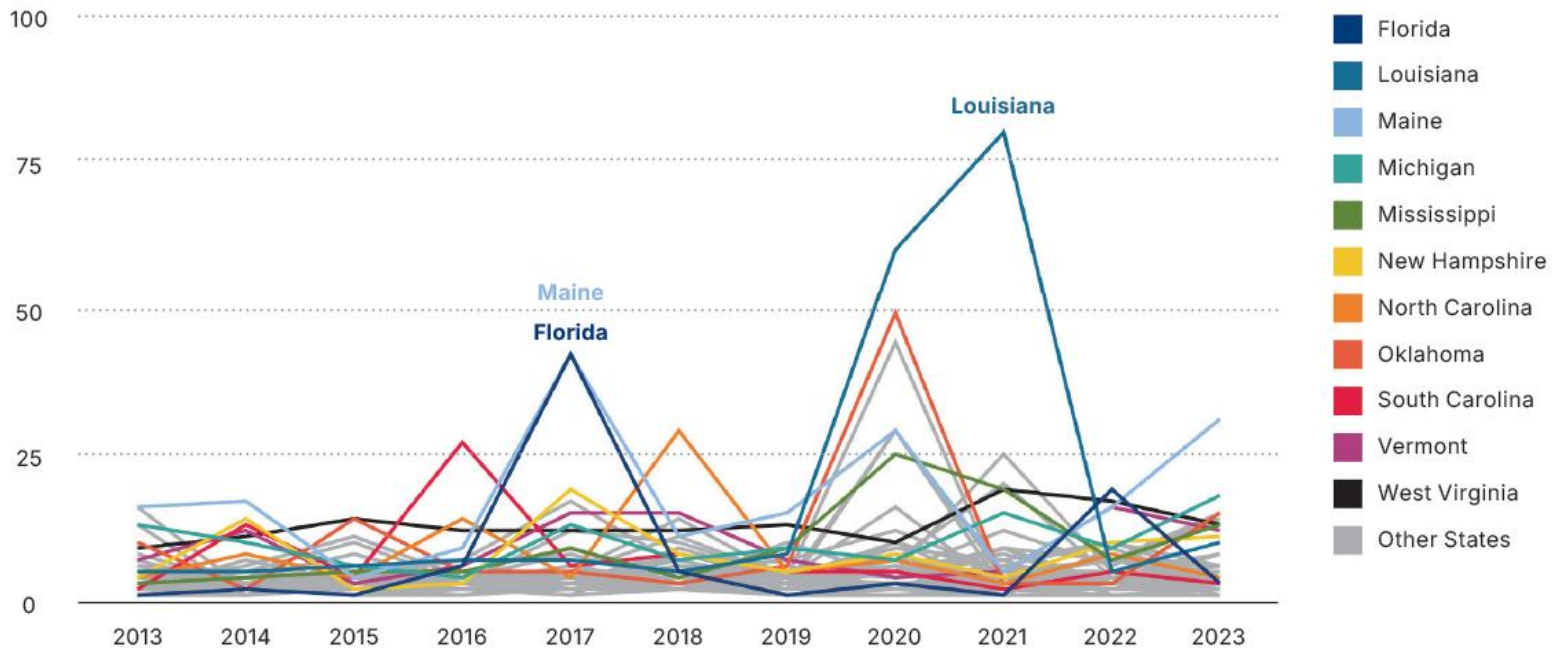
Source: First Street, 2022.

Flood Risk
First Street Foundation's Flood Factor matrix



From 2013 to 2023, Louisiana experienced 198 hours of power interruption — the most of any state — three times more than the national average.

Average annual duration of electric power interruptions, by state
Hours per customer



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

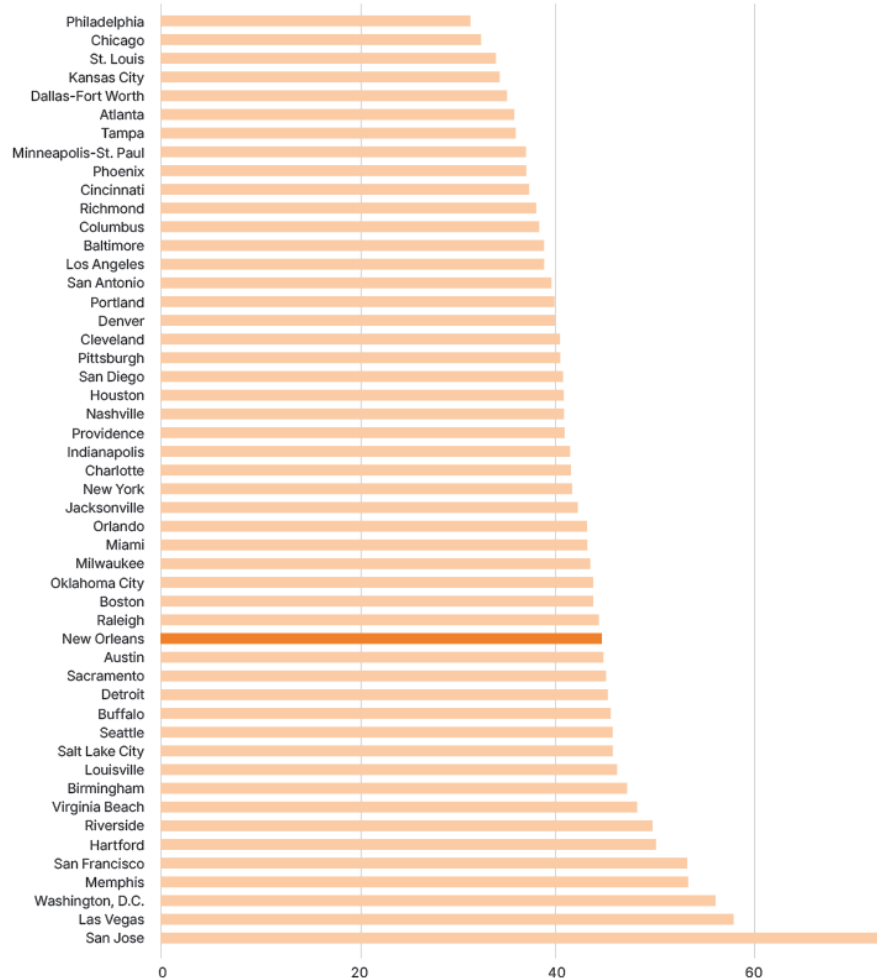


Economy and Workforce

Metro New Orleans ranks 34th in economic diversity among the largest 50 metros.

**Executive Diversity Index for 50
largest metro areas, 2021**
Lower values = more diverse

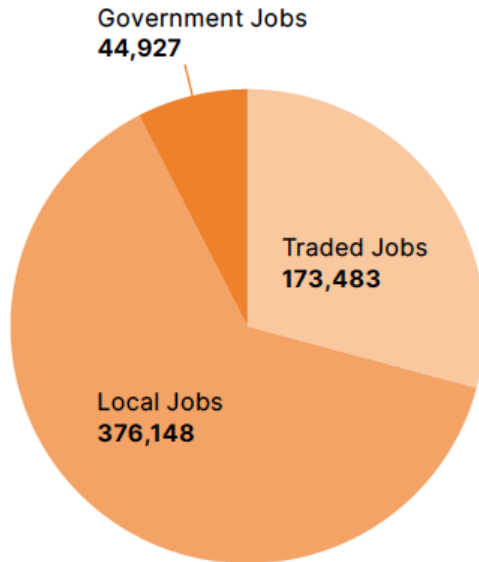
Source: Chmura Analytics 2021



Metro New Orleans ranks 34th in economic diversity among the largest 50 metros.

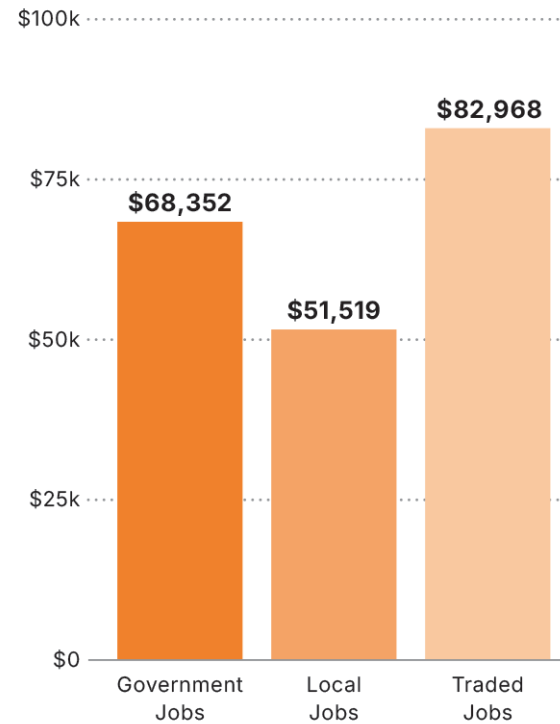
Jobs

Metro New Orleans, 2023



Average annual wages

Metro New Orleans, 2023

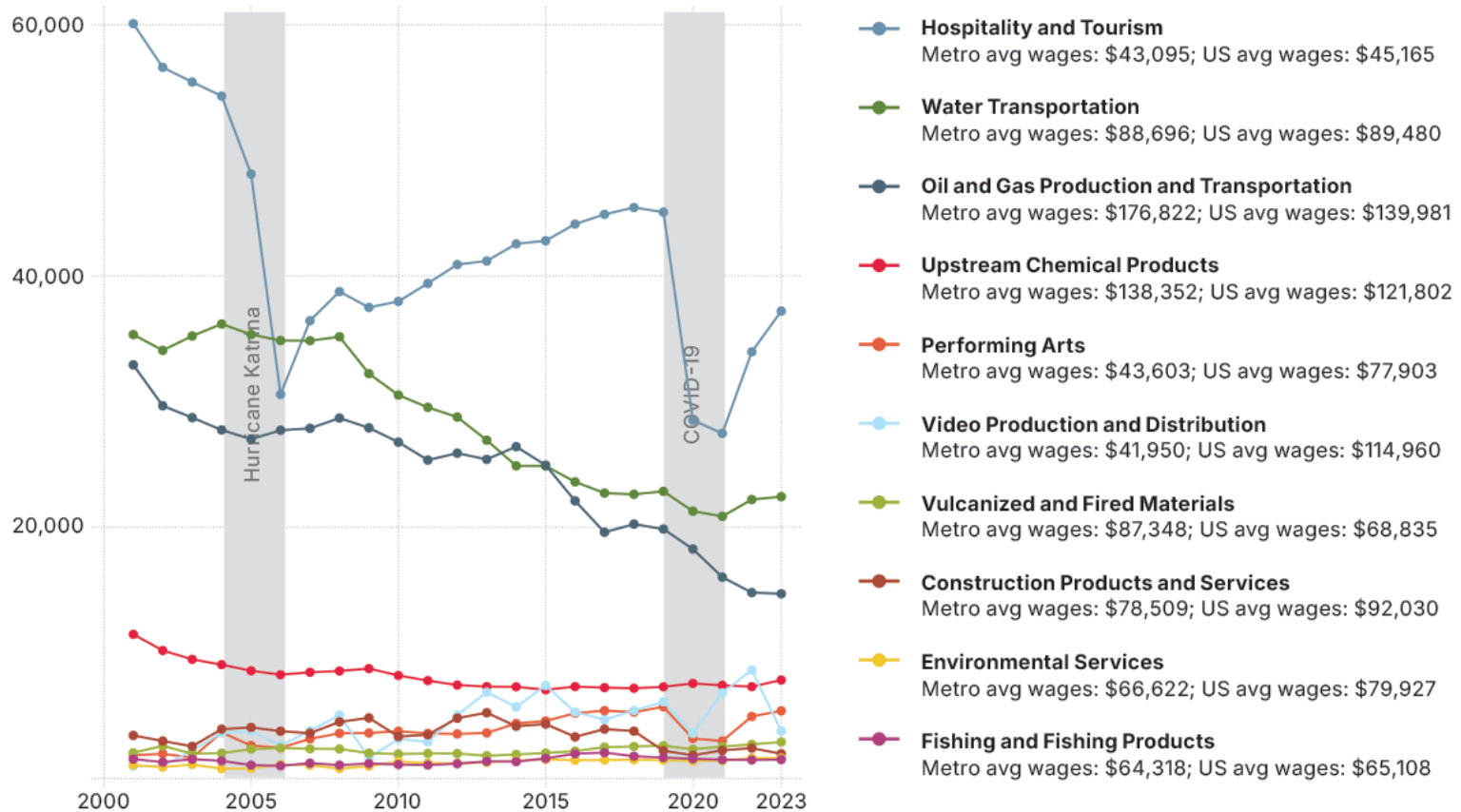


Source: Lightcast and The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project

Despite substantial private and public investments, tourism, oil & gas, water transportation, and upstream chemical clusters have shed 38% of jobs since 2004 primarily due to automation and technology.

Jobs by traded cluster

For the 10 strongest specializations, Metro New Orleans



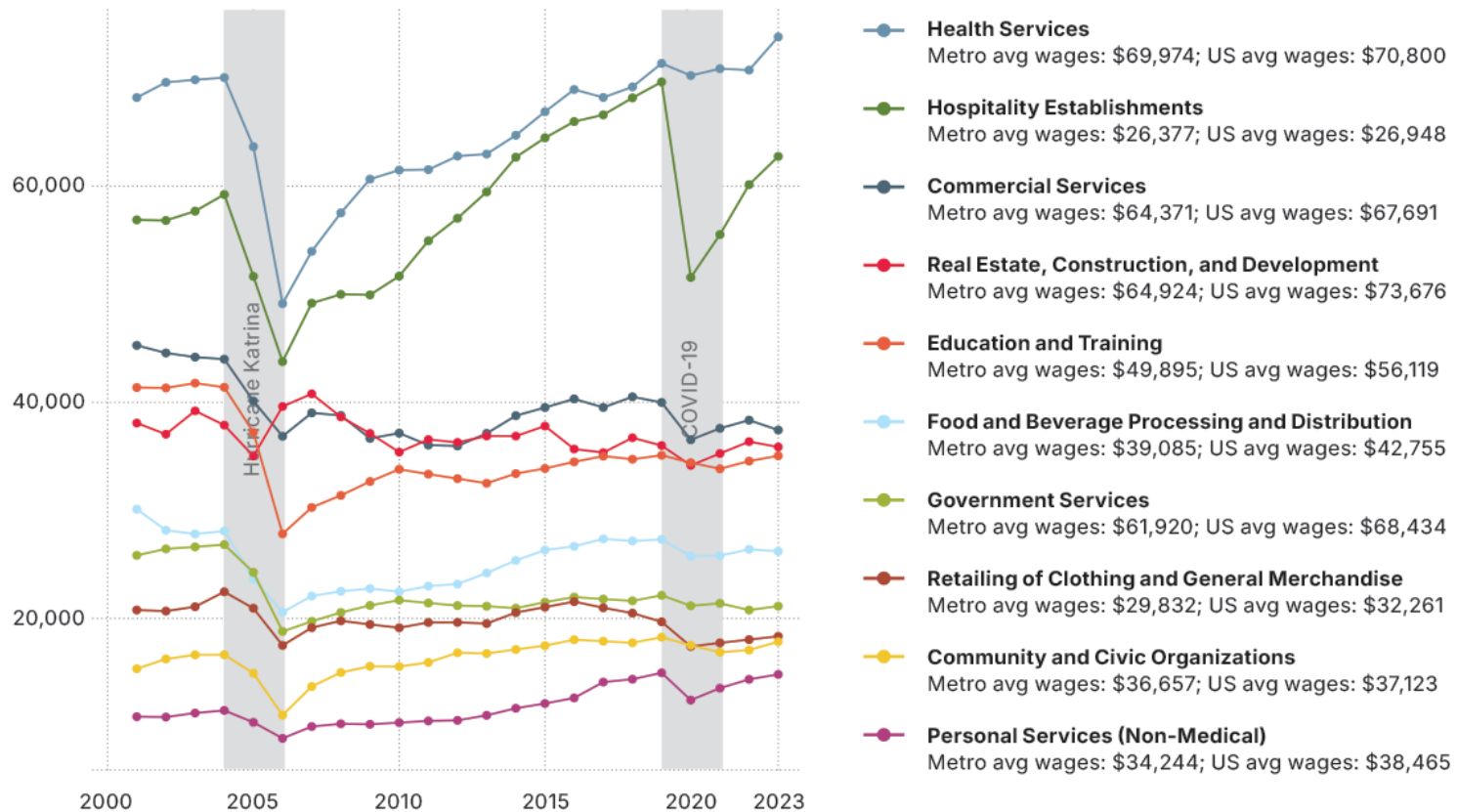
Source: Lightcast and The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project



Among local-serving clusters, health service jobs are growing slightly more rapidly than nationally. Local hospitality jobs are less concentrated than the 10 top traded clusters.

Jobs by local-serving cluster

For the 10 largest local-serving clusters by jobs, Metro New Orleans



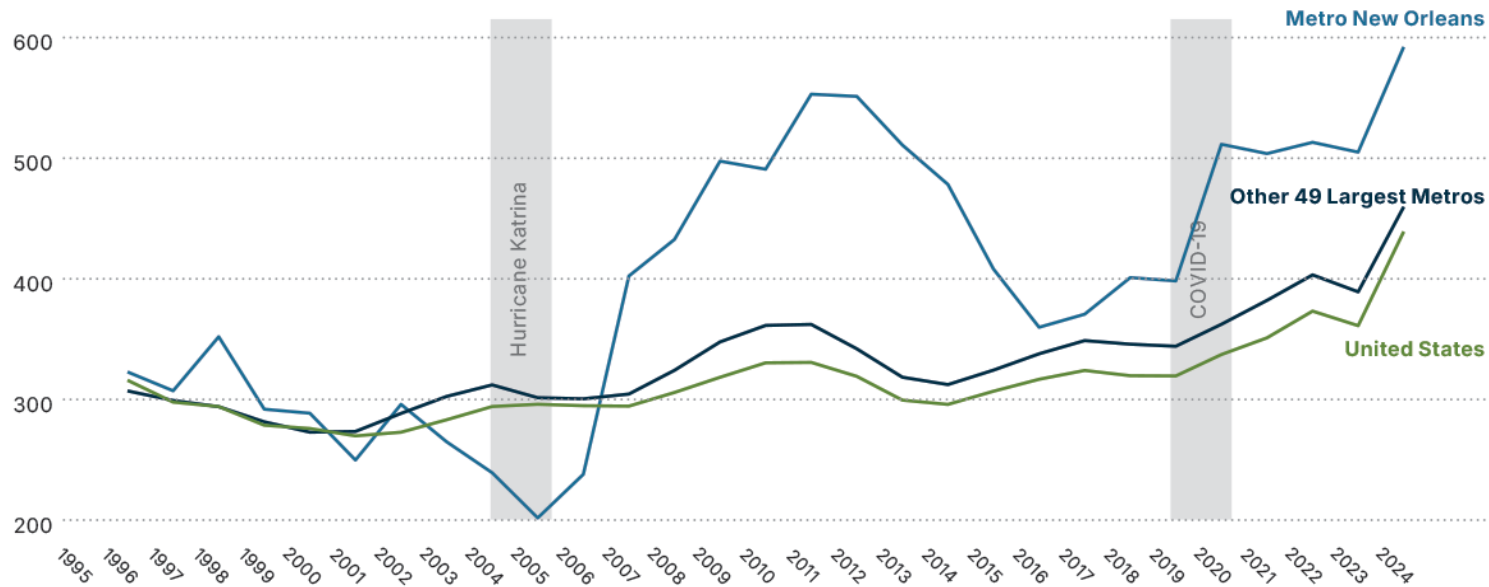
Source: Lightcast and The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project



Metro New Orleans' rate of business startups spiked post-Katrina and remains 35% higher than the national average, and 29% higher than the large metro average.

Individuals starting up businesses

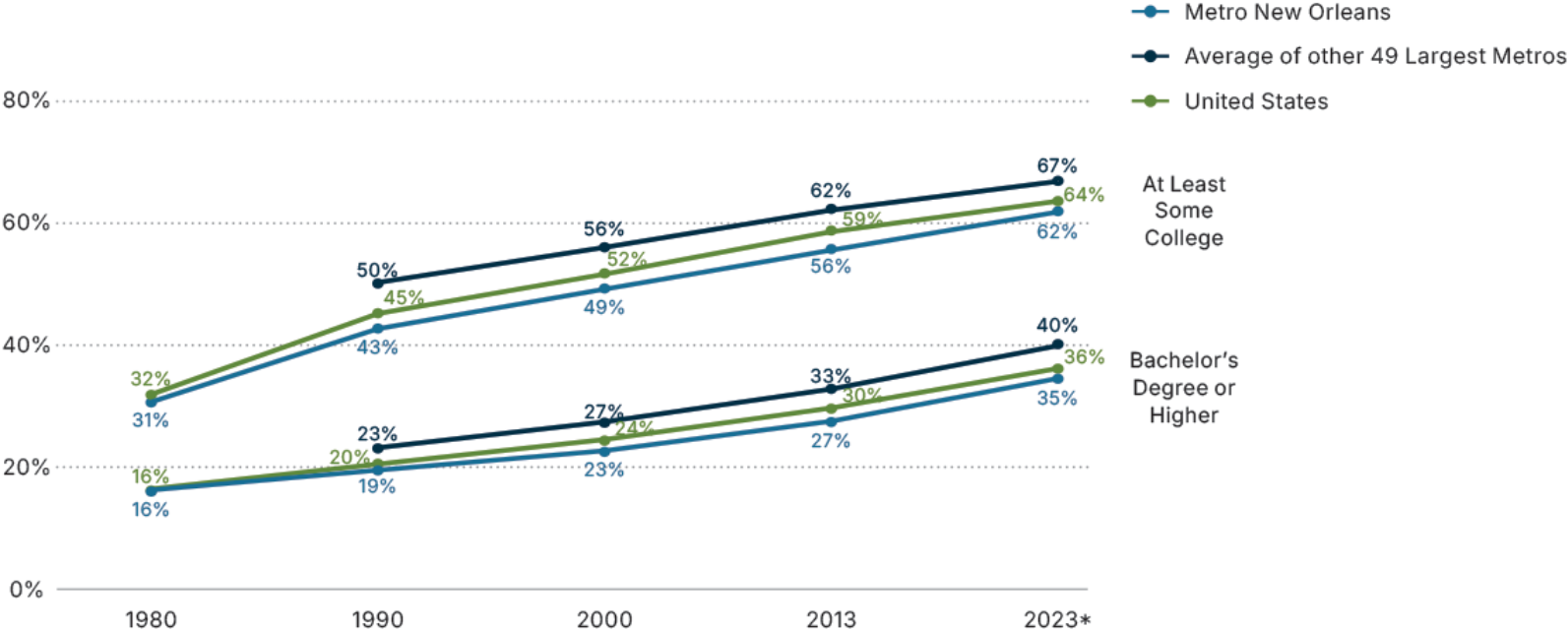
Per 100,000 adult population (3-year averages)



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey

Metro New Orleans' share of adults with a bachelor's degree at 35% has reached parity with the nation, but continues to trail the other 49 large metros where 40% have a bachelor's.

Educational Attainment
25 years or older



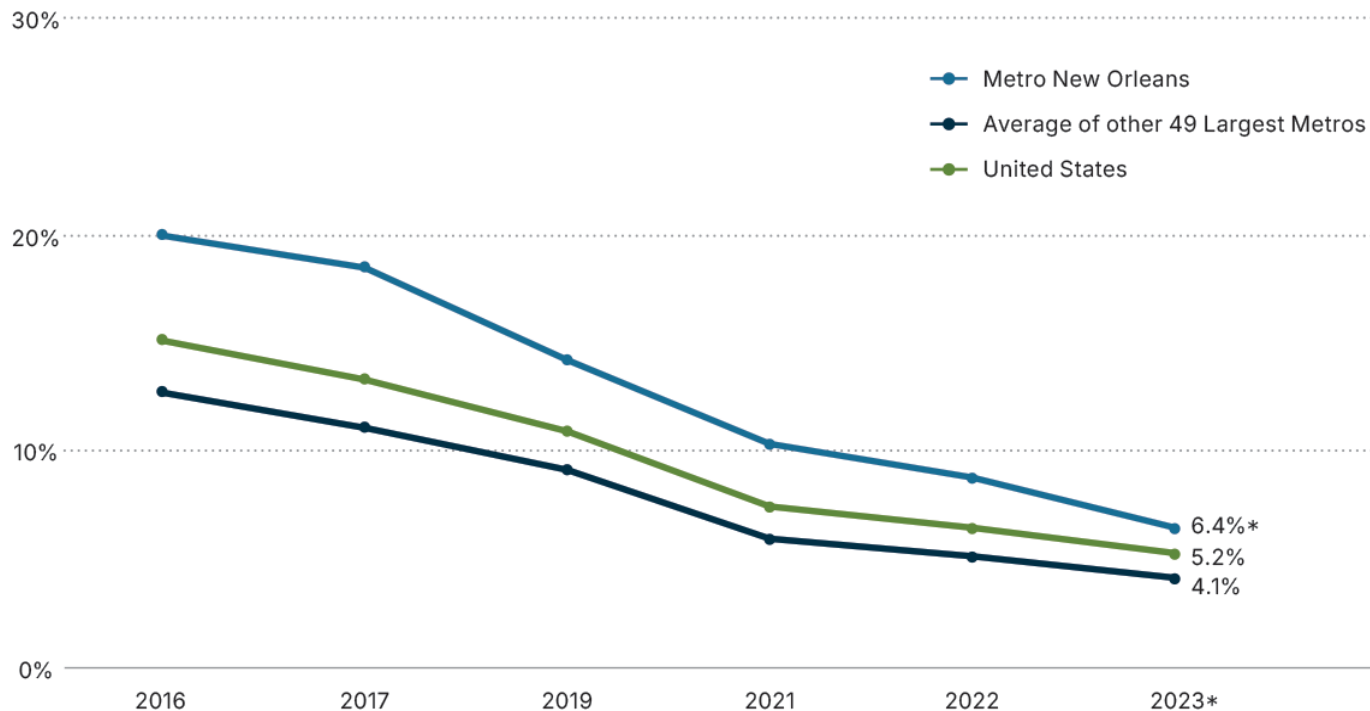
Source: iPUMS NHGIS data from Decennial Census 1980, 1990, 2000, and American Community Survey 2018 and 2023.



The share of households without internet – not even a cellular data plan – in Metro New Orleans fell from 20% in 2016 to 6.4% in 2023 and is now on par with the nation and the other 49 large metros.

Households without internet access

Not even a cellular plan



Source: U.S. Census Bureau data, American Community Survey

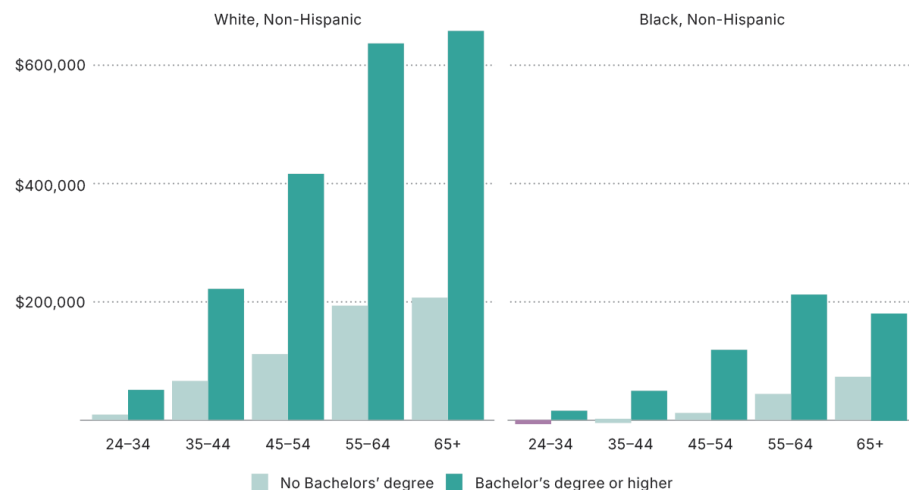
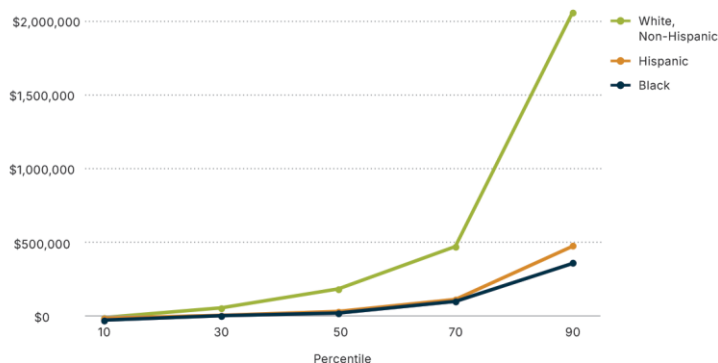


Wealth

White households in Metro New Orleans have 10x the net worth of Black households and 6x that of Hispanic households. Wealth among Black college graduates is on par with that of White households with no college degree.

Distribution of net worth by race

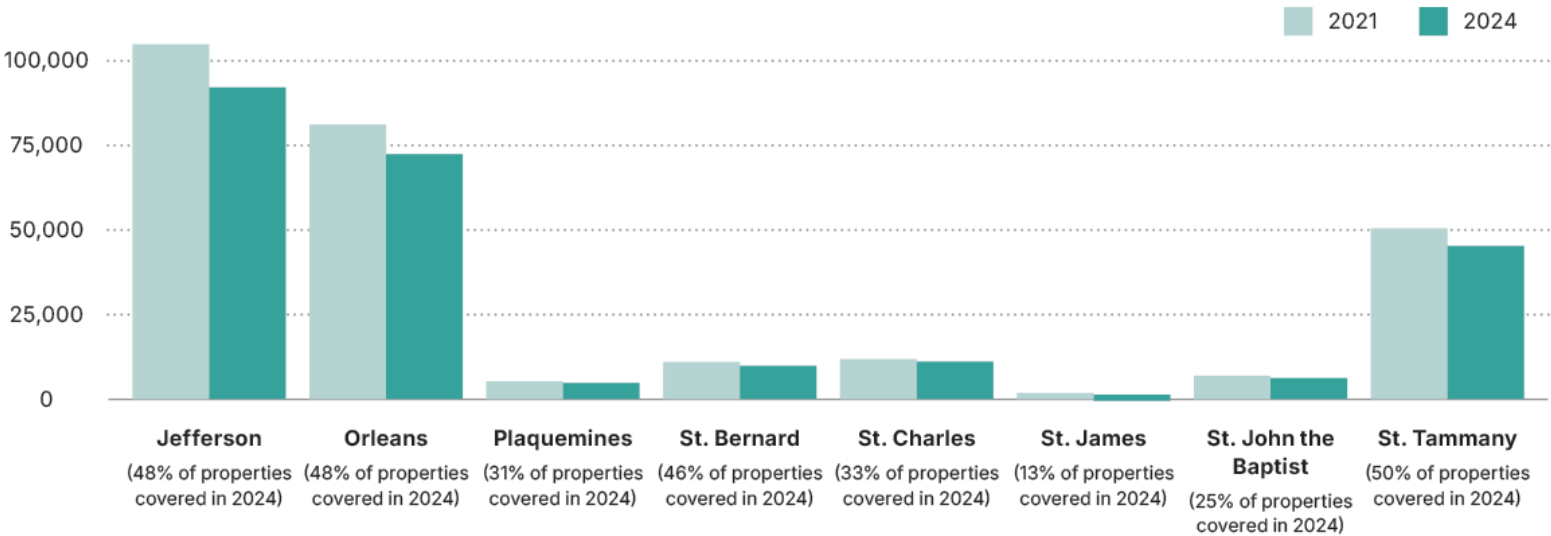
Metro New Orleans, 2018



Source: Estimates by The Data Center based on 2018 Survey of Income Program Participation and the 2018 American Community Survey.

In St. Tammany, Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard only half of properties have flood insurance. In St. Charles and Plaquemines only about 1/3 have flood insurance. In St. John only 25% and in St. James 13% are covered.

National Flood Insurance Program policies in-force
As of October 2024



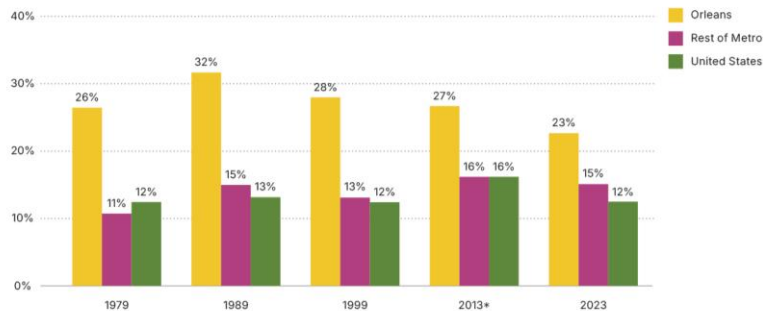
Source: First Street Foundation and NFIP.



While poverty rates have fallen in New Orleans, from 28% in 1999 to 23% in 2023, they've grown in the rest of the metro and at 15% are now higher than the national rate. Today more impoverished people live in the suburbs than in the city.

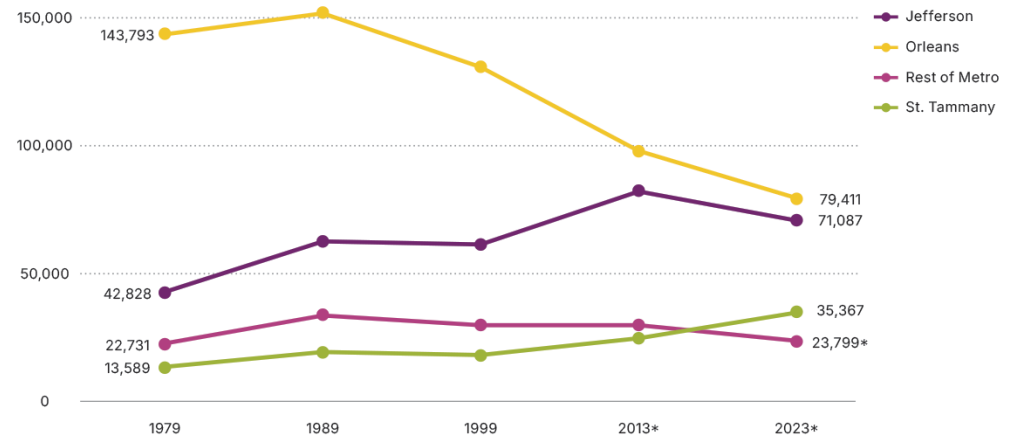
Poverty rate

For population for whom poverty status is determined



Population living in poverty

For population for whom poverty status is determined



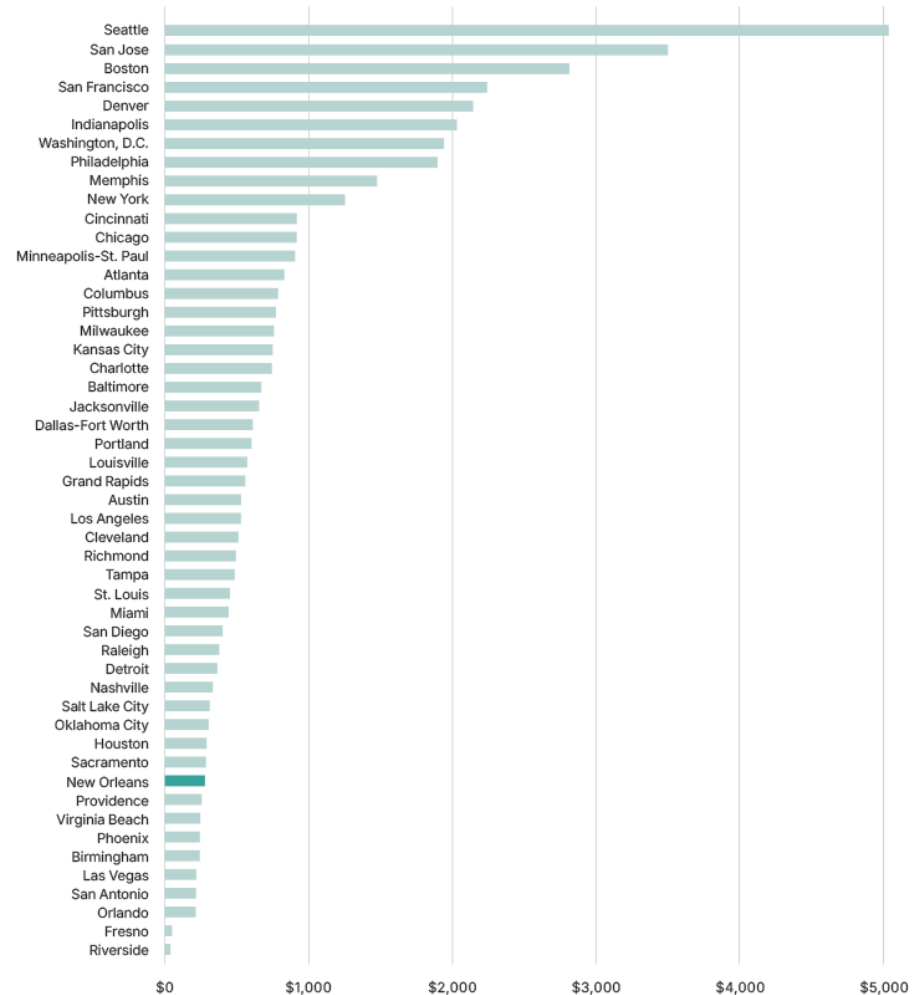
Source: iPUMS NHGIS data from U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 1980, 1990, 2000 and American Community Survey 2013 and 2023.



Philanthropic capacity in Metro New Orleans is about half the national average and among the lowest of the 50 largest metros.

**Per capita philanthropic
spending for 50 largest
metropolitan areas, 2023**
Philanthropic spending includes
giving to anywhere, for any topic

Source: Foundation Center

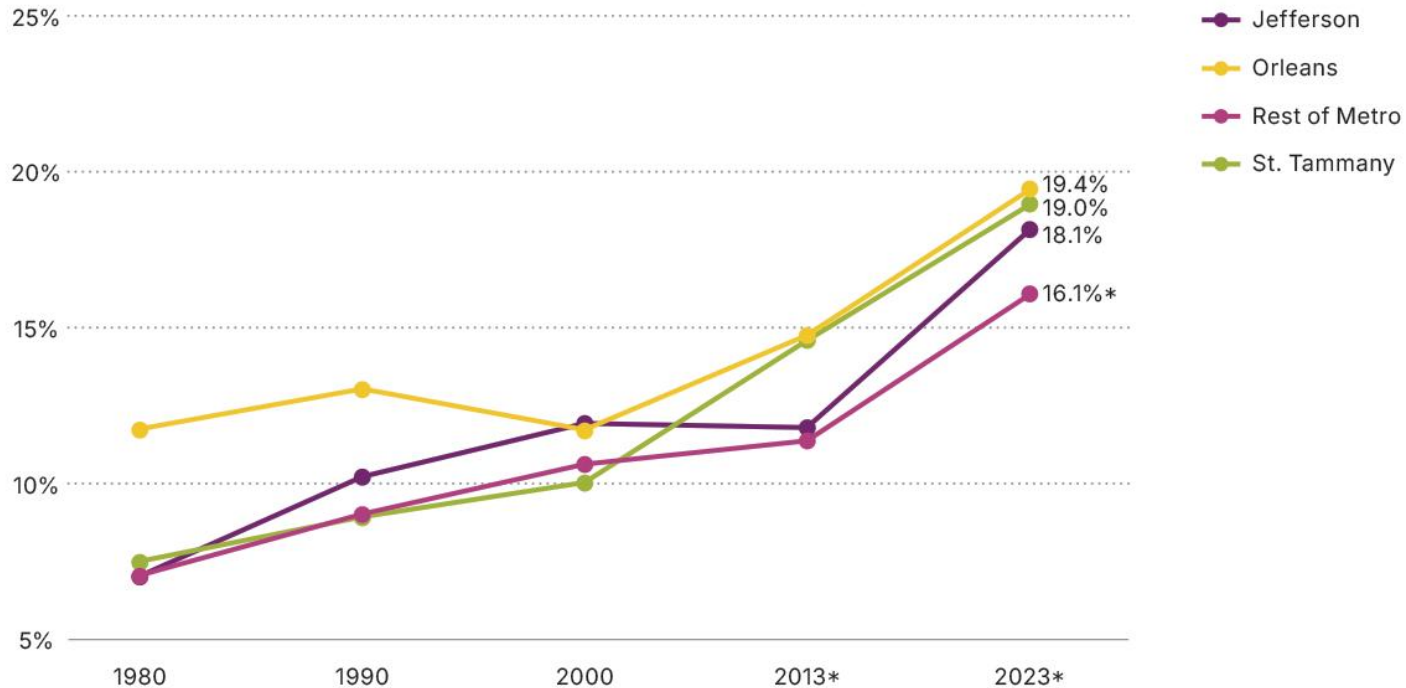




People

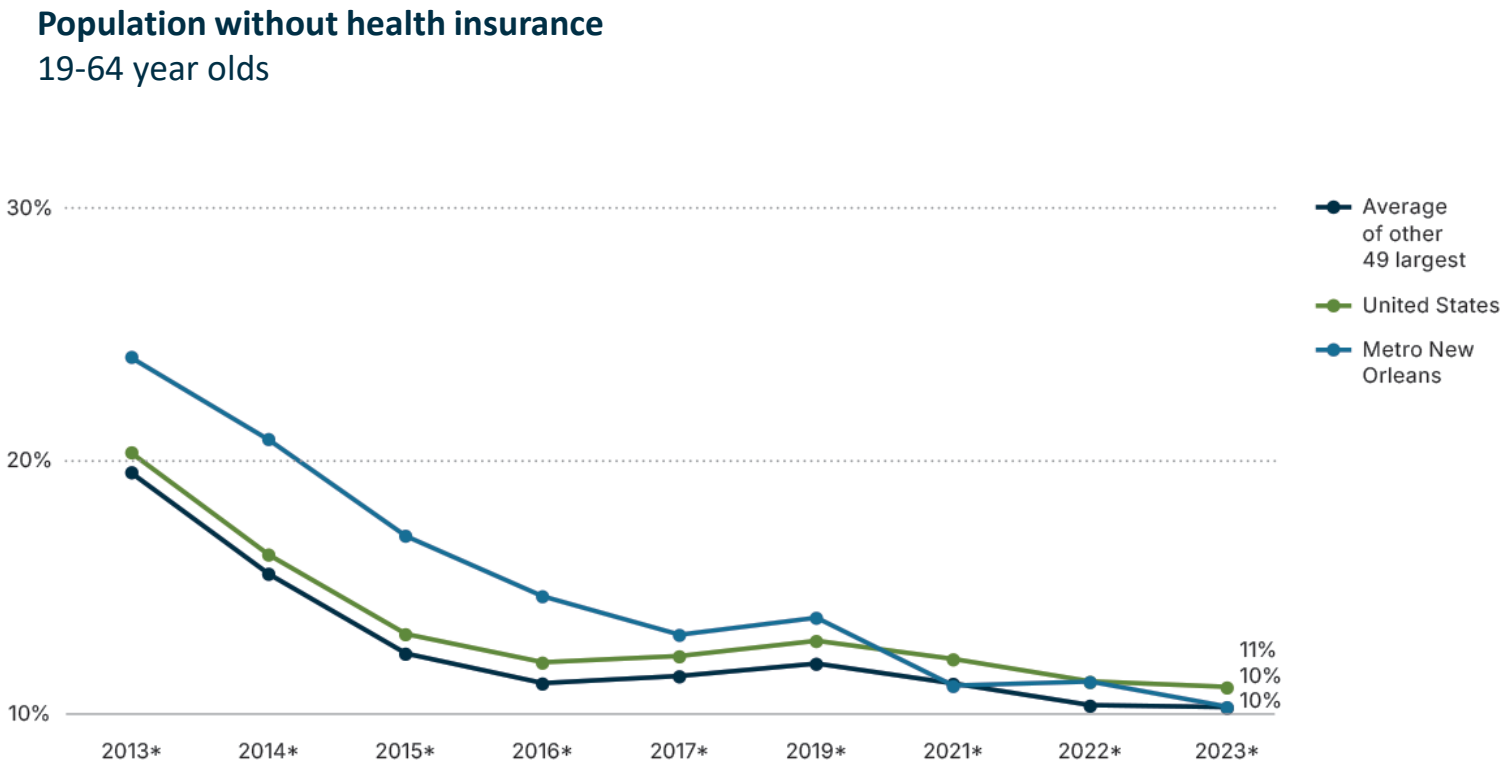
Roughly 1 in 5 Metro New Orleans residents are 65 years old or older –slightly exceeding the national average.

Population over 65 years old



Source: iPUMS NHGIS from U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial 1980, 1990, 2000, and American Community Survey 2013 and 2023

Metro New Orleans' share of working-age adults without health insurance has fallen from 24% in 2013 to 10% in 2023 and is now on par with the nation and other large metros.

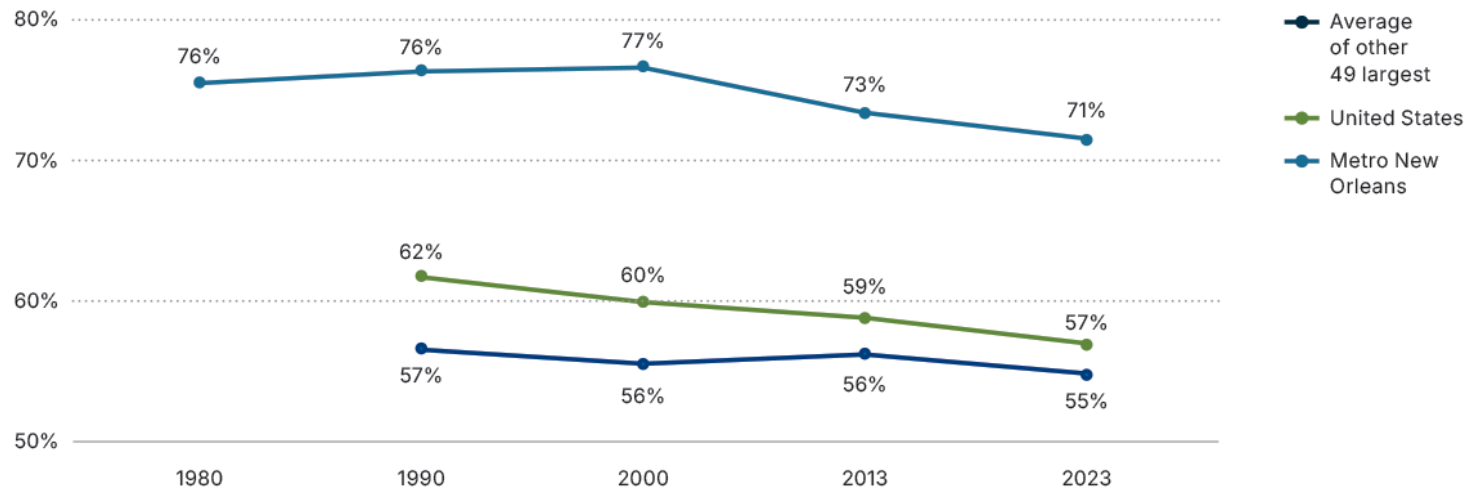


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



Roughly 3 out of 4 metro New Orleans residents were born in Louisiana, a much higher state nativity rate than other large metros.

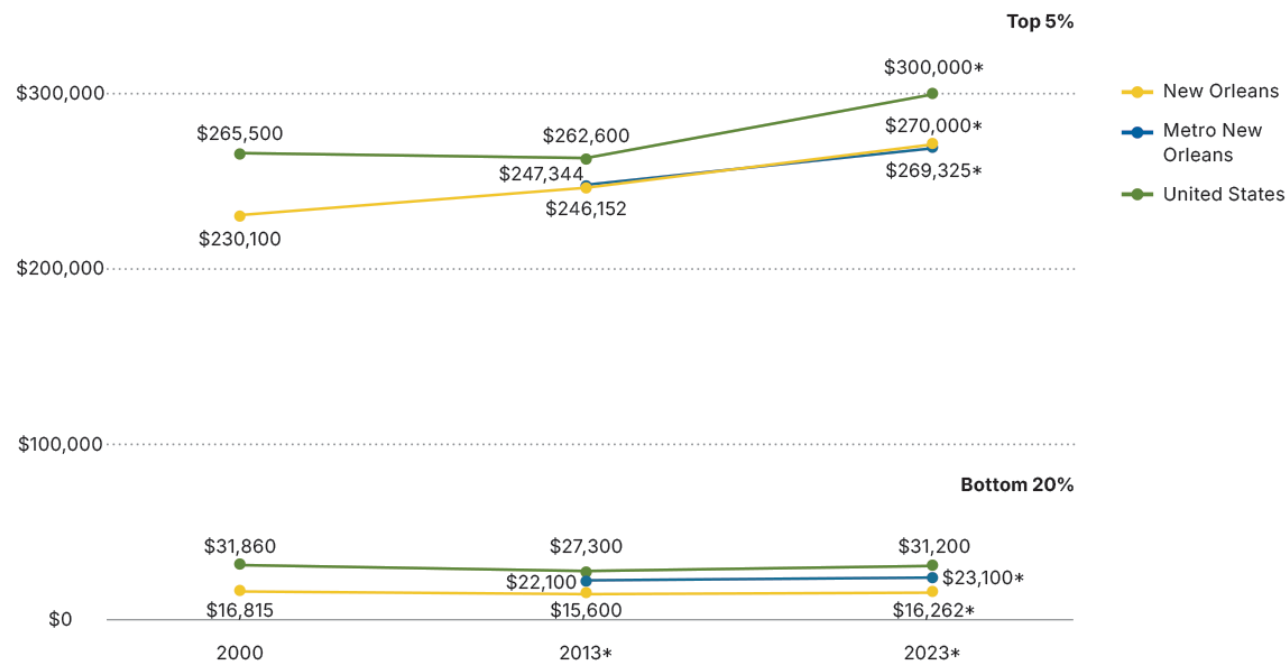
Population born in state of residence



Source: iPUMS NHGIS from U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial 1980, 1990, 2000, and American Community Survey 2013 and 2023

Metro New Orleans is more unequal than the nation. The ratio of the income of the top 5 percent of households to the bottom 20 percent is 12:1 in Metro New Orleans compared to 10:1 nationwide.

Income at 95th percentile and 20th percentile
2023 inflation-adjusted dollars

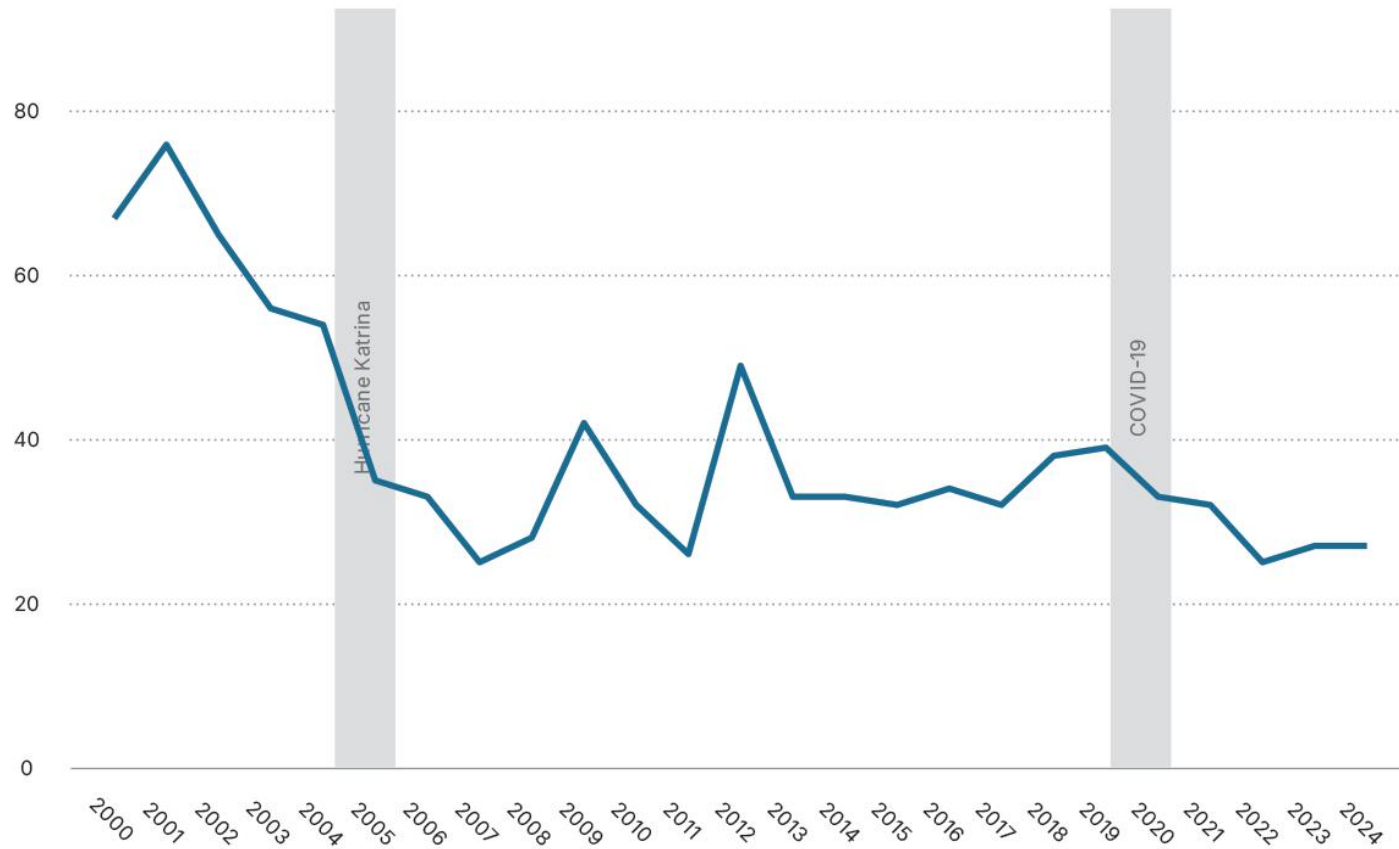


Source: iPUMS NHGIS from U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial 1980, 1990, 2000, and American Community Survey 2013 and 2023



The number of workers covered by unions in Metro New Orleans is half of what it was in 2004.

Workers covered by union membership in thousands
Metro New Orleans



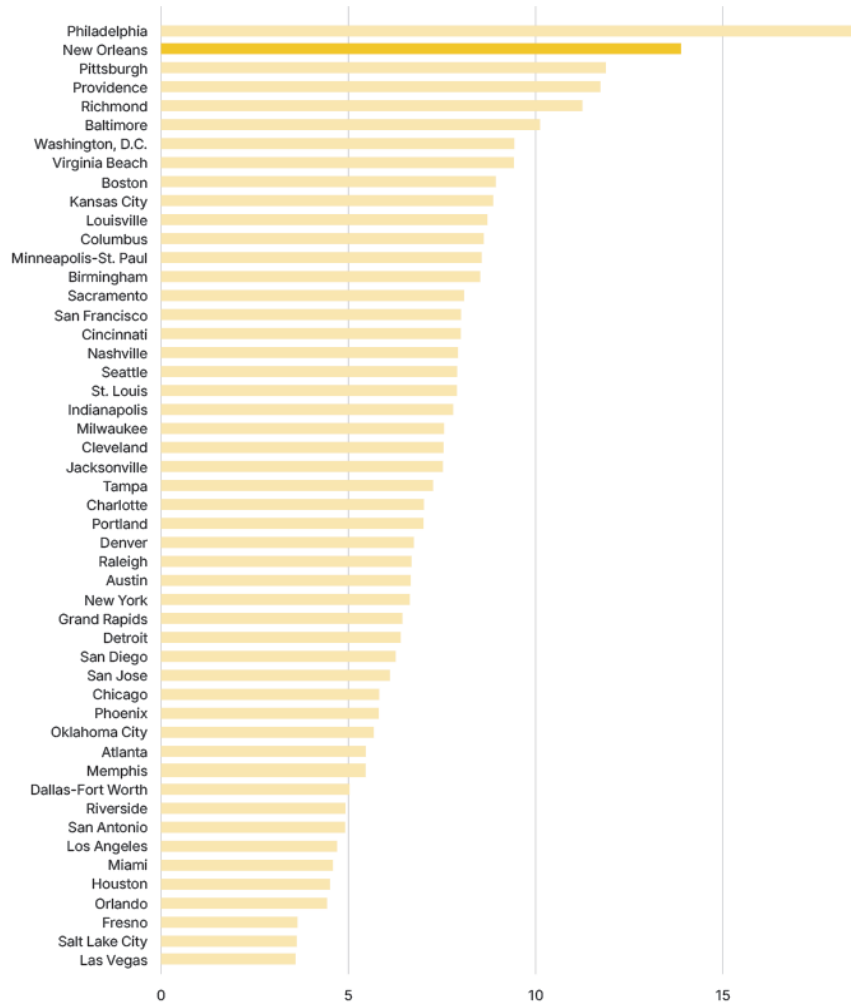
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



Social clubs play a critical role in fostering social cohesion by facilitating community engagement, expanding interpersonal networks, and enhancing individuals' sense of belonging. New Orleans has the second highest concentration of social clubs of the 50 largest metros.

**Recreational, pleasure, or social clubs
per 100,000 people**
50 largest metros, March 2025

Source: Cause IQ. March 2025 data pull



Conclusion

Metro New Orleans needs additional investments in strong housing and infrastructure, yet the economy is diversifying and entrepreneurship is very strong. Adult educational attainment has caught up and is on par with the nation. Material wealth is in short supply, while social cohesion and attachment to place are strengths that are undergirding New Orleans' resilience.

All Americans must plan for a future with increasing climate shocks, and the tremendous economic disruption that AI will bring. Leaders and residents will need to unite around policies that have as their primary goal a high quality of life for everyone.



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