Post-Katrina Commuter Patterns

*Based on 2008 Local Employment Dynamics data from the U.S. Census Bureau*

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More low-wage workers commute into Orleans Parish for work, than commute out. But of all metro area parishes, Jefferson has the largest net inflow of low-wage workers. Nearly 22,000 low-wage workers commute into Jefferson Parish for work—hundreds from as far away as St. John the Baptist Parish.

Introduction

The Census Bureau and the State of Louisiana have teamed up to publish Local Employment Dynamics data – a robust new set of data on commuter patterns. By combining job location data (reported to the state by employers for unemployment insurance purposes) with worker residence data (from federal data sets such as IRS, Social Security, etc.) this new data set indicates where folks live compared to where they work – by low, moderate and high-wage levels.¹

In this brief, we explore where jobs of various wage levels are located and commuter patterns across the New Orleans metropolitan area. Specifically, we look at:

- Job centers and bedroom communities
- Location of low and moderate-wage jobs
- Residency choices of high-earning workers
- Low-wage labor flows to Orleans and Jefferson
- Metro-wide commuting patterns among low-wage workers
- Moderate-wage worker flows
- Residency of Jefferson Parish’s low-wage labor force

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¹ The Local Employment Dynamics analysis is based on a person’s primary job, which is the highest paying job for an individual worker for the year. This ensures that each worker is counted once in his/her parish of residence. However, it does mean that some jobs are missing from the job counts. Commuting pattern reports unite place of work and place of residence regardless of whether the commute is physical, a telecommute or a temporary consultancy.
Which parishes are job centers and which are bedroom communities?

In 2008, three years after the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent levee failures, the New Orleans metro area had 14 percent fewer jobs than in 2004.

### Jobs in parish and workers living in parish, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Jobs in parish</th>
<th>Workers living in parish (regardless of job location)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JEFFERSON</td>
<td>197,742</td>
<td>184,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>146,530</td>
<td>109,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. TAMMANY</td>
<td>62,096</td>
<td>77,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. CHARLES</td>
<td>21,718</td>
<td>21,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. JOHN</td>
<td>13,722</td>
<td>19,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAQUEMINES</td>
<td>11,687</td>
<td>6,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. BERNARD</td>
<td>7,617</td>
<td>11,011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau

### Net labor flows, 2008

- **Orleans**: Net in-commuters 37,517
- **Jefferson**: Net in-commuters 12,991
- **Plaquemines**: Net in-commuters 4,737
- **St. Charles**: Net out-commuters 163
- **St. Bernard**: Net out-commuters 3,394
- **St. John**: Net out-commuters 6,187
- **St. Tammany**: Net out-commuters 15,231

Orleans, Jefferson, and Plaquemines all have more jobs than workers living in the parish, and therefore, experience a net labor inflow.

In contrast, St. Bernard, St. John and St. Tammany are “bedroom communities” where workers more often live and commute to jobs in other parishes.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau
Where are most low and moderate-wage jobs located?

Jobs by income category, 2004 and 2008

Jefferson has a larger number of low and moderate-wage jobs than Orleans Parish, primarily because of the more significant loss of jobs in Orleans post-Katrina.

Example of full-time, year-round jobs by income category, 2008

- **>$3,333/mo**
  - educators, law enforcement officers, managers, healthcare professionals, architects, lawyers

- **$1,251/mo - $3,333/mo**
  - cooks, hotel housekeeping staff, casino workers, healthcare support workers, administrative assistants

- **< $1,250/mo**
  - minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week

Source: ACS, U.S. Census Bureau

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau
Where do high-earning workers live in the region?

High-earning workers (earning at least $3,333 a month) by parish of residence, 2008

High-earning workers, it is assumed, can live wherever they want in the region. The majority of workers who earn more than $3,333 monthly in the New Orleans metro live in Jefferson followed by Orleans and St. Tammany.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau
Is Orleans Parish housing a surplus of low-wage workers?

Low-wage workers are likely to be geographically constrained by housing costs, lack of subsidized housing, and other factors.¹

Low-wage labor flows for regional job centers, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARISH</th>
<th>In-commuters</th>
<th>Out-commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>15,682</td>
<td>13,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live &amp; work in parish</td>
<td>13,552</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEFFERSON</td>
<td>21,968</td>
<td>16,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live &amp; work in parish</td>
<td>21,887</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JEFFERSON

Jefferson has an even larger net inflow of low-wage workers.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau

¹ This data set does not provide income per household, which is a better indicator of purchasing power than wages per job.
Which parish imports the most low-wage workers?

Low-wage labor flows, 2008

In contrast, St. Bernard, St. Charles, and St. John house a surplus of low-wage workers who commute to other parishes for work.

Jefferson has by far the largest net inflow of low-wage workers, followed by Orleans.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau
Which parish has the largest net inflow of moderate-wage workers?

Net moderate-wage labor flows, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Net In-commuters</th>
<th>Net Out-commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>11,842</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>5,473</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>1,154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>2,309</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>2,180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John</td>
<td>3,243</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of moderate earning workers, Orleans has the largest net inflow of all the parishes in the metro, while St. John has the largest net outflow.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau

With post-Katrina rent and utilities averaging $712 per month in St. John the Baptist, and $791 in St. Bernard, compared to $851 in Jefferson and $920 in Orleans, this commuter pattern data suggests that the lower housing costs in parishes such as St. John the Baptist and St. Bernard may be attracting residents working at low and moderate-wage jobs in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. And despite the availability of more housing subsidies in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, many workers still commute from other parishes to the large number of low- and moderate-wage jobs located there.
From where do Jefferson Parish’s low-wage workers commute?

Jefferson Parish’s low-wage labor shed, 2008

Nearly 22,000 low-wage workers commute into Jefferson. Of these workers, hundreds commute from as far away as St. Tammany and St. John for jobs earning less than $1,250 per month.

Source: Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau