

**2004 Survey of Jefferson County  
Critical Issues Facing Citizens and their Community**

Lamar University  
Department of Political Science

***Center for Public Policy Studies***

**Dr. James M. Vanderleeuw, Director**

Elena Korbout, Student Assistant  
(409) 880-2288

## Overview

Voters identify numerous issues of importance to themselves and to their community. Several of these issues, however, are of particular relevance. By far and away, the largest concern is the sluggish economy and the loss of jobs. Another significant concern is the quality of education in our area. Other major concerns are affordable health care, and drugs and crime in neighborhoods.

In sum, voters desire a future characterized by greater job opportunities and a better education, a future with accessible healthcare, and life in a safe, drug-free neighborhood.

## The Survey

The Center for Public Policy Studies conducted its first phone survey of registered voters in Jefferson County. The survey was in collaboration with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University. 347 registered voters were surveyed by phone between March 22 and March 30. Survey results provide a picture of issues that voters in Jefferson county consider most important in realizing the kind of future that they desire for themselves, their family, and their community.

The results of this survey represent the perceptions and opinions of registered voters in Jefferson County. The results are not objective measures of community conditions or of government services.

## Critical Issues Facing Citizens in Jefferson County

Registered voters in Jefferson County were asked the following question: *Considering the next 3 to 5 years, what are the critical issues facing people in your community?* As a follow-up, respondents were asked to identify any other issue they considered critical: *Is there anything else that you can think of that will need to be addressed?*

### Critical Issues – Categories:

These two open-ended questions generated a wide range of issues of importance to voters. These issues include the economy, education, taxes, health care, the environment, housing, retirement and social security, transportation, the cost of living, services for those in need, flooding and drainage, community aesthetics, race relations, family values, government spending, the Ford Entertainment Complex, and home-land security (listed in Table 1).

There are indeed numerous issues of importance to voters in Jefferson County. Several issues, however, stand out as having particular relevance for many voters. Four issues account for over half of all responses. These critical issues are the economy (24% of responses), education (12%), health care (9%), and neighborhood issues (9%).

**Critical Issues – Most Frequent Specific Concerns within the Top Four Categories:**

Overwhelmingly, responses having to do with the *Economy* note the loss of jobs in our area, and the need for more job creation. Nearly 70% of responses in this category deal with these two related concerns. Another almost 10% of responses note the need for more high paying jobs and more full-time jobs.

Over one-third of the responses having to do with *Education* note the need to improve the quality of education and the need for schools to adhere to high standards. Other frequently mentioned concerns are the need to physically repair and rebuild schools, and the need for increased school funding and pay for teachers. These several specific concerns account for the majority of responses in this category.

Almost one-half of the responses in the *Healthcare* category note high cost of healthcare, as well as the cost and difficulty in obtaining healthcare insurance. Another frequently mentioned concern is crowded hospitals. Together, these specific concerns account for 60% of all responses in this category.

Most responses having to do with *Neighborhood Issues* center on drugs, safety and crime. Nearly one-third of responses note drug availability and drug traffic, violence due to drugs, and the need to weed out drugs. Another nearly one-third note the problem of neighborhood safety and the need for more police. Over 12% of responses reflect concern with neighborhood crime and a high crime rate.

Table 1: Critical Issues by Category, Ranked by Frequency of Response

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<i>Category:</i>	<i>% Responses:</i>
Economy	24.0
Education	12.2
Healthcare	9.3
Neighborhood Issues	9.1
Environment	6.9
Entertainment Complex	6.7
Taxes	6.2
Government & Politics	4.7
Infrastructure	4.4
Transportation	3.3
Retirement	2.9
Family & Values	2.4
Cost of Living	2.2
Community Aesthetics	1.6
Housing	1.6
Services for the Needy	0.9
Home-Land Security	0.9
Race Relations	0.7

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N=450 based on combining responses to both open-ended questions, referenced above.

Percentages exclude cases where there was no response as well as where the response could not be categorized.

Lamar University Student-Interviewers:

Haley Bakker, Zachary Cyrus, Elena Korbout, Satracya Jefferson, Yvetta Williams.