



**LESSONS OF KATRINA:
AMERICA'S MAJOR RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS
FIND COMMON GROUND AFTER THE STORM**

A Multilingual Poll Conducted for New California Media (NCM)
by Bendixen & Associates

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Executive Summary
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Methodology

The results, analysis and findings in this report are based on a telephone poll on Katrina and its impact on public opinion on the adult population of the United States. Bendixen & Associates conducted the study for New California Media (NCM) and interviewed 1,035 respondents in Spanish, English, Korean, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Mandarin from October 14th to 21st of this year. The sub-samples of the survey were designed to be representative of the four major ethnic and racial groups in America: Non Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians. The margin of error for the full sample of the study is three percentage points while the margin of error for each of the ethnic and racial sub-samples is six percentage points.

Purpose

Katrina and its aftermath riveted the attention of the overwhelming majority of Americans - and much of the world - for many weeks. The NCM poll studies its impact on public opinion on four of the most important national issues: the eradication of poverty in the United States; race relations and discrimination; the environment and climate change; and the ability of government to deal with catastrophic events. How did the hurricane affect the way America's four major ethnic and racial groups view these issues? What are the points of consensus on the nation's priorities in the wake of Katrina? What are the points of divergence? This executive report attempts to answer these important questions based on the results and analysis of the recently completed public opinion survey.

Major Findings

1. "Eliminating poverty in our country" has emerged as a more important priority than "fighting terrorism," "establishing democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan," and "rebuilding the cities and regions devastated by natural disasters" among the four ethnic and racial groups in the United States that make up most of its adult population. A majority of African Americans and clear pluralities of Hispanics, Asians and Non Hispanic Whites agreed that Katrina had focused their attention on what **Newsweek** magazine has called the country's "enduring shame ... the rising tide of people living in poverty." In contrast, an analysis published by The Roper Center in 2004 on public opinion studies on poverty concludes that "Americans are not terribly optimistic that poverty in the United States can ever be eliminated" and that "Americans would like to think that no one has to be poor in the United States today." Dramatic television coverage of tens of thousands of poor families abandoned at the Superdome and the Convention Center in New Orleans and of thousands of families stranded on I-10 without food and water in the aftermath of Katrina seems to have had a major impact on the way many Americans look at the issue of poverty and what the nation should do about it. More than two-thirds of the respondents in each of the racial and ethnic groups studied agreed that "life is a lot more difficult for poor people in the United States than I ever imagined." The poll also reveals that strong majorities of Non Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians now think that

“it is a disgrace that there are millions of very poor people in the United States and government should do everything in its power to eliminate poverty.” In contrast, much smaller percentages of each group feel that “there will always be millions of very poor people in the United States and there is very little that our government can do to change that.”

Which do you think should be the most important priority for the United States?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Developing and funding programs to eliminate poverty in this country	58%	43%	40%	36%
Rebuilding cities and regions devastated by Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters	22%	34%	27%	23%
Fighting terrorism	11%	14%	23%	25%
Establishing democracies in Iraq & Afghanistan	2%	6%	6%	4%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: Life is a lot more difficult for poor people in the United States than I ever imagined.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	84%	77%	74%	67%
Disagree	12%	20%	22%	28%

Which is closer to your opinion?

Statement A: There will always be millions of very poor people in the United States and there is very little that our government can do to change that.

OR

Statement B: It is a disgrace that there are millions of very poor people in the United States and government should do everything in its power to eliminate poverty.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Asians</i>
Statement A	17%	24%	27%	34%
Statement B	78%	74%	67%	60%

2. There is a strong consensus among the four major ethnic and racial groups in America that the reconstruction of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and the government's share of the hurricane relief efforts should be financed by "getting our troops out of Iraq as soon as possible." Solid majorities of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians and a plurality of Non Hispanic Whites chose that financing option over "raising taxes," "cutting government funding for health and education programs," and "borrowing more money from foreign countries." An overwhelming majority of respondents from the groups studied also agreed with the following statement: "we need to stop spending so much money and resources in Iraq and Afghanistan so that we can afford to take care of people in the United States."

How should the government finance its share of the Hurricane Katrina relief effort?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
By getting our troops out of Iraq as soon as possible	77%	69%	60%	46%
By raising taxes	7%	6%	16%	21%
By cutting government funding for health and education programs	2%	7%	4%	5%
By borrowing more money from foreign countries	2%	4%	3%	4%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: We need to stop spending so much money and resources in Iraq and Afghanistan so that we can afford to take care of people in the United States.

	<i>Asians</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	71%	88%	85%	59%
Disagree	22%	9%	14%	35%

3. Two-thirds of Asians and African Americans, a majority of Hispanics and a plurality of Non Hispanic Whites express concern in the survey about the potential negative impact of climate change by agreeing that “global warming and weak environmental protection policies have resulted in an increase in the number and power of hurricanes.” Even though the last two hurricane seasons have produced an extraordinary number of dangerous storms, many government leaders and scientists do not believe that this phenomenon is due to climate change or other environmental factors. It is interesting to note than more than one-third of African Americans and about one-fourth of Hispanics and Asians feel that “Hurricane Katrina was an Act of God meant to warn and punish the United States.”

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: Global warming and weak environmental protection policies have resulted in an increase in the number and power of hurricanes.

	<i>Asians</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	68%	67%	56%	43%
Disagree	25%	21%	35%	42%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: Hurricane Katrina was an Act of God meant to warn and punish the United States.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	37%	26%	26%	15%
Disagree	57%	70%	65%	83%

4. A significant percentage of Americans have lost confidence in the capacity of the United States government to react to a major catastrophe. They are not only concerned about what would happen to their families and communities in case of a natural disaster but Hurricane Katrina has also created doubts about the federal government's capacity to protect the United States from terrorism. When asked about who they would count on to help their family if a natural disaster similar to Hurricane Katrina struck their community, a strong majority of the respondents from each of the racial and ethnic groups interviewed stated that they would count on organizations like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, on religious and community groups and on their family and friends. Only about one-fifth of African Americans and Non Hispanic Whites and approximately one-third of Hispanics and Asians stated that they would count on the Armed Forces, FEMA or their state and local governments to help their families. Moreover, a solid majority of African Americans, one-half of Hispanics and Non Hispanic Whites and one-third of Asians are "not very confident" or "not confident at all" that the country is well prepared for a major terrorist attack. The study also reveals that a majority of African Americans and Asians, half of Hispanics and more than two-fifths of Non Hispanic Whites also feel that they can no longer "rely on the American system and its institutions to protect their family in a crisis."

If your community was impacted by a natural disaster similar to Hurricane Katrina whom do you think you could count on the most to help your family?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>
Families and friends	31%	32%	23%	22%
Red Cross & Salvation Army	28%	24%	32%	25%
Religious / church / community groups	22%	18%	14%	16%
Subtotal	81%	74%	69%	63%
State and local governments	6%	7%	10%	17%
FEMA	6%	5%	7%	8%
The U.S. Armed Forces	5%	7%	11%	9%
Subtotal	17%	19%	28%	34%

How confident are you that the United States is well prepared for a major terrorist attack?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Asians</i>
Very confident	8%	16%	9%	19%
Somewhat confident	29%	32%	44%	45%
Not very confident	28%	30%	26%	25%
Not confident at all	31%	20%	20%	9%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: I cannot rely on the American system and its institutions to protect my family in a crisis.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	59%	55%	50%	43%
Disagree	35%	36%	43%	50%

5. President George W. Bush receives a solid negative rating for the job that he has done during the Katrina crisis. Four-fifths of African Americans, two-thirds of Asians, and a majority of Hispanics and Non Hispanic Whites rate his performance as “mediocre” or “poor.” The poll also indicates that a majority of African Americans and Hispanics and about two-fifths of Asians and Non Hispanic Whites reported to be “angry with President Bush for the way he handled the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.” Nevertheless, when respondents were asked specifically about who was most responsible for the slow reaction of government to the crisis, Anglos blamed FEMA officials and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco more than President Bush while significant percentages of Hispanics and Asians thought that New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was also responsible.

How would you generally rate the job that President George W. Bush has done on the Hurricane Katrina crisis?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Excellent	3%	6%	7%	12%
Good	12%	19%	32%	31%
Mediocre	28%	33%	28%	24%
Poor	52%	36%	26%	31%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: I am very angry with President Bush for the way he handled the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Agree	64%	57%	39%	38%
Disagree	27%	36%	52%	58%

Who do you think was most responsible for the slow reaction of government to the crisis caused by Hurricane Katrina?

	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>African Americans</i>
Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco	23%	13%	15%	12%
FEMA officials	22%	19%	25%	25%
President George W. Bush	19%	29%	24%	36%
New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin	17%	17%	17%	8%

6. Most Americans give credit to organizations like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for having done the better job of helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Non Hispanic Whites and African Americans also give a lot of credit to religious and community groups involved in the relief efforts. Two-thirds of Hispanics and African Americans and four-fifths of Non Hispanic Whites and Asians report having made a cash contribution to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. The largest number of Hispanics, Asians and Non Hispanic Whites that contributed gave their money through charitable organizations like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army while the largest number of African Americans that contributed gave their money through religious and church groups in their community.

Who do you think has done a better job of helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina?

	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>
Red Cross & Salvation Army	60%	51%	49%	47%
Religious and church groups	9%	16%	15%	8%
Community groups	5%	6%	8%	10%
Families and friends of the victims	6%	7%	12%	5%
Government	14%	12%	6%	18%

Have you personally contributed money to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort?

	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>
Yes	79%	79%	69%	67%
No	21%	21%	31%	33%

How did you make your contribution to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort?

	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>African Americans</i>
Through Red Cross & Salvation Army	43%	42%	34%	30%
Through religious and church groups in my community	30%	28%	24%	36%
Through community organizations	14%	13%	1%	9%
Through ethnic media	1%	6%	1%	3%

7. There is a strong consensus that the international image of the United States has suffered damage because of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Three-fifths of Hispanics and African Americans, two-fifths of Asians and one-third of Non Hispanic Whites characterize the level of damage as “substantial” and a significant percentage of immigrants from Latin America, Vietnam, Korea and China feel that their country would have done a better job than the United States in responding to a natural catastrophe like Katrina. Approximately one-third of the respondents from the four ethnic and racial groups interviewed stated that Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath had changed their view of the United States for the worse.

How would you characterize the level of damage that the image of the United States has suffered internationally because of Hurricane Katrina?

	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
Substantial damage	62%	61%	46%	32%
Some damage	21%	21%	21%	28%
A little damage	9%	9%	21%	23%
No damage at all	6%	7%	10%	14%

Would you say that Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath has changed your view of the United States?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>
View changed for the better	16%	19%	18%	9%
View changed for the worse	38%	36%	34%	28%
View has not changed	41%	41%	45%	61%

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: My country would have done a better job than the United States in its response to the Hurricane Katrina crisis.

	<i>Asian Immigrants</i>	<i>Latin American Immigrants</i>
Agree	37%	37%
Disagree	51%	53%

8. The study also found some important differences in the opinion of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Non Hispanic Whites related to the Katrina crisis – especially on questions dealing with racism, race relations and discrimination.

*** There was an important difference in how African Americans and the other ethnic and racial groups perceived the people in New Orleans who entered stores and took food, furniture, clothing and television sets in the first days after Hurricane Katrina struck their city. A solid majority of African Americans felt that they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs while most of the Anglos that answered the question felt that they were looters and criminals. Asians and Hispanics were evenly divided in how they perceived them.

Now thinking about the people in New Orleans who entered stores and took food, furniture, clothing and TV sets in the first days after Hurricane Katrina, do you think they were looters and criminals or do you think they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>
They were looters and criminals	29%	46%	40%	44%
They were people trying to take care of their families and their needs	57%	31%	43%	45%

*** African Americans strongly agree with the statement that: “life is a lot more difficult for Blacks in the United States than I ever imagined” while a solid majority of Non Hispanic Whites disagree with the statement. Asians and Hispanics are evenly divided between those that agree and those that disagree with the statement.

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: Life is a lot more difficult for Blacks in the United States than I ever imagined.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>
Agree	73%	34%	47%	47%
Disagree	22%	57%	41%	45%

*** The poll reveals a similar pattern on a similar question on racism. A clear majority of African Americans and Hispanics agree that “there is a lot more racism in the United States than I ever imagined” while a majority of Non Hispanic Whites disagree with the statement. Asians are evenly divided between those that agree and those that disagree with the statement.

Do you agree / disagree with the following statement: There is a lot more racism in the United States than I ever imagined.

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Non Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>Asians</i>
Agree	76%	66%	42%	48%
Disagree	20%	28%	53%	45%

*** Most African Americans said that Katrina was a greater disaster than the tsunami that struck Indonesia and other nations last December or the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City and Washington in 2001. Most Anglos rank the 9/11 terrorist attack as a greater disaster; Asians are divided between the tsunami and 9/11 while Hispanics split their responses evenly between the three tragedies.

In your personal opinion, which of the following was the greater disaster – Hurricane Katrina, the tsunami that struck Indonesia and other nations last December or the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City and Washington D.C. in 2001?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Anglos</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>
Hurricane Katrina	48%	23%	22%	31%
Tsunami	14%	26%	35%	28%
9/11 terrorist attack	25%	38%	34%	31%

9. One of the more revealing questions in the survey asked respondents about the image that they were most likely to remember from Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. “Dead bodies on the streets and in the flooded waters in New Orleans” was chosen by the largest number of respondents, especially Hispanics, Asians and African Americans. The largest number of Anglo respondents said that “elderly and sick patients abandoned at the Convention Center and the Superdome” would be their most enduring memory. The images of “victims waiting to be rescued on rooftops and balconies” and of “families and children stranded on Interstate 10 for days without food and water” were also mentioned by a significant percentage of the respondents. Images of “looting and criminal activity in New Orleans” and of “the incident in Gretna when people fleeing the hurricane were denied entry into a wealthy New Orleans suburb” were chosen by only a few of the poll participants as the image they would always remember.

What is the image from Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in New Orleans that you think you will always remember?

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Anglos</i>
Dead bodies on the streets and in the flooded waters of the city	32%	31%	30%	17%
Elderly and sick patients abandoned at the Convention Center and Superdome	23%	18%	21%	25%
Families and children stranded on the interstate for days without food and water	22%	8%	18%	19%
Victims waiting to be rescued on rooftops and balconies	10%	28%	22%	22%
Residents looting and engaging in criminal activity in many neighborhoods	2%	3%	4%	5%
People fleeing the Hurricane being denied entry into the wealthy New Orleans’ suburb of Gretna	2%	5%	2%	2%

ABOUT NCM AND BENDIXEN & ASSOCIATES

New California Media, founded in 1996 by the nonprofit Pacific News Service to promote ethnic media, has been a pioneer of multilingual polling since 2002, with support from a broad range of foundations and organizations, including The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The Overbrook Foundation, The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Open Society Institute. NCM has partnered with the Institute for Justice and Journalism at USC Annenberg School for Communication and with the Chinese American Voter Education Committee in developing multilingual polling nationwide.

Bendixen & Associates is a public opinion research, management, and communications consulting firm based in Miami, Florida. Founded in 1984, the firm has grown from a company with roots in political campaigns and polling into an international consulting company that incorporates many disciplines and sectors. The firm has managed projects throughout the U.S., as well as in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bonaire, the Antilles, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Japan.

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Through its multilingual polling initiative, NCM has collaborated with Chinese American Voter Education Committee, Amnesty International, Center for American Progress, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, California Department of Health and Human Services, and various educational institutions.

NCM will be announcing its name change to New America Media on January 1, 2006 in response to the growing need for a nationwide organization that promotes the viability of ethnic media and the voices of its audiences.