

The Pulse of Black America Survey

Black Pulse Survey is an ongoing public opinion survey of the African American general public and others about international affairs and current events. The Black Pulse Survey also collects demographic information on respondents including their race, sex, age, education, marital status, income, and occupation and industry. Analysis of the data provides up-to-date insights and information about the attitudes and behaviors of African Americans and others as voters, consumers, community residents, family members, business owners, etc. These profiles are useful for policy makers and planners.

Thus far, we have conducted three surveys.

Black Pulse #1: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The first survey, conducted between September 21 and October 5, 2005 was a web-based survey of victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This survey collected information about the experiences and long-term needs of a sample of Gulf Coast residents and others affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who registered with the International/American Red Cross Family Links. More than 6,000 email addresses were randomly selected from the contact list, and messages were sent to potential study participants. This strategy yielded 1,642 valid surveys.

The survey asked about evacuees' lives before, during, and shortly after the disasters. It also sought their opinions about the efforts of public officials and private agencies to meet their needs. The survey was also structured to invite comparisons to data from a national survey of the general population that was collected by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. This allowed us to focus on differences in how blacks and whites (survivors and members of the general public) reacted to the response to the Hurricanes, and what linkages, if any, they made between responses to the hurricanes and America's current international and domestic priorities. For example, when asked whether attention to the war in Iraq made it more difficult to attend to the rescue of victims of Hurricane Katrina (presumably because of National Guard personnel and machinery and equipment that might have been used), 57% of black survivors and 59% of white survivors agreed with this premise. When asked whether "America's continued involvement in the war in Iraq makes it more difficult for America to attend to problems at home," 7 in 10 (71% of) blacks agreed compared with less than half (48%) of whites. Nearly two thirds (65%) of white hurricane survivors, however, agreed with this, and 72% of black survivors agreed. More than three quarters of white survivors (79%) and black survivors (76%) believed that the government's response to the hurricanes weakened it in the eyes of other countries. And there was near consensus among survivors that the United States should accept aid from the United Nations and other sources to help evacuees secure food, clothing, housing, and other essentials, as 93% of white survivors agreed with this, and 99% of black survivors agreed.

Only 6% of African Americans believe that President Bush cares a lot about the needs and problems of people left homeless by the hurricanes. This compares with more than 4 in 10 whites (43%). Only 14% of blacks believe the Bush Administration has a clear plan for finding housing and jobs for the victims, compared with 23% of whites. A higher percentage of blacks (65%) than whites (55%) say that they are willing to pay higher taxes to help with the recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Finally, while a majority of whites (51%) approves of the way President Bush is responding to meeting the needs of the victims of Hurricane Katrina, less than 1 in 4 blacks (23%) agree with this view. More generally, only 15% of blacks say that they have confidence in 7 George W. Bush's ability to make the right decisions about dealing with the problems people affected by Hurricane Katrina are facing. This compares with more than half of whites (52%).

The results of this survey have already been presented to members of the Civil Society League, at "The People's Assembly on Race and International Affairs in Post-Katrina America," at various churches, and at the Association of Black Sociologists Conference in Montreal, Canada. A copy of the survey instrument and a printout of the PowerPoint slides of the results are included in Appendix A.

In addition to the public presentations based on this survey, a copy of the study was also presented to Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, Shashi Tharoor at a reception in his honor hosted by the PEOPLE Programme. He said of that study, "I must say that the data you have collected and analyzed, and the differences it reveals between the interpretations and expectations of African Americans, and those of white Americans, of your Government are most interesting indeed." A scholarly version of the study ("Hurricane Katrina and the Racial Gulf: A Du Boisian Analysis of Victims' Experiences") was published by Cambridge University Press in the Du Bois Review of Social Science Research on Race.

Black Pulse #2: Trade Policy And Related International Issues.

The second Black Pulse survey collected information about African American opinion leaders' beliefs about trade policy and related international issues. Leaders from 200 organizations were randomly selected and contacted from the National Directory of African American Organizations. This strategy yielded 62 valid surveys. The survey asked these leaders about their knowledge and opinions about free trade, fair trade, the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and their policy preferences in areas such as immigration policy and debt forgiveness for developing countries. The results showed that while more than two-thirds (68%) of African American opinion leaders reported that they are familiar with free trade issues, just over half (58%) said that they were familiar with fair trade. While more than three-quarters (77%) believed that NAFTA has been good for U.S. companies, only 19% believed that it has been good for the U.S. economy, 10% believed it has been good for U.S. jobs, 15% believed it has been good for the environment, 3% believe it has been good for job security, and 13% believe it has been good for living standards. Two-thirds (66%) of

respondents felt that it is important that public schools provide students with fair trade options as part of their meal plans. More than three-quarters (77%) support a resolution requiring that fair trade coffee be served at all official meetings hosted by their place of work or school. And 8 in 10 (80%) support the idea of debt forgiveness for developing nations. The results of this survey have been presented to members of the Civil Society League, at a People's Assembly entitled "Free Trade or Fair Trade? What 'Free Trade Really Costs Us" and at a forum hosted by Oxfam America: Chicago Committee on Fair Trade.

Black Pulse #3: Immigration Policy Preferences.

The third Black Pulse survey collected information from participants in an immigrant mobilization march of an estimated crowd of 700,000 in Chicago. The survey used a multi-stage block sampling technique to give respondents an equal chance of being selected for the study. This process yielded 410 surveys. The survey examined the immigration policy preferences and attitudes of march participants, and it allowed us to examine the policy preferences of immigrants in Chicago to others from Chicago and across the nation.

The survey showed that for many, this was the first time they had engaged in political activities. While slightly over half of the respondents had attended public meetings (55%), just over a third had signed petitions (37%), written letters or called officials (31%), placed campaign stickers in their car or home (32%), attended political rallies (39%) or contributed money to political candidates (23%). Nearly half (47%) of respondents reported having marched in a previous immigrant rights march in March. For the May 1st march, 72% of those with jobs said they had missed work to participate. Of those eligible to vote, 62% reported participating in the past elections. When we look at civic participation by race and ethnicity, we see that Latinos are generally less involved than are other racial and ethnic groups. Whites are more likely than are other groups to sign petitions, contact public officials, and give money to political causes. African Americans are more likely than are other groups to attend meetings, place campaign signs on their property, and go to political rallies. Most participants identified concerns shared by Latinos and African Americans such as racial discrimination (65%), work (60%), education.

(54%), which can perhaps be activated to create alliances. Results from this survey were presented at a news conference, at a People's Assembly entitled "Jobs, Immigration, and Fair Trade."