



CALIFORNIA POLL OF ASIAN AMERICANS ON THE TSUNAMI

New California Media commissions the first in-depth, multilingual poll of Asian Americans on their role in the Tsunami relief and its impact on their personal lives, their homelands and their identities as Asian Americans.

Conducted By Bendixen & Associates

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Methodology

The findings of this report are based on a poll of 706 adults of Asian descent living in California. The total sample is comprised of two sub-samples. The first sub-sample of 606 interviews is representative of the Asian-American population living in California (groups included in this sample are Chinese, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Korean, Filipino, Japanese, Sri Lankan, and Thai). The second sub-sample is made up of 100 interviews with Indonesian-Americans living in California. Interviews for the study were conducted in the following languages: English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Bahasa Indonesian.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents chose to be interviewed in a language other than English. All of the interviews were conducted between February 8th and February 18th of 2005. The margin of error for the sample of 606 is ± 4 percentage points and the margin of error for the sample of 100 is ± 10 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. The polling project was organized and coordinated by Bendixen & Associates of Coral Gables, Florida.

Major Findings

1. The Asian-American population in California has donated over \$200 million to the tsunami relief effort.

The vast majority (70 percent) of the Asian-American population in California has made a contribution to the tsunami relief effort – 64 percent of whom donated money. The average individual contribution was between \$50 and \$200. These donations were given at a variety of places, most commonly religious organizations and international relief organizations, where 38 percent and 32 percent, respectively made their donation. The study also indicates that Chinese-American, Korean-American and Vietnamese-American ethnic media played an important role in motivating these groups to give to the relief effort.

Though just 8 percent of Asian Californians say they knew someone who was directly impacted by the tsunami, two out of three still donated to the relief effort. According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll conducted in January of this year, only 33 percent of all American adults have contributed money to the tsunami relief effort.¹ The relief effort encompassed all Asian groups polled, not just immigrants from tsunami-affected countries.

The poll also indicates the strengthening of a Pan-Asian identity as a result of the tsunami. While prior indicators show that most Asian-Americans are more likely to identify with their own particular home country or ethnicity, rather than as the more inclusive Asian-American, the aftermath of the catastrophe has left fifty percent of Asian Californians feeling more connected to Asia as a whole.

¹ Survey by Cable News Network, USA Today and Gallup Organization, January 7-January 9, 2005. Retrieved February 24, 2005 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. The tsunami had a strong effect on the Asian community in California – 85 percent say it was the worst natural catastrophe in their lifetime.

Overall, 85 percent of Asian-Americans and 90 percent of Indonesian-Americans in California say the tsunami was the worst natural catastrophe in their lifetime and most (82 percent) have been following the news about it closely. The strength of the impact of the tsunami can further be understood when one remembers that the Asian peninsula has not been spared from natural disasters over the past 50 years, in fact quite the opposite. A series of droughts in India, and devastating floods and earthquakes in China have been just a part of the many disasters the region has experienced in recent history.

Many also think the economic impact of the tsunami on the region will be overwhelming. Nearly four-in-ten (38 percent) say that the economy of the affected region was devastated and it will take decades for it to recover. On a more positive note, however, some say the tsunami may have positive political implications. In fact, 47 percent of Sri Lankans and 32 percent of Indonesians say that the aftermath of the tsunami has created a political environment that has made it easier for their respective governments to negotiate with the Tamil Tigers (Sri Lanka) and the Free Aceh Movement (Indonesia).

3. More than 1 in 4 Asian-Americans in California say the tsunami was a warning from a higher power.

Twenty-eight percent of Asian-Americans overall, and 44 percent of Indonesian-Americans say the tsunami was a warning from a higher power for people in the region where the tsunami hit to increase their devotion to their religion. In addition, 26 percent say that the tsunami was pre-determined by fate.

Further substantiation of the psychological impact of the tsunami on the Asian-American population is that nearly a third (31 percent) of respondents says that they have become either terrified or more afraid of the ocean since the tsunami. Another 41 percent of respondents say that the tsunami has made them feel apprehensive about the future.

4. Overall, the United States and President Bush receive fair ratings on the handling of the tsunami.

Four-in-ten Asian-Americans in California say the United States is doing its fair share to help the areas affected by the tsunami. In addition, while more than a third (35 percent) says that President Bush's initial response to the tsunami was inappropriate and slow, just under half (47 percent) say his response was appropriate and timely.

Asian-Americans see various roles for the United States to play as the tsunami relief effort moves forward. Most (69 percent) say that the U.S. military should have a role in the relief effort. In addition, many think that it is more important role for the United States to provide doctors, engineers and invest in infrastructure, rather than offering economic solutions such as forgiving debt and making zero interest loans.