

## Survey of Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

### *Methodology*

#### **Summary**

The Survey of Hurricane Katrina Evacuees took place Sept. 10-12, 2005 among 680 randomly selected adult evacuees residing in Houston shelters. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. The margin of error for overall results is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Fieldwork was conducted by International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

#### **Detailed Methodology**

**Who was interviewed:** The survey was conducted with 680 respondents aged 18 or older who were evacuated to Houston from the Gulf Coast due to Hurricane Katrina. This included: 439 respondents in the Houston Reliant Park Complex (which included the Reliant Astrodome and the Reliant Center); 152 in the George R. Brown Convention Center; and 12 whose location was not recorded..

The sample also included 77 respondents from five of the fourteen smaller Red Cross shelters in the greater Houston area. Interviewers were unable to visit the remaining shelters due to privacy concerns, unstable conditions, or inability to reach the center or receive clearance in a timely manner. We have no reason to believe residents of the shelters we could not access are significantly different from those living in the shelters we *were* able to access, but we cannot rule out this possibility.

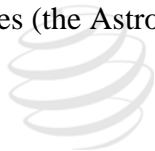
Interviews were distributed across shelters in proportion to best estimates of the actual shelter populations on the dates of interviewing.

Overall, 98 percent of those interviewed were from the greater New Orleans area.

**Red Cross participation:** The Red Cross gave The Post/Kaiser/Harvard interviewing team permission to interview at the various centers, but was not a co-sponsor of the survey and bears no responsibility for results presented here. Interviewers made clear to each respondent that their ability to receive Red Cross aid was in no way related to their participation in the survey. In addition, the interviewing team received permission from the City of Houston and Reliant Park Complex administrators to enter shelters under their control.

**The interviewers:** Interviews were conducted by 28 professional, Houston-based interviewers who were supervised by Erin Weltzien of the Kaiser Family Foundation and Lori Robbins of ICR with input from Washington Post staff in Houston. ICR also oversaw all other aspects of the fieldwork under the direction of Vice President Melissa Herrmann and Account Manager Jennifer Schmidt.

Supervisors divided each shelter location into separate areas which were then assigned to an individual interviewer. In the three main shelter complexes (the Astrodome, Reliant Center, and Convention



Center) those areas were monitored by an interviewer from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. At the five smaller shelters, interviewers visited at various times throughout the day to conduct interviews.

On the second day of interviewing in the Reliant Park Complex, interviewers were accompanied by a Red Cross volunteer. These volunteers did not conduct, nor interfere with, interviews in any way. All interviews were conducted in the most private circumstances available, given the circumstances in the shelters.

**The survey instrument:** The survey instrument and survey design were reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Surveys were conducted using paper questionnaires, and the data was processed by ICR. Each survey lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Respondents were told that all survey results would be reported in the aggregate. No names or other personal identifiers were collected

**How individual respondents were selected:** Interviewers were instructed to use two random selection procedures depending upon the mobility of the evacuees in their assigned area.

For areas where the evacuees either had limited mobility or were non-mobile -- --for example, cot areas occupied largely by elderly or infirm evacuees, or TV lounge areas -- interviewers moved through the respondent population. Specifically, interviewers were given a random number and instructed to count off this number of people before beginning the first/next interview. After an interview was completed (or a refusal obtained), interviewers would again count off using the random interval before selecting the next respondent.

For areas where evacuees were mobile -- for example hallways and evacuee service areas -- interviewers stayed in one particular spot throughout the interviewing period. They then counted people who passed their defined location and chose the (randomly generated) n<sup>th</sup> person to interview. This selection criteria was duplicated at the conclusion of each contact attempt, whether it was a completed interview or a refusal.

In both cases, interviewers excluded children from the counting cycle.

**Response rate:** Nine in ten evacuees approached about the survey agreed to participate.

**Who wasn't included:** The survey was intended to cover that population that was hardest hit by the hurricane: those that did not make it out of the city in time, that had to rely on government help to evacuate, and that did not have access to housing on their own. Clearly there are a large number of evacuees now living with friends or family, in temporary paid housing, in hotels, or in other shelters outside Houston. The opinion of these evacuees -- generally a more well-off population-- are obviously not included in this survey.