

Resilience in the Wake of Superstorm Sandy

Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey reveals new information about the importance of social and community bonds in recovery from a disaster like Superstorm Sandy.

Chicago, June 24, 2013—[The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) has released results of a major survey exploring resilience of people and neighborhoods directly affected by Superstorm Sandy. The study reveals the importance of social factors such as neighborhood bonds and social supports in coping with the storm and its aftermath.

Striking landfall in the United States on October 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy affected large areas of coastal New York and New Jersey, devastated communities, killed more than 130 people, and caused tens of billions of dollars in property damage.

“The impact of the storm is being felt to this day as the long process of recovery continues,” said Trevor Tompson, director of the AP-NORC Center. “Our survey data powerfully illustrate how important the help of friends, family, and neighbors can be in getting people back on their feet after natural disasters. These crucial social bonds are often overlooked as policy discussions tend to focus on the role that official institutions have in fostering resilience.”

With funding from the [Rockefeller Foundation](#), the Associated Press—NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a national survey of 2,025 individuals including an oversample of 1,007 interviews with residents in the NY and NJ region affected by Superstorm Sandy.

The survey had two central objectives:

- 1) To systematically measure the impact of the storm on individuals and neighborhoods and to assess the level of recovery six months after the storm.
- 2) To learn how neighborhood characteristics and social factors relate to recovery and resilience.

Critical findings of the survey include:

- The most important sources of help before, during, and after the storm were friends, family, and neighbors, with first responders seen as equally important in the affected regions.
- Organized charities such as The Salvation Army, and food banks as well as relief organizations like the Red Cross were seen as very helpful and important in the wake of the storm in the regions most affected by the storm.

- By contrast State and federal governments and utility companies were seen as significantly less helpful by those in the affected region.
- Residents of the region affected by Sandy report extensive impacts beyond the physical damage, including prolonged effects on daily living and social relationships, with many individuals and neighborhoods continuing to struggle.
- The storm brought out the best in neighbors, with reports of many people sharing access to power, food and water, and providing shelter. Just seven percent report that the storm brought out the worst in their neighbors.
- Americans supported the victims, with 54 percent of Americans donating food, money, clothing or other items to help, with 63 percent of people in the affected regions doing the same.
- About two-thirds of Americans support government assistance in rebuilding, with a smaller majority supporting buyouts in areas susceptible to natural disasters.
- In areas affected by the storm, people relied heavily on both face to face communication and on technology, with cellphones cited as the most common way to communicate during the storm. Email and Facebook were used by about one-third of residents and Twitter by a small percentage.
- In the most severely hit areas, 80 percent of people relied on face to face communications, followed by cellphone, landlines, email, Facebook, and Twitter.

"Superstorm Sandy tested the resilience of New York and New Jersey," said Dr. Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation. "As the region works to rebuild and to better prepare for future storms, the results of this poll can inform our thinking and planning in a way that will ensure greater resilience. The poll shows that family, neighborhood and community are vital components of responding to shocks and stresses and bouncing back stronger."

About the Survey

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Survey Research titled "Resilience in the Wake of Superstorm Sandy" was conducted from April 19 through June 2, 2013. The affected region was defined as 16 counties in New York and New Jersey which all received a FEMA impact rating of "very high" based on a composite indicator of wind, storm surge, and rain. The overall margin of error for the national sample was +/- 4.0 percent.

Additional information, including the Associated Press stories and the survey's complete topline findings, can be found on the AP-NORC Center's website at www.apnorc.org.

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The Rockefeller Foundation aims to achieve equitable growth by expanding opportunity for more people in more places worldwide, and to build resilience by helping them prepare for, withstand, and emerge stronger from acute shocks and chronic stresses. Throughout its 100 year history, The Rockefeller Foundation has enhanced the impact of innovative thinkers and actors working to change the world by providing the resources, networks, convening power, and technologies to move them from idea to impact. In today's dynamic and interconnected world, The Rockefeller Foundation has a unique ability to address the emerging challenges facing humankind through innovation, intervention and influence in order to shape agendas and inform decision making.

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