

Consumers Union

Non-profit * Independent * Expert

www.hearusnow.org

Internet and Broadband

- Telecom Mergers
 - SBC/ATT and Verizon/MCI
 - newly formed telecommunications giants will control about 90 percent of residential wireline, 70 percent of long distance, and up to half of the wireless telephone service in their respective regions.
 - Hurts consumers
 - » Less Choice
 - » Higher Prices

- Internet Access

- America Falling Behind

- America's access to affordable, high-speed Internet lags far behind the rest of the digital world

- NTIA Study Shows:

- low- and middle-class Americans continue to lack access to broadband Internet in the home

- » key factor in having broadband at home:

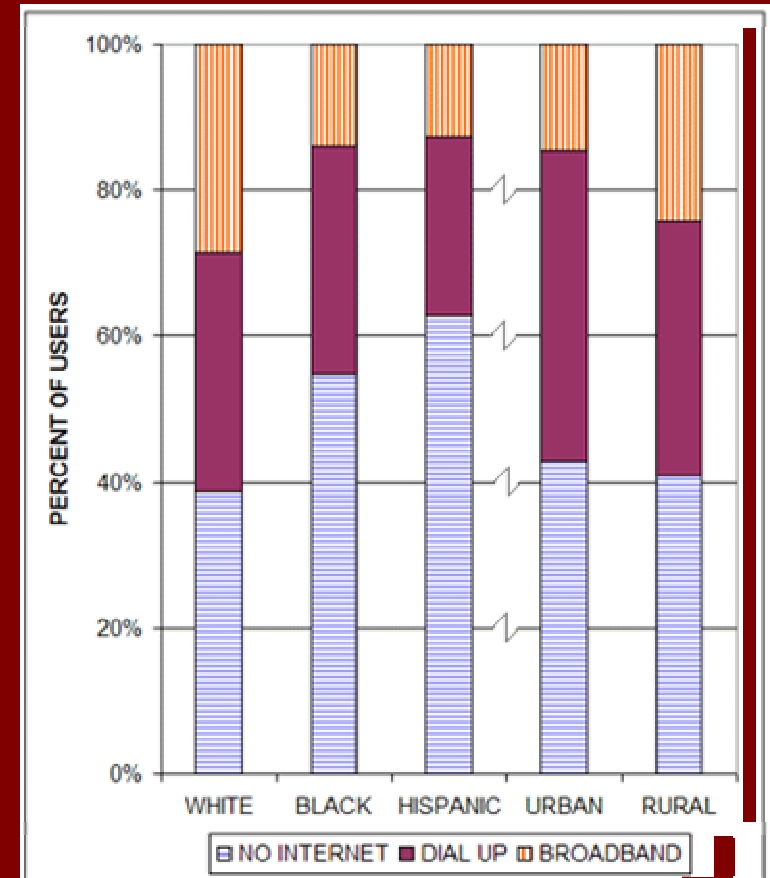
- » almost half of all households with incomes above \$75,000 have broadband

- » only 17% of households between \$25,000 and \$50,000 have broadband

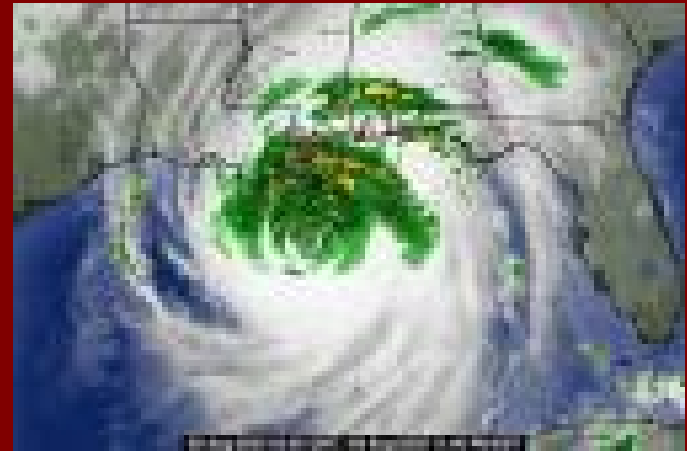
- » less than 10% of those with incomes below \$25,000 have broadband.

- penetration of the Internet has slowed

- blacks and Hispanics are particularly vulnerable to the digital divide
- Slightly more than half of all black and Latino children have access to a home computer and approximately 40 percent have access to the Internet at home (compared to 85.5 and 77.4 percent of white, non-Latino children).
- Children more effected by racial disparities of Digital Divide
- Cultural and Language Divide
 - Spanish Speakers
 - Among Latino groups, Mexicans have the lowest home computer and Internet access rates followed by Central and South Americans who have the next lowest rates. Although Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Other Latinos have higher rates, *all Latino groups are less likely to own a computer or have Internet access at home than are white, non-Latinos.*



Case Study: Hurricane Katrina



- According to media reports, an ad hoc wireless network was the only means available for communications among New Orleans city officials after their satellite phones failed.
- wireless networks were quickly established at shelters and are being used to help evacuees locate and communicate, via voice-over-Internet protocol, with loved ones at distant locations.
- Could have saved more lives if first responders had ability to use wireless internet to communicate
- Community Broadband Act of 2005 (McCain, Lautenberg)

TV, Radio, and Cable

- Digital Television Transition
 - Government mandated switch that will occur in 2009
 - Signal changes, leaves current non-digital TV's in the dark
 - Set aside subsidy for Americans to purchase converter boxes
- Spectrum Auctions
 - By setting aside some of the white space for high speed low frequency broadband, we accomplish several important goals:
 - More wireless communication space for emergency personnel
 - Take publicly owned property (spectrum) and use it to benefit it's owners → American consumers and NOT big business
 - Allow for minority-owned businesses and smaller independent media to purchase unlicensed spectrum freed up by digital switch
 - More space for diverse programming



Case Study: Media Content



- **Latinos and News Coverage**
 - According to the Network Brownout Report of 2005, news stories about Latinos and Latino issues were almost non-existent. Of the 548 hours of network news in 2004, only 3 hours and 25 minutes were devoted to Latino stories- a decline from 2003.
 - the study found that certain topics, such as immigration, were linked to Latinos and overemphasized in coverage relating to the Latino community.

• African Americans and Political Opinion

- The National Urban League released a report entitled, “Sunday Morning Apartheid: A Diversity Study of the Sunday Morning Talk Shows,” which presented the results of an 18-month study of political talk shows on ABC, CBS, CNN, FOX and NBC.
- examined Sunday morning political talk shows because they “play a unique and substantial role in the political discourse in America.”
- African-Americans accounted for only 8% of the more than 2100 guest appearances on the shows during the period between January 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005.
- More than 60% of the programs during the period had featured zero African-American guests



–Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell and Juan Williams accounted for 69% of the 175 guest appearances which included African-Americans.

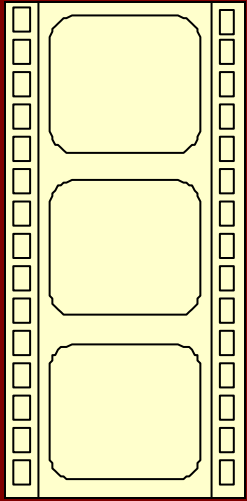


Asian Pacific Islander Americans

- Reports indicate that mainstream media continues to contribute to a lack of understanding and awareness of APIA culture, interests and concerns through under representation of APIA images onscreen and contributing to negative stereotyping of Asian Americans
- Asian American Justice Center found that APIA actors in primetime represent less than half of the Asian American population
- Evidence shows that the majority of Asian American actors were limited to “stereotyped niche” roles, such as “technology geeks” or martial artists.
 - ***Memoirs of a Geisha***
 - Created great controversy when it was released
 - Portrayed the life of a Japanese Geisha with Chinese and Malaysian actors



Native Americans



- Hollywood
 - The history of discrimination and neglect
 - In fact, during Hollywood's early history, says Canadian Ojibwa playwright Drew Hayden Taylor, "there wasn't a real 'Indian' to be seen on the movie sets: Native 'representation' was taken care of by Italians or Spaniards—anyone with dark enough skin to save on makeup."
- Today
 - Unfortunately, not much has changed since the era of the western.
 - As actors, Native Americans still have a difficult time getting roles on television, in film, and in theatre.
 - in 2004, Native Americans had a net loss of roles, from .3% in 2003 to .2% in 2004.
- Children's Hour
 - the lack of diversity is arguably most harmful to the youngest members of our society
 - Study by Children Now, the 8 to 9 PM television-viewing "family hour" is the least ethnically diverse.
 - Only 1 of 8 programs has a mixed cast
 - This lack of minority representation sends a sends highly skewed message about diversity in America to viewers, especially children.

Ownership

- Minority Ownership Statistics
 - While people of color make up about 1/3 of the United States population yet own less than 4% of television and radio broadcast licenses.
 - The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released a report in 2001 that found that minorities owned 4 percent of full-power commercial radio stations, even though they represent about a third of the US population.
 - Minorities have gone missing from the boardroom in major media outlets and the deregulation spurred by the 1996 Telecommunications Act has made the situation even worse.
 - No limitation on TV channel ownership
 - Little capital available for minorities
 - Little support from the FCC

Why it Matters

- *Metro Broadcasting v. FCC*
 - the Supreme Court cited several studies showing:
 - Minority Media ownership INCREASES
 - Minority Employment
 - Stories that Focus on Issues of Interest
 - Impact how those stories are told
 - The need for minority owned and minority controlled media is critical.
 - Dr. Clara Rodriguez at Fordham University believes this lack of diversity in film and TV depiction is harmful. “You should be able to have all types of movie depicting all types of characters,” said Rodriguez during her testimony before congress. “The problems come when the representation of a particular group is too narrow, one-dimensional and stereotypical.”

Consumers Union Media Justice Advocacy

- Consumers union advocates for media justice in 3 ways
 - **Education**
 - online at our website www.hearusnow.org and our Spanish site www.poderdelconsumidor.org
 - Work with classes at Fordham and University of Maryland- students research and publish online media justice/diversity facts
 - **Action Alerts to CU members**
 - Promote political participation
 - **Direct Federal Lobbying**
 - Community wireless campaigns in Philadelphia
 - DTV Legislation
 - FCC Hearings/Comments
 - Testifying before congress on harm of mergers/consolidation