

BALLOT
BOX

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box

The 2012 General Election in California



ASIAN AMERICANS
ADVANCING
JUSTICE

LOS ANGELES

Contents

Introduction	1	ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION
Key Findings	2	Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Overview	3	Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice - LA) is the nation's largest legal and civil rights organization for Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI).
Legislative Districts	6	Founded in 1983 as the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Advancing Justice - LA serves more than 15,000 individuals and organizations every year. Through direct services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, leadership development, and capacity building, Advancing Justice - LA focuses on the most vulnerable members of Asian American and NHPI communities while also building a strong voice for civil rights and social justice.
Voter Turnout	8	
Party Affiliation	10	
Candidates/ Ballot Measures/Issues	11	Advancing Justice - LA is based in downtown Los Angeles, with satellite offices in Orange County, Sacramento, and the San Gabriel Valley.
Policy Recommendations	12	<i>www.advancingjustice-la.org</i>
Methodology	13	

Introduction

Asian Americans are California's fastest growing racial group.

As our communities grow, so too do their needs and concerns. Between 2006 and 2010, the number of unemployed Asian Americans in California increased 196%. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of Asian Americans living below the poverty line statewide increased 50%. As of 2010, almost 1.7 million Asian Americans in our state were limited English proficient, facing challenges communicating in English that impact their ability to access jobs and basic services.

To ensure these growing needs are met, our communities need to engage elected officials and policy makers. To be taken seriously, we need to flex our muscle at the polls.

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box: The 2012 General Election in California compiles information on the state's Asian American electorate during the last major statewide election. Based on our own analysis of data from the California Secretary of State's Office and the National Asian American Survey, the report shows a growing electorate that increasingly has the ability to hold elected officials accountable at the polls. Now more than ever, Asian Americans are the margin of victory in legislative races throughout the state.

We hope the report is useful in your efforts to better understand and articulate our community's growing involvement in California's electoral process.

We would like to thank the sponsors who made this report possible, including the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation and Cyrus Chung Ying Tang Foundation.

We would also like to thank those who provided critical support and guidance, including Lisa Alvis from the Elections Division in the California Secretary of State's Office, Cathy Cha from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Francine Cafarchia from Interviewing Service of America (ISA), Hee Joo Yoon from Korean Resource Center, Mary Anne Foo and Jacqueline Wu from Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, and Professor Karthick Ramakrishnan at UC Riverside.



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Key Findings

More Asian Americans in California are voting than ever before.

Nearly 1.7 million Asian Americans were registered to vote in California as of the 2012 General Election. Asian Americans made up over 9% of all registered voters statewide. Between 2002 and 2012, the number of Asian Americans registered to vote in California increased nearly 60%. By the next presidential elections in 2016, it is estimated that Asian Americans will make up nearly 11% of voters statewide. While Asian Americans are registering to vote and casting ballots in record numbers, more work is needed to ensure their full civic engagement.

Asian Americans are the margin of victory in legislative districts throughout the state.

During the 2012 General Election, Asian American voter registration exceeded the margin of victory in 38 Congressional, State Senate, and State Assembly races. Asian American voter registration exceeded *half* the margin of victory in 75 legislative races statewide. These legislative districts were located in counties throughout the state, both within and outside established Asian American communities in the Bay Area and Los Angeles. In-language get-out-the-vote efforts targeting Asian Americans are needed to ensure their voice in these and other key legislative races.

Asian American voters hold progressive positions on key policy issues.

Approximately 67% of Asian Americans voting in the 2012 General Election voted in favor of Proposition 30, the ballot measure that approved temporary and targeted tax increases to prevent cuts to California's education budget. Over 72% expressed support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the federal policy that prevents the deportation of some undocumented young people. Nearly 74% indicated support for policies that require health care providers to be able to serve patients in languages other than English. Given the growing influence of Asian American voters and the disproportionate number unaffiliated with a political party, it is critical that elected officials belonging to both parties address these and other policy concerns.

*Nearly **1.7 million**
Asian Americans
were registered to vote in California
as of the 2012 General Election.*

California's Asian American electorate is large and growing.

There were nearly 1.7 million Asian Americans registered to vote in California as of the 2012 General Election.

Asian Americans made up over 9% of those registered to vote and 8% of those who cast ballots statewide.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the number of Asian Americans registered to vote in California increased nearly 60% between 2002 and 2012.¹

According to the Center for Regional Change at UC Davis, Asian Americans will make up nearly 11% of California voters by the 2016 presidential elections.²

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, November 2012 Current Population Survey, Table 4B; November 2002 Current Population Survey, Table 4A.

² University of California, Davis, Center for Regional Change. January, 2014. CCEP Policy Brief Issue 7.

Overview

Chinese Americans are California's largest Asian American electorate, numbering nearly 462,000 statewide.

There are approximately 374,000 Filipino, 263,000 Vietnamese, 153,000 Indian, and 138,000 Korean Americans registered to vote statewide.

The Asian American electorate is an immigrant electorate. Approximately 61% of Asian American registered voters statewide are foreign-born.

Among Asian American ethnic groups, only Japanese Americans are a majority native-born electorate.

Approximately 76% of Vietnamese, 70% of Indian, 68% of Korean, 62% of Chinese, 59% of Filipino, and 52% of Cambodian American registered voters in California are foreign-born.

**61% of
Asian American
registered voters
statewide are
immigrants.**

Asian American Voter Registration by Ethnic Group California, 2012 General Election

ETHNIC GROUP	NUMBER
Cambodian	26,280
Chinese	461,636
Filipino	373,745
Indian	152,685
Japanese	114,405
Korean	138,359
Vietnamese	263,089

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Overview

Los Angeles County is home to more Asian American registered voters than any other county statewide; nearly 460,000 were registered to vote countywide as of the 2012 General Election.

Los Angeles County's Asian American voter registration is followed in size by those in Orange (230,112), Santa Clara (195,008), Alameda (140,222), and San Francisco (108,699) Counties.

Santa Clara County's electorate is proportionally the most Asian American in California; approximately 24% of registered voters countywide are Asian American. Roughly 22% of registered voters in San Francisco County are Asian American.

While Southern California is home to larger numbers, the Bay Area's electorate is proportionally more Asian American.

Asian American Voter Registration by County, California, 2012 General Election

COUNTY	NUMBER
Los Angeles	459,688
Orange	230,112
Santa Clara	195,008
Alameda	140,222
San Francisco	108,699
San Diego	89,850
Sacramento	63,364
San Mateo	53,840
Contra Costa	49,225
San Bernardino	35,440
Riverside	33,484
Fresno	26,760
San Joaquin	24,850
Ventura	19,690
Solano	15,971

COUNTY	% OF TOTAL
Santa Clara	24%
San Francisco	22%
Alameda	17%
San Mateo	15%
Sutter	14%
Orange	14%
Los Angeles	10%
Sacramento	9%
Contra Costa	9%
San Joaquin	8%
Solano	8%
Yolo	7%
Fresno	7%
Merced	6%
San Diego	6%

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Legislative Districts

Asian Americans make up a *majority* of constituents in Congressional District 17 (Honda) in Santa Clara County, State Assembly District 49 (Chau) in Los Angeles County's San Gabriel Valley, and State Assembly District 25 (Wieckowski) in Santa Clara and Alameda Counties.

Asian Americans make up a quarter or more of constituents in seven Congressional Districts, six State Senate Districts, and twelve State Assembly Districts statewide.

Of districts statewide that are a quarter or more Asian American, five of seven Congressional Districts, four of six State Senate Districts, and seven of twelve State Assembly Districts are in the Bay Area.

Legislative districts with the highest concentrations of Asian Americans are located in Northern and Southern California.

Percent of Legislative District that is Asian American California, 2010 Population & 2012 Voter Registration, Ranked by Percent of Population that is Asian American

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT	MEMBER	LOCATION	% AA POP 2010	% AA VAP 2010	% AA CVAP 2010	% AA REG 2012
17	Honda	Santa Clara / Alameda	51%	50%	39%	35%
27	Chu	Los Angeles (San Gabriel Valley)	38%	39%	32%	25%
12	Pelosi	San Francisco	33%	32%	28%	21%
14	Speier	San Mateo / San Francisco	32%	32%	29%	19%
39	Royce	Orange / Los Angeles	29%	30%	25%	19%

STATE SENATE DISTRICT	MEMBER	LOCATION	% AA POP 2010	% AA VAP 2010	% AA CVAP 2010	% AA REG 2012
10	Corbett	Alameda / Santa Clara	41%	41%	34%	
11	Leno	San Francisco / San Mateo	37%	37%	32%	23%
22	De Leon	Los Angeles (East Los Angeles)	32%	35%	32%	
15	Beall	Santa Clara	31%	31%	26%	24%
29	Huff	Orange / Los Angeles	27%	28%	24%	19%

STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT	MEMBER	LOCATION	% AA POP 2010	% AA VAP 2010	% AA CVAP 2010	% AA REG 2012
49	Chau	Los Angeles (San Gabriel Valley)	53%	55%	50%	43%
25	Wieckowski	Santa Clara / Alameda	51%	50%	40%	36%
19	Ting	San Francisco / San Mateo	46%	45%	40%	28%
27	Campos	Santa Clara	33%	34%	35%	32%
72	Allen	Orange	33%	33%	28%	28%

Note: 'Pop' represents population, 'VAP' represents voting-age population (those old enough to vote), 'CVAP' represents citizen voting-age population (those eligible to register to vote), and 'Reg' represents voter registration. Population data are from the California Citizen's Redistricting Commission; voter registration data are from an Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Legislative Districts

During the 2012 General Election, Asian American voter registration exceeded the margin of victory in 38 legislative races statewide, including thirteen Congressional, five State Senate, and twenty State Assembly contests.

Legislative districts in which Asian American voter registration exceeded the margin of victory were located throughout the state, including Alameda, Los Angeles, Marin, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Sutter Counties.

During the same election, Asian American voter registration exceeded half the margin of victory in 75 legislative races statewide, including twenty-three Congressional, eleven State Senate, and forty-one State Assembly contests.

During the 2012 General Election, Asian American voter registration exceeded the margin of victory in 38 legislative races.

Asian American Voter Registration as a Percent of Margin of Victory in Legislative Districts California, 2012 General Election, Ranked by Percent of Margin of Victory

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT	WINNER	LOCATION	MARGIN OF VICTORY (MOV)	AA REG	AA REG / MOV
15	Swalwell	Alameda	9,742	64,423	661%
52	Peters	San Diego	6,992	36,131	517%
07	Bera	Sacramento	9,191	31,570	343%
39	Royce	Orange / Los Angeles	39,247	75,971	194%
47	Lowenthal	Los Angeles / Orange	30,174	58,196	193%

STATE SENATE DISTRICT	WINNER	LOCATION	MARGIN OF VICTORY (MOV)	AA REG	AA REG / MOV
05	Galgiani	San Joaquin / Stanislaus	2,923	30,443	1042%
29	Huff	Orange / Los Angeles	29,684	90,176	304%
15	Beall	Santa Clara	38,106	105,077	276%
27	Pavley	Los Angeles / Ventura	26,319	37,266	142%
37	Walters	Orange	52,491	66,478	127%

STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT	WINNER	LOCATION	MARGIN OF VICTORY (MOV)	AA REG	AA REG / MOV
20	Quirk	Alameda	917	48,027	5237%
36	Fox	Los Angeles (Lancaster / Palmdale)	145	5,516	3804%
18	Bonta	Alameda	1,443	37,673	2611%
50	Bloom	Los Angeles (Westside)	1,705	17,898	1050%
40	Morrell	San Bernardino	1,018	10,058	988%

Margin of victory data are from the California Secretary of State's Office; voter registration data are from an Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Voter Turnout

While more Asian Americans are registered to vote in California than ever before, Asian American voter turnout statewide still lags behind that of all voters.

Approximately 65% of Asian American registered voters statewide cast ballots on Election Day, compared to 72% of all registered voters.

Voter turnout varies considerably among Asian American ethnic groups.

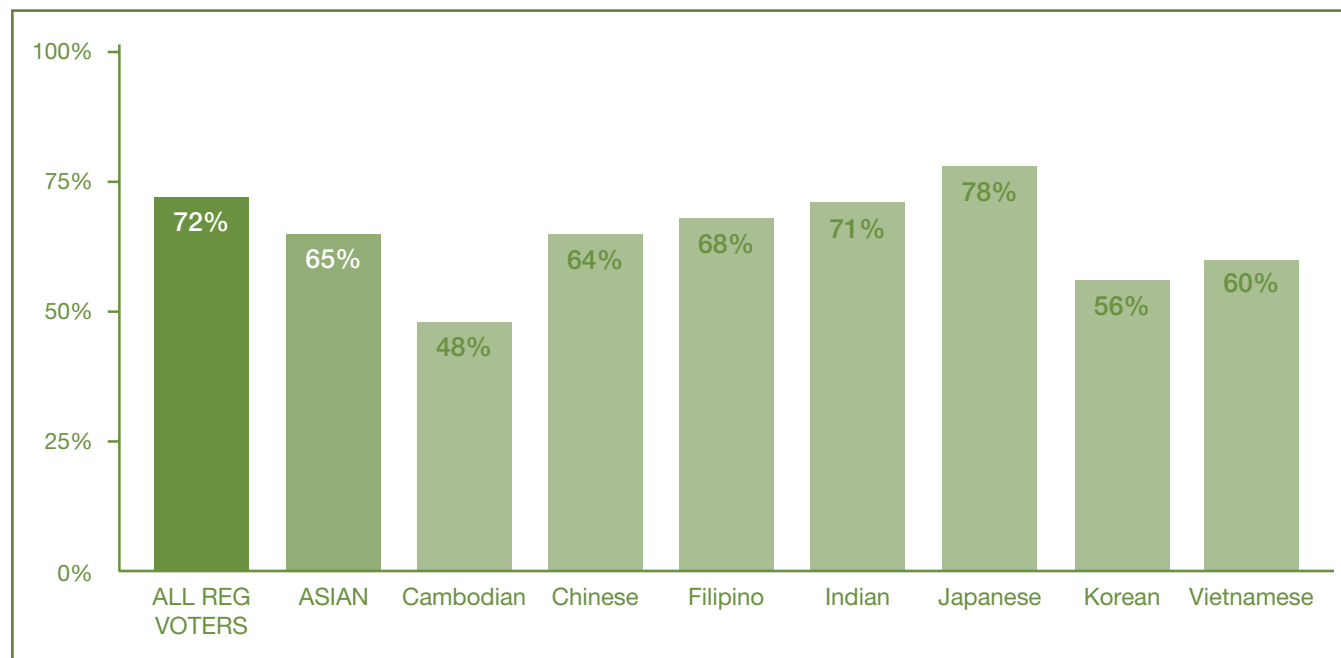
Approximately 78% of Japanese American registered voters statewide cast ballots on Election Day, a rate that far exceeded that of all voters. Voter turnout among Asian Indian (71%), Filipino (68%), and Chinese Americans (64%) approached that of all voters.

In contrast, only 48% of Cambodian Americans registered to vote cast ballots on Election Day. Voter turnout among Korean (56%) and Vietnamese Americans (60%) also lagged behind that of other Asian American ethnic groups.

Among counties with at least 20,000 Asian American registered voters, Asian American voter turnout was highest in Santa Clara (74%), Contra Costa (73%), and San Mateo (73%) Counties and lowest in Fresno (54%), Orange (58%), and Los Angeles (61%) Counties.

More Asian Americans are registered to vote than ever before, yet voter turnout still lags behind that of all voters.

Asian American Voter Turnout* by Ethnic Group, California, 2012 General Election



*Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2012 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout among Asian Americans varied by age and nativity.

While the voter turnout of most native-born Asian American registered voters approached that of all native-born registered voters, turnout among younger Asian Americans and immigrants lagged behind.

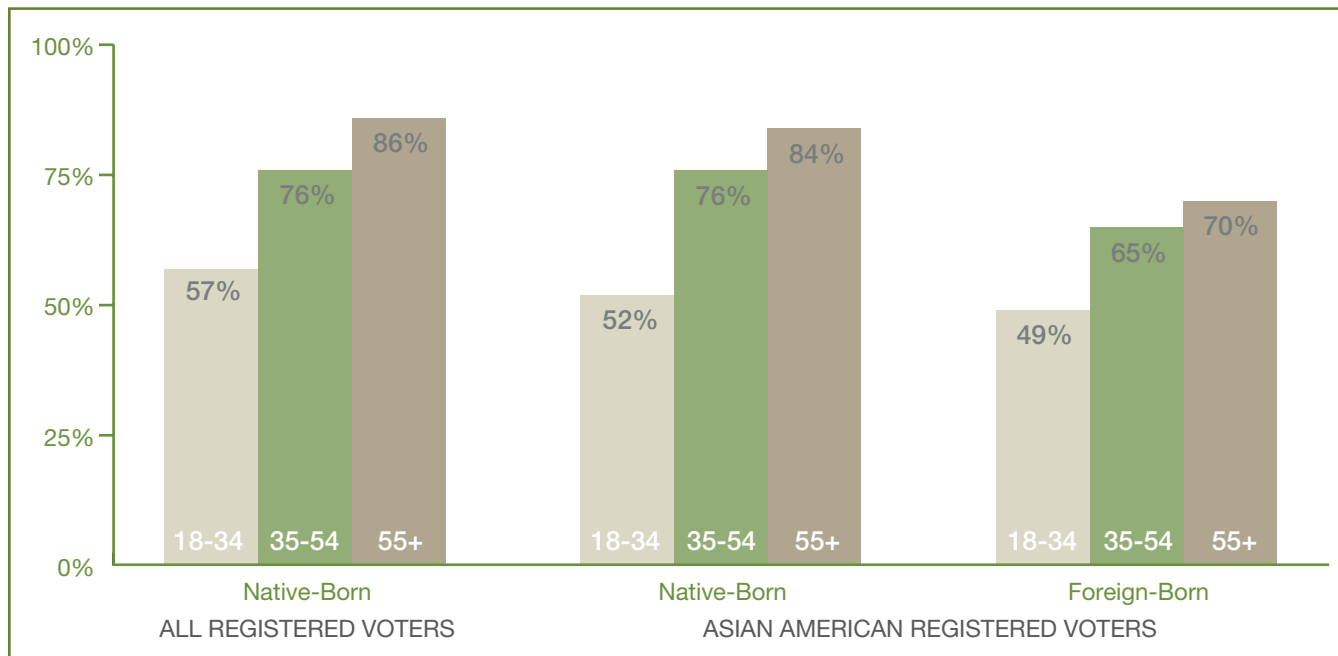
Among native-born registered voters, the turnout of Asian Americans 35 to 54 and 55 and older approached that of all voters in corresponding age brackets.

Yet voter turnout among younger Asian Americans lagged behind that of all registered voters 18 to 34.

The voter turnout of Asian American immigrants fell below that of all native-born registered voters, regardless of age. These disparities were particularly significant among Asian American immigrants 35 to 54 and 55 and older.

Voter turnout was lower among younger Asian Americans and immigrants.

Asian American Voter Turnout* by Age, Nativity, California, 2012 General Election



*Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2012 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Party Affiliation

Among the defining features of the Asian American electorate are the disproportionate numbers unaffiliated with a political party. Roughly 35% of Asian Americans registered to vote statewide have no party affiliation.

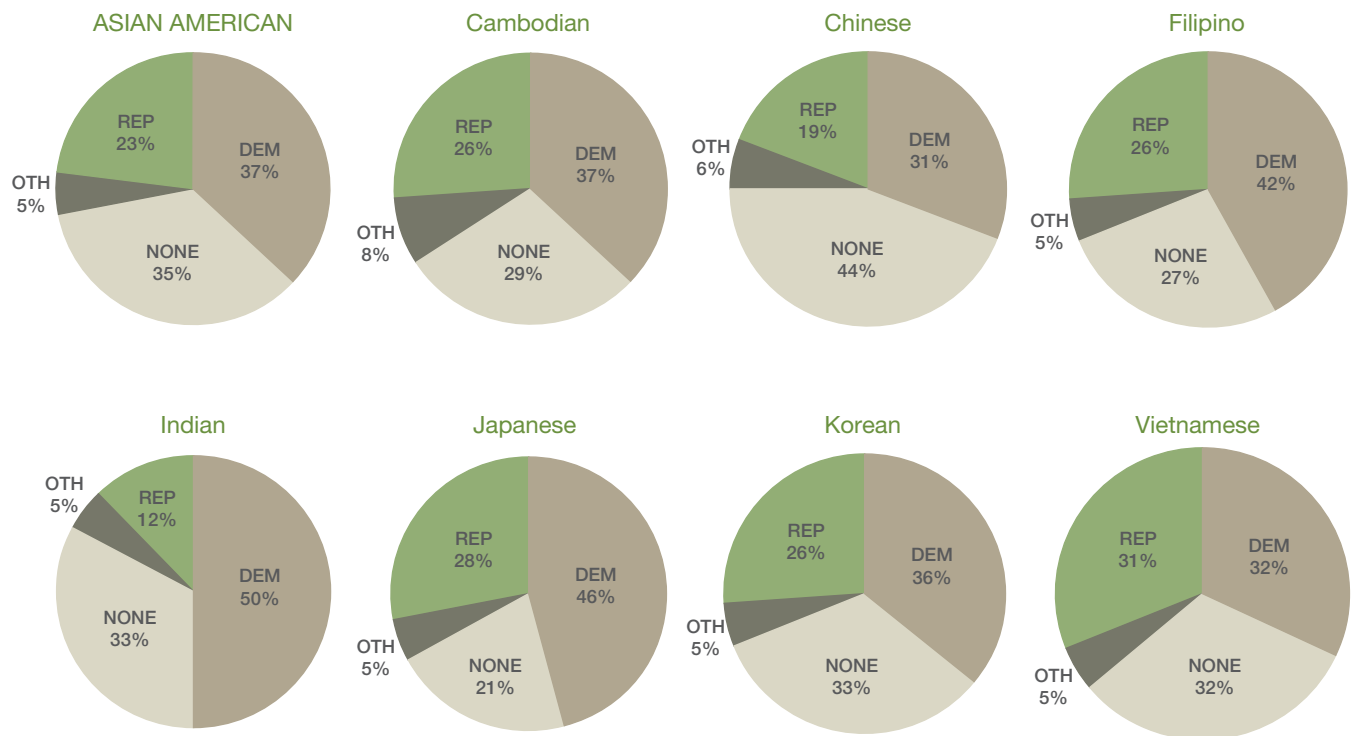
Among Chinese American registered voters, those unaffiliated with a political party outnumber those registered as either Democrat or Republican; 44% have no party affiliation.

Approximately 37% of Asian Americans registered to vote statewide are Democrats; 23% are Republicans. In comparison, 44% of all registered voters statewide are Democrats and 29% are Republicans.

While Democrats outnumber Republicans among each of the seven Asian American ethnic groups included in this report, party affiliation differs between groups. Indian Americans are most likely to be registered Democrat, while Vietnamese Americans are most likely to be registered Republican.

While Democrats outnumber Republicans, 35% of Asian Americans are not affiliated with a political party.

Asian American Party Affiliation by Ethnic Group, California, 2012 General Election



Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the California Secretary of State's Office's Statewide Voter File (April 8, 2013).

Candidates / Ballot Measures / Issues

With disproportionate numbers unaffiliated with a political party, Asian American voters are more likely to be swayed by a candidate's position on the issues than by partisan appeals. So where do Asian American voters stand?

During the 2012 General Election, approximately 70% of Asian American voters in California supported President Barack Obama in his bid for re-election.

Approximately 80% of Asian American voters statewide said immigration played an important role in determining how they voted.

Over 72% of Asian American voters indicated support for President Obama's program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA is a federal policy that prevents the deportation of young people who came to this country without documentation as children and allows them to work.

Approximately 67% of Asian American voters supported Proposition 30. Passed by voters on Election Day, the ballot measure approved temporary increases in both the state income taxes of those earning \$250,000 per year or more and the state sales tax to prevent cuts to California's education budget.

Nearly 74% of Asian American voters indicated support for policies that require health care providers be able to serve patients in languages other than English.

70% of Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama.

80% of Asian American voters said immigration played an important role in determining how they voted.

72% of Asian American voters support Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

67% of Asian Americans voted in favor of Proposition 30.

74% of Asian American voters support language access to healthcare.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles analysis of the 2012 National Asian American Survey's California sample.

Policy Recommendations

Address Asian American Policy Concerns

Asian American communities in California face mounting challenges in the aftermath of the economic recession. Increasing numbers are unemployed and poor. Many face language barriers that prevent access to jobs and critical services. Our communities are disproportionately impacted by disease, yet still lack access to adequate health care.

These challenges are reflected in both how Asian Americans vote and their attitudes on critical issues. During the 2012 General Election, Asian American voters expressed support for a ballot measure to temporarily increase taxes to support public education, a federal policy to prevent the deportation of undocumented young people, and policies that ensure access to health care for immigrant communities. As Asian Americans register to vote in record numbers and wield growing influence in legislative districts throughout the state, it is incumbent on elected officials belonging to both political parties to address the issues that affect them.

Target Civic Engagement Efforts to Asian American Communities

More Asian Americans are registering to vote and casting ballots than ever before. Yet Asian American communities in California have yet to realize their full potential as participants in the political process. The Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at USC estimates that over 470,000 Asian American immigrants who are eligible to naturalize statewide have not; 96% are of voting age.¹ The United States Census Bureau estimates that only 59% of Asian Americans eligible to register to vote have done so.²

As Asian American communities in California continue to grow, citizenship, voter registration, voter education, and get-out-the-vote efforts targeting Asian Americans become even more critical. These efforts should engage communities in diverse Asian languages and be carried out both during and between election years.

Maintain and Improve Asian Language Assistance to Voters

No racial group in California is more immigrant than Asian Americans. The Asian American electorate is disproportionately foreign-born; approximately 61% of Asian Americans registered to vote statewide as of the 2012 General Election were born outside the United States.

Federal and state voting rights law ensures immigrant communities access to the ballot by requiring assistance to voters in languages other than English. Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act requires certain counties to provide both written and oral assistance to voters in Asian languages. The California Elections Code also requires similar written and oral assistance in certain jurisdictions. When either federally- or state-mandated language assistance is denied or inadequate, the Asian American vote is effectively suppressed. State and county election officials should continue to work with communities to ensure the assistance required by law is provided to voters.

¹Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII), University of Southern California, 2011. Note: A legal permanent resident is generally eligible to naturalize after holding that status for five years. However, additional criteria, such as "good moral character" and basic English literacy, must also be met. Data include the top 13 Asian countries of origin only.

²U.S. Census Bureau, November 2008 Current Population Survey, Table 4B.

Methodology

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box draws from two primary sources of data:
(1) the California Secretary of State's Statewide Voter File and
(2) the 2012 National Asian American Survey's California sample.

California's Statewide Voter File

Information on Asian American voter registration and turnout was drawn from the California Secretary of State's Statewide Voter File, purchased from California Secretary of State's Office on April 8, 2013 under strict disclosure limitations. These data include information on every voter in the state of California, including their location, age, place of birth, and party affiliation. Advancing Justice - Los Angeles estimated the racial and ethnic background of Asian American voters by matching voter names to ethnic name lists developed through an analysis of over 15 million birth and death records obtained from the California Department of Health Services (now referred to as the California Department of Health Care Services).

2012 National Asian American Survey

Information on how Asian Americans voted was drawn from the 2012 National Asian American Survey's (NAAS) California sample. Conducted in partnership with Professor Karthick Ramakrishnan at UC Riverside between November 6 and December 26, 2012, NAAS surveyed registered voters in California at random by phone, oversampling those in Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara Counties. Surveying 10,030 registered voters, including 4,375 Asian Americans, the survey asked questions regarding (1) positions on candidates, ballot measures, and public policy issues, (2) language ability and use of bilingual voter assistance mandated under federal and state voting rights law, and (3) general demographic characteristics. Specifically, voters were asked how they voted in the Presidential race, how they voted on four statewide ballot measures (Propositions 30, 32, 34, and 38), and their positions on both Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and language access to health care.

The questionnaire instrument was translated from English into eight languages: Chinese, Hindi, Khmer, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Languages were chosen based on an analysis of language need in California. Interviews were carried out by Interviewing Service of America (ISA).



Cyrus Chung Ying Tang Foundation

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The statements and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.