

**THE ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
VOTE**

**2004**

**A REPORT ON THE MULTILINGUAL  
EXIT POLL IN THE 2004  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

**A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND**

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), founded in 1974, protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans through litigation, legal advocacy and community education in the areas of immigrant rights, civic participation and voting rights, economic justice for workers, racially-motivated violence and police misconduct, youth rights and educational equity, affirmative action, and language rights.

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# The Asian American Vote

## A Report on the AALDEF Multilingual Exit Poll in the 2004 Presidential Election

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	1
Methodology .....	3
I. Profile of Survey Respondents .....	4
II. Asian Americans and the Presidential Vote .....	8
Most Important Factor in Vote for President .....	9
Crossover Voting .....	9
III. The Vote by Other Characteristics .....	10
First-Time Voters .....	10
Foreign Born Voters .....	10
Young Voters .....	11
IV. News Sources and Civil Rights Issues .....	12
V. Access to the Vote .....	14
Language Assistance .....	14
Voting Barriers .....	15
Appendix .....	16



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 2, 2004, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), with the help of several co-sponsoring organizations and 1,200 attorneys, law students, and volunteers, conducted the nation's largest nonpartisan, multilingual exit poll of almost 11,000 Asian American voters. The questionnaire was written in 8 languages, and Asian Americans were surveyed in 23 cities in 8 states: New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

The five largest Asian groups surveyed in 2004 were Chinese (46%), South Asian (25%), Korean (14%), Southeast Asian (6%), and Filipino (5%).<sup>2</sup> 82% were foreign born. 29% had no formal U.S. education. More than a third (38%) were first-time voters.

- *Asian Americans were largely Democratic voters.* Almost 60% of Asian Americans were registered Democrats, over a quarter were not enrolled in any political party, and only 1 in 7 Asian Americans were registered Republicans. By a 3 to 1 margin, Asian Americans favored Senator John Kerry over President George W. Bush, 74% to 24%, with 2% voting for other candidates. Among first-time Asian American voters, 78% voted for Kerry, 20% voted for Bush, and 2% voted for other candidates.
- *Party crossover voting favored Democrats.* 18% of all Asian Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Kerry. By contrast, 7% of Asian Democrats voted for Bush. Among Asian voters not enrolled in any political party, more than two thirds (70%) voted for Kerry, while 26% voted for Bush.
- *Economy/jobs was the most important issue to Asian Americans in voting for President.*

Overall, the most important issues for voters were Economy/Jobs (26%), followed by the War in Iraq (16%), Terrorism/Security (16%) and Health Care (14%). Asian Americans who voted for Kerry were most influenced by the Economy/Jobs (29%), followed by the War in Iraq (18%) and Health Care (15%). Among Bush supporters, the most important factors influencing their vote for President were Terrorism/Security (33%), Economy/Jobs (18%), and the War in Iraq (11%).

- *Asian Americans share common political interests, even across ethnic lines.* Though Asian Americans are diverse, coming from different countries and speaking different languages and dialects, in the political arena there is a fair amount of political unity. Regardless of ethnicity, almost all Asian ethnic groups voted as a bloc for the same candidates and identified common reasons for their vote. Voters were asked to select the most important civil rights/immigrants rights issue from the following choices: Affirmative Action, Civil Liberties, Deportation/Detention, Hate Crimes, Immigration Backlogs, Language Barriers to Services, Legalization of Immigrants, Racial Profiling, Voting/Political

<sup>1</sup> AALDEF has conducted exit polls of Asian American voters in every major election since 1988. Over 5,000 Asian New Yorkers and 3,000 Asian voters in 4 states (NY, NJ, MA, MI) were surveyed in AALDEF's 2000 and 2002 exit polls, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> All percentages are based on total correct responses to survey questions. Questions left blank or incorrectly answered were not included in calculating percentages.



Photo by Joseph Hsu, *World Journal*

Representation, and Workers' Rights. Civil Liberties was the top choice for each ethnic group.

- *Asian Americans turned to ethnic media outlets for their main source of news.* More than half (51%) of all respondents got their news about politics and community issues from the ethnic press, rather than from mainstream media outlets. The ethnic newspaper was the most common source used among those using ethnic sources. 36% of voters got their news from ethnic media sources in Asian languages.
- *Language assistance and bilingual ballots are needed to preserve access to the vote.* 41% of Asian Americans expressed that they were limited English proficient. 14% identified English as their native language. A number of poll sites were mandated to provide bilingual ballots and interpreters under the federal Voting Rights Act; other jurisdictions voluntarily provided language assistance. In the 2004 elections, almost a

third of all respondents needed some form of language assistance to vote. The greatest beneficiaries of language assistance (46%) were first-time voters.

- *Asian Americans faced many voting barriers.* Hundreds of voters were directed to the wrong poll site and complained of hostile, rude or poorly trained poll workers. In one instance, 66% of voters who did not have to show identification were required to provide identification. AALDEF poll monitors and pollsters received more than 600 complaints of voting problems.

Community exit polls paint a different picture of the electorate. Different results are found when exit polls are taken in numerous Asian languages and pollsters resemble the populations they are polling. For example, only 11% of respondents in the poll conducted by the National Election Pool were first-time voters, whereas over a third (38%) of those surveyed in AALDEF's multilingual exit poll were first-time voters. Moreover, although the National Election Pool reported that 54% of Asian Americans voted for Kerry, AALDEF's exit poll found that 74% of Asian Americans voted for Kerry. Multilingual exit polls reveal vital information about Asian American voting patterns that are regularly overlooked or very different from mainstream voter surveys.

Copies of the report can be obtained online at [www.aaldef.org](http://www.aaldef.org) or by calling the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund at 212.966.5932.

## METHODOLOGY

In November 2004, 1,197 volunteers surveyed 10,789 Asian American voters at 87 poll sites in 23 cities in 8 states (New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Virginia).<sup>3</sup>

Seven of the eight states selected were among the states with the largest Asian American populations in the nation.<sup>4</sup> Cities and poll sites with large concentrations of Asian American voters were selected based on census data and interviews with local elections officials and community leaders. Sites with a history of voting problems were also selected.

Poll sites were covered throughout the day, from open to close, usually 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Volunteers were provided by the co-sponsoring organizations, Asian Pacific American Law Student Associations, community-based organizations, and faculty at universities. All volunteers were trained in conducting the exit poll. All were nonpartisan. Volunteers were instructed to approach all Asian voters as they were leaving poll sites and to ask them to complete a questionnaire.<sup>5</sup>

10,789 surveys were collected.<sup>6</sup> The survey questionnaire was written in 7 Asian languages: Chinese, Korean, Bengali, Arabic, Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao, in addition to English. Volunteers were conversant in 23 Asian languages and dialects: South Asian languages (Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Malayalam, Gujarati, Tamil, Urdu, Kannada, Nepali, Telegu, Marathi), Southeast Asian

languages (Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai), Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Fukienese, Toisan), Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic. About 1 in 3 respondents (32%) completed the translated questionnaire. 5% of voters needed assistance in completing the survey. Assistance included volunteers reading questionnaires aloud to voters or providing translation in another language.



Photo by Jenjamin Yuh

<sup>3</sup> A full list of the poll site locations can be found at Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) 100-Percent Data. Rhode Island was the only state selected that has a comparatively small Asian American population. The inclusion and exclusion of states depended on the capacity and interest of local groups to co-sponsor the exit poll and mobilize the requisite number of volunteers.

<sup>5</sup> Purposive sampling methodology was employed in this exit poll. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling method that involves choosing respondents with certain characteristics.

<sup>6</sup> One hundred non-Asians also voluntarily responded to the exit poll. These surveys, however, were not included in the total sample or the calculation of percentages for this report.

## I. Profile of Survey Respondents

**Ethnicity.** Survey respondents were predominantly Chinese (46%), South Asian (25%), Korean (14%), Southeast Asian (6%) and Filipino (5%). South Asian includes respondents of Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indo-Caribbean<sup>7</sup>, Sri Lankan, and Nepalese heritage. Southeast Asian includes Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Hmong, Thai, Indonesians, Burmese, and Malaysians. The remaining 4% of respondents were of other Asian ethnicities, including Japanese, Arab<sup>8</sup>, and multiracial Asians.

**Language.** While 14% of respondents identified English as their native language, more than 41% identified one or more Chinese dialects as their native language, 20% identified one or more South Asian languages, 13% identified Korean, 5% identified one or more Southeast Asian languages, 4% identified Tagalog, 1% identified Arabic, and 2% identified some other language.

Among Chinese voters, 54% selected Cantonese as their native dialect, 28% chose Mandarin, and 7% chose another Chinese dialect, including Fukienese, Shanghainese, Toisan, Taiwanese and Hakka. 10% selected English as their native language, and 1% spoke another language.

Among South Asian voters, 19% selected Bengali as their native language, 15% chose Gujarati, 14% chose Urdu, 10% chose Hindi, 6% chose Malayalam, and 5% chose Punjabi. 11% spoke multiple South Asian languages. The remaining 19% selected English as their native language, and 1% spoke another language.

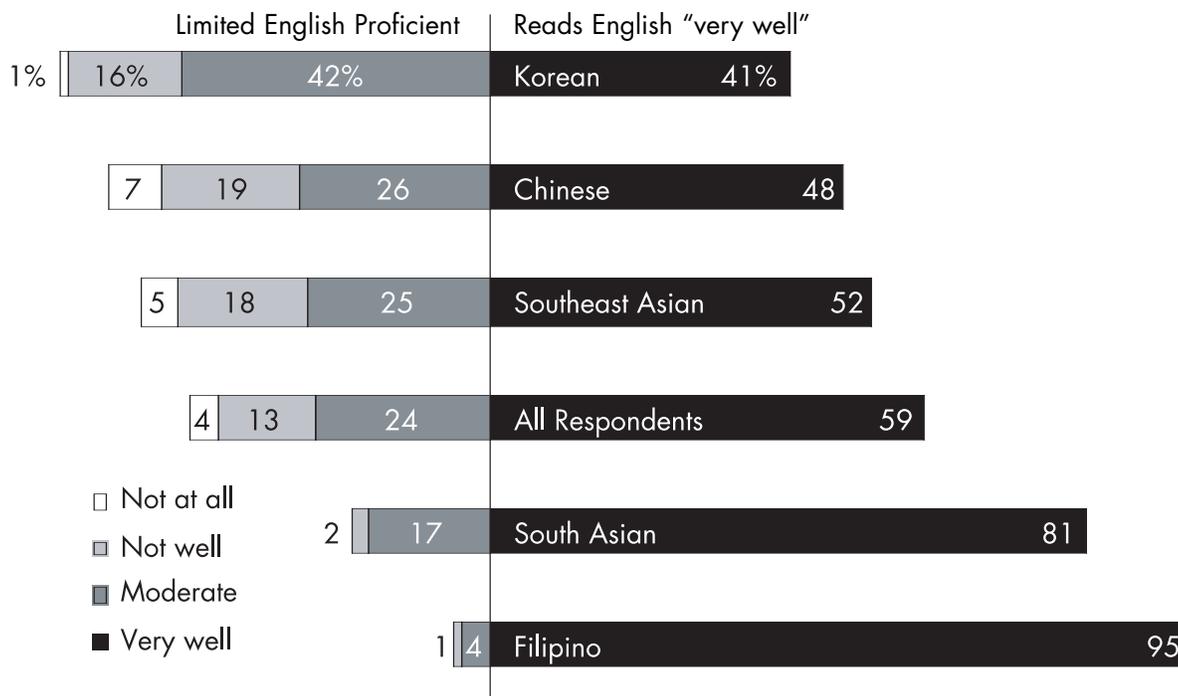
Among Korean voters, nearly 89% selected Korean as their native language. 10% selected

Percentage of Voters	Asian Respondents
100%	Total
51	Women
49	Men
46	Chinese
25	South Asian
14	Korean
6	Southeast Asian
5	Filipino
4	Other Asian
25	18 to 29 years old
18	30 to 39 years old
20	40 to 49 years old
18	50 to 59 years old
11	60 to 69 years old
8	70 and over
18	Born in the U.S.
82	Foreign born, naturalized citizen: ..... 14% 0-2 years ago ..... 17% 3-5 years ago ..... 22% 6-10 years ago ..... 47% More than 10 years ago
57	Democrat
15	Republican
26	Not enrolled in any party
2	Other party
38	First-time voter
62	Has voted before
29	No formal education in the U.S.
	Educated in the U.S., highest level:
1	..... Elementary school
2	..... Less than high school
6	..... High school degree or equivalent
4	..... Trade school degree
42	..... College or university degree
16	..... Advanced degree

<sup>7</sup> Indo-Caribbeans are ethnic Asian Indians who were brought to Caribbean nations, such as Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad, and Jamaica, as indentured servants over a century ago. Beginning in 1980 and throughout the 1990s, they have been migrating to the United States, specifically to New York.

<sup>8</sup> Although the U.S. Census Bureau designates Arabs as White, Arabs were included as Asian for this survey, since South Asians and Arabs faced similar problems of discrimination and racial profiling after September 11.

Figure 1. Ethnicity by Reading Proficiency.



English as their native language, and 1% spoke another language.

Among Southeast Asian voters, 57% selected Vietnamese as their native language, 25% chose Khmer, and 6% chose Laotian. Another 4% spoke Cantonese and/or Mandarin as their native language. 6% selected English as their native language, and 2% spoke another language.

Among Filipino voters, over three-quarters (77%) selected Tagalog as their native language. 22% selected English as their native language, and 1% spoke another language.

**Limited English Proficiency.** 41% of all respondents were limited English proficient.<sup>9</sup> Korean Americans were the most limited English proficient of all Asian ethnic groups, with 59% indicating that they have at least some difficulty reading English. Similarly, 59% of Vietnamese and 52% of Chinese voters also read English less than “very well.” Among Southeast Asian voters as a whole, 48% were limited English proficient. Among the South Asians polled, Asian Indians were largely proficient in English, while

Bangladeshi and Pakistani voters exhibited higher levels of limited English proficiency, 38% and 26% respectively.

Over a third (37%) of limited English proficient respondents were first-time voters.

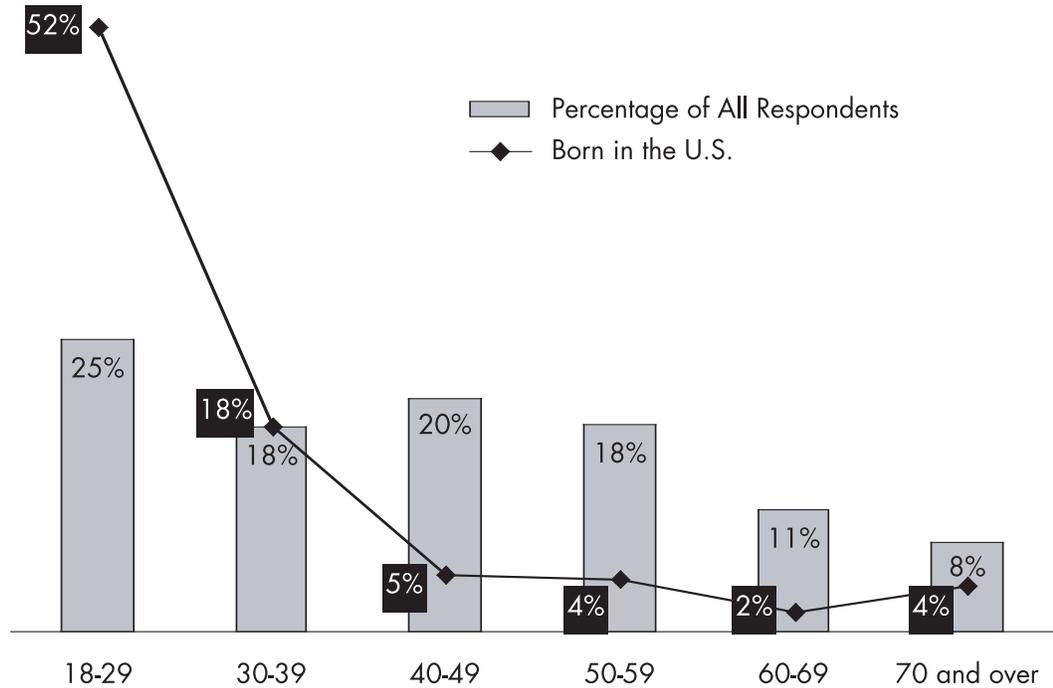
**Foreign Born.** 82% of all respondents were foreign born naturalized citizens, of which almost half (49%) were limited English proficient. 14% of these foreign born voters became U.S. citizens within the last two years, 17% 3 to 5 years ago, and 22% 6 to 10 years ago. 47% of those foreign born were naturalized more than 10 years ago.

Figure 2. Foreign Born.

South Asian	88%
Korean	87%
Southeast Asian	85%
All respondents	82%
Chinese	79%
Filipino	75%

<sup>9</sup> Limited English proficiency is determined by one’s ability to read English less than “very well.”

Figure 3. Age by Nativity.

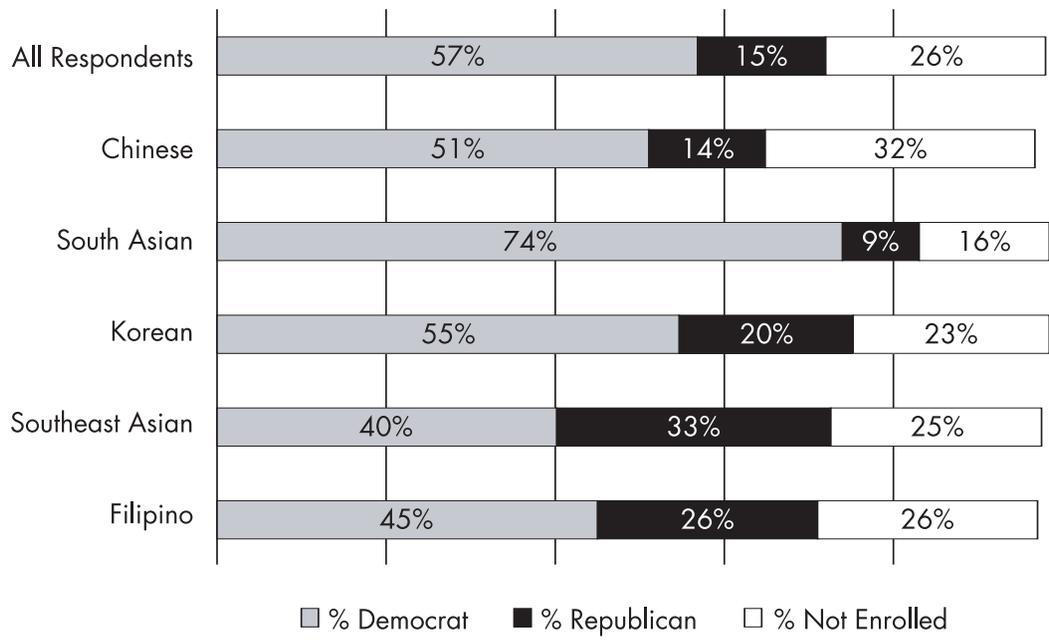


**Age.** The age distribution of voters polled was fairly even across all groups, with Asian youth 18 to 29 years old and middle aged Asians 40 to 49 years old as the two largest age groups surveyed, 25% and 20% respectively. Voters over 60 years old were 19% of the total respondent pool, in addition to those aged 30 to 39 and 50 to 59, each 18% respectively. More than 95% of Asian voters above the age of 40 were foreign born, while over half of the Asian youth (52%) were native U.S. born.

**Educational Attainment.** 29% of all respondents had no formal education in the United States. 3% had less than a high school education, 10% attained high school or trade school degrees from a U.S. school, 42% attended college or university in the U.S., and 16% held advanced graduate degrees.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, 38% of limited English proficient voters had no formal education in the U.S.

<sup>10</sup> Other surveys, such as the census, often phrase questions on educational attainment without making distinctions between the education completed abroad and the education acquired in the U.S. The percentages presented in this report reflect education attainment only in the U.S.

Figure 4. Ethnicity by Party Affiliation.



**Party Affiliation.** A majority of Asian Americans (57%) were registered Democrats, 15% were registered as Republicans, and only 2% were enrolled in other parties. 26% of all Asian American respondents were not enrolled in any political party.

While Democratic Party enrollment was the choice of each Asian ethnic group, there were some variations. By and large, South Asians, particularly Bangladeshi (84%) and Indo-Caribbean voters (81%), were registered as Democrats. A majority of Southeast Asian voters of Laotian and Cambodian descent were also enrolled as Democrats, 63% and 66% respectively. But nearly half (48%) of the Vietnamese voters who were surveyed were registered as Republicans. The Chinese respondents had the highest percentage among all Asian ethnic groups of those not enrolled in any party (32%).

**First Time Voting.** More than a third (38%) of all those surveyed stated that the November 2004 elections were the first U.S. elections in which they had voted. More than half of the Cambodian (57%), Arab (51%), and Bangladeshi (51%) respondents were first-time voters. 46% of Southeast Asians as a whole were voting for the first time. Among South Asians, there were also many first-time voters (42%), notably among the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities.

Figure 5. First Time Voting.

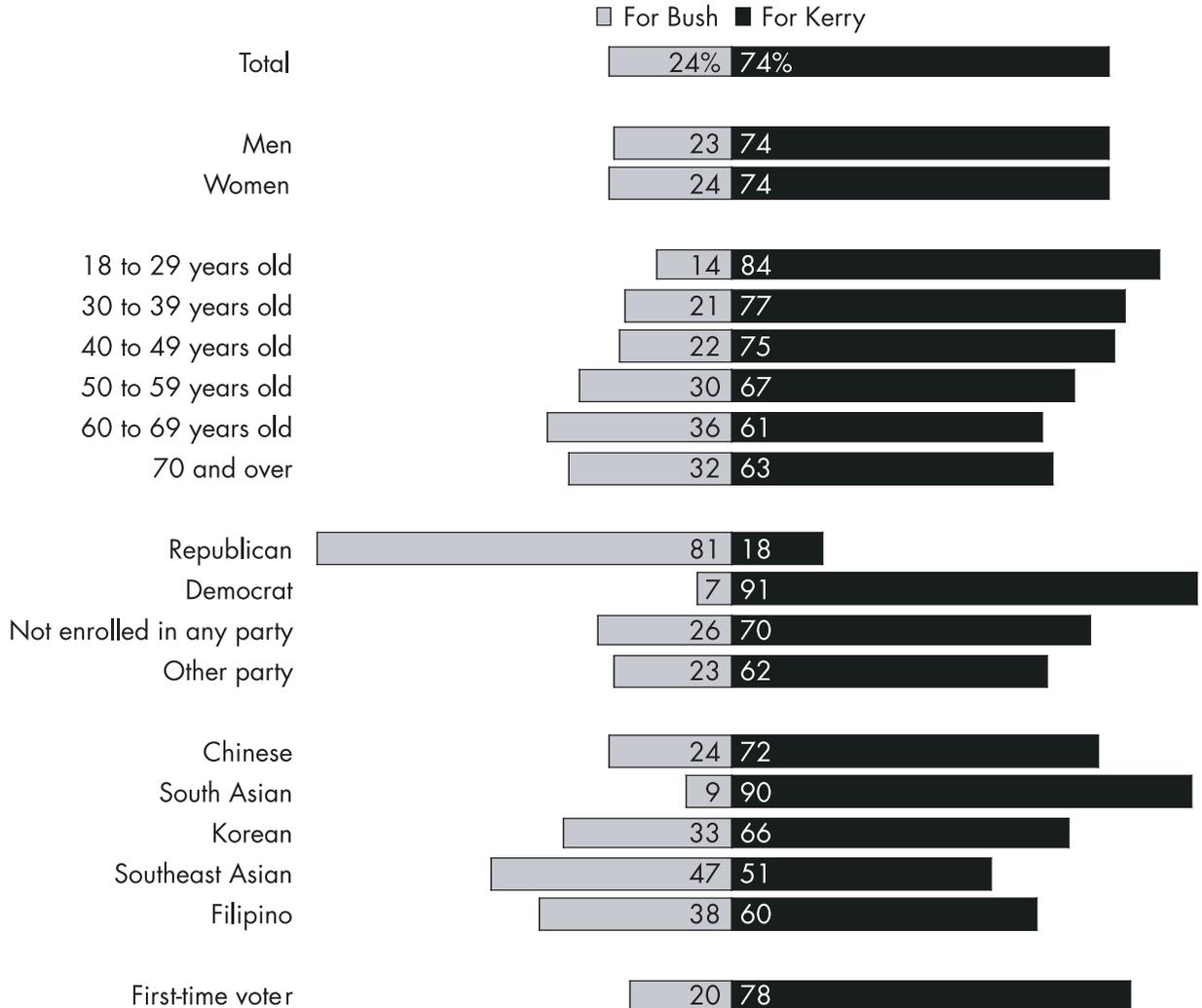
Southeast Asian	46%
South Asian	42%
All respondents	38%
Chinese	37%
Korean	35%
Filipino	27%

## II. Asian Americans and the Presidential Vote

Asian Americans favored Senator John Kerry over President George W. Bush, 74% to 24%, with 2% voting for other candidates. Exit polls conducted by the National Election Pool (ABC, Associated Press, CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC) and the *Los Angeles Times* likewise found that Asian American voters favored Kerry over Bush, but those polls had much smaller samples of Asian American voters.<sup>11</sup>

Among first-time Asian American voters, 78% voted for Kerry, 20% voted for Bush, and 2% voted for other candidates.

Figure 6. Vote for President.



<sup>11</sup> Asians made up only 2% of the total sample in the exit poll conducted by the National Election Pool and 3% of the total sample in the exit poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*. These surveys were administered in English and Spanish.

<sup>12</sup> Exit poll data for the National Election Pool was collected by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. Their national poll sampled 13,660 voters, either exiting the polling place or telephone interviews of absentee/early voters. 77% were White, 11% African Americans, 8% Latino, 2% Asian, and 2% other. More results from this exit poll are available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5297138/>.

Among Asian ethnic groups, South Asians were the strongest supporters for Kerry (90%).

Compared to other racial groups, Asian Americans voted for Presidential candidates at about the same percentage as Latinos, who voted 53% for Kerry and 44% for Bush.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 7. Vote for President by Racial Group.

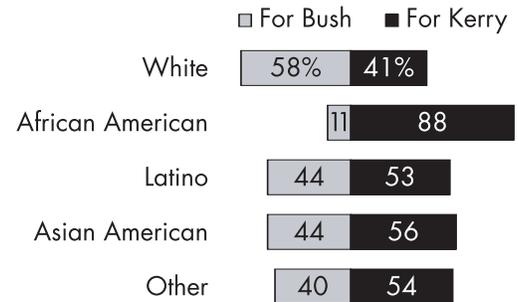
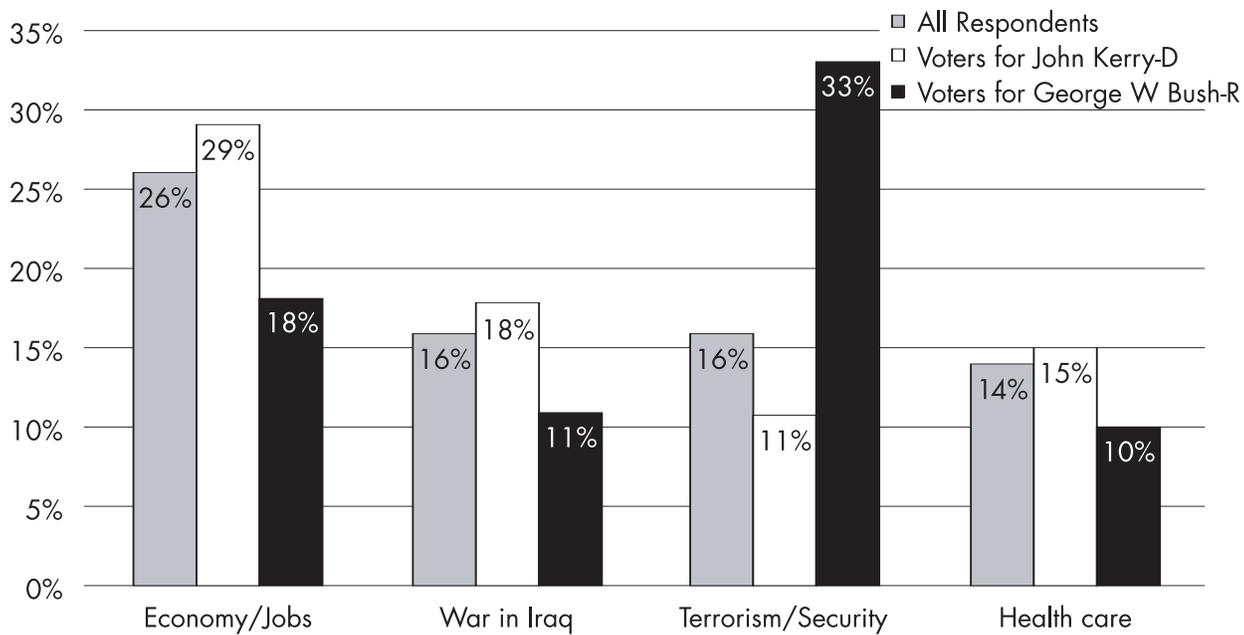


Figure 8. Most Important Factors Influencing Their Vote for President.



**A. Most Important Factor in Vote for President**

The most important issues influencing Asian Americans in their vote for president were: Economy/Jobs (26%); War in Iraq (16%); Terrorism/Security (16%); Health Care (14%); Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights (13%); Education (8%); Other (4%); and Crime in Neighborhoods (3%). Other issues included the candidate’s character, gay rights, reproductive rights, stem cell research and international affairs/foreign policy.

Among Bush supporters, the factors influencing the vote were Terrorism/Security (33%), Economy/Jobs (18%), and the War in Iraq (11%). Among Kerry supporters, the factors influencing the vote were Economy/Jobs (29%), the War in Iraq (18%), and Health Care (15%).

**B. Crossover Voting**

In the presidential race, 18% of all Asian Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Kerry, while only 7% of Asian Democrats crossed over to vote for Bush. Kerry was also

the choice of Asian American voters who were not enrolled in any political party.

Figure 9. Vote for President by Party Affiliation.

Voted For	Asian Democrats	Asian Republicans	Asians Not Enrolled
Bush	7%	81%	26%
Kerry	91%	18%	70%

Crossover voting for Kerry was stronger among Asian Americans when compared to the nation’s voters. The National Election Pool reported that only 6% of all Republicans voted for Kerry, while 11% of all Democrats voted for Bush.<sup>13</sup>

South Asian voters showed overwhelming support for Kerry, with more than 32% of South Asian Republicans crossing party lines to vote for a Democrat. Only 2% of South Asian Democrats voted for Bush. 1 in 5 Chinese Republicans also crossed party lines to vote for Kerry, while almost 1 voter for every 10 Chinese Democrats voted for Bush.

<sup>13</sup> 37% of this sample were registered Democrats, 37% were Republican, and 26% were Independent.

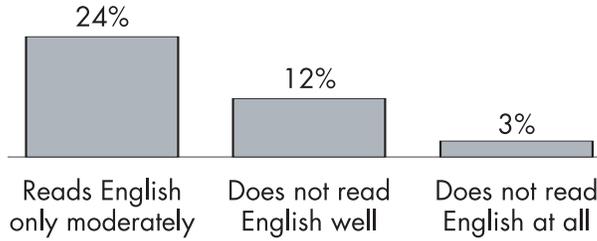
### III. The Vote by Other Characteristics

#### A. First-Time Voters

39 % of first-time voters were limited English proficient compared to 41 % overall.

Nearly half (46 %) of those who used some form of language assistance were first-time voters.

Figure 10. Limited English Proficiency.



57 % of first-time voters were Democrats. By contrast, 13 % were Republicans and 28 % were not enrolled in any party. Only 2 % were enrolled in another political party.

Among these new Asian American voters, 78 % voted for Kerry, 20 % voted for Bush, and 2 % voted for other candidates. The most important factors influencing their vote mirrored that of all voters, Economy/Jobs (27 %), the War in Iraq (17 %), and Terrorism/Security (14 %).

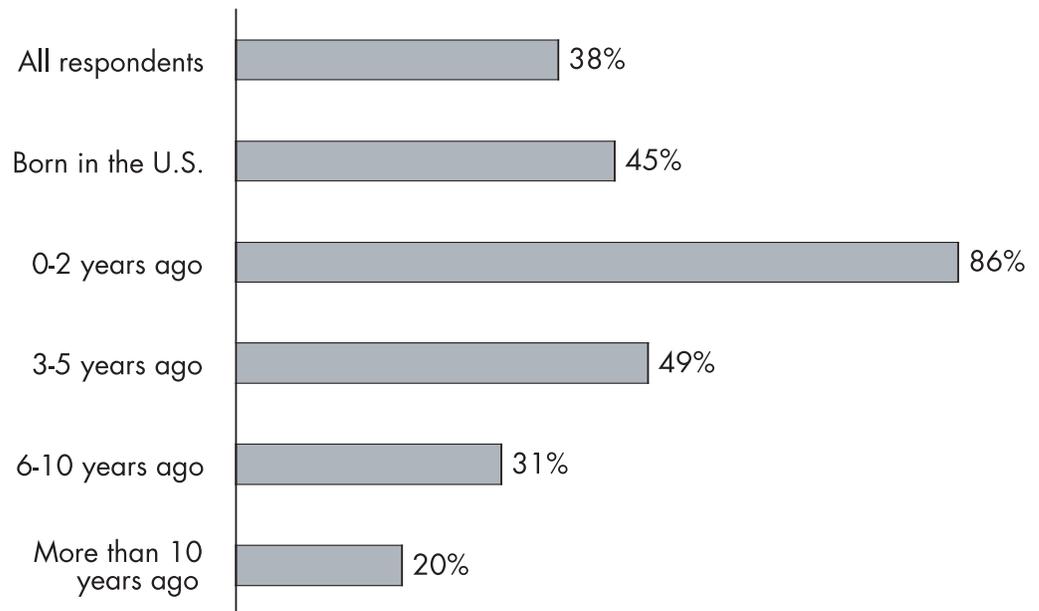
#### B. Foreign Born Voters

82 % of the Asian Americans surveyed on Election Day were foreign born voters.<sup>14</sup>

Of the survey respondents who were native born, 45 % voted for the first time. By contrast, 86 % of those who became U.S. citizens in the last 2 years voted for the first time. Close to half (49 %) of the Asian Americans who became U.S. citizens 3 to 5 years ago were also new voters.

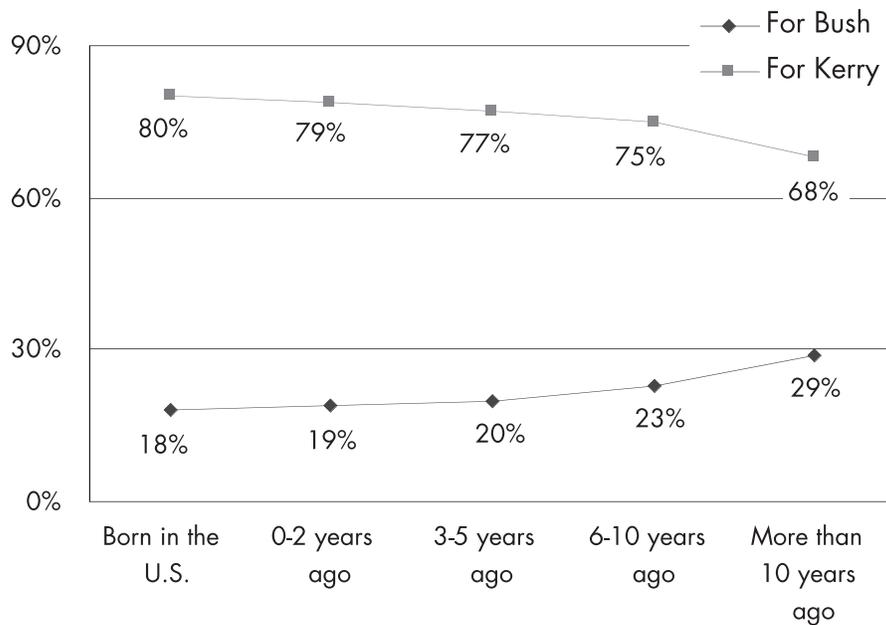
Over half (52 %) of the foreign born voters who became U.S. citizens in the last 5 years were limited English proficient. However, Asian Americans who had been naturalized 6-10 years or more than 10 years also expressed difficulty with English, 47 % and 48 % respectively.

Figure 11. Citizenship Tenure by First Time Voting.



<sup>14</sup> Foreign born voters became U.S. citizens through naturalization.

Figure 12. Citizenship Tenure by Vote for President.



There was an inverse relationship between the vote for the presidential candidates and the citizenship tenure of Asian American voters. Kerry's greatest support came from U.S. born Asian Americans and Asian Americans who became citizens within five years of the election. Conversely, Bush's greatest support came from those who had been naturalized for more than 10 years.

Foreign born voters, regardless of when they naturalized, identified Economy/Jobs as the most important factor influencing their vote for president. However, they were more likely to rank Civil Rights or Health Care as motivating factors influencing their vote than U.S. born voters, who ranked the War in Iraq second and Terrorism/Security third.

### C. Young Voters

Close to half (48%) of Asian Americans aged 18 to 29 years old were foreign born. 63% of them voted for the first time.

Across all age groups, young people favored Kerry the most, with 84% voting for Kerry, 14% voting for Bush and 2% for other candidates. Though 9% of these Asian youth were registered in the Republican Party, 25% of them crossed party lines to vote for Kerry. By contrast, 4% of young Democrats voted for Bush.



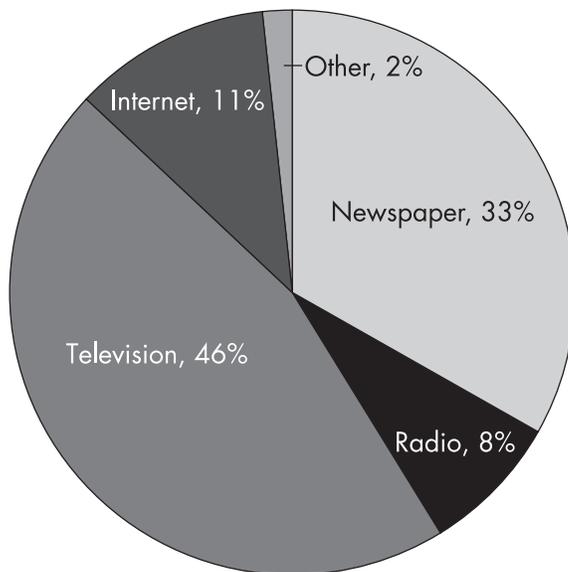
Photo by Jenjamin Yuh

## IV. News Sources and Civil Rights Issues

### A. Source of News

Nearly 46% of Asians responded that they watched television as their main source of news about politics and community issues. Another third (33%) said that their main source of news came from the newspaper, 11% got their information from the Internet, 8% from the radio, and 2% from other sources.

Figure 13. Source of News.



More than half (51%) of all respondents got their news from the ethnic press, rather than from mainstream English media outlets.

The ethnic newspaper was the most common source (43%) among those using ethnic sources. Very few (6%), however, used the Internet, as opposed to the 19% of those using mainstream English news sources.

Korean and Chinese voters received their news about politics and community issues primarily from ethnic media outlets, most of which were translated in Asian languages.

Figure 14. Type of Media.

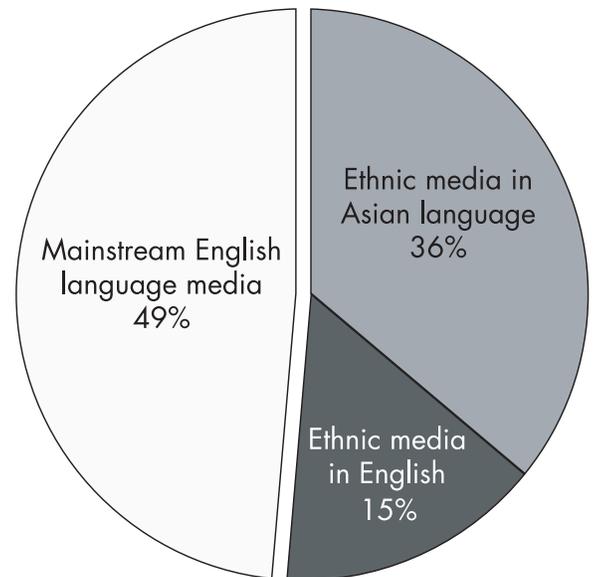


Figure 15. Ethnicity by Type of Media.

	Ethnic media in Asian language	Ethnic media in English	Mainstream English language media
Chinese	47%	12%	41%
South Asian	16%	22%	62%
Korean	57%	9%	34%
Southeast Asian	26%	22%	52%
Filipino	6%	16%	78%

## B. Immigrant Rights/Civil Rights Issues

When asked what immigrant rights/civil rights issue was most important to them, Asian Americans overwhelmingly chose Civil Liberties as their top issue. This issue was followed by Affirmative Action, Racial Profiling and Workers' Rights. Each Asian ethnic group shared similar issues of importance, although there was some variation in their second and third issues.

Among first-time voters, the most important issues included Civil Liberties (28%), Workers' Rights (10%) and Racial Profiling (10%). Likewise, foreign born Asians responded with Civil Liberties (29%) as their top immigrant rights issue, followed by Affirmative Action (10%) and Racial Profiling (10%).

Figure 16. Most Important Civil Rights Issue.

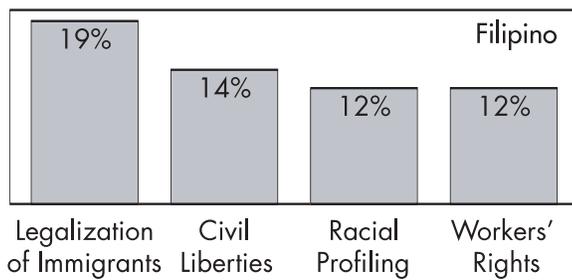
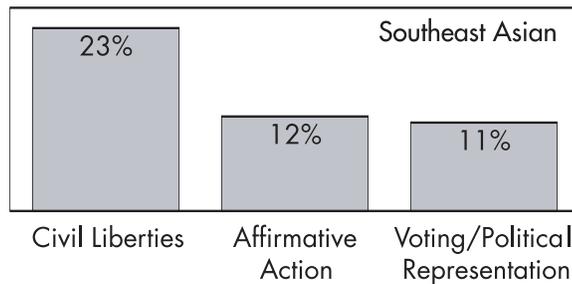
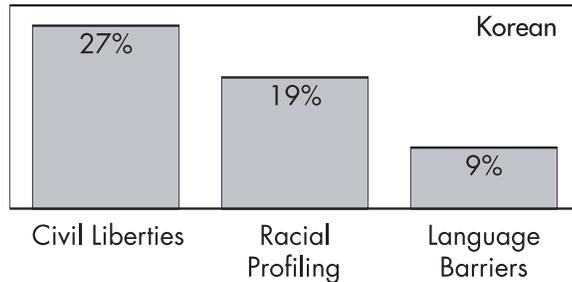
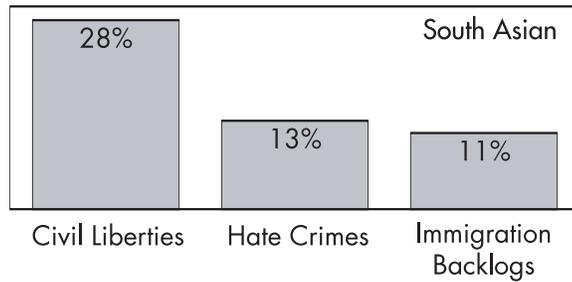
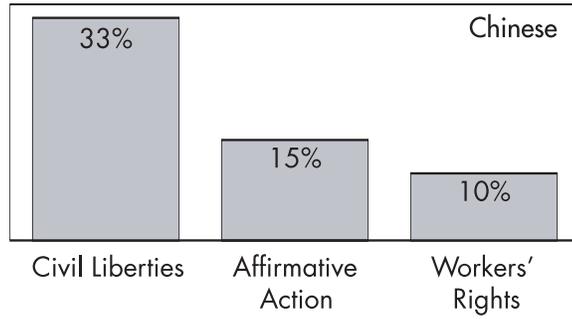
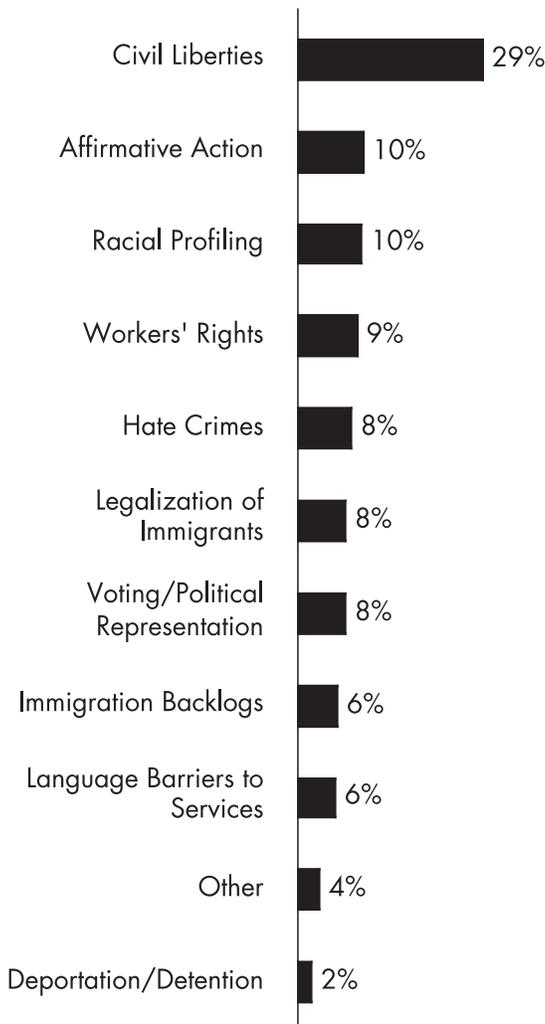




Photo by Joseph Hsu, *World Journal*

## V. Access to the Vote

The federal Voting Rights Act protects racial, ethnic and language minority voters. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act guards against racial discrimination. Section 203 affirmatively requires jurisdictions with large numbers of limited English proficient voting age citizens to provide translated ballots and interpreters at poll sites. Congress also enacted the federal Help American Vote Act (HAVA) to remedy many voting problems highlighted in Florida in the 2000 elections. Several state laws and local election procedures also protect Asian American and other minority voters.

### A. Language Assistance

The 2004 exit poll covered jurisdictions that were either legally required to provide or voluntarily provided language assistance to the vote.

Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act covers jurisdictions in New York and Illinois for Asian language assistance.<sup>15</sup> In New York, Chinese language assistance is required in Kings County (Brooklyn) and New York County (Manhattan), and both Chinese and Korean are required in Queens County. In Illinois, Cook County is covered for Chinese language assistance. These jurisdictions must provide translated ballots, instructions, and other voting materials and interpreters at poll sites with large numbers of limited English proficient voters.

In Michigan, pursuant to a consent decree by the U. S. Department of Justice for past voting discrimination and racial profiling at the polls in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, the City of Hamtramck provided Arabic and Bengali language assistance.<sup>16</sup>

Other jurisdictions in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois and Pennsylvania voluntarily provide language assistance, most often in the form of interpreters at selected poll sites for particular Asian language minority voters.

Figure 17. Required Language Assistance by Language Minority Group.

Language Minority Group <sup>17</sup>	Limited English Proficient	Needed an Interpreter	Needed Translated Written Materials
Chinese in Manhattan, Brooklyn, & Queens, NY	56%	37%	36%
Korean in Queens, NY	67%	34%	49%
Bangladeshi in Hamtramck, MI	59%	26%	33%
Arab in Hamtramck, MI	38%	30%	24%

<sup>15</sup> A political subdivision is covered if more than 5% or 10,000 of its voting age citizens are members of a single language minority group and are limited English proficient, and the illiteracy rate of such language minority citizens is higher than the national illiteracy rate. A complete list of the 296 jurisdictions that are required to provide minority language assistance can be found at [http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/sec\\_203/203\\_notice.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/sec_203/203_notice.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> *U.S. v. City of Hamtramck*, (E.D.Mich.) Aug. 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Chinese voters were not surveyed at Section 203 covered poll sites in Chicago, Illinois. Consequently, the corresponding numbers for limited English proficiency and use of language assistance are not offered in this report.

Figure 18. Voluntary Language Assistance by Language Minority Group.

Language Minority Group	Limited English Proficient	Needed an Interpreter	Needed Translated Written Materials
Korean in Palisades Park & Fort Lee, NJ	55%	21%	33%
Chinese in Boston, MA	65%	43%	52%
Vietnamese in Dorchester, MA	74%	60%	55%
Cambodian in Lowell, MA	39%	35%	32%
Korean in Greater Chicago Area, IL	59%	22%	37%
Chinese in Philadelphia, PA	44%	25%	31%
Vietnamese in Falls Church, VA	55%	29%	24%

All voters have a right to be assisted by a person of their choice, and these individuals (most often a friend or family member) may enter voting booths to translate the ballot for the voter. In jurisdictions where Asian American voters were growing in numbers but language assistance was not already provided, voters were allowed to bring their own interpreters. This particularly involved Southeast Asian voters (Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese) in Providence, RI; Chinese voters in Quincy, MA; South Asians in Edison and Jersey City, NJ; and South Asian and Vietnamese voters in Falls Church, VA.

Language assistance has expanded access to the vote for many Asian Americans. The greatest beneficiaries of language assistance (46%) were first-time voters.

### B. Voting Barriers

Asian Americans had to overcome a number of barriers to exercise their right to vote. For example, in most jurisdictions identification was not a prerequisite to voting. HAVA now requires that certain first-time voters must provide identification.<sup>18</sup> Other voters were generally exempt from these new federal

voting requirements. However, two thirds (66%) of New York and New Jersey voters who had registered prior to January 1, 2003 were required to show identification, even though it was not legally required under HAVA. In total, 2,789 voters reported that they were required to show some form of identification.

A number of Asian American voters polled also reported various other voting problems.

- The names of 371 voters were not on the lists of registered voters.
- 126 voters complained that poll workers were discourteous or hostile.
- 239 voters said that poll workers were poorly trained.
- 185 voters were directed to the wrong poll site or election district.
- 385 voters encountered other voting problems.

More than 600 voters called AALDEF's election hotline or complained to poll monitors to report voting problems. More must be done to ensure that Asian Americans can fully exercise their right to vote.

<sup>18</sup> HAVA's identification provisions only apply to first time voters who registered after January 1, 2003, registered by mail, and who did not provide a driver's license number or last four digits of social security numbers or the numbers did not match.

# APPENDIX

## A. Poll Site Locations

### New York

Manhattan (Chinatown, Lower East Side)  
Queens (Flushing, Jackson Heights,  
Elmhurst, Richmond Hill, Floral Park,  
Jamaica, Bayside)  
Brooklyn (Sunset Park, Williamsburg,  
Midwood, Kensington)

### New Jersey

Palisades Park  
Fort Lee  
Jersey City  
Edison  
East Brunswick

### Massachusetts

Boston (Chinatown, Dorchester, Mission Hill)  
Lowell  
Quincy

### Rhode Island

Providence

### Michigan

Detroit  
Hamtramck  
Dearborn  
Ann Arbor

### Illinois

Chicago (Nortown, Devon, Albany Park)  
Evanston  
Lincolnwood  
Glenview  
North Brook

### Pennsylvania

Philadelphia (Chinatown, North  
Philadelphia)

### Virginia

Annandale  
Falls Church  
Arlington

## B. Co-Sponsors of the Asian American Exit Poll

Asian American Bar Association of New York  
Asian Pacific American Agenda Coalition  
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center  
Boston Asian Students Alliance  
Chinatown Voter Education Alliance  
Chinese Progressive Association  
Harry H. Dow Memorial Legal Assistance Fund  
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center  
Korean American Voters Council of NY/NJ  
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights – Boston  
National Asian American Student Convention  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
Providence Youth and Student Movement  
Organization of Chinese Americans – Detroit Chapter  
South Asian American Leaders for Tomorrow  
South Asian American Voting Youth  
Vietnamese American Initiative for Development  
Young Korean American Service and Education Center

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Asian American Studies Program, Hunter College/ City University of New York (CUNY)  
Asian/American Center, Queens College/ City University of New York (CUNY)  
Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program & Institute, New York University  
Center for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, Columbia University  
College of Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts at Boston  
Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University

### *Asian Pacific American Law Student Associations (APALSA)*

Brooklyn Law School  
Cardozo School of Law  
Columbia Law School<sup>19</sup>  
CUNY School of Law at Queens College  
Fordham University School of Law  
Harvard Law School  
Hofstra University School of Law  
New York University School of Law<sup>19</sup>  
Northeastern University School of Law  
Rutgers University School of Law  
Suffolk University Law School  
Southern New England School of Law  
University of Chicago Law School  
University of Michigan School of Law

### *Community-Based Organizations*

Asian Pacific Islander American Corporate Leadership Network  
Asian Americans Raise Your Voice  
Coalition of Asian, African, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois  
Collaborative Opportunities for Raising Awareness  
Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Men of New York  
Korean American League for Civic Action  
Project Impact for South Asian Americans  
South Asian Youth Action!  
Young Korean American Network

### *Undergraduate Student Clubs and Organizations*

ACLU Chapter at University of Chicago  
Arab Student Association at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor  
Asian American Alliance at Columbia University  
Asian American Students Association at Brown University  
Asian American Women's Alliance at New York University  
United Asian American Organizations at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor

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<sup>18</sup> At Columbia and NYU, both the APALSA and South Asian American Law Student Association assisted in the exit poll.



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