

**THE ASIAN
AMERICAN
VOTE IN
THE
2008
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION**

NY, NJ, MA, PA, VA, MD, DC, MI, IL, LA, TX, NV



A REPORT OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE IN THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Election Day, November 4, 2008, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) dispatched 1,500 attorneys, law students and community volunteers to poll sites in 11 states and conducted a nonpartisan multilingual exit poll of 16,665 Asian American voters.

AALDEF's exit poll was the nation's largest survey of Asian American voters and covered 113 poll sites in 39 cities. The exit poll was conducted in English and twelve Asian languages. Voters were surveyed in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, and Nevada. AALDEF has conducted exit polls in every major election since 1988.

Asian American voters often are overlooked by the mainstream media and by candidates for political office. Mainstream exit polls typically report racial breakdowns for Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and "others." When the media neglect the Asian American vote, candidates often follow suit. When they do report on the Asian American vote, the data may be skewed because respondents were surveyed only in English.

Multilingual exit polls give a fuller and more accurate portrait of Asian American voters than polls conducted only in English. AALDEF's exit poll reveals details about the Asian American community including voter preferences on candidates, political parties, language needs, and other issues of vital importance to our community.

Profile of Respondents

The six largest Asian ethnic groups polled in 2008 were Chinese (32%), South Asian (32%), Korean (14%), Southeast Asian (9%), and Filipino (5%). South Asian includes Asian Indians, Bangladeshis, Indo-Caribbeans, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans. Southeast Asian includes Cambodians, Indonesians, Laotians, Thais, and Vietnamese. Four out of five (79%) respondents were foreign born. Over one-third (35%) described themselves as limited English proficient, and 23% had no formal U.S. education. Nearly one-third (31%) were first-time voters.

Democratic Majority

In the presidential race, Asian Americans favored Barack Obama over John McCain by more than a 3 to 1 margin (76% to 23%). A clear majority (58%) of Asian Americans were registered Democrats, 26% were not enrolled in any political party, and 13% of Asian Americans were registered Republicans.

Party crossover voting heavily favored Democrats. A larger proportion of Asian American Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Obama than did Asian American Democrats voting for McCain. Moreover, the vast majority of Asian Americans not enrolled in a party voted for Obama.

Common Political Interests

Asian Americans are a diverse community of people, some of whom come from different countries and speak different languages and dialects. In the political arena, however, they share common views. During the presidential election, Asian Americans voted as a bloc for the same candidates and identified common reasons for their votes. Economy/Jobs was the dominant issue influencing the Asian American vote for President (66%) followed by Health Care (40%), Foreign Policy/War in Iraq (31%), Education (27%), and Civil Rights/Immigration Rights (23%).



With respect to health care, AALDEF's exit poll showed that Asian Americans were strongly supportive of reforms that would extend health insurance and medical coverage to all persons regardless of immigration status.

Furthermore, many Americans have lost their jobs and homes because of the current economic crisis. The recent instability of the U.S. economy has created a climate of fear among many Americans who are concerned with their job security and with foreclosure on their homes. AALDEF's exit poll revealed that many Asian Americans, especially those who were limited English proficient, were concerned with losing their homes because of foreclosure.

Language Access

Language assistance and bilingual ballots are needed to preserve access to the vote. One in five (20%) voters identified English as their native language. Thirty-five percent (35%) said that they were limited English proficient. 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 2008 elections, 43% of respondents who were limited English proficient preferred to use some form of language assistance to vote.

Voting Barriers

AALDEF poll monitors received more than 800 complaints of voting problems. Asian American voters were unlawfully required to provide identification to vote, mistreated by hostile or poorly trained poll workers, directed to the wrong poll sites, and did not receive adequate notification of their poll site assignments. Asian American voters also faced long lines, a lack of Asian-language assistance, poll books with missing voter names, and machine breakdowns.

Copies of this report can be obtained online at www.aaldef.org or by contacting the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund at 800.966.5946 or info@aaldef.org.

METHODOLOGY

On November 4, 2008, AALDEF surveyed 16,665 Asian American voters at 113 poll sites in 39 cities across eleven states - New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, and Nevada - and Washington, D.C.

The states selected for the exit poll were among those with the largest Asian American populations in the nation according to the U.S. Census. Poll sites with large concentrations of Asian American voters were selected using voter registration files, census data, and interviews with local elections officials and community leaders. Poll sites with a history of voting problems were also selected.

Volunteer exit pollsters were stationed at poll sites throughout the day, usually between 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Volunteers were recruited with the assistance of co-sponsoring organizations including Asian Pacific American Law Student Association chapters, community-based organizations, Asian American bar associations, law firms, and undergraduate Asian American Studies programs and student associations. All volunteers were trained in conducting the exit poll. All were nonpartisan. Volunteers were instructed to survey all Asian voters as they were leaving poll sites by asking them to complete an anonymous questionnaire.

Survey questionnaires were written in twelve Asian languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese, in addition to English. Volunteers were conversant in 38 Asian languages and dialects: Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Fujianese, Hakka, Mandarin, Shanghainese, Taiwanese, Toisan, Wenzhounese) South Asian languages (Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telegu, Tulu, Urdu), Southeast Asian languages (Burmese, Cham, Hmong, Indonesian, Khmer, Konkani, Lao, Malay, Thai, Tibetan), Filipino dialects (Tagalog, Cebuano), Arabic, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, and Pashto. One in four respondents (25%) completed Asian language questionnaires, while 75% completed the English version. Some voters needed assistance and had the questionnaires read aloud to them.

Figure 1. Proportion of Asian Population by Locality

State	Locality	Proportion of Asian Population ¹
NY	Manhattan	10%
	Queens	19%
	Brooklyn	8%
	Bronx	4%
NJ	Jersey City	19%
	Palisades Park	42%
	Fort Lee	35%
	Tenafly	20%
	Edison	36%
MA	East Brunswick	21%
	Boston	9%
	Quincy	20%
	Malden	18%
PA	Lowell	20%
	Philadelphia	6%
	Montgomery	15%
	Upper Darby	10%
VA	Bensalem	8%
	Annandale	20%
	Arlington	10%
	Centreville	28%
	Fairfax	16%
	Falls Church	8%
	Glen Allen	3%
Virginia Beach	7%	
MD	Rockville	19%
	Silver Spring	10%
	Gaithersburg	19%
District of Columbia		4%
MI	Ann Arbor	16%
	Canton	14%
	Dearborn	2%
	Detroit	1%
	Hamtramck	18%
	Novi	14%
	Troy	17%
IL	Chicago	5%
	Glenview	12%
LA	New Orleans	3%
TX	Houston	6%
NV	Las Vegas	7%

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Ethnicity

Survey respondents were Chinese (32%), Asian Indian (15%), Korean (14%), Bangladeshi (8%), Vietnamese (6%), Filipino (5%), Indo-Caribbean (4%), Pakistani (4%), and Arab (3%). In aggregate, South Asians made up 32% of all respondents. The remaining respondents were of other Asian ethnicities and were multiracial or multiethnic Asians.

Language

While 20% of respondents identified English as their native language, 27% identified one or more Chinese dialects as their native language (including Cantonese, Mandarin), 24% spoke one or more South Asian languages (including Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu), 12% spoke Korean, 8% spoke one or more Southeast Asian languages (including Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao), 4% spoke Tagalog, 3% spoke Arabic, and 2% identified another Asian language as their native language.

Among Chinese voters 44% selected Cantonese as their native dialect while 31% chose Mandarin. Seven percent (7%) said they spoke multiple Chinese dialects and/or other Chinese dialects, including Fujianese, Hakka, Shanghaiese, Taiwanese, and Toisan. Fifteen percent (15%) identified English as their native language.

Among Korean voters, 81% selected Korean as their native language, while 18% identified English as their native language.

Among South Asian voters, 27% selected Bengali as their native language, 11% selected Gujarati, 11% selected Urdu, 7% selected Hindi, and 5% selected Punjabi. Thirteen percent (13%) of South Asian voters spoke multiple South Asian languages or other South Asian languages, including Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, and Marathi. Twenty-four percent (24%) identified English as their native language.

Among Southeast Asian voters, 61% selected Vietnamese as their native language, 18% selected Khmer, and 9% selected English. Another 9% spoke

Figure 2. Profile of Survey Respondents

Percentage of Voters	Asian American Respondents
100%	16,665 Total surveyed
49	Women
51	Men
32	Chinese
15	Asian Indian
14	Korean
8	Bangladeshi
6	Vietnamese
5	Filipino
4	Indo-Caribbean
4	Pakistani
3	Arab
25	18 to 29 years old
20	30 to 39 years old
18	40 to 49 years old
17	50 to 59 years old
11	60 to 69 years old
9	70 and over
21	Born in the U.S.
79	Foreign-born, naturalized citizen:
11	... 0-2 years ago
11	... 3-5 years ago
17	... 6-10 years ago
40	... More than 10 years ago
58	Democrat
13	Republican
26	Not enrolled in any party
3	Other party
23	No formal education in the U.S.
77	Educated in the U.S., highest level:
1	... Elementary school
1	... Some high school
11	... High school or trade school
43	... College/university
21	... Graduate school

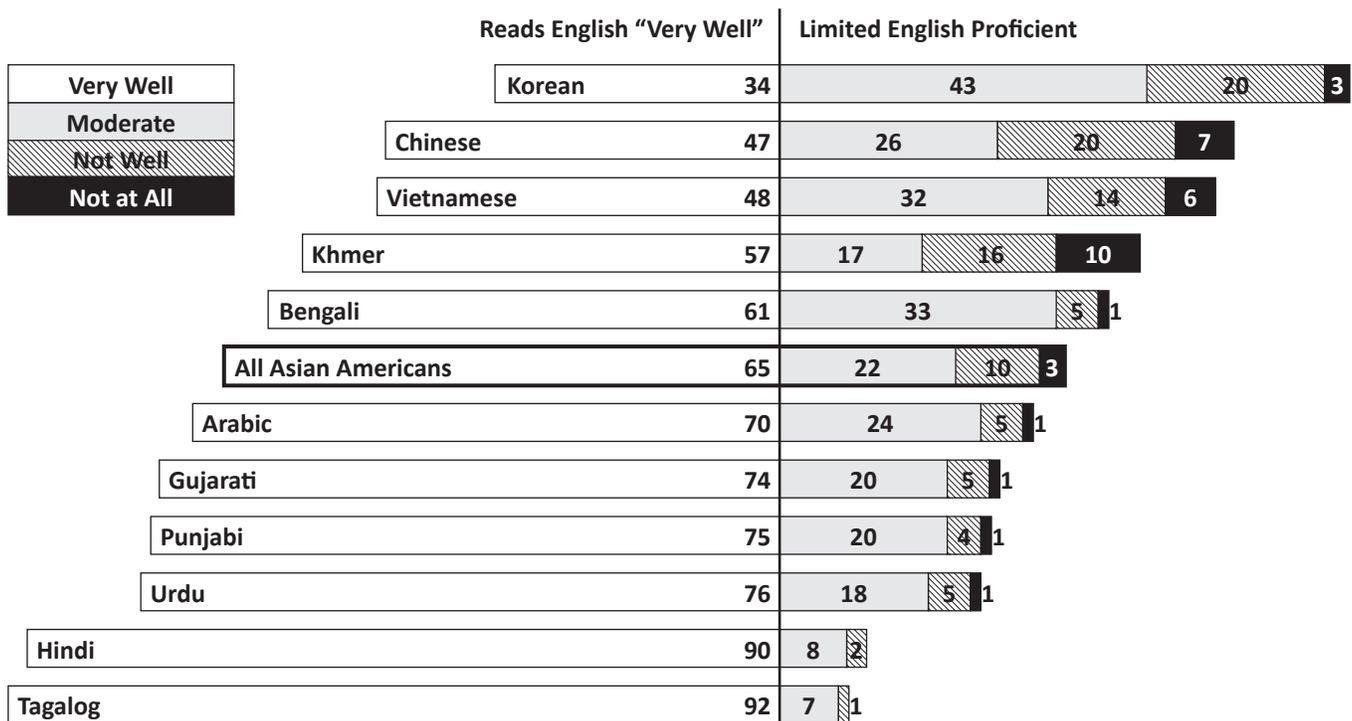
multiple languages and/or other Southeast Asian Languages, including Thai, Lao, Indonesian, and Burmese. Among Filipino voters, 73% selected Tagalog as their native dialect and 26% selected English as their native language.

Limited English Proficiency

Thirty-five percent (35%) of Asian voters surveyed said they read English less than “very well.” Limited English proficiency is defined as the ability to read English less than “very well.”² Therefore, over one-third of respondents were limited English proficient.

Of all language groups, native Korean-speaking voters exhibited the highest rate of limited English proficiency, with 66% indicating that they have at least some difficulty reading English. Among South Asians, although native Hindi speakers were largely proficient in English (90%), 39% of native Bengali speakers read English less than “very well.”

Figure 3. Limited English Proficiency by Language Group



In certain cities, even higher rates of limited English proficiency were revealed. In Chicago, Illinois, 81% of native Korean-speaking respondents were limited English proficient. In Boston, Massachusetts, 70% of native Chinese speakers and 54% of native Vietnamese speakers were limited English proficient. In Queens, New York, 58% of native Chinese speakers and 75% of native Korean speakers were limited English proficient.

Forty-three percent (43%) of all respondents who were limited English proficient reported that they preferred voting with the help of an interpreter or translated voting materials. Groups with significant rates of limited English proficiency also exhibited a high propensity towards the use of an interpreter or translated voting

materials. Thirty-one percent (31%) of native Chinese speakers, 28% of native Khmer speakers, and 27% of native Vietnamese speakers preferred to use some form of language assistance while voting. A quarter (25%) of native Korean speakers also said they preferred to vote with the use of an interpreter and/or translated materials.

Foreign Born

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of all respondents were foreign-born, naturalized citizens. The groups with the highest rates of foreign-born, naturalized citizens were South Asians (87%), Koreans (83%), and Southeast Asians (83%). The groups with the largest proportion of native-born citizens were Chinese (26%), Filipinos (26%), and Middle Easterners (31%).

Gender

The gender distribution of those surveyed was split fairly evenly with 49% of respondents female and 51% male. However, gender ratios varied among ethnic groups. Among South Asians and Southeast Asians, males were the majority of respondents at 58% and 52% respectively. However, among Koreans, Filipinos, and Chinese, women were the majority of respondents at 55%, 57%, and 54% respectively.

Educational Attainment

Over one-fifth (23%) of all respondents had no formal education in the United States.³ The rates of respondents that had no formal education in the United States were relatively consistent across all Asian Ethnic groups with a few exceptions. Nearly two out of five (39%) Korean respondents, had no formal education in the U.S., the highest rate among all Asian ethnic groups surveyed. At the same time however, over half (56%) of Korean Americans held college or advanced graduate degrees. Filipino Americans had the lowest rate of respondents who had no formal U.S. education at 12%.

First-Time Voting

Thirty-one percent (31%) of all Asian American voters surveyed stated that they voted for the first time in the November 2008 Presidential Elections. The groups with the highest rates of first-time voters were Middle Eastern Americans (40%), South Asians (36%), and Vietnamese (32%).⁴ Forty-three percent (43%) of first-time voters were between 18 to 29 years old, the largest age group among respondents who voted for the first time.

Figure 4. Foreign-Born, Naturalized Citizens

Ethnicity	%
Bangladeshi	95%
Indo-Caribbean	90%
Pakistani	88%
Vietnamese	86%
Korean	83%
Asian Indian	82%
All Asian Americans	79%
Chinese	74%
Filipino	74%

Figure 5. No Formal Education in the U.S.

Ethnicity	%
Korean	39%
Bangladeshi	32%
Indo-Caribbean	25%
All Asian Americans	23%
Pakistani	23%
Chinese	23%
Vietnamese	21%
Asian Indian	17%
Filipino	12%

Figure 6. First-Time Voters

Ethnicity	%
Bangladeshi	40%
Indo-Caribbean	36%
Asian Indian	34%
Pakistani	34%
Vietnamese	32%
All Asian Americans	31%
Chinese	29%
Korean	25%
Filipino	24%

Party Affiliation

The majority of Asian Americans surveyed (58%) were registered Democrats, 13% were registered Republicans, and 3% were enrolled in other parties. Twenty-six percent (26%) of all Asian American respondents were not enrolled in any political party.

There were some variations by ethnicity. South Asian voters were enrolled in the Democratic Party at higher rates than all other Asian ethnic groups. Overall, 76% of South Asians were registered Democrats, including 69% of Asian Indians, 74% of Pakistanis, 85% of Bangladeshis, and 82% of Indo-Caribbeans. A significant proportion of Middle Eastern respondents were also enrolled in the Democratic Party at 84%.

Southeast Asians had much lower rates of enrollment in the Democratic Party at 34% and higher rates of enrollment in the Republican Party at 36%. Vietnamese respondents exhibited the highest rate of enrollment in the Republican Party out of all ethnic groups, with 44% registered as Republicans. When viewed by state, over 50% of Vietnamese Americans were enrolled as Republicans in Louisiana, Texas, and Maryland. In contrast, there were more Vietnamese respondents enrolled as Democrats than as Republicans in New York and Pennsylvania.

Figure 7. Asian American Party Enrollment by Ethnicity

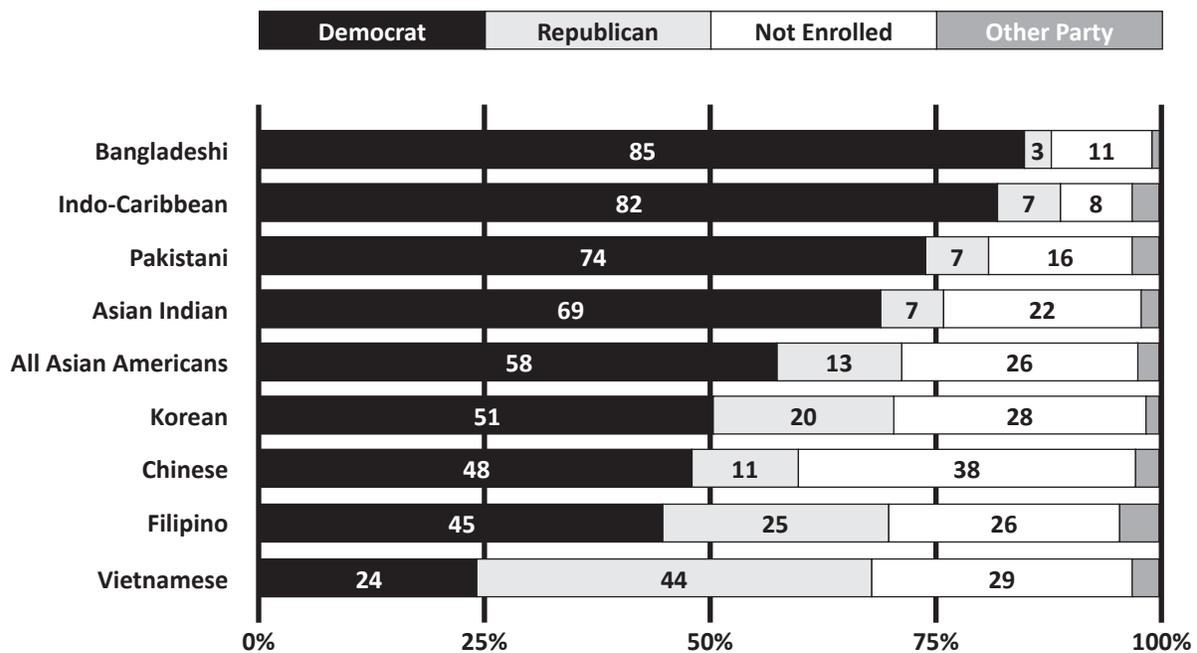
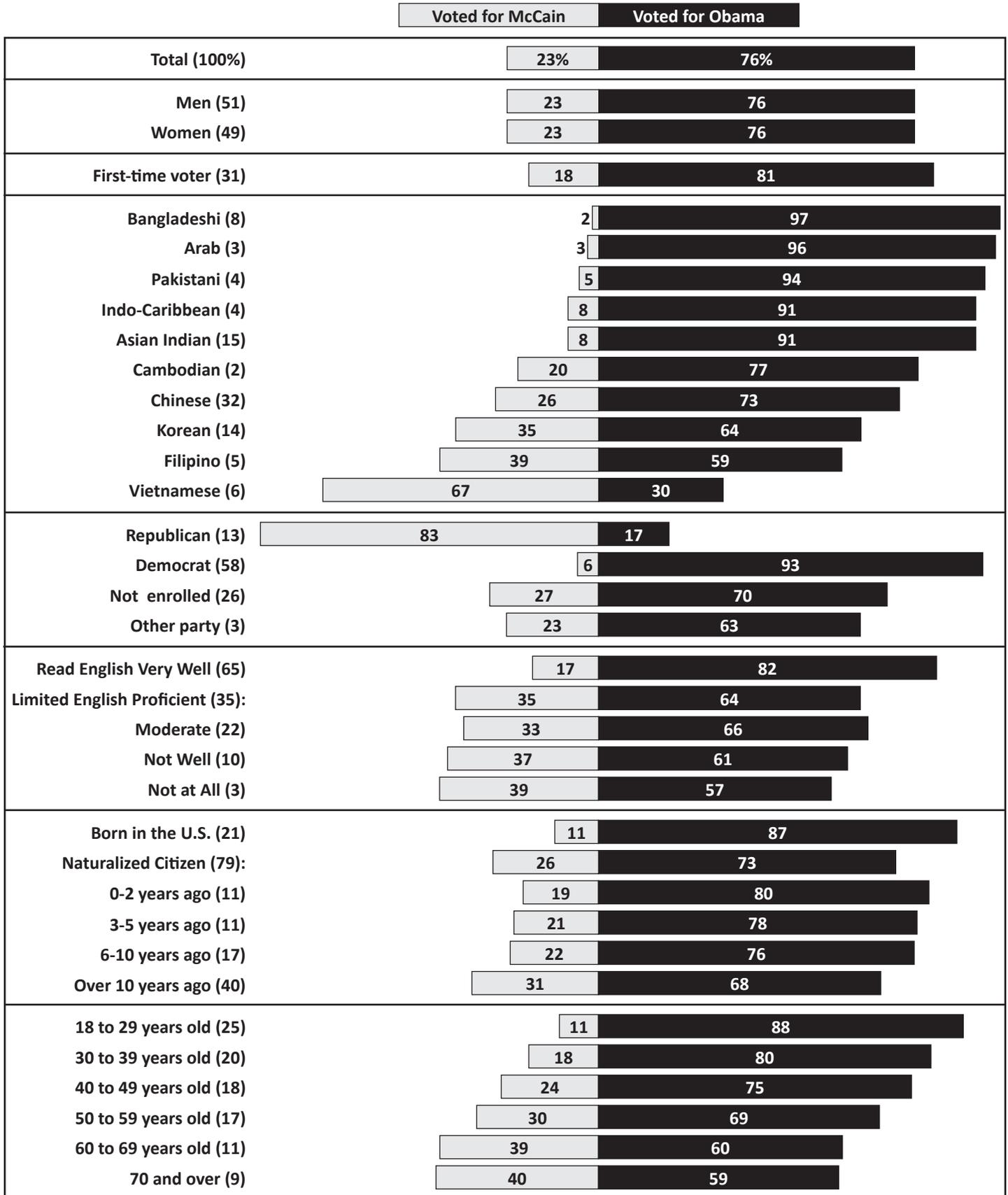


Figure 9. Vote for President



THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE

AALDEF's multilingual exit poll revealed that Asian Americans favored Barack Obama over John McCain, 76% to 23%, in the historic election of the nation's first African American President. First-time voters and South Asian Americans demonstrated even stronger support for Obama.

Exit polls conducted by the National Election Pool found that 95% of African-Americans, 67% of Latinos, 66% of other races, 62% of Asians and 43% of Whites voted for Obama.⁵ AALDEF's findings, however, indicated that certain Asian American groups supported Obama as strongly as other communities of color.

Vote for President by Ethnicity

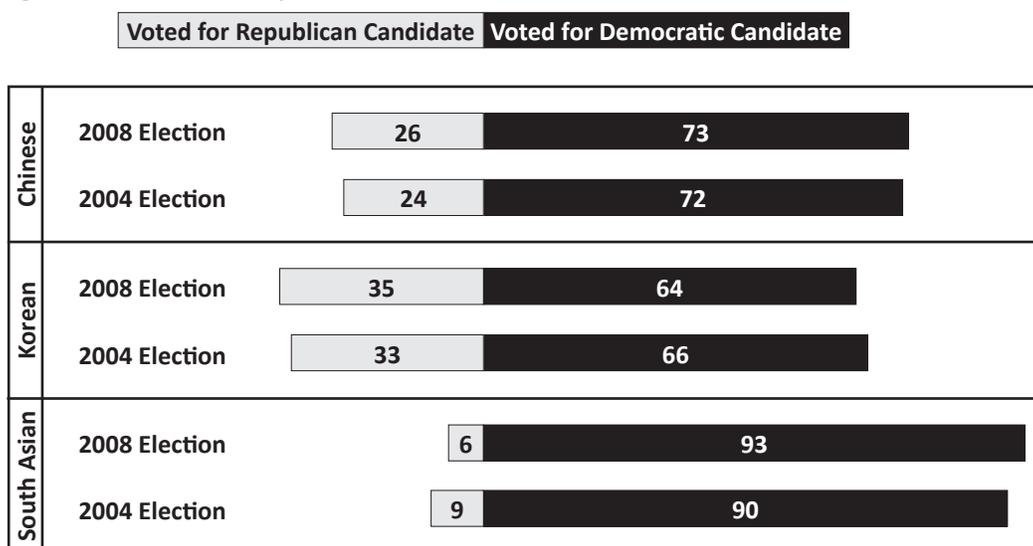
Generally, Asian Americans demonstrated political unity, even across ethnic lines. With only one exception - Vietnamese American voters - each Asian ethnic group voted as a bloc for Obama. Many also identified the same reasons for their votes.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of South Asian American voters supported Barack Obama. In contrast, Vietnamese American voters gave McCain the strongest support of all Asian ethnic groups at 67%. However, further analysis of Vietnamese American voters revealed 69% of those born in the U.S. and 60% of those 18-29 years old voted for Obama. Among Vietnamese American respondents, 15% were born in the U.S. and 25% were between the ages of 18 and 29.

In previous presidential elections, South Asian voters have supported the Democratic presidential candidates most strongly of all Asian ethnic groups. In the 2000 presidential elections, 80% of South Asians voted for the Democratic candidate Al Gore.⁶ In 2004, 90% voted for Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry.⁷

The majority of Chinese and Korean Americans have also shown consistent support for Democratic presidential candidates. With 73% of Chinese Americans and 64% of Korean Americans supporting Obama in 2008, 72% of Chinese voters and 66% of Korean voters supported Senator Kerry in the 2004 elections. In 2000, the majority of Chinese and Korean Americans voted for Al Gore at 79% and 80% respectively.

Figure 10. Vote for President by Election Year

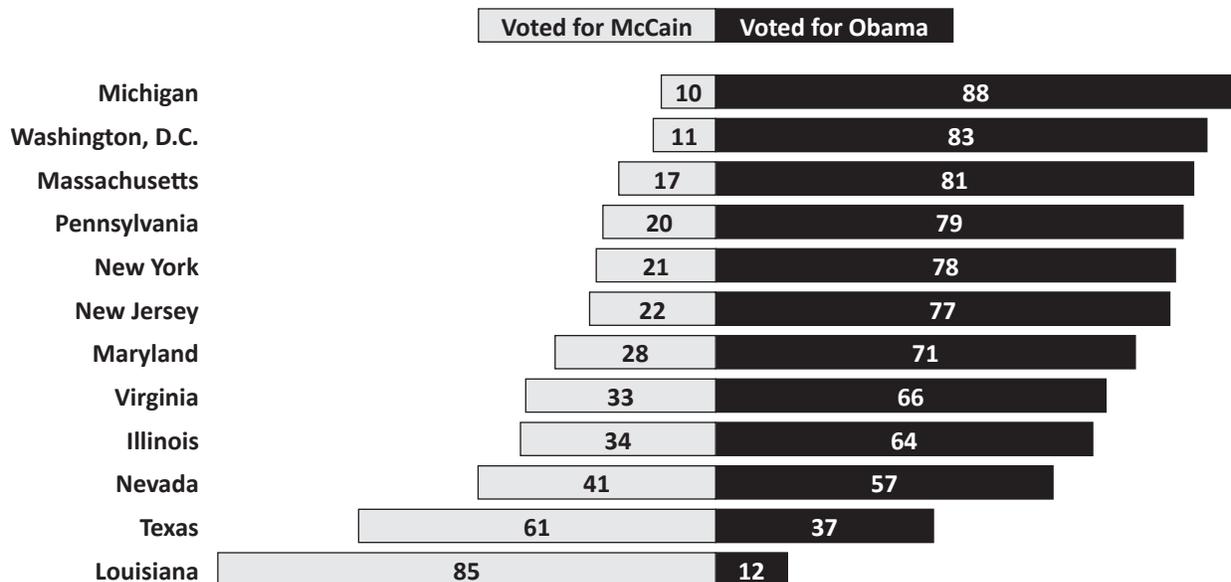


Vote for President by State

Asian Americans in Michigan, Massachusetts, and New York were among the strongest supporters for Obama, whereas Asian Americans in Louisiana and Texas strongly supported McCain, largely because of the high number of Vietnamese voters surveyed. In states where Asian American voters supported Obama over McCain, Obama led with double-digit margins.

In comparison to the 2004 presidential elections, Asian Americans voted for the Democratic presidential candidate over the Republican candidate at nearly identical rates. For example, in New York, 74% of Asian Americans voted for Senator Kerry and 23% voted for President Bush in the 2004 Elections. In Michigan, 88% went to Kerry and 10% to Bush. Massachusetts, however, has shown an increased support for the Democratic presidential candidates. Four years earlier, 68% of Asian Americans voted for Kerry and 30% voted for Bush.

Figure 11. Asian American Vote for President by State



First-Time Voting

First-time voters favored Barack Obama by a significant margin. Eighty-one percent of first-time Asian American voters supported Obama and 18% voted for McCain. In contrast, 69% of first-time voters voted for Obama, and 30% voted for McCain in the overall electorate.⁸ Similarly, in the 2004 Presidential Elections, 78% of Asian Americans who were voting for the first time supported Senator Kerry compared to 53% of all first-time voters.

Crossover Voting and Unenrolled Voters

In terms of crossover voting, Asian Americans gave stronger support to Barack Obama when compared to the overall electorate. National polls showed that only 10% of registered Democrats voted for McCain and 9% of registered Republicans voted for Obama.⁹

Party crossover voting has largely benefited Democratic presidential candidates for the past decade. Seventeen percent (17%) of Asian Americans registered as Republicans voted for Barack Obama, whereas only 7% of Asian Americans registered as Democrats voted for John McCain.

Figure 12. Vote for President by Party Affiliation

Voted for...	Asian American Democrats	Asian American Republicans	Not Enrolled in Any Party
John McCain - R	7%	83%	27%
Barack Obama - D	93%	17%	70%

Asian Americans crossed over and voted at similar rates in 2004. Seven percent (7%) of Asian Democrats voted for George Bush and 18% of Asian Republicans for John Kerry. Respondents who were not enrolled in any party strongly supported Obama over McCain at almost a 3 to 1 ratio.

The Vote by Age

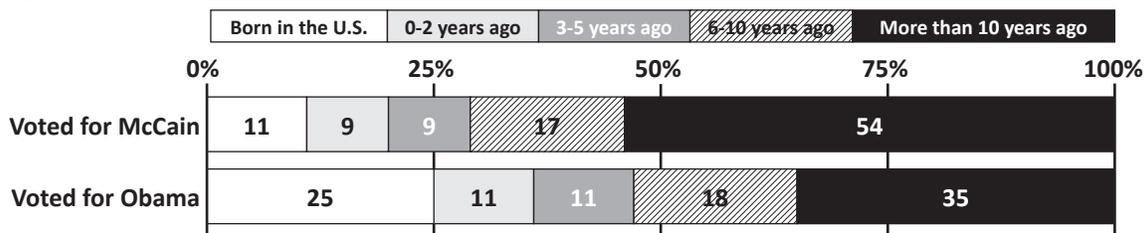
Younger Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama by much greater margins than older Asian Americans. Among 18-29 year olds, 88% voted for Obama and 11% for McCain. But as the voters' age increased, support for Obama, though still majorities of each, steadily declined. For those over 70, 59% voted for Obama and 40% for McCain.

Citizenship Tenure

Obama's support was greatest among native-born Asian American voters, with 87% voting for Obama. Native-born Asian Americans were only 21% of all respondents, while foreign-born Asian Americans were 79% of those polled. Seventy-three percent (73%) of foreign-born Asian Americans supported Obama. As voters' citizenship tenure lengthened, support for Obama decreased.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of Asian American respondents who voted for McCain were naturalized in the U.S. Over half (54%) of McCain's supporters immigrated to the U.S. more than ten years ago.

Figure 13. Vote for President by Citizenship Tenure

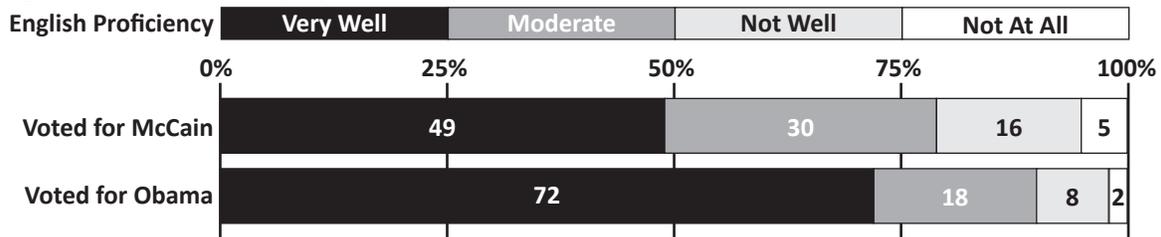


Limited English Proficiency

Obama’s support was greatest among fully English proficient Asian American voters, with 82% of voters who read English “very well” voting for Obama and 17% for McCain. The proportion of Obama’s support gradually decreased as the voters’ English ability declined.

Among Asian Americans who voted for Obama, 72% read English very well, whereas just over a quarter (28%) of his supporters were limited English proficient. In contrast, over half (51%) of Asian Americans who supported McCain were limited English proficient.

Figure 14. Vote for President by English Proficiency



Vote for Congress

AALDEF’s exit poll was conducted in 45 congressional districts. Overall, Asian Americans overwhelmingly voted for Democratic congressional candidates over Republican candidates in the November 2008 General Elections. Thirty of the 45 congressional districts surveyed showed the majority of Asian Americans supporting Democratic congressional candidates. Of the congressional races covered, 21 candidates were elected with the majority support of Asian Americans. Furthermore, 12 of these elected representatives received stronger support from Asian American voters than they did from the overall electorate. For example, in the 13th Congressional District of New York, Michael E. McMahon won with 61% of the overall vote but received 90% of the Asian American vote.¹⁰

Summary of the Asian American Vote

AALDEF’s exit poll data shows that younger, U.S.-born, more recently naturalized, and English proficient Asian American citizens voted for Barack Obama for President by wide margins. Older, foreign-born citizens with limited English proficiency and who had been naturalized more than ten years ago voted in greater proportions for McCain. Furthermore, it is clear that certain elected representatives received significant support from their Asian American constituency.

Figure 15. Asian American Vote for Congress (Selected Districts)ⁱ

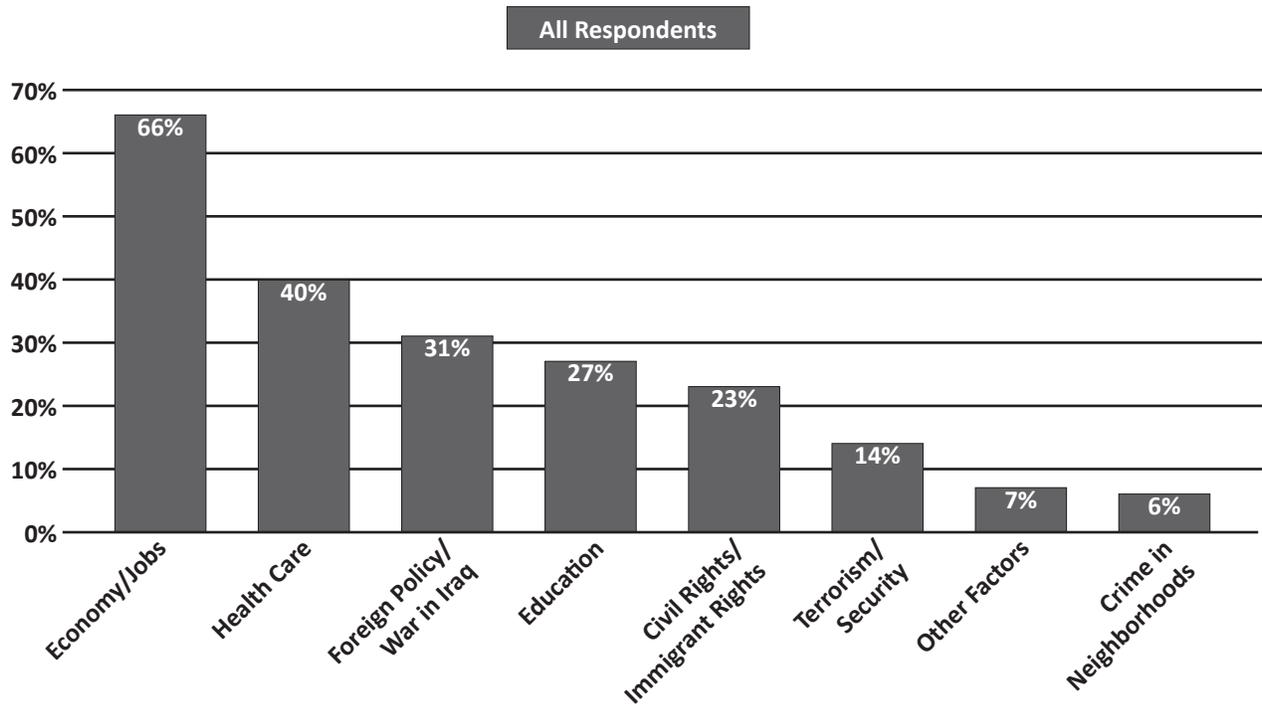
State	Congressional District	Democratic Candidate	Asian American Vote	Republican Candidate	Asian American Vote
NY	5	Gary L. Ackerman*	83%	Elizabeth Berney	16%
	7	Joseph Crowley*	88%	William Britt, Jr.	11%
	8	Jerrold L. Nadler*	86%	Grace Lin	11%
	10	Edolphus Towns*	86%	Salvatore Grupico	13%
	11	Yvette D. Clarke*	92%	Hugh Carr	7%
	12	Nydia Velasquez*	86%	Allan Romaguera	13%
	13	Michael E. McMahon*	90%	Bob Straniere	10%
	14	Carolyn Maloney*	79%	Robert Heim	19%
NJ	7	Linda Stender	82%	Leonard Lance*	11%
	9	Steven R. Rothman*	62%	Vince Micco	38%
	12	Rush Holt*	71%	Alan Bateman	27%
	13	Albio Sires*	79%	Joseph Turula	20%
PA	1	Robert Brady*	83%	Mike Muhammad	16%
VA	7	Anita Hatke	58%	Eric I. Cantor*	41%
	8	James P. Moran*	85%	Mark Ellmore	14%
	11	Gerald Connolly*	70%	Keith Fimian	29%
MD	4	Donna Edwards*	65%	Peter James	31%
	8	Chris Van Hollen*	76%	Steve Hudson	23%
MI	9	Gary Peters*	68%	Joseph Knollenberg	31%
	11	Joseph Larkin	82%	Thaddeus McCotter*	17%
	13	Carolyn Kilpatrick*	98%	Edward Gubics	2%
	15	John Dingell*	84%	Jack Lynch	12%
IL	10	Dan Seals	65%	Mark S. Kirk*	35%
LA	2	William Jefferson	32%	Joseph Cao*	65%
NV	3	Dina Titus*	58%	Jon Porter	38%

* Winning candidate.

ⁱ Chart does not include races with no major party contests or with fewer than 100 survey respondents.

THE ISSUES

Figure 16. Most Important Issues Influencing Vote for President

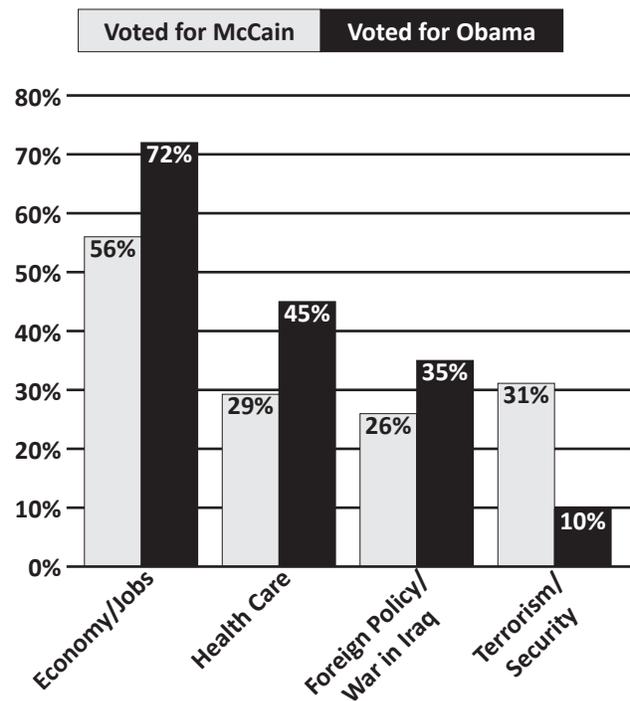


Important Factors Influencing the Vote for President

The three most important issues influencing Asian Americans in their vote for President were Economy/Jobs (66%), Health Care (40%), and Foreign Policy/War in Iraq (31%). These top choices were generally the same for both Obama and McCain supporters. These factors also mirrored the same concerns for most voters in the overall electorate.

Top issues for all individual Asian ethnic groups revealed that they shared common interests. Economy/Jobs was the top choice for all Asian ethnic groups surveyed. Most Asian ethnic groups identified Health Care as the second most important factor influencing their vote for President. Koreans, however, considered Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights as a top issue, ranked second at 33%. Furthermore, among Middle Eastern and Pakistani Americans, Foreign Policy/War in Iraq was ranked as the second most important issue at 40% and 45% respectively.

Figure 17. Issues by Vote for President

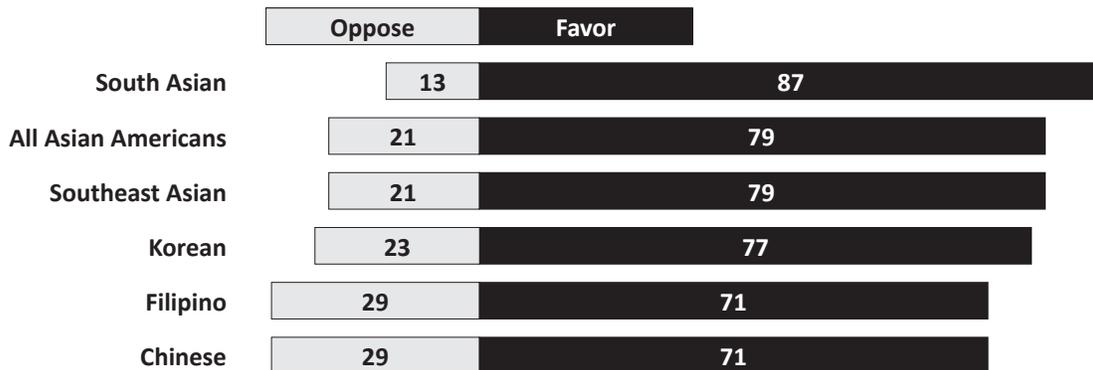


Health Care

Asian Americans have a larger percentage of people who are uninsured as compared to non-Hispanic whites.¹¹ Survey respondents also found health care to be the second most significant issue influencing their vote for President in the 2008 Elections.

When asked if voters “favor or oppose health insurance and medical coverage for all persons, regardless of immigration status,” approximately four out of five (79%) respondents favored the proposition. The distribution of those who favored the proposal was fairly even across all Asian ethnic groups.

Figure 18. Asian Americans who Favor/Oppose Health Insurance and Medical Coverage for All Persons Regardless of Immigration Status



Housing

Families across the country have lost their homes because of the economic recession and housing crisis, while others still face the potential of foreclosure. In some cities - such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia - urban rezoning plans introduced over the past several years have disproportionately and adversely affected low-income residents in communities of color. This environment has created fear among both homeowners and tenants in Asian American communities across the country.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of homeowners and 24% of renters were concerned with losing their homes due to foreclosure. Overall, Asian American respondents who were limited English proficient were more worried about foreclosure than those who were not limited English proficient. Among limited English proficient homeowners, over a third (35%) were worried about losing their homes to some extent. In comparison, approximately a quarter (26%) of homeowners who were not limited English proficient were worried of losing their homes. This difference may stem from a lack of foreclosure news in the ethnic media and lack of language access to government-funded housing assistance programs.

Figure 19. Limited English Proficient Homeowners and Renters Concerned with Losing Their Homes Due to Foreclosure

State	Locality	% Worried
Homeowners		
NY	Queens	31%
	Brooklyn	37%
NJ	Palisades Park	32%
LA	New Orleans	31%
Renters		
NY	Queens	24%
	Brooklyn	46%
	Manhattan	47%
MA	Boston	48%
NJ	Palisades Park	13%

Tenants have also suffered from the recent housing crisis. Over a third of foreclosures involved rental properties.¹² Among Asian Americans who rent their homes, 34% of limited English proficient respondents were worried about foreclosure to a certain extent while only 18% of those who read English very well were worried about losing their homes.

Figure 20. Homeowners and Renters Concerned with Losing Their Homes

State	Locality	Percent of Homeowners Worried	Percent of Renters Worried
NY	Queens	31%	23%
	Brooklyn	29%	32%
	Manhattan	30%	29%
NJ	Edison	22%	22%
	Palisades Park	27%	10%
	Jersey City	26%	18%
MA	Boston	28%	32%
	Lowell	*	33%
PA	Philadelphia	23%	16%
VA	Centreville	33%	*
	Annandale	19%	*
	Falls Church	25%	*
	Fairfax	27%	*
MD	Silver Spring	14%	*
	Gaithersburg	13%	*
MI	Ann Arbor	*	9%
	Troy	26%	*
	Canton	31%	*
	Novi	25%	*
	Dearborn	44%	*
LA	New Orleans	27%	*
TX	Houston	29%	*
NV	Las Vegas	48%	*

* Chart does not include localities with fewer than 100 survey respondents.

ACCESS TO THE VOTE

The federal Voting Rights Act protects racial, ethnic and language minorities from voting discrimination and ensures equal access to the vote. The Language Assistance Provisions of the Voting Rights Act, codified at Section 203,¹³ cover sixteen counties in seven states and require them to provide assistance in one or more Asian languages.¹⁴

Congress also enacted the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)¹⁵ to remedy many voting problems highlighted in the 2000 Presidential Elections. Additionally, several state laws and local election procedures protect Asian American and other minority voters.

Furthermore, under Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act, all voters have a right to be assisted by persons of their choice. These individuals (most often a friend or family member) may accompany voters inside voting booths to interpret the ballot for them.

Language Assistance

AALDEF's exit poll results have shown only one in five (20%) Asian Americans identified English as their native language; 35% said that they were limited English proficient. Nearly one out of five (18%) respondents reported that they preferred voting with the help of an interpreter or translated materials. Over a quarter (26%) of Chinese and Southeast Asian respondents and 21% of Korean respondents prefer voting with an interpreter or translated materials.



Certain jurisdictions in AALDEF's exit poll are required by Section 203 to provide Asian language assistance - such as translated ballots, instructions, and other voting materials as well as interpreters - at poll sites.

In New York City, Chinese language assistance is required in Kings County (Brooklyn) and New York County (Manhattan) and Chinese and Korean are required in Queens County. Houston, Texas is required to provide language assistance in Vietnamese. In Cook County, Illinois, language assistance in Chinese is required.

Boston, Massachusetts was required to provide bilingual ballots in Chinese and Vietnamese under Voting Rights Act litigation.¹⁶

In jurisdictions covered for translated ballots, AALDEF's exit poll found that more than half of the covered language minority groups were limited English proficient. For example:

- 60% of Chinese in Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn, NY
- 75% of Koreans in Queens, NY
- 51% of Vietnamese in Houston, TX
- 70% of Chinese in Boston, MA
- 54% of Vietnamese in Boston, MA

Figure 21. Sample of Multilingual Ballot from Queens, NY

OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION City of New York - County of Queens - November 4, 2008 紐約						
	A ★ Democratic 民主黨 민주당	B 🦅 Republican 共和黨 공화당	C 🦅 Independence 獨立黨 독립당	D 🦅 Conservative 保守黨 보수당	E 🏠 Working Families 勞動家庭黨 근로가족당	
Electors for President and Vice President of the United States Vote ONCE Electores para Presidente	For President Para Presidente 總統候選人 Barack Obama 歐巴馬 바락 오바마 and - y 及 그리고 Joe Biden 玖拜丹 조 바이든	For President Para Presidente 總統候選人 John McCain 麥馬侃 잔 맥케인 and - y 及 그리고 Sarah Palin 賽若裴琳 사라 패일린	For President Para Presidente 總統候選人 John McCain 麥馬侃 잔 맥케인 and - y 及 그리고 Sarah Palin 賽若裴琳 사라 패일린	For President Para Presidente 總統候選人 John McCain 麥馬侃 잔 맥케인 and - y 及 그리고 Sarah Palin 賽若裴琳 사라 패일린	For President Para Presidente 總統候選人 Barack Obama 歐巴馬 바락 오바마 and - y 及 그리고 Joe Biden 玖拜丹 조 바이든	
	For Vice-President Para Vice-Presidente 副總統候選人 ★ 1A Democratic	For Vice-President Para Vice-Presidente 副總統候選人 🦅 1B Republican	For Vice-President Para Vice-Presidente 副總統候選人 🦅 1C Independence	For Vice-President Para Vice-Presidente 副總統候選人 🦅 1D Conservative	For Vice-President Para Vice-Presidente 副總統候選人 🏠 1E Working Families	

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

In New York, over a third (35%) of native Korean speakers in Queens used an official interpreter at a poll site or brought their own. Furthermore, 43% of native Chinese speakers in Brooklyn preferred to vote with language assistance.

In Boston, Massachusetts, almost half (49%) of native Chinese speakers surveyed preferred voting with language assistance. During the presidential elections, approximately one-third of these individuals used interpreters (31%) and translated materials (39%).

In Pennsylvania, 42% of native Gujarati speakers in Bensalem are LEP. In Philadelphia, almost two-thirds (63%) of native Chinese speakers are LEP with 41% preferring to vote with language assistance. Over a third (34%) of these voters used an interpreter provided by the poll site or brought their own.

In Annandale, Virginia, Korean Americans exhibited the highest level of LEP voters (78%) based on native language and surveyed locality. Almost a third preferred voting with some form of language assistance (31%) and used an interpreter (32%) during the 2008 presidential elections.

In Cook County Illinois, 43% of voters whose native language was Korean preferred voting with language assistance. Over a third of those individuals used an interpreter (35%) and translated materials (34%).

Figure 22. Need for Language Access by Locality

State	Locality	Language Minority Group	Limited English Proficient	Prefers Voting with Language Assistance	Used an Interpreter	Used Translated Materials
NY	Brooklyn	Chinese	62%	43%	31%	26%
		Bengali	50%	21%	*	*
		Urdu	39%	20%	*	*
	Manhattan	Chinese	61%	36%	27%	23%
	Queens	Korean	75%	29%	35%	26%
		Chinese	58%	31%	21%	20%
Bengali		37%	15%	*	*	
Urdu		22%	9%	*	*	
NJ	Bergen County	Korean	62%	22%	22%	*
	Middlesex County	Gujarati	29%	12%	*	*
		Chinese	25%	9%	*	*
MA	Boston	Chinese	70%	49%	31%	39%
		Vietnamese	54%	32%	20%	23%
	Lowell	Khmer	47%	31%	29%	*
	Quincy	Chinese	38%	15%	*	*
PA	Bensalem	Gujarati	42%	17%	*	*
	Philadelphia	Khmer	68%	37%	*	*
		Chinese	63%	41%	34%	*
		Korean	44%	28%	39%	11%
		Vietnamese	41%	18%	*	12%
VA	Annandale	Korean	78%	31%	32%	*
	Centreville	Korean	53%	12%	*	*
	Falls Church	Vietnamese	49%	13%	*	*
MD	Rockville	Chinese	36%	20%	*	*
	Silver Spring	Korean	45%	10%	*	*
		Vietnamese	43%	13%	*	*
MI	Dearborn	Arabic	27%	18%	21%	11%
	Detroit	Bengali	45%	27%	*	*
	Hamtramck	Arabic	40%	29%	16%	*
IL	Chicago/Cook County	Korean	81%	43%	35%	34%
LA	New Orleans	Vietnamese	63%	45%	*	*
TX	Houston	Vietnamese	51%	27%	18%	23%

* No interpreter or translated materials available.



In New Orleans, almost half (45%) of the respondents whose native language is Vietnamese preferred to vote with some form of language assistance.

Although Section 203 has made the vote more accessible, covered jurisdictions have had several problems in implementation. AALDEF's poll monitoring for compliance with Section 203 uncovered numerous violations.

While Section 203 has helped immensely, countless Asian Americans are still denied access to vote. Limited English proficient Asian American voters are growing in many other parts of the country not covered under

Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act. To address the greater need for language assistance, advocates have pressed for voluntary assistance, such as bilingual poll workers and translated voter registration forms and voting instructions. Such efforts have helped to remove barriers to voting for Asian American and other language minority voters.

For more information on voting barriers, see AALDEF's report, *Asian American Access to Democracy In the 2008 Elections*, downloadable at www.aaldef.org.

CONCLUSION

The Asian American population has surged throughout the United States. They are becoming citizens and aim to participate in the nation's political franchise, but they are often overlooked by media exit polls and politicians. Greater outreach is needed, especially to limited English proficient and older Asian American voters.

Moreover, Asian Americans have encountered many voting barriers. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act has helped to expand access to the vote, but there have been some shortcomings in local compliance. Aggressive enforcement is needed to ensure that all Americans can exercise the right to vote.

AALDEF's exit poll shows that Asian Americans strongly supported President Obama in the 2008 Elections. Moreover, Asian Americans expect the new administration to address issues regarding Economy/Jobs, Health Care, and Foreign Policy/War in Iraq, which Asian Americans overall agree are the most significant issues. With respect to health care, Asian Americans believe that any reform should include health care coverage for all people regardless of immigration status. Certain localities would also benefit from housing assistance programs, since many Asian Americans are concerned with losing their homes due to foreclosure.

It is also clear from AALDEF's exit poll that many congressional representatives received strong support from their Asian American constituents. These elected representatives should spearhead or assist in introducing and supporting legislation that will address the concerns of the Asian American community.



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Co-Sponsoring Organizations and Local Chapters

National Co-Sponsors:

Asian Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
North American South Asian Bar Association
Organization of Chinese Americans
South Asian Americans Leading Together

Local Chapters:

APIA Vote - Michigan
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APIA Vote - Nevada
OCA: Greater Washington DC
OCA: Northern Virginia
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OCA: Greater Houston
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Local Co-Sponsors:

ACCESS – MI
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Asian Community Development Corporation of Boston – MA
Asian Pacific American Agenda Coalition – MA
Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia – PA
Conference for Asian Pacific American Leadership – DC
Chinatown Voter Education Alliance – NY
Chinese American Planning Council: Youth Services – NY
Chinese American Voters Association – NY
Chinese Progressive Association – MA
Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans of Virginia
Committee of 70 – PA
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Hunter College/CUNY, Asian American Studies Program – NY
Korean American Coalition – DC
Korean American Voters' Council of NY/NJ
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center – IL
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Wash. DC
Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association – MD
Mass VOTE – MA
One Lowell – MA
Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation – PA
Providence Youth and Student Movement – RI
Sikh Coalition – NY
South Asian Youth Action! – NY
U. Maryland Asian American Studies Program
Viet-Vote – MA
Vietnamese American Initiative for Development – MA
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South Asian Bar Association of New Jersey
South Asian Bar Association of New York
South Asian Bar Association of Michigan
U. Penn. School of Law, Public Interest Office
Temple U. School of Law, Public Interest Office – PA

and Asian Pacific American Law Student Association chapters across the country.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Population data was obtained from the American Community Survey. These figures include Asian Americans who checked “Asian alone” or “Asian in combination with one or more other races.”
<<http://factfinder.census.gov>>.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-29.pdf>>.
- ³ The Census asks questions on educational attainment without making distinctions between education completed abroad (with instruction typically done in the native language) and education acquired in the U.S. (typically done in English). The percentages presented in this report reflect educational attainment only in the U.S.
- ⁴ In comparison, AALDEF’s exit poll of the November 2004 Presidential Elections showed that 38% of all Asian Americans surveyed were voting for the first time, and that more than half of all Cambodian, Arab, and Bangladeshi respondents were first-time voters.
- ⁵ Election poll data for the National Election Pool was collected by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. Their national poll randomly selected voters on Election Day and conducted telephone interviews with absentee and early voters. Among the 17,836 voters polled, 74% were White, 13% African American, 9% Latino, 3% other, and 2% Asian. Voters were surveyed in English and Spanish only. CNN Exit Polls, <<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>>.
- ⁶ AALDEF conducted an exit poll in New York City during the 2000 Presidential Elections. AALDEF, *The Asian American Vote: A Report on the Multilingual Exit Poll in the 2000 Presidential Election*.
- ⁷ AALDEF conducted the 2004 Asian American Exit Poll in IL, MA, MI, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VA. AALDEF, *The Asian American Vote: A Report on the Multilingual Exit Poll in the 2004 Presidential Election*.
- ⁸ CNN Exit Polls, <<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>>.
- ⁹ Id.
- ¹⁰ *NYS Board of Elections Rep. in Congress Election Returns Nov. 4, 2008*, <<http://www.elections.state.ny.us/NYSBOE/elections/2008/General/USCongress08.pdf>>.
- ¹¹ A report by the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum showed that 84% of Asian Americans had some form of health insurance coverage and that 16% of Asian Americans are uninsured compared to 12% of non-Hispanic whites. Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, *Race, Ethnicity & Health Care*, <<http://www.apiahf.org/downloads/April2008FactSheet.pdf>>.
- ¹² “On March 27, 2008, CBS News reported that 38 percent of foreclosures involved rental properties, affecting at least 168,000 households.” National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, *Indicators of Increasing Homelessness Due to the Foreclosure and Economic Crisis*, at 2, <http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/Foreclosure_effects_on_homelessness.pdf>.
- ¹³ 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1973aa-1a.
- ¹⁴ These include counties in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Washington for Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, or Japanese language assistance. 67 Fed. Reg. No. 144, 48871-77 (July 26, 2002) (Notices).
- ¹⁵ 42 U.S.C. Sec. 15301 *et seq.*
- ¹⁶ The bilingual ballots in Boston were mandated through litigation under the non-discrimination provisions, Section 2, of the Voting Rights Act. *U.S. v. City of Boston*, Civ. 05-11598 WGY (D. Mass. 2005).

Founded in 1974, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) is a national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all.

AALDEF focuses on critical issues affecting Asian Americans, including immigrant rights, civic participation and voting rights, economic justice for workers, language access to services, Census policy, affirmative action, youth rights and educational equity, and the elimination of anti-Asian violence, police misconduct, and human trafficking.

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