

# **THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE**

**In the 2010  
Midterm Elections**

**A Special Report of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund**

# **The Asian American Vote in the 2010 Midterm Elections**

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, housing and environmental justice, and the elimination of anti-Asian violence, police misconduct, and human trafficking.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Election Day, November 2, 2010, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), with the help of several co-sponsoring organizations and 354 attorneys, law students, and volunteers, conducted a nonpartisan, multilingual exit poll of 3,721 Asian American voters. The questionnaire was available in English and five Asian languages. Voters were surveyed in 8 cities across five states—New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Texas. AALDEF has conducted exit polls in every major election since 1988.



Multilingual exit polls give a fuller and more accurate portrait of Asian American voters than polls conducted only in English. AALDEF's exit poll often finds different results than mainstream exit polls and reveals more detailed characteristics about the Asian American community.

The five largest groups surveyed in 2010 were Chinese (38%), Korean (28%), South Asian (23%), Filipino (4%), and Vietnamese (3%). Approximately nine out of ten (89%) respondents were foreign-born. Nine percent (9%) were voting for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

***Asian Americans shared common political concerns across ethnic lines.*** Though Asian Americans are diverse, coming from different countries and speaking different languages and dialects, they shared similar concerns regardless of ethnicity or party affiliation. Every ethnic group, regardless of political party, selected Economy/Jobs as the most important issue influencing their vote on Election Day. Thirty percent (30%) of survey respondents chose Economy/Jobs, followed by Health Care (19%), Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights (16%), and Education (13%).

***Asian American enrollment in a political party varied by region.*** Among all survey respondents, nearly two out of three (65%) Asian American voters were registered Democrats and 19% were not enrolled in any party. There was a greater representation of Democrats in the Northeast (NY, PA, MA) with 70% of respondents identifying as Democrats. In the South (GA, TX), there was a slightly higher representation of Republicans (36%) compared to Democrats (32%) and unaffiliated voters (31%).

<sup>1</sup> All percentages are based on total correct responses to survey questions. Questions left blank or incorrectly answered were not included in calculating percentages.

***Party crossover voting favored Republican candidates.*** More Asian American Democrats crossed party lines to vote for Republican candidates than did Asian American Republicans voting for Democratic candidates. Moreover, a larger percentage of Asian Americans not enrolled in a party supported Republican candidates. For all gubernatorial races surveyed, on average, 16% of Democrats crossed party lines and voted for the Republican candidates, while only 3% of Republicans voted for the Democratic candidates.

***Language assistance and bilingual ballots are needed to preserve access to the vote.*** Fifty-six percent (56%) of Asian Americans expressed that they were limited English proficient, and 5% 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 2010 midterm elections, one-fourth of voters surveyed (25%) used translated written materials and 34% needed interpreters to vote.

***Asian Americans faced many voting barriers.*** AALDEF poll monitors and pollsters received more than 200 complaints of voting problems. Asian American voters had difficulty reading the small text of the ballot, were mistreated by hostile, rude or poorly trained poll workers, and were denied access to translated voting materials.

## METHODOLOGY

On November 2, 2010, 354 volunteers, along with AALDEF staff and interns, surveyed 3,721 Asian American voters at 34 poll sites in 8 cities across five states—New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Texas.

The cities and states selected for the exit poll were among those with the largest or fastest-growing Asian American populations. Cities and poll sites with large concentrations of Asian American voters were selected based on 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 from 7:00AM to 8:00PM. Volunteers were recruited by the co-sponsoring organizations, community-based organizations, law firms, bar associations, and undergraduate associations and classes. All volunteers were trained in conducting the exit poll. All were nonpartisan. Volunteers were instructed to approach all Asian American voters as they were leaving poll sites to ask them to complete anonymous questionnaires.<sup>2</sup>

3,721 surveys were collected. Survey questionnaires were written in five Asian languages: Bengali, Chinese, Korean, Urdu and Vietnamese, in addition to English. Volunteers were conversant in 16 Asian languages and dialects: South Asian languages (Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Nepali, Punjabi, Urdu), Southeast Asian languages (Khmer, Vietnamese), Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Toisan), Korean, Japanese, and Tagalog.

**Figure 1. Proportion of Asian Population and Population Growth Rates by Locality**

STATE	Locality	Percent Asian	Asian Growth Rate (2000 – 2010)	Total Growth Rate of Locality
TX	Sugar Land	35%	84%	24%
NY	Queens, NYC	23%	31%	0%
GA	Suwanee	18%	362%	76%
PA	Upper Darby	11%	27%	1%
NY	Manhattan, NYC	11%	24%	3%
NY	Brooklyn, NYC	11%	41%	2%
MA	Boston	9%	25%	5%
PA	Philadelphia	6%	43%	1%
TX	Houston	6%	22%	7%
GA	DeKalb	5%	33%	4%

One in three respondents (39%) completed Asian language questionnaires, while 61% completed the English version. Some voters needed assistance and had the questions read aloud to them.

<sup>2</sup> Purposive sampling methodology was employed in this exit poll rather than random sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling method that involves choosing respondents with certain characteristics.



## I. PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

**Ethnicity.** Survey respondents were Chinese (38%), Korean (28%), South Asian (23%), Filipino (4%), and Vietnamese (3%). South Asian includes Asian Indians, Bangladeshis, Indo-Caribbeans,<sup>3</sup> Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans. The remaining respondents were of other Asian ethnicities and multiracial Asians.

**Language.** While 5% of respondents identified English as their native language, 40% identified one or more Chinese dialects as their native language (including Cantonese, Mandarin, etc.), 34% spoke Korean, 14% spoke one or more South Asian languages (including Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, etc.), 4% spoke one or more Southeast Asian languages (including Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, etc.), and 3% identified some other language as their native language.

Among *Chinese American* voters, 54% selected Cantonese as their native dialect, and 29% chose Mandarin. One percent (1%) said they spoke multiple Chinese dialects and/or other Chinese dialects, including Fujianese, Hakka, Shanghainese, Taiwanese, and Toisan. Fifteen percent (15%) identified English as their native language and 1% chose other languages.

Among *Korean American* voters, 94% selected Korean as their native language, while 6% identified English as their native language.

Among *South Asian American* voters, 52% selected Bengali as their native language, 7% selected Gujarati, 11% selected Urdu, 7% selected Hindi, and 5% selected Punjabi. Eleven percent (11%) of South Asian voters spoke multiple South Asian languages and/or other South Asian languages, including Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, and Marathi. Twelve percent (12%) identified English as their native language.

Among *Vietnamese American* voters, 92% chose Vietnamese as their native language, 7% chose English, and 1% chose Cantonese as their native language.

Among *Filipino American* voters, 63% selected Tagalog as their native dialect. Thirty-three percent (33%) selected English as their native language, and 1% spoke other languages.

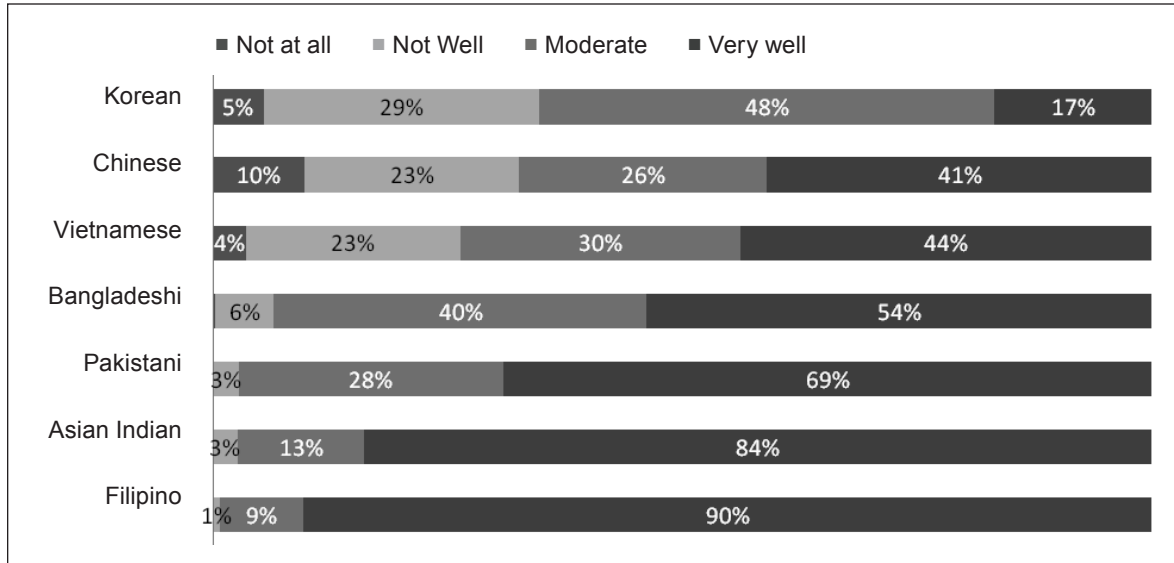
**Figure 2. Profile of Survey Respondents**

Percentage of Voters	Asian Respondents
100%	Total (3,721 voters)
47%	Women
53%	Men
38%	Chinese
28%	Korean
10%	Bangladeshi
9%	Asian Indian
4%	Filipino
3%	Vietnamese
3%	Pakistani
1%	Indo-Caribbean
4%	Other Asian
9%	18 to 29 years old
12%	30 to 39 years old
17%	40 to 49 years old
21%	50 to 59 years old
21%	60 to 69 years old
20%	70 and over
11%	Born in the U.S.
89%	Foreign born, naturalized citizen:
	... (8%) 0-2 years ago
	... (11%) 3-5 years ago
	... (17%) 6-10 years ago
	... (53%) More than 10 years ago
65%	Democrat
14%	Republican
19%	Not enrolled in any party
2%	Other party
9%	First-time voter

<sup>3</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.

**Limited English Proficiency.** According to the U.S. Census, reading less than “very well” constitutes “limited English proficiency.” Over half of survey respondents were limited English proficient (LEP). Fifty-six percent (56%) of Asian American voters surveyed said they read English less than “very well.” Of all ethnic groups, Korean American voters exhibited the highest rate of limited English proficiency at 83%. Similarly, 59% of Chinese American voters and 56% of Vietnamese voters expressed at least some difficulty reading English. Among South Asian Americans, although Asian Indian voters were largely proficient in English (16% LEP), 56% of Bangladeshi voters read English less than “very well.”

**Figure 3. Limited English proficiency (LEP) by Ethnicity**



**First Time Voting.** Nearly one-tenth (9%) of those surveyed stated that they voted for the first time in the November 2010 elections. The groups with the highest rates of first-time voters were Chinese (24%), Koreans (20%), Bangladeshis (17%), Pakistanis (14%), and Asian Indians (12%).

**Foreign-born.** Eighty-nine percent (89%) of all respondents were foreign-born, naturalized citizens. Of the foreign-born respondents, eight percent (8%) became U.S. citizens within the last two years, 11% three to five years ago, 7% six to ten years ago, and 53% more than ten years ago. The groups with the highest rates of foreign-born naturalized citizens were South Asians (96%), Koreans (94%), and Filipinos (90%). The group with the most native born citizens were Chinese (21%).

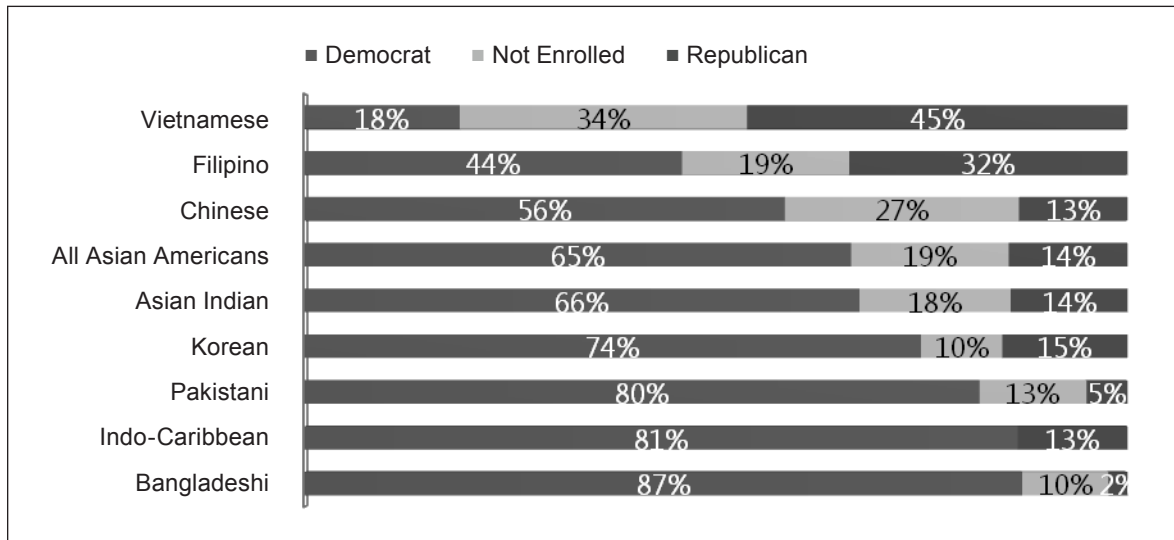
**Age.** The age distribution of voters polled was fairly even across all groups of voters. Asians 50-59 and 60-69 years of age were the largest age groups both surveyed at 21%. Voters 70 and over and 40-49 years of age comprised the third and fourth largest groups at 20% and 17%, respectively. Twelve percent (12%) of voters were 30-39 years of age and 9% were 18-29 years of age.

**Gender.** Among those surveyed, 53% were male and 47% were female. There was some variation of this gender ratio among specific ethnic groups. Among South Asians, 68% were male and 32% were female. However, among Filipinos, 61% of respondents were female.

**Party Affiliation.** Nearly two out of three Asian Americans surveyed (65%) were registered Democrats, 14% were registered Republicans, and 2% were enrolled in other parties. Nineteen percent (19%) of all Asian American respondents were not enrolled in any political party.

Even though many Asian Americans were registered Democrats, the exit poll revealed some variations across ethnic lines. South Asian American voters were enrolled in the Democratic Party at higher rates than all other Asian ethnic groups. Overall, 78% of South Asian Americans were registered Democrats, including 66% of Asian Indians, 81% Indo-Caribbeans, 80% of Pakistanis, and 85% of Bangladeshis. Chinese American voters had the largest percentage of respondents who were not enrolled in any party with 38% identifying as an unenrolled voter. Conversely, a majority of Vietnamese American voters identified with the Republican party, with 55% of Vietnamese American voters as registered Republicans.

**Figure 4. Party Enrollment by Ethnicity**



AALDEF’s survey also demonstrated differences in party affiliation in the Northeast region and the South. In the northeastern states (NY, PA, MA), 70% were Democrats, 17% unenrolled, and 11% Republicans. In New York, 70% were registered Democrats, 15% were not enrolled in any party, and 12% were Republicans. In Pennsylvania, 76% were Democrats, 8% unenrolled, and 16% Republicans. In Massachusetts, 48% were Democrats, 40% unenrolled, and 3% Republicans.

In the southern states (GA, TX) party affiliation was more evenly distributed. Thirty-six percent (36%) were Republican, 32% identified as Democrats, and 31% were unaffiliated with any party. In Georgia, 37% were Republican, 30% were Democrats, and 29% were unaffiliated. In Texas, 32% were Democrats, 32% were unaffiliated, and 35% were Republican.

## II. THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE

In the November 2010 midterm elections, 38 state and territorial governorships, 37 of 100 seats in the U.S. Senate and all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives were contested. The Republican Party gained a majority of 63 seats in the House of Representatives.<sup>4</sup>

### A. U.S. Governor Races

In the *New York Gubernatorial race*, 83% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Andrew Cuomo and 12% voted for Republican Carl Paladino.<sup>5</sup> Among all New York voters, 61% voted for Cuomo and 35% voted for Paladino.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Massachusetts Gubernatorial race*, 83% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat incumbent Deval Patrick and 14% supported Republican Charlie Baker. Among all Massachusetts voters, 48% voted for Patrick and 42% voted for Baker.<sup>7</sup>

In the *Pennsylvania Gubernatorial race*, 81% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Dan Onorato and 18% voted for Republican Tom Corbett. Among the general electorate, 55% voted for Corbett and 45% voted for Onorato.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Georgia Gubernatorial race*, 52% of Asian Americans voted for Republican Nathan Deal and 44% voted for Democrat Roy Barnes. Among all Georgia voters, 53% voted for Deal and 43% voted for Barnes.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Texas Gubernatorial race*, 50% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Bill White and 49% voted for Republican Rick Perry. Among all Texas voters, 55% voted for Perry and 42% voted for White.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 5. Asian American Vote in Governor Races**

State	Democratic Candidate	Actual Vote	Asian American Vote	Republican Candidate	Actual Vote	Asian American Vote
NY	Andrew Cuomo*	61%	83%	Carl Paladino	35%	12%
MA	Deval Patrick*	48%	83%	Charles Baker	42%	14%
GA	Roy Barnes	43%	44%	Nathan Deal*	53%	52%
TX	Bill White	42%	50%	Rick Perry*	55%	49%
PA	Dan Onorato	45%	81%	Tom Corbett*	55%	18%

\*Winning Candidate

<sup>4</sup> Survey results do not include races with no major party contests or with fewer than 100 survey respondents.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages may not add up to 100 due to additional candidates.

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/02/130683660/election-2010-new-york-results>

<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130683194>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130683855>

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130682436>

<sup>10</sup> Source: <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/02/130684009/election-2010-texas-results>

## B. U.S. Senate Races

In the *New York Senate race*, 76% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand and 18% voted for Republican Joseph DioGuardi. Among all New York voters, 61% voted for Gillibrand and 36% voted for DioGuardi.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Pennsylvania Senate race*, 79% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Joe Sestak and 18% voted for Republican Pat Toomey. Among all Pennsylvania voters, 51% voted for Toomey and 49% voted for Sestak.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Georgia Senate race*, 58% of Asian Americans voted for Republican Johnny Isakson and 38% voted for Democrat Michael Thurmond. Among all voters in Georgia, 58% voted for Isakson and 39% voted for Thurmond.<sup>13</sup>

## C. U.S. House of Representatives Races

AALDEF's exit poll was conducted in 14 congressional districts. Asian Americans polled in the Northeast (NY, MA, PA) supported Democratic candidates, while Asian American voters in the South (TX, GA) supported Republican candidates. Of the congressional races covered, almost every incumbent representative won with majority support of Asian Americans.

Figure 6. Asian American Vote for Congress (selected districts)<sup>14</sup>

State	Congressional District	Democratic Candidate	Actual Vote	Asian American Vote	Republican Candidate	Actual Vote	Asian American Vote
NY	5	Gary Ackerman*	62%	80%	James Milano	37%	18%
	7	Joseph Crowley*	80%	78%	Ken Reynolds	19%	18%
	11	Yvette D. Clarke*	90%	92%	Hugh Carr	10%	8%
	12	Nydia Velazquez*	93%	81%	Alice Gaffney	7%	18%
GA	4	Hank Johnson*	75%	55%	Lisbeth Carter	25%	41%
	7	Doug Heckman	33%	34%	Rob Woodall*	67%	64%
TX	9	Al Green*	76%	32%	Steven Mueller	23%	64%
	22	Kesha Rogers	30%	46%	Pete Olsen*	68%	52%
PA	7	Bryan Lentz	44%	46%	Patrick Meehan*	55%	52%

\*Winning Candidate

Chart does not include races with no major party contests or with fewer than 100 survey respondents. Percentages may not total 100 due to additional candidates.

## D. Other Races

In a carefully-watched New York State Senate race, Democratic candidate Tony Avella unseated long-time Republican incumbent Frank Padavan in Senate District 11 in Queens. Padavan had been criticized by community groups for his anti-immigrant positions. According to a local poll conducted by AALDEF community partner MinKwon Center for Community Action, 89% of Korean American voters favored Democratic candidate Avella, and 11% of those polled supported Padavan. Avella defeated Padavan by 53% to 47% of all district voters.

11 Source: <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/02/130683660/election-2010-new-york-results>

12 Source: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130683855>

13 Source: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130682436&refresh=true>

14 Source: <http://www.npr.org/series/elections/>

In the Texas Lieutenant Governor Race, 52% of Asian Americans voted for Democrat Linda Chavez-Thompson and 48% voted for Republican incumbent David Dewhurst. Among all Texas voters, 61.8% voted for Dewhurst and 34.8% voted for Chavez-Thompson.<sup>15</sup>

### **III. THE VOTE BY OTHER CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **A. Crossover and Independent Voters in Gubernatorial Elections**

Overall, crossover voting and voters not enrolled in any political party (“independent”) during the 2010 Midterm Elections favored Republican candidates. Democratic crossover voting for Republicans occurred at higher rates than Republican voting for Democratic candidates. For all gubernatorial races, on average, 15% of Democrats crossed party lines and voted for the Republican candidate, while only 5% of Republicans voted for the Democratic candidate. Independent voters chose Republican candidates at higher rates (25%) than Democratic (16%).

In New York, 5% of Asian Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Democratic candidate Andrew Cuomo, while 21% of Asian Democrats voted for Carl Paladino, the Republican candidate. Nineteen percent (19%) of those not enrolled in any party voted for Paladino while 13% voted for Cuomo. Andrew Cuomo won the gubernatorial race with 61% of the vote.

In Massachusetts, 1% of Asian Republicans voted for Deval Patrick, the Democratic candidate and incumbent, while 29% of Asian Democrats voted for Republican Charlie Baker. 42% of unenrolled respondents voted for Deval Patrick. Deval Patrick won the election in a close race with 48% of the vote.

In Pennsylvania, Asian Democrats respondents heavily favored Democratic candidate Dan Onorato who received 89% of their vote, 10% of independent votes, and 2% of Republicans who crossed party lines to support Onorato. Republican, Tom Corbett, received 7% of the independent vote and 21% of the vote from Asian Democrats. Corbett won the race with 55% of the vote.

In Texas, independent voting played a bigger role than crossover voting. Only 5% of the Asian Democrats crossed party lines to vote for Rick Perry, the Republican candidate and incumbent who received most of his support from Republicans (63%) and voters not affiliated with any political party at 32%. Bill White, the Democratic candidate, received 63% of the Asian Democratic votes and 29% from unaffiliated voters. Rick Perry won the election with 55% of the vote.

In Georgia, Asian Democrats supported Democratic candidate, Roy Barnes, at a higher rate (71%) than Asian Republicans supported Nathan Deal, the Republican candidate, who received 68% of the vote from Asian Republicans. Unenrolled voters provided additional support to Deal at 29% of their vote while 28% voted for Barnes. Nathan Deal won the election with 53% of the vote.

#### **B. Most Important Issues Affecting the Asian American Vote**

AALDEF asked voters to identify the three top issues influencing their vote on Election Day. The most important issues were Economy/Jobs (30%), followed by Health Care (19%), and Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights (16%). Other issues identified by Asian American voters included Education (13%), Terrorism/Security (7%), Crime in Neighborhoods (7%), the War in Iraq/Afghanistan (5%), and other issues (3%).

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<sup>15</sup> Source: <http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/results/texas>

Across the board, the top issues for all Asian Americans, regardless of ethnicity, state, or party affiliation, were: Economy/Jobs, Health Care, Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights, and Education. Of those who chose Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights as a top issue, Korean Americans cited it at the highest rate at 26%. Chinese Americans respondents ranked Health Care at the highest rates among all the respondents, with 23% citing it as an important factor influencing their vote. Vietnamese Americans cited Education at the highest rate of importance among Asian American respondents at 16%.

Regardless of political party, Economy/Jobs was the number one issue for Asian Democrats (30%), for Asian Republicans (32%), and for those not enrolled in any party at (31%). Furthermore, for all three groups, Health Care was ranked as a second priority (20%, 17%, and 20%, respectively).

**Figure 7. Top Issues Influencing Vote on Election Day**

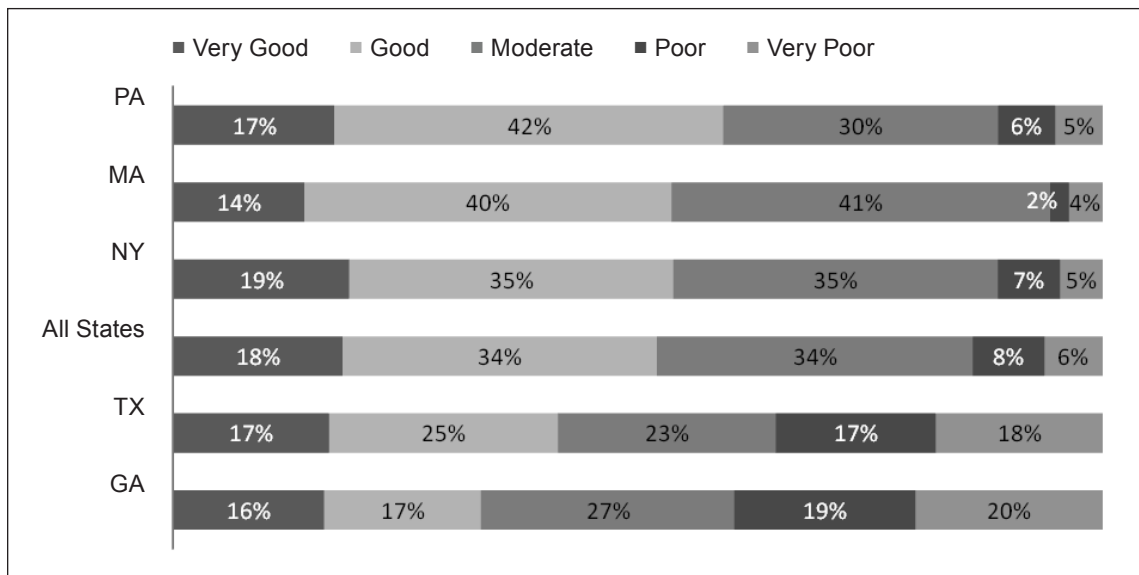
Issue	%
Economy/Jobs	30%
Health Care	19%
Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights	16%
Education	13%
Terrorism/Security	7%
Crime in Neighborhood	7%
War in Iraq/Afghanistan	5%
Other Issues	3%

### C. Rating of Barack Obama’s Performance as President

When asked about Barack Obama’s performance as President, Asian Americans largely responded favorably. Eighteen percent (18%) felt he was doing a “very good” job, 34% thought he was doing a “good” job, 34% responded that he was doing a “moderate” job, 8% felt his job performance was “poor,” while 6% felt he was doing a “very poor” job as President.

A majority of Asian Democrats (63%) felt that President Obama was doing a “very good” or “good” job, 31% felt he was doing a “moderate” job, and 6% felt that he was doing a “poor” or a “very poor” job as President. Eighteen percent (18%) of Asian Republican respondents felt that Barack Obama was doing a “very good” or

**Figure 8. Overall and State-by-State Rating of Barack Obama’s Performance as President**



“good” job as President, 35% felt he was doing a “moderate” job, and almost half (48%) felt he was doing a “poor” or “very poor” job as President.

Forty-three percent (43%) of voters not enrolled in any party responded that Obama was doing a “very good” or “good” job, while 42% felt he was doing a “moderate” job, and 16% felt he was doing a “poor” or “very poor” job as President.

## IV. ACCESS TO THE VOTE

The federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) protects racial, ethnic and language minority voters. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act guards against racial discrimination. Section 203 requires jurisdictions with large numbers of limited English proficient voting age citizens to provide translated ballots and interpreters at poll sites.<sup>16</sup> Congress also enacted the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to remedy many voting problems highlighted in Florida in the 2000 elections.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, several state laws and local election procedures protect Asian American and other minority voters.

### A. Language Assistance

The 2010 exit poll covered jurisdictions that were either legally required to provide or voluntarily provided language assistance to limited English proficient voters.

Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act covers jurisdictions in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Washington for Asian 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.

Only some jurisdictions covered by AALDEF’s exit poll survey are required by the VRA to provide Asian language assistance. In Texas, Vietnamese language assistance is required in Harris County. In New York City, Chinese language assistance is required in Kings County (Brooklyn) and New York County (Manhattan), and both Chinese and Korean are required in Queens County.

**Figure 12. LEP Rates and Use of Language Assistance by Ethnicity**

Language Minority Group	LEP	Prefers Voting with Language Assistance	Used an Interpreter	Used Translated Materials
Korean	83%	50%	57%	50%
Chinese	59%	39%	31%	25%
Vietnamese	56%	30%	10%	5%
Bangladeshi	46%	23%	11%	5%
Pakistani	31%	14%	9%	5%

<sup>16</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 including the 16 jurisdictions that are required to provide Asian language assistance can be found at [http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/sec\\_203/203\\_notice.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/sec_203/203_notice.pdf).

<sup>17</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 provided did not match in the Department of Motor Vehicles or Social Security Administration’s database.



In Boston, Massachusetts, Chinese and Vietnamese language assistance was initially required by the settlement reached in *U.S. v. City of Boston*, a Justice Department lawsuit under Section 2 of the VRA. The city voluntarily continued to provide language assistance beyond the December 2008 expiration of the settlement. Other jurisdictions in Pennsylvania voluntarily provide language assistance, most often in the form of interpreters at selected poll sites for particular Asian language minority voters.

Furthermore, under Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act, all voters have a right to be assisted by persons of their choice, and these individuals (most often a friend or family member) may enter voting booths to translate the ballot for voters. In jurisdictions where Asian American voters are growing in numbers but language assistance is not already provided, the Voting Rights Act allows them to bring their own interpreters.

The three groups with the highest rates of limited English proficiency also exhibited high propensity towards the use of an interpreter or translated voting materials. Half (50%) of Korean American voters, 37% of Chinese American voters and 30% of Vietnamese American voters said that they preferred some form of language assistance while voting.

**Figure 11. LEP Rates by Language Minority Group and Locality**

<b>Language Minority Group</b>	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>
Chinese in Manhattan, Brooklyn, & Queens, NY	61%
Korean in Queens, NY	87%
Bangladeshi in Brooklyn, NY	46%
Chinese in Boston, MA	69%
Chinese in Philadelphia, PA	48%
Vietnamese in Fort Bend County, TX	49%
Vietnamese in DeKalb and Gwinnett County, GA	62%

In jurisdictions covered for translated ballots, AALDEF’s exit poll found high rates of LEP voters in covered language minority groups, supporting the need for language access during elections.

A quarter (25%) of respondents reported that they preferred voting with the help of an interpreter or translated voting materials. Yet, 31% actually used an interpreter, either provided by the city or brought by the voter, to help them vote.

## **B. Voting Barriers**

Like other racial minorities, Asian Americans had to overcome a number of obstacles to exercise their right to vote. Among the numerous voting barriers they faced, many Asian Americans reported the following voting problems :

- In New York, numerous voters complained about the small size of the Chinese and Korean translations on ballots. Many elderly voters were unable to read the ballot and therefore could not vote.
- Language assistance required under the Voting Rights Act was inadequate. In New York, 28% of assigned Chinese interpreters and 20% of Korean interpreters did not show up at poll sites on Election Day. Translated signs and voting materials were missing from many poll sites. In one instance, Korean materials were delivered to a poll site in Chinatown, where voters spoke Chinese.

- The Voting Rights Act gives voters the right to be assisted by persons of their choice. But in Philadelphia, an election judge prevented a Cambodian American voter from receiving assistance from her son. The voter was then made to wait for over an hour before she was allowed to vote.
- Poll workers were unnecessarily rude and selectively hostile toward Asian American voters. In Boston, a South Asian American voter was racially profiled and improperly detained at her poll site by a police officer. In Philadelphia, a poll worker mocked a Korean American voter making the voter feel embarrassed and ashamed. In Chinatown, New York, poll workers were rude to elderly Chinese American voters, scolded them, and made one leave the poll site in tears.
- Asian American voters' names were missing in voter lists at poll sites. The Help America Vote Act requires that these voters be offered provisional ballots, but in Philadelphia's Chinatown, when poll workers could not find voters' names on the voter list, they turned the voters away.

Figure 13. Sample of Multilingual Ballot for Kings County, New York

**OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION - City of New York - County of Kings - November 2, 2010**  
正式選票 普選 - 紐約市 國王郡 - 2010年11月2日

	A ★ Democratic 民主黨	B 🇺🇸 Republican 共和黨	C 🇺🇸 Independence 獨立黨	D 🇺🇸 Conservative 保守黨	E 🇺🇸 Working Families 勞動家庭黨	F 🇺🇸 Green 綠黨	G 🇺🇸 Rent Is 2 Damn High 房租過高黨	H 🇺🇸 Liberarian 自由意志黨	WRITE-IN CANDIDATO POR ESCRITO 寫入表列名候選人
Governor and Lieutenant Governor  Governador y Vice Governador  州長 及 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Andrew M Cuomo 安德魯 M 庫奧莫 Robert J Duffy 羅伯特 J 達菲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Carl P Paladino 卡爾 P 帕拉迪諾 Gregory J Edwards 格雷戈里 J 愛德華茲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Andrew M Cuomo 安德魯 M 庫奧莫 Robert J Duffy 羅伯特 J 達菲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Carl P Paladino 卡爾 P 帕拉迪諾 Gregory J Edwards 格雷戈里 J 愛德華茲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Andrew M Cuomo 安德魯 M 庫奧莫 Robert J Duffy 羅伯特 J 達菲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Howie Hawkins 霍伊 霍金斯 Clonia Mattera 克羅尼亞 馬特若 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	For Governor Para Gobernador 州長 Jimmy McMillan 吉米 麥克米蘭 Warren Redlich 沃倫 雷德力希 Aiden Link 奧登 林克 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長		
Vote Once Vote una vez 僅選一次	★ 1A <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1B <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1C <input type="radio"/>	f 1D <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1E <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1F <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1G <input type="radio"/>	🇺🇸 1H <input type="radio"/>	
						K 🇺🇸 Taxpayers 納稅人黨 Carl P Paolino 卡爾 P 帕拉迪諾 Gregory J Edwards 格雷戈里 J 愛德華茲 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	J 🇺🇸 Freedom 自由黨 Charles Barron 查爾斯 巴倫 Eva M Doyle 伊娃 M 多伊爾 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	I 🇺🇸 Anti-Prohibition 反禁酒黨 Kristin M Davis 潔絲汀 M 戴維斯 Tanya Gentleman 塔尼亞 甘德曼 For Lieutenant Governor Para Vice Gobernador 副州長	
						1K <input type="radio"/>	1J <input type="radio"/>	1I <input type="radio"/>	

1. BEFORE VOTING THIS BALLOT, PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS BALLOT.

1. ANTES DE EMITIR SU VOTO CON ESTA PAPELETA, SIRVASE LEER LAS INSTRUCCIONES EN EL DORSO DE ESTA PAPELETA.

2. BALLOT PROPOSALS ARE LOCATED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS BALLOT.

2. LAS PROPUESAS DE PAPELETA APARECEN EN EL DORSO DE ESTA PAPELETA.

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

- 74 voters complained they did not know how to use voting machines.
- 143 voters reported that it was difficult to read the ballot and the text was too small.
- 65 voters were required to present ID.

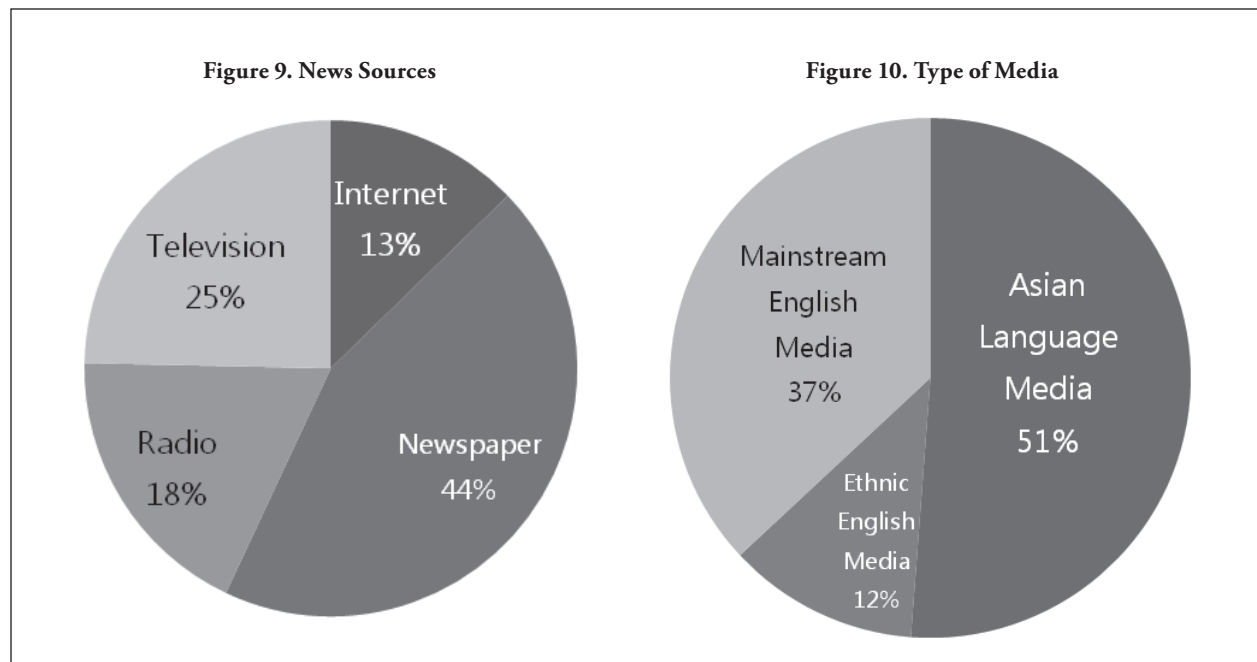
Overall, more than 200 individual voters filed official complaints with exit pollsters or via AALDEF’s election hotline to report voting problems.

### C. News Sources

Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents said that newspapers were their main source of news about politics and community issues. Another 25% said that their main source of news came from television, 18% got their information from the radio, and 13% got their news from the Internet.

More than half (51%) got their news from Asian language media, while 37% got their news from mainstream English media and 12% used ethnic English media. The most popular news format for respondents was Asian language newspapers, with 44% citing that it was their main source of news.

Korean American and Chinese American respondents received their news about politics and community issues primarily from Asian language media sources, with rates of usage at 79% and 56%, respectively. Filipino respondents used mainstream English media outlets at the highest rate amongst Asian voters, at 79%.



## CONCLUSION

The Asian American community is one of the fastest-growing groups in the United States, far surpassing local population growth rates. This can be attributed to the large majority of survey respondents who identified as new Americans emigrating from foreign countries. Voting rates from the exit poll indicate that, over time, these immigrants become citizens and vote regularly.

AALDEF's exit poll shows that Asian Americans vote as a bloc on matters that transcend ethnicity or party affiliation. Most respondents agreed on the important issues including Economy/Jobs, Health Care, Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights, and Education.

Overall, exit poll results show that Asian Americans were satisfied with the performance of President Barack Obama, but crossover voting for Republican candidates was greatly influenced by the importance of Economy/Jobs, an issue that all elected officials must address within the Asian American community and all Americans.

With a large LEP population among Asian Americans, more dedicated and robust support is needed for voters in order to provide better language access and compliance with Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act. This will ensure that Asian Americans will be able to fully exercise their right to vote and become more involved in the political process.



Photo courtesy of Cam Ashling

# APPENDIX

## A. Poll Site Locations

### New York

Manhattan (Chinatown)  
Queens (Elmhurst, Floral Park, Flushing, Jackson Heights, Jamaica, Richmond Hill, Woodside)  
Brooklyn (Sunset Park, Midwood, Kensington)

### Pennsylvania

Philadelphia (Chinatown, North Philadelphia)  
Upper Darby

### Massachusetts

Boston (Chinatown, South End)

### Georgia

Norcross  
Suwanee  
Doraville  
Duluth

### Texas

Sugar Land  
Houston

## B. Acknowledgments

The following groups helped mobilize 354 volunteers to conduct the exit poll and monitor poll sites:

### National Co-Sponsors

APIA Vote  
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association  
OCA  
South Asian Americans Leading Together

### New York

Asian American Bar Association of New York  
Chhaya CDC  
Columbia University Asian American Alliance  
Filipino American Human Services, Inc.  
Filipino American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Hunter College Asian American Studies Program  
Korean American Voters' Council  
MinKwon Center  
Muslim Bar Association of New York  
National Federation of Filipino American Associations- Region One  
SEVA  
South Asian Bar Association of New York  
South Asian Youth Action

### Pennsylvania

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania  
Asian Pacific American Law Student Association at University of Pennsylvania Law School  
OCA Greater Philadelphia Chapter  
Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation  
Swarthmore College Asian Organization

### Massachusetts

Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts  
Asian Community Development Corporation  
Asian Outreach Unit, Greater Boston Legal Services  
Boston College Asian Caucus  
Chinese Progressive Association  
Mass Vote

### Georgia

Asian American Legal Advocacy Center of Georgia  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services  
Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association  
OCA Georgia Chapter

### Texas

OCA Houston Chapter



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