

# THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE 2012



A REPORT OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary . . . . . 2

Methodology . . . . . 4

Profile of Survey Respondents . . . . . 4

The Asian American Vote . . . . . 8

President . . . . . 8

U.S. Senate Races . . . . . 12

U.S. House of Representatives Races . . . . . 13

Main Source of News . . . . . 15

The Issues . . . . . 16

Comprehensive Immigration Reform . . . . . 16

Same-Sex Marriage . . . . . 17

Access to the Vote . . . . . 19

Language Assistance . . . . . 21

Voting Barriers . . . . . 21

Conclusion . . . . . 22

Appendix . . . . . 23

Acknowledgments . . . . . 25

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 6, 2012, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), with the assistance of over 850 attorneys, law students, and community volunteers, conducted a nonpartisan, multilingual exit poll of Asian American voters in 14 states—California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia—and Washington, DC.

AALDEF's exit poll, the largest survey of its kind in the nation, surveyed 9,096 Asian American voters at 81 poll sites in 38 cities. The exit poll was conducted in English and 11 Asian languages. AALDEF has conducted exit polls in every major election since 1988.

The mainstream media often provide a limited racial breakdown of voters: Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and "Others." As a result, elected officials, candidates, and policymakers may overlook the political preferences and needs of the Asian American community. In many media reports on the Asian American vote, the data may be skewed due to surveys conducted only in English or including only the largest Asian ethnic populations.

Multilingual exit polls provide a more comprehensive portrait of Asian American voters than surveys done only in English. AALDEF's exit poll reveals details about the Asian American community, including voter preferences on candidates, political parties, issues, and language needs.

### Profile of Respondents

The five largest Asian ethnic groups polled in 2012 were Chinese (31%), South Asian (30%), Southeast Asian (12%), Korean (11%), and Filipino (9%). South Asians include Asian Indians, Bangladeshis, Indo-Caribbeans, and Pakistanis. Southeast Asians include Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Thais. Four out of five (79%) of respondents were foreign-born. Over one-third (37%) described themselves as limited English proficient, and 24% had no formal education in the U.S. Over one-quarter (27%) were first-time voters in the November 2012 General Election.

### Democratic Majority

In the presidential race, 77% of Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama, and 21% voted for Mitt Romney. The majority (57%) of Asian Americans were enrolled in the Democratic Party, 14% were enrolled in the Republican Party, and 27% were not enrolled in any political party.

Crossover voting favored Obama over Romney. More Asian American Republicans crossed party lines to vote for Obama compared to Asian American Democrats voting for Romney. Of those not enrolled in a political party, the majority favored Obama over Romney by a 3 to 1 margin (73% to 24%).

### Common Political Interests

Americans are a diverse community, including many who are foreign-born and speak different Asian languages and dialects. In the political arena, however, they share common political interests even across ethnic lines. In the 2012 presidential election, Asian Americans voted as a bloc for the same candidates and identified common reasons for their vote. Respondents identified Economy/Jobs (53%), Health Care (35%), Education (27%), and Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights (26%) as the top issues that influenced their vote for President. Two

out of three Asian Americans (65 %) showed strong support for comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Support for immigration reform cut across party lines, with 73 % of Asian American Democrats, 53 % of Asian American Republicans, and 57 % of those not enrolled in a political party showing support for immigration reform. Support for same-sex marriage was more varied. Overall, more than one-third (37 %) of Asian Americans supported same-sex marriage, 48 % were opposed, and the remaining 15 % said that they “don’t know.” The greatest support was among native-born, younger, highly educated, and fully English proficient Asian American voters. For example, 75 % of U.S.-born Asian Americans supported same-sex marriage. The greatest opposition was among foreign-born, limited English proficient, and older Asian Americans.

### **Language Access**

Bilingual ballots and language assistance are needed to preserve access to the vote. Thirty-seven percent (37 %) of Asian Americans were limited English proficient. Eighteen percent (18 %) identified English as their native language. In the 2012 elections, almost one-quarter (22 %) of Asian Americans said they preferred voting with the assistance of an interpreter or translated materials. Nine percent (9 %) of those surveyed said they had difficulty voting because no assistance was available in their native language.

### **Voting Barriers**

AALDEF monitors received more than 300 complaints of voting problems. Asian American voters were unlawfully required to provide identification to vote, mistreated by hostile or poorly trained poll workers, were denied Asian-language assistance, and found that their names were missing from or misspelled in voter rolls. In Annandale, Virginia, Korean American voters were told to stand in a different line from other voters. In New Orleans, Louisiana, Vietnamese American voters were denied the right to bring an assistor of choice into the voting booth. Asian American voters also faced long lines, machine breakdowns, misdirection to poll sites, and inadequate notification of poll site assignments or changes.

## METHODOLOGY

On November 6, 2012, AALDEF surveyed 9,096 Asian American voters at 81 poll sites in 38 cities across 14 states—California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia—and Washington, DC.

The cities and states selected for the exit poll were among those with the largest or fastest-growing Asian American populations according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Poll sites with large concentrations of Asian American voters were selected based on voter registration files, census data, interviews with local elections officials and community leaders, and a history of voting problems. 878 volunteers were stationed at poll sites throughout the day, generally between 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Volunteers were recruited by the co-sponsoring organizations, including 50

community-based organizations, 26 law firms, 23 bar associations, as well as Asian Pacific American Law Student Association chapters and undergraduate student 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.



Photo credit: VAYLA

Survey questionnaires were written in English and 11 Asian languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Volunteers were conversant in 32 Asian languages and dialects: Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Fujianese, Mandarin, Shanghaiese, Sichuanese, Taiwanese, Teochew, Toisan, Wenzhounese), South Asian languages (Bengali, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu), Southeast Asian languages (Burmese, Hmong, Indonesian, Khmer, Thai, Vietnamese), Filipino dialects (Ilonggo, Tagalog), Arabic, Japanese, and Korean. Twenty-nine percent (29 %) of respondents completed Asian-language questionnaires, while 71 % completed the English version. Some voters required assistance and had the questions read aloud to them.

### I. Profile Of Survey Respondents

#### Ethnicity

Survey respondents were Chinese (31 %), Asian Indian (13 %), Bangladeshi (12 %), Vietnamese (12 %), Korean (11 %), Filipino (9 %), Pakistani (3 %), Indo-Caribbean (1 %), and Cambodian (1 %). The remaining respondents were of other Asian ethnicities, including Japanese, Thai, Nepalese, and multiracial Asians.

#### Language

While one out of five (18 %) respondents identified English as their native language, 26 % identified one or more Chinese dialects as their native language, 22 % spoke one or more South Asian languages (including Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil), 11 % spoke one or

Figure 1. Profile of Survey Respondents

Percentage of Voters	Asian American respondents
100%	9,096 Total Surveyed
31	Chinese
30	South Asian
12	Vietnamese
11	Korean
9	Filipino
9	Other Asian Ethnicities
21	Born in the U.S.
79	Foreign born, naturalized citizen:
10	... 0-2 years ago
9	... 3-5 years ago
15	... 6-10 years ago
45	... more than 10 years ago
24	No formal education in US
76	Educated in the U.S., highest level:
1	... Elementary school
1	... Some high school
12	... High school trade school degree
40	... College or university degree
22	... Advanced degree

more Southeast Asian languages (including Vietnamese and Khmer), 9 % spoke Korean, 7 % spoke Tagalog, and 5 % identified another Asian language as their native language. Among South Asian voters, 12 % spoke Bengali as their native language, 4 % Hindi, 2 % Gujarati, 2 % Urdu, and 2 % Punjabi. Among Southeast Asian voters, 10 % selected Vietnamese as their native language, and 1 % selected Khmer.

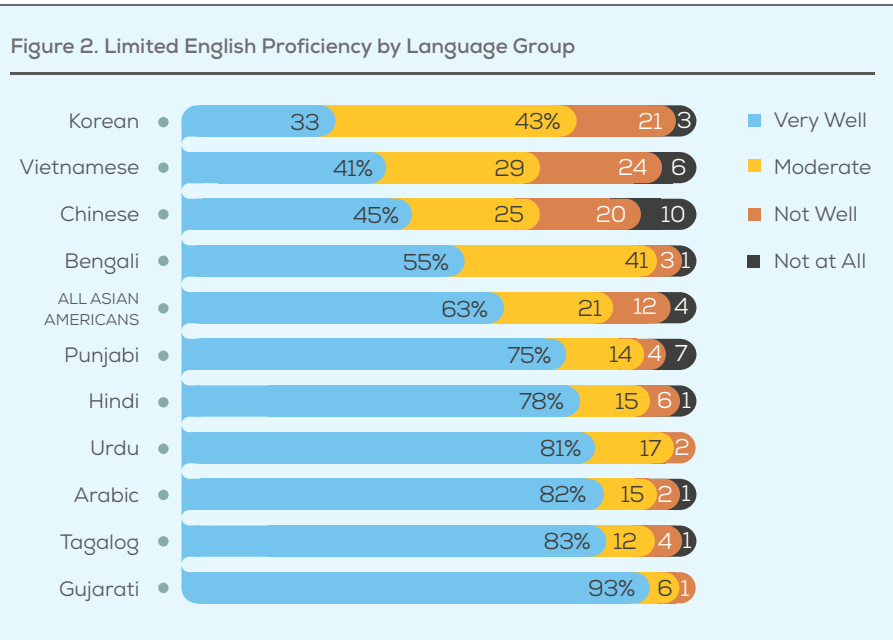
**Limited English Proficiency**

More than 1 out of 3 (37 %) Asian American voters surveyed said they were limited English proficient, which is defined as reading English less than “very well.” Of first-time voters, 38 % were limited English proficient. Of all language groups polled, Korean American voters exhibited the highest rate of limited English proficiency at 67 %. Fifty-nine percent (59 %) of Vietnamese American and 55 % of Chinese American voters expressed at least some difficulty reading English. Among South Asian Americans, although Asian Indian American voters were largely proficient in English, almost half (45 %) of Bangladeshi American voters were limited English proficient. Twenty-two percent (22 %) of respondents indicated that they preferred to

vote with the help of an interpreter and/or translated materials. Nine percent (9 %) said they had difficulty voting because no assistance was available in their native language.

**First-Time Voting**

Twenty-seven percent (27 %) of Asian Americans polled said that they voted for the first time in the November 2012 Presidential Elections. The highest rates of first-time voters were among South Asians, with 45 % of Bangladeshi, 35 % of Pakistani, 29 % of Asian Indian, and 28 % of Indo-Caribbean Americans voting for the first time.



## Foreign-Born, Naturalized Citizens

Seventy-nine percent (79 %) of all respondents were foreign-born, naturalized citizens. South Asians had among the highest rates of foreign-born, naturalized citizens (96 % of Bangladeshis, 89 % of Pakistanis, 85 % of Indo-Caribbeans, and 81 % of Asian Indians).

Eighty-six percent (86 %) Vietnamese and 84 % Korean American voters were also born outside the U.S. The groups with the largest proportions of native-born citizens were Chinese (25 %) and Filipino (25 %).

Figure 3. First-Time Voters

Ethnicity	%
Bangladeshi	45%
Arab	35%
Pakistani	35%
Asian Indian	29%
Indo-Caribbean	28%
All Asian Americans	27%
Vietnamese	26%
Chinese	23%
Filipino	23%
Korean	20%

Figure 4. Foreign-Born, Naturalized Citizens

Ethnicity	%
Bangladeshi	96%
Pakistani	89%
Vietnamese	86%
Indo-Caribbean	85%
Korean	84%
Asian Indian	81%
All Asian Americans	79%
Chinese	75%
Filipino	75%



Photo credit: VAYLA

## Age

Twenty-one percent (21 %) of respondents were between the ages of 18 to 29. Twenty percent (20 %) were between the ages of 30 to 39. Eighteen percent (18 %) were between the ages of 40 to 49. Seventeen percent (17 %) were between 50 to 59 years old. Fourteen percent (14 %) were between 60 to 69 years old. Ten percent (10 %) were 70 years old or older.

## Gender

The gender distribution of those polled was split almost evenly, with 51 % of respondents female and 49 % male.

## Educational Attainment

Twenty-four percent (24 %) of all respondents had no formal education in the United States. Among those who were educated in the U.S., 40 % held a college or university degree, 22 % held an advanced degree, and 12 % held a high school or trade school degree. The remaining 2 % said that their highest level of education in the U.S. was some high school or elementary school.

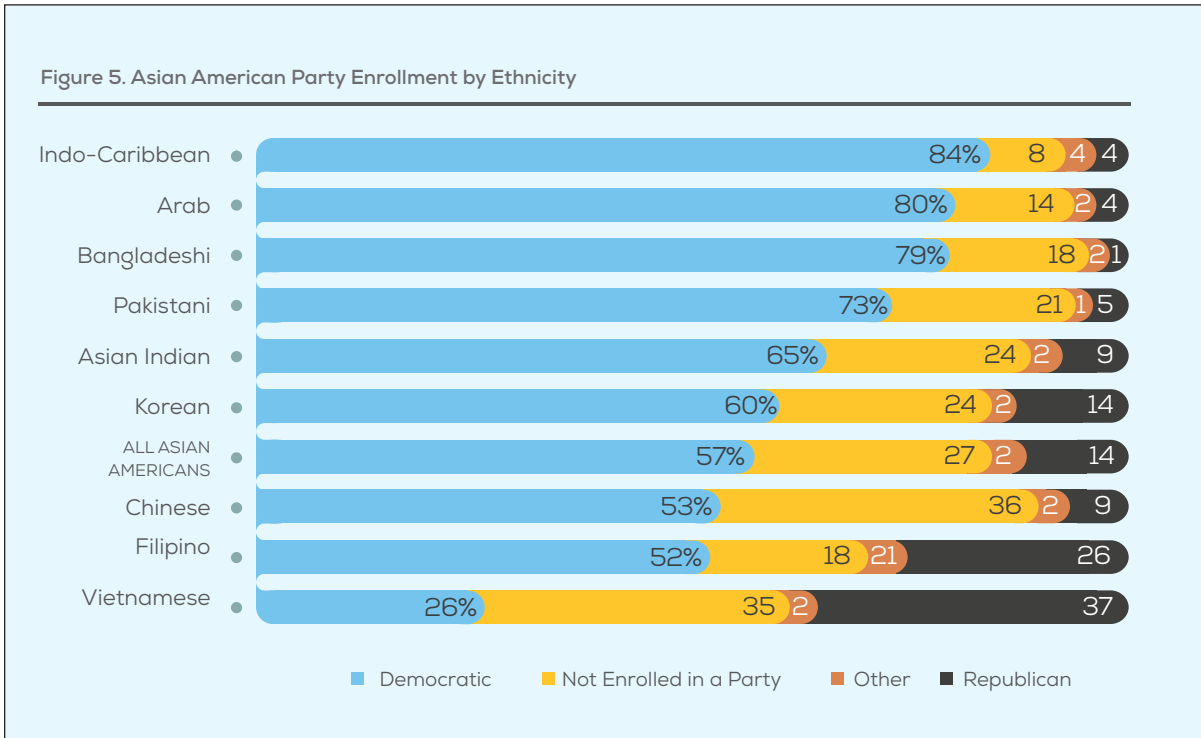
## Party Affiliation

The majority (57 %) of Asian American respondents were enrolled in the Democratic Party. Fourteen percent (14 %) were enrolled in the Republican Party. Twenty-seven percent (27 %) of all Asian American respondents were not enrolled in any party.



Photo credit: AALDEF

There was some variation among ethnicities. Enrollment in the Democratic Party was highest among South Asian ethnicities. 84 % of Indo-Caribbean, 79 % of Bangladeshi, 73 % of Pakistani, and 65 % of Asian Indian American voters were enrolled as Democrats, compared to 57 % of all Asian Americans surveyed nationally. Vietnamese American respondents had higher rates of enrollment in the Republican Party at 37 %. Thirty-six percent (36 %) of Chinese Americans and 35 % of Vietnamese Americans, the highest rates of all groups surveyed, were not enrolled in any political party.



There was some change in party enrollment from previous AALDEF exit polls. In Georgia, for example, 21 % of respondents were enrolled in the Republican Party, a drop from the 38 % of Asian Americans surveyed in AALDEF’s 2010 exit poll. The 2012 exit poll revealed an increase of independent voters in Georgia, from 30 % in 2010 to 42 % in 2012.



## II. THE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTE

Generally, Asian Americans demonstrated political unity, even across ethnic lines. With the exception of Vietnamese American voters, Asian Americans largely voted as a bloc for Obama. As many as 96 % of Bangladeshi Americans, compared to 44 % of Vietnamese Americans, voted for Obama. Overall, Asian Americans also showed strong support for Democratic congressional candidates.

### Important Factors Influencing the Vote for President

The most important factors influencing the vote for President were Economy/Jobs (53 %), Health Care (35 %), Education (27 %), and Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights (26 %). Other important factors included Women's Issues (14 %) and Terrorism/Security (11 %).

### Vote for President by Ethnicity

Three out of four Asian Americans (77 %) voted for Barack Obama, and 21 % voted for Mitt Romney for President. Support for Obama was particularly strong among first-time voters and South Asian voters.



Photo credit: AALDEF

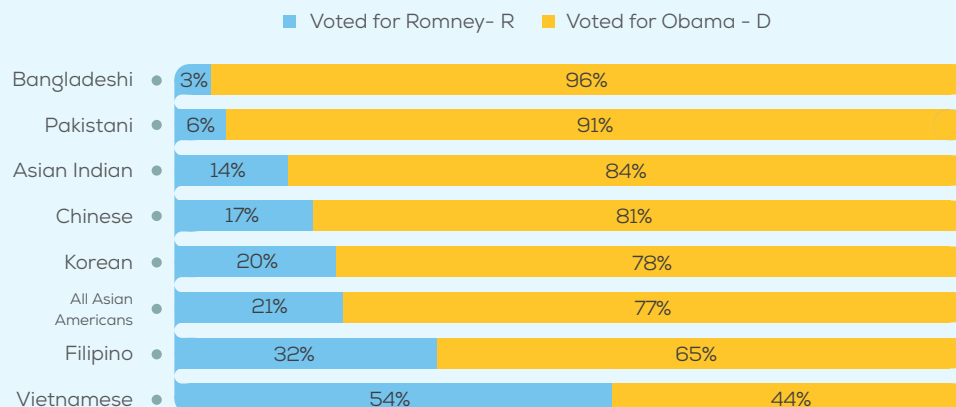


Photo credit: VAYLA

Among Vietnamese American respondents, 54 % voted for Romney and 44 % voted for Obama. This was a decrease from the 67 % support that John McCain received from Vietnamese American voters in the 2008 presidential election, according to the AALDEF 2008 exit poll.

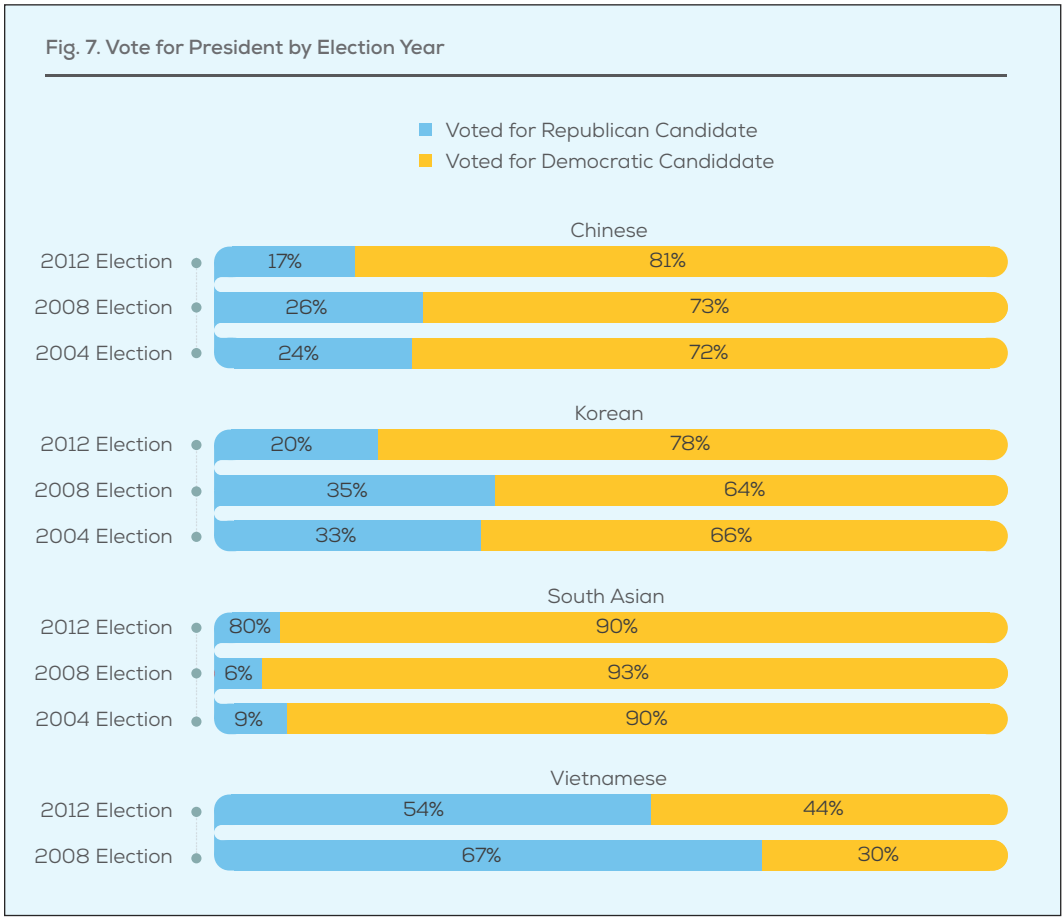
South Asian American voters showed the strongest support for Obama, a trend that was consistent over the past several Presidential

Fig. 6. Vote for President by Ethnicity



elections. In the 2012 Presidential Election, 90 % of South Asian voters voted for Obama, 93 % for Obama in 2008, and 90 % for John Kerry in 2004. In November 2012, 96 % of Bangladeshi, 91 % of Pakistani, and 84 % of Asian Indian Americans voted for Obama at a higher rate than Asian Americans nationally.

In past AALDEF exit polls, a wide majority of South Asian, Chinese, and Korean Americans have consistently supported Democratic presidential candidates. In the 2012 presidential elections, 81 % of Chinese Americans and 78 % of Korean Americans voted for Obama. In the 2008 elections, 73 % of Chinese Americans and 64 % of Korean Americans supported Obama. In the 2004 presidential elections, 72 % of Chinese Americans and 66 % of Korean American voters supported John Kerry.



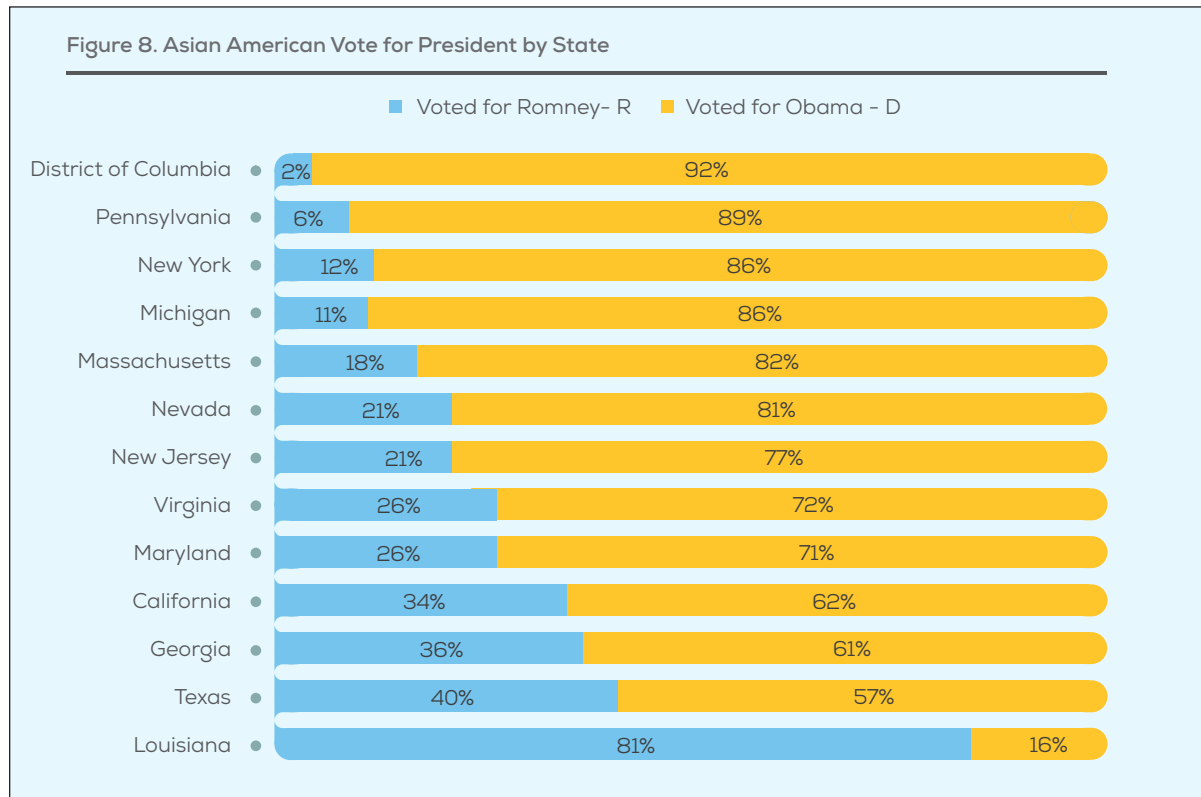
**Vote for President by State**

Asian American voters in Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Massachusetts, were among the strongest supporters for Obama, whereas Asian Americans in Louisiana, which were largely Vietnamese, were among the strongest supporters for Romney. While Asian Americans in the Northeast voted for Obama at high levels (89 % in Pennsylvania and 86 % in New York and Michigan), as few as 16 % of those polled in Louisiana voted for Obama. Asian American voters in southern states voted for Romney at a



Photo credit: Adhikaar

higher rate than Asian Americans nationally. In Louisiana, 81 % of voters supported Romney, while 40 % in Texas and 36 % in Georgia supported Romney.



In comparison to the 2008 and 2004 presidential elections, voter support for the Democratic presidential candidate vs. the Republican candidate was fairly consistent in most states. For example, in Michigan, 86 % of voters voted for Obama and 11 % voted for Romney. In 2008, 88 % voted for Obama and 10 % voted for McCain. In Massachusetts, 82 % of voters voted for Obama and 17 % voted for Romney. In 2008, 81 % voted for Obama and 17 % voted for McCain. In 2004, however, 68 % voted for John Kerry and 30 % voted for George W. Bush.

Some states exhibited an increase in support for Obama in the 2012 presidential election. For example, in Pennsylvania, which had the highest support for Obama of all states surveyed, 89 % voted for Obama and 9 % voted for Romney. In the 2008 election, 79 % voted for Obama and 20 % voted for McCain. In Nevada, 81 % voted for Obama and 18 % voted for Romney, a substantial increase from the 57 % who voted for Obama and 41 % who voted for McCain and in 2008. In Texas, 40 % voted for Romney in 2012, while 67 % voted for McCain four years earlier. In 2012, 57 % of voters voted for Obama, while only 37 % supported Obama in 2008.

### First-Time Voting

First-time voters favored Barack Obama by a wide margin, a trend consistent in AALDEF exit polls for past presidential elections. Eighty-two percent (82 %) of Asian American first-time voters supported Obama, compared to 16 % who voted for Romney. Similarly, in the 2008 presidential elections, 81 % of Asian American first-time voters voted for Obama and 18 % for McCain. In the 2004 presidential elections, 78 % of Asian American first-time voters voted for Senator Kerry.

**Crossover Voting and Unenrolled Voters**

Crossover voting favored Obama over Romney in the 2012 elections. A larger percentage of Asian Americans enrolled in the Republican Party (13%) crossed party lines to vote for Obama for President, compared to registered Democrats (3%) who crossed party lines to vote for Romney. Of those Asian Americans not enrolled in a political party, the majority favored Obama over Romney by a 3 to 1 margin (73% to 24%).

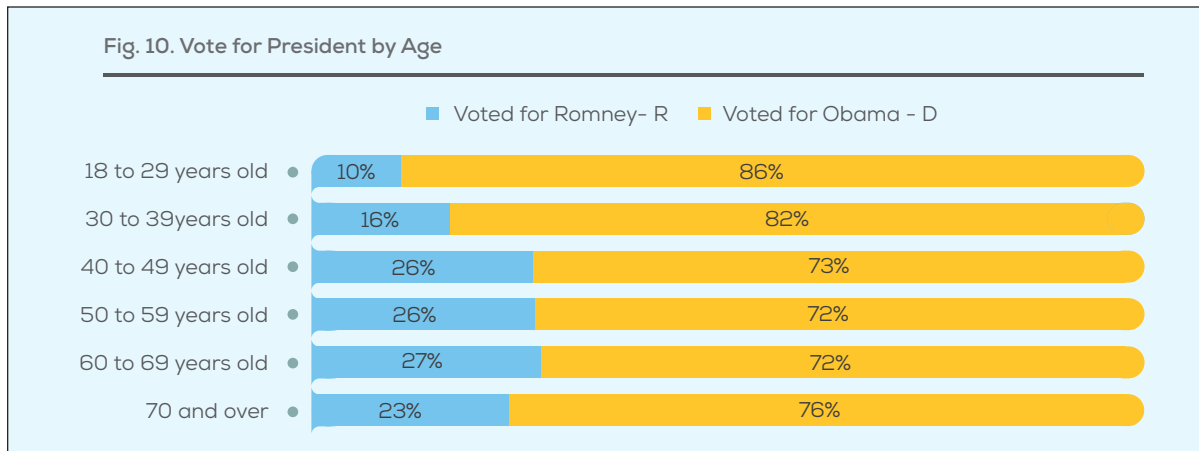
Fig. 9. Vote for President by Party Affiliation

Voted for...	Asian American Democrats	Asian American Republicans	Not Enrolled in Any Party
Barack Obama – D	96%	13%	73%
Mitt Romney – R	3%	85%	24%

**The Vote by Age**

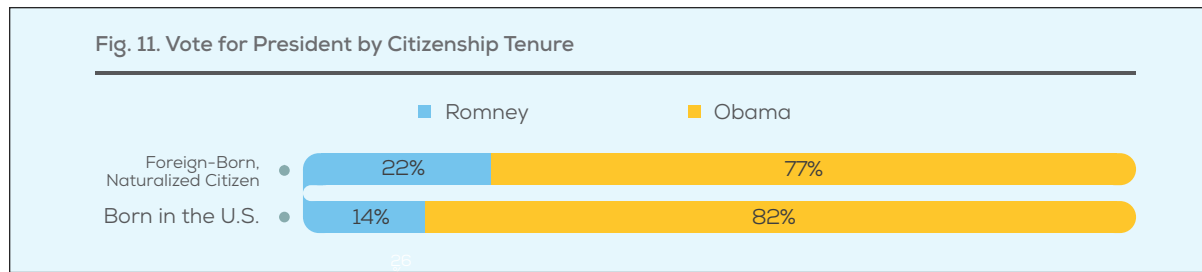
There was overwhelming support for Obama across all age levels, especially voters under 40. The strongest support for Obama came from voters between the ages of 18 to 29, in which 86% voted for Obama. In that age category, only 10% of respondents voted for Romney, compared to 16% of those between 30-39, 26% of those between 40-49, 26% between those 50-59, and 27% between 60-69. Although 23% of voters over 70 voted for Romney, 76% voted for Obama.

This was different from the 2008 elections, in which support for Obama steadily declined as age increased. For example, in 2008, 88% of voters between the ages of 18 to 29 voted for Obama, but 59% of those over the age of 70 voted for Obama. The gap was not as large in the 2012 presidential election.



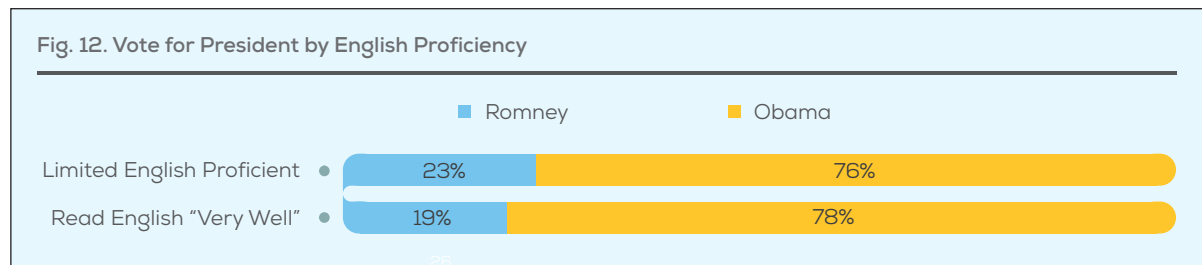
**Citizenship Tenure**

There was strong support for Obama among native and foreign-born Asian American voters. 82% of those born in the U.S. and 77% of naturalized citizens voted for Obama.



### Limited English Proficiency

There was also strong support for Obama among voters who were fluent in English and limited English proficient. Seventy-eight percent (78 %) of voters who read English "very well" and 76 % of limited English proficient Asian Americans voted for Obama. In contrast, 19 % of English proficient and 23 % of limited English proficient Asian Americans voted for Romney.



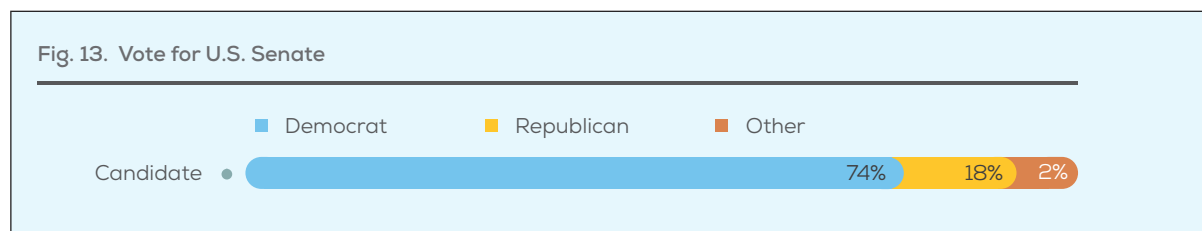
By contrast, in the 2008 presidential election, Obama received less support from limited English proficient voters. In 2008, 82 % of voters who read English "very well" voted for Obama and 17 % for McCain. Over half (51 %) of voters who supported McCain were limited English proficient.

### Vote for Congress

In most of the congressional races polled, the majority of Asian Americans supported Democratic candidates.

### U.S. Senate Races

74 % of Asian Americans polled voted for the Democratic senatorial candidates, and 18 % voted for the Republican candidates.



In Massachusetts 79 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, while only 17 % voted for Republican candidate Scott Brown. In comparison, 53 % of the Massachusetts electorate voted for Warren.

In Michigan, 81 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic U.S. Senator Debbie Ann

Stabenow, while only 12 % voted for Republican candidate Pete Hoekstra. In comparison, 59 % of the Michigan electorate voted for Stabenow.

In Nevada, 79 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Shelley Berkley, and 17 % voted for Republican U.S. Senator Dean Heller. The Nevada electorate was closely split in this race, with 45 % voting for Berkley and 46 % voting for Heller.

In Pennsylvania, 76 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic U.S. Senator Bob Casey, while only 10 % voted for Republican candidate Tom Smith. In comparison, 54 % of the Pennsylvania electorate voted for Casey and 45 % for Smith.

In Texas, 51 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Paul Sadler, while 39 % voted for Republican U.S. Senator Ted Cruz. 41 % of the Texas electorate voted for Sadler and 56 % for Cruz.

In Virginia, 70 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic U.S. Senator Timothy Kaine, while 26 % voted for Republican candidate and former Senator George Allen. In comparison, 53 % of Virginians voted for Kaine and 47 % for Allen.

### **U.S. House of Representative Races**

Likewise, 74 % of Asian Americans polled voted for the Democratic House candidates, and 17 % voted for the Republican candidates. Results varied by congressional district, however.

In the swing state of Nevada, 81 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic Representative Dina Titus in the 1st district, compared to 17 % who voted for Republican candidate Chris Edwards.

In Pennsylvania, Asian Americans showed strong support for Democratic Representatives Robert Brady (92 %) in the 1st district and Chaka Fattah (80 %) in the 2nd district.

In Georgia, the majority of Asian Americans supported Democratic Representatives Hank Johnson (58 %) in the 4th district and Jeff Kazanow (73 %) in the 6th district. However, Asian Americans were split between Democratic candidate Steve Reilly (49 %) and Republican Representative Robert Woodall (50 %) in the 7th district.

In Virginia, the majority of Asian Americans supported Democratic Representatives Jim Moran (77 %) in the 8th district and Gerry Connolly (77 %) in the 11th district. In the 7th district, 56 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Wayne Powell, while 31 % voted for Republican Representative Eric Cantor. However, in the 2nd congressional district, 53 % of Asian Americans voted for Republican Representative Scott Rigell, compared to the 44 % who voted for Democratic candidate Paul Hirschbiel, Jr.

In Louisiana, 71 % of Asian Americans voted for Republican Dwayne Bailey in the 2nd district, over his Democratic opponent Cedric Richmond. Richmond, however, was elected to the 2nd district by an overall majority of 55 %.

In Texas, 49 % of Asian Americans voted for Democratic candidate Al Green in 9th district, while 44 % voted for his opponent, Republican candidate Steve Mueller. 62 % voted for Democratic candidate Kesha Rogers in the 22nd district, while only 34 % voted for Republican U.S. Representative Pete Olson.

Fig. 14. Asian American Vote for Congress (Selected Districts)  
 (Note: larger cells indicate a larger number of poll sites surveyed).

State	Congressional District	Democratic Candidate	Asian American Vote	Republican Candidate	Asian American Vote
CA	52	Scott Peters*	55%	Brian Bilbray	41%
GA	4	Hank Johnson*	58%	J. Chris Vaughn	38%
	6	Jeff Kazanow	73%	Tom Price*	27%
	7	Steve Reilly	49%	Robert Woodall*	50%
LA	2	Cedric Richmond*	25%	Dwayne Bailey	71%
MA	5	Edward Markey*	89%	Tom Tierney	11%
	7	Michael Capuano*	88%	N/A	N/A
	8	Stephen Lynch*	75%	Joe Selvaggi	24%
MD	3	John Sarbanes*	78%	Eric Knowles	20%
	8	Chris Van Hollen*	74%	Ken Timmerman	24%
MI	3	Steve Pestka	92%	Justin Amash*	-
	11	Syed Taj	68%	Kerry Bentivolio*	29%
	12	John Dingell*	90%	Cynthia Kallgren	8%
	14	Gary Peters*	97%	John Hauler	2%
NJ	9	Bill Pascrell*	81%	Shmuley Boteach	18%
	10	Donald Payne Jr.*	85%	Brian Kelemen	15%
NV	1	Dina Titus*	81%	Chris Edwards	17%
NY	3	Steve Israel*	91%	Steven Labate	7%
	5	Gregory Meeks*	89%	Allan W. Jennings, Jr.	10%
	6	Grace Meng*	88%	Daniel Halloran	11%
	7	Nydia Velázquez*	76%	N/A	N/A
	9	Yvette Clark*	89%	Daniel J. Cavanagh	8%
	10	Jerrold Nadler*	98%	Michael Chan	1%
	12	Carolyn Maloney*	87%	Christopher R. Wight	7%
	14	Joseph Crowley*	91%	William F. Gibbons, Jr.	8%
PA	1	Robert Brady*	92%	John Featherman	8%
	2	Chaka Fattah*	80%	Robert Mansfield	17%
	13	Allyson Schwartz*	90%	Joseph J. Rooney	10%

Fig. 14. Asian American Vote for Congress (Selected Districts) *Continued*  
 (Note: larger cells indicate a larger number of poll sites surveyed).

TX	9	Al Green*	49%	Steve Mueller	44%
	22	Kesha Rogers	62%	Pete Olson*	34%
VA	2	Paul O. Hirschbiel Jr.	44%	Scott Rigell*	53%
	7	Wayne Powell	56%	Eric Cantor*	31%
	8	Jim Moran*	77%	J. Patrick Murray	20%
	11	Gerry Connolly*	77%	Chris S. Perkins	22%

\* Winning Candidate

In New York, Asian Americans showed overwhelming support for Democratic candidates. For example, 98 % of Asian Americans in the 10th district voted for Representative Jerrold Nadler, and 88 % voted for candidate Grace Meng, the first Asian American from New York elected to Congress.

### Main Source of News

Almost one-third (30 %) of Asian Americans got their main source of news from ethnic media in an Asian language. Eighteen percent (18 %) relied on ethnic media in English, and the remaining 52 % relied on mainstream English language media.

A larger percentage of Korean (46 %), Vietnamese (41 %), Chinese (41 %), and Bangladeshi (37 %) Americans relied on ethnic media in their native language. These groups were also among the more limited English proficient Asian Americans.

### Summary of the Asian American Vote

In the 2012 November presidential elections, Asian Americans as a whole showed strong support for President Obama and Democratic congressional candidates. Although there were slight variations by ethnic group and geographic location, most of these differences were not as wide as in past presidential elections.

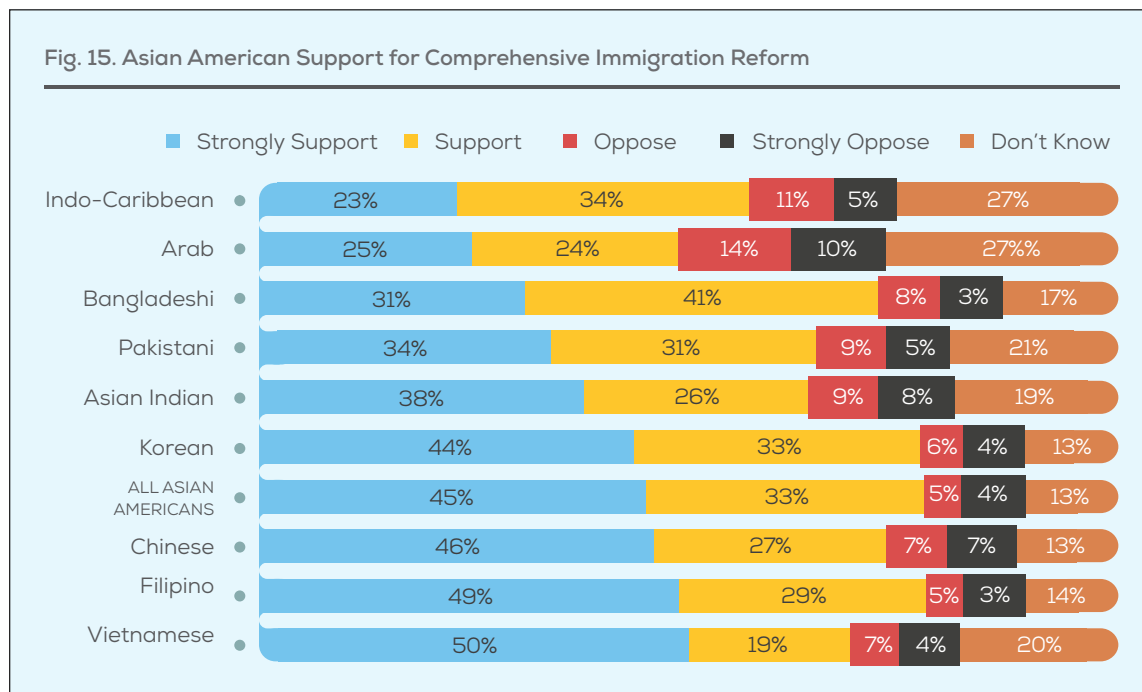
The Asian American community is a diverse and fast-growing segment of the population. AALDEF's Asian American exit poll revealed that language assistance and bilingual ballots are needed to preserve access to the vote, especially for the more than one-third (37 %) of Asian Americans who are limited English proficient.



### III. The Issues

#### Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Support for comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, was consistent across all categories polled, including political party, English proficiency, voting experience, nativity, gender, and all education levels and age groups. The majority of Asian Americans (65 %) showed strong support for comprehensive immigration reform, although there was some variation among ethnic groups.



Immigration reform and a path to citizenship are not partisan issues for Asian Americans. Seventy-three percent (73 %) of Asian American Democrats, 53 % of Asian American Republicans, and 57 % of those not enrolled in a political party showed support for comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Sixty-seven percent (67 %) of English proficient and 61 % of limited English proficient Asian American voters supported comprehensive immigration reform. Sixty-five percent (65 %) of first-time voters and 64 % of all other voters supported immigration reform. The majority of Asian Americans from all education levels supported immigration reform, with the highest numbers among those with a college or high school degree (66 %) and graduate degree (65 %) and a low of 50 % among those with a trade school degree.

The majority of South Asian Americans supported immigration reform, with the highest support from the Bangladeshi (78 %), Pakistani (78 %), Indo-Caribbean (77 %), and Asian Indian (64 %) communities. Seventy-three percent (73 %) of Filipino and 72 % of Korean Americans also supported immigration reform. While a low of 49 % of Vietnamese Americans supported immigration reform, only 14 % said that they opposed it, and 27 % said that they “don’t know.”

There was also high support for comprehensive immigration reform in key swing states, such as Nevada (87%), Pennsylvania (69%), Virginia (67%), and Georgia (56%). In Nevada, most Asian Americans (68%) who voted for Republican Senator Dean Heller supported immigration reform.

In New York, two out of three Asian Americans (68%) supported immigration reform, including a path to citizenship. The highest support was from Bangladeshi (80%), Indo-Caribbean (78%), Korean (76%), Filipino (76%), and Asian Indian (68%) American voters. Seventy-one percent (71%) of Democrats, 59% of Republicans, and 60% not enrolled in any political party supported immigration reform.

In New Jersey, 80% of Asian Americans who voted for Democratic “Gang of Eight” member, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, supported immigration reform. The “Gang of Eight” is a bipartisan group of Senators that drafted the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill.

In Louisiana, opinions about immigration reform were more evenly split, with 34% of Asian Americans supporting, 36% opposing, and 30% who did not know. In Texas, half (50%) of Asian Americans who voted for Republican U.S. Senator Ted Cruz supported immigration reform, 27% opposed, and 23% said that they “don’t know.”

### **Same-Sex Marriage**

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of those polled said that they supported same-sex marriage, and 48% said that they opposed it. A large percentage of Asian Americans (15%) said that they “don’t know.”

The greatest support for same-sex marriage came from native-born, younger, highly educated, and fully English proficient Asian American voters. For example, 75% of Asian Americans born in the U.S. supported the right of same-sex couples to legally marry. Greater opposition to same-sex marriage came from foreign-born, older, limited English proficient Asian American voters. This group currently makes up a large portion of the Asian American electorate.

Rates of support for same-sex marriage varied across ethnic groups. Forty-eight percent (48%) of Filipino, 45% of Chinese, and 42% of Asian Indian Americans supported the right of same-sex couples to legally marry. However, even within these communities, the rate of voters who said that they “don’t know” was high. Thirteen percent (13%) of Filipino, 18% of Chinese, and 18% of Asian Indian Americans said that they “don’t know.”

Although support for same-sex marriage varied among key swing states, such as Nevada (52%), Virginia (42%), Pennsylvania (40%), and Georgia (33%), the rate of those who were undecided about same-sex marriage was fairly high. Seventeen percent (17%) in Nevada, 16% in Virginia, 21% in Pennsylvania, and 15% in Georgia said that they “don’t know.”

In Maryland, where the same-sex marriage referendum was approved in November 2012, 43% of Asian Americans supported same-sex marriage. Results were similar in the breakdown by political affiliation. Forty-three percent (43%) of Democrats supported the rights of same-sex couples to legally marry, although 15% “don’t know.” Even though only 21% of Republicans said that they supported same-sex marriage, 11% said that they “don’t know.” Thirty-four percent (34%) of those not enrolled in a party supported same-sex marriage, and 18% “don’t know.”

Support for same-sex marriage was highest among voters between the ages of 18-29. Sixty-five percent (65 %) of voters in that category said that they supported same-sex marriage. Support for same-sex marriage was lowest among voters who were 70 years old or older; however, almost one out of five voters (18 %) in this age group said that they “don’t know.”

The results showed that half of Asian Americans whose main source of news was from mainstream English media supported same-sex marriage, compared to lower support from those who relied on ethnic media in an Asian language or ethnic media in English.

#### IV. Access To The Vote

The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 ensures that all American citizens can fully exercise their right to vote. It protects racial, ethnic and language minorities from voter discrimination and ensures equal access to the vote. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, also known as the Language Access Provisions, covers 11 states and 22 cities and counties for eight Asian language groups: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, Japanese, “Asian Indian” (which has been designated as Bengali in Queens County, New York and as Hindi in Cook County, Illinois and Los Angeles County, California) and “Other” (which has been designated as Thai in Los Angeles County, California).

Section 203 covers a jurisdiction or political subdivision when the Census Bureau certifies that more than 10,000, or 5 % of all voting age citizens in that jurisdiction, who are of the same language minority group—Alaskan Native, Asian, Spanish, or Native American—are limited English proficient (LEP) and have an average illiteracy rate higher than the national average.

Section 208 of the federal Voting Rights Act gives voters the right to an assistor of choice, with the exception of the voter’s employer or union representative. If a voter needs assistance to cast a ballot, the assistor can accompany the voter into the voting booth.

Fig. 16. Asian Language Coverage Under Section 203

Asian Language Coverage Under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act after Census 2010  
(New languages since the 2010 Census are identified below in **bold**).

##### ALASKA

- Aleutians East Borough: Filipino
- Aleutians West Census Area: Filipino

##### CALIFORNIA

- Alameda: Chinese, **Filipino**, **Vietnamese**
- Los Angeles: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, **Indian**, **Other (not specified)**
- Orange: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese
- **Sacramento: Chinese**
- San Diego: Filipino, **Chinese**, **Vietnamese**
- San Francisco: Chinese
- San Mateo: Chinese
- Santa Clara: Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese

##### HAWAII

- Honolulu: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese
- Maui: Filipino

##### ILLINOIS

- Cook: Chinese, **Indian**

##### MASSACHUSETTS

- Quincy city: Chinese

##### MICHIGAN

- Hamtramck city: **Bangladeshi**

##### NEVADA

- Clark: Filipino

##### NEW JERSEY

- Bergen: Korean

##### NEW YORK

- Kings (Brooklyn): Chinese
- New York (Manhattan): Chinese
- Queens: Chinese, Korean, **Indian**

##### TEXAS

- Harris: Vietnamese, **Chinese**

##### WASHINGTON

- King: Chinese, **Vietnamese**

Fig. 17. AALDEF Multilingual Exit Poll: Language Minority Groups (Selected Localities)

STATE - LOCALITY	LANGUAGE MINORITY GROUP	LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT	PREFERS VOTING WITH ASSISTANCE OF INTERPRETER OR TRANSLATED MATERIALS
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>			
- SAN DIEGO	Vietnamese	28%	17%
<b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</b>			
- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	Chinese	36%	27%
<b>GEORGIA</b>			
- DEKALB CO.	Vietnamese	18%	9%
- GWINNETT CO.	Korean	61%	22%
	Vietnamese	48%	12%
	Chinese	21%	3%
<b>LOUISIANA</b>			
- NEW ORLEANS	Vietnamese	67%	41%
<b>MARYLAND</b>			
- MONTGOMERY CO.	Chinese	23%	16%
	Korean	41%	19%
	Vietnamese	42%	17%
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>			
- BOSTON	Chinese	53%	44%
	Vietnamese	68%	37%
- MALDEN	Chinese	51%	42%
- QUINCY	Chinese	26%	17%
<b>MICHIGAN</b>			
- WAYNE CO.	Bangladeshi	44%	36%
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>			
- BERGEN CO.	Korean	72%	28%
- HUDSON CO.	Asian Indian	26%	11%
<b>NEW YORK</b>			
- BROOKLYN	Chinese	56%	42%
	Bengali	48%	17%
- MANHATTAN	Chinese	56%	45%
- QUEENS	Chinese	45%	27%
	Korean	71%	38%
	Bengali	48%	28%
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>			
- PHILADELPHIA	Chinese	74%	52%
	Vietnamese	68%	33%
<b>TEXAS</b>			
- HOUSTON	Vietnamese	62%	32%
	Chinese	62%	27%
<b>VIRGINIA</b>			
- ARLINGTON CO.	Chinese	35%	22%
- FAIRFAX CO.	Korean	39%	14%
	Vietnamese	49%	14%

### Language Assistance

AALDEF's exit poll showed that only one in five (18%) Asian Americans identified English as their native language.

Under Section 203, certain jurisdictions in which the AALDEF exit poll was conducted were mandated to provide Asian language assistance, such as translated ballots, instructions, and interpreters. For example, in New York City, Chinese language assistance is required in Kings County (Brooklyn) and New York County (Manhattan). Chinese, Korean, and Bengali are required in Queens County. Boston, Massachusetts was required to provide bilingual ballots in Chinese and Vietnamese under Voting Rights Act litigation and now by state legislation. Other jurisdictions provided voluntary language assistance.

### Voting Barriers



Photo credit: VAYLA

Asian Americans were also asked about voting problems they encountered on Election Day. Of those polled, improper requests for identification, missing or misspelled names in voter rolls, rude or hostile poll workers, and lack of language access were among the most common problems.

Similar to other voters, Asian Americans also faced long lines, machine breakdowns, misdirection to poll sites, and inadequate

notification of site assignments or changes.

In Annandale, Virginia, Korean American voters were segregated from other voters into another line. In New Orleans, Louisiana, Vietnamese American voters were denied the right to bring an assistor of choice into the poll booth.

## Conclusion

The Asian American population is now the fastest growing racial group in the nation. Asian Americans are increasingly becoming citizens and have a desire to participate in the political franchise, but mainstream media polls and politicians often overlook them. More outreach is needed, especially towards older and limited English proficient Asian Americans.

Moreover, Asian Americans have encountered many voting barriers, similar to past elections. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act has expanded coverage of language assistance to additional jurisdictions, but shortcomings in local compliance still exist. Aggressive enforcement is needed to ensure that all Americans can fully exercise their right to vote.

AALDEF's exit poll shows that Asian Americans strongly supported President Obama in the 2012 Elections. Moreover, Asian Americans believe that Economy/Jobs, Health Care, Education, and Civil Rights/Immigrant Rights are all important issues that need to be addressed by Congress and the Obama Administration. Asian Americans also strongly support comprehensive immigration reform, with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Although there was not the same level of support for same-sex marriage, the significant rates of undecided voters indicate the



Photo credit: SAALT



Photo credit: AALDEF

need and opportunity to conduct more educational outreach about same-sex marriage, especially among naturalized citizens, older, and limited English proficient Asian Americans.

It is also clear that many congressional representatives received strong support from their Asian American constituents. These elected representatives should address the needs and concerns of the Asian American community in their districts.

## APPENDIX

Poll Site Locations			
State	County	City	Poll Site
CA	San Diego	San Diego	Challenger Middle School Garage – White Residence
DC	District of Columbia	District of Columbia	Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church
FL	Miami-Dade	Miami	West Dade Regional Library
GA	DeKalb	Doraville	Oakcliff Elementary School
	Gwinnett	Norcross	Lucky Shoals Community Center
		Duluth	Hull Middle School
IL	Cook	Suwanee	Full Gospel Atlanta Church
		Glenview	Willowbrook School Glen Grove School
LA	Orleans	New Orleans	Mary Queen of Vietnam Church Engine House #37 Sarah Reed High School
	Suffolk	Boston	Metropolitan Community Room Catherine F. Clark Apartments Dr. William Henderson Inclusion Elementary School Cathedral High School
MA	Middlesex	Malden	Beebe School
	Norfolk	Quincy	North Quincy High School
MD	Montgomery	Rockville	Richard Montgomery High School St. Elizabeth Catholic School
		Silver Spring	Westover Elementary School White Oak Middle School
		Ann Arbor	Clague Middle School
MI	Washtenaw	Canton	Summit on the Park
	Wayne	Hamtramck	Hamtramck Community Center
		Dearborn	Salina Elementary School
	Kent	Detroit	Transfiguration Church
		Gaines	Gaines Township Office
		Novi	Novi Public Library
		Troy	First United Methodist Church
NJ	Bergen	Fort Lee Palisades Park	Senior Citizens Activities Center Palisades Park Junior and Senior High School
	Hudson	Jersey City	Brunswick Towers Fire House
NV	Clark	Las Vegas	Seafood City Boulevard Mall Chinatown Plaza
NY	Kings	Brooklyn	PS 217
			PS 230
	New York	Manhattan	PS 314
			PS 94
	Queens	Queens	Confucius Plaza
			PS 131
PS 126			
PS 234			
			Newtown High School Benjamin N. Cardozo High School PS 115 PS 20 John Bowne JHS 189 Rosenthal Senior Center St Andrews School PS 69



## Poll Site Locations (continued)

State	County	City	Poll Site
			IS 230 Thomas A. Edison HS PS 62 PS 150
PA	Delaware Philadelphia	Upper Darby Philadelphia	69th Street Alliance Church Thomas Jefferson Alumni Hall Chinese Church & Christian Center James R. Lowell Elementary School South Philadelphia Branch Library
	Fort Bend	Sugar Land	Barrington Place Homeowners Association
TX	Harris	Houston	Sartartia Middle School Chambers Elementary School Sharpstown Middle School Margaret Collins Elementary School Chancellor Elementary School Alief Middle School Houston Community College Alief Center
VA	Arlington Chesterfield Fairfax	Arlington Midlothian Annandale Centreville Fairfax	Fire Station #10 Midlothian High School Annandale Fire Station Co., #8 Powell Elementary School Baileys Elementary School Mosby Woods Elementary School
	Henrico Princess Anne	Glen Allen Virginia Beach	Deep Run High School Kempsville Presbyterian Church Salem High School

The following groups helped mobilize over 850 volunteers to conduct the nation's largest Asian American exit poll survey and election monitoring program.

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OCA (formerly Organization of Chinese Americans)  
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Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation – PA

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

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.

This report was written by Chi-Ser Tran, AALDEF Voting Rights Organizer, with the assistance of Democracy Program Director Glenn D. Magpantay and Executive Director Margaret Fung. AALDEF also acknowledges Staff Attorney Jerry Vattamala and Policy Analyst Nancy Yu, as well as fellows Matthew Clark, Lilian Pascone, Katie Wang, and Alan Xu and interns Cynthia Vuong, Tina Tran, Pamela Pan, and Jon Kim for their work.

This report was made possible with the generous support of the Ford Foundation.

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
99 Hudson Street, 12th floor, New York, New York 10013-2815  
Phone: 212.966.5932 • Fax: 212.966.4303 • Email: [info@aaldef.org](mailto:info@aaldef.org)  
Website: [www.aaldef.org](http://www.aaldef.org)

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99 Hudson Street-12F  
New York, NY 10013  
Tel. 212-966-5932  
[www.aaldef.org](http://www.aaldef.org)

