

BALLOT
BOX

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box

The 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County



ASIAN PACIFIC
AMERICAN
LEGAL CENTER
OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Cyrus Chung Ying Tang
Foundation

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Asian Pacific American Legal Center

The Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California was founded in 1983 and is the largest organization in the country focused on providing multilingual, culturally sensitive legal services, education, and civil rights support to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs). APALC's mission is to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to positively influence and impact APIs and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. APALC works on a range of issues affecting APIs and immigrants, including workers rights, consumer rights, immigration, citizenship, domestic violence, hate crimes, health care, language access, and voting rights.

APALC is affiliated with the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, D.C., Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco, and Asian American Institute in Chicago

www.apalc.org

Cyrus Chung Ying Tang Foundation

The Cyrus Chung Ying Tang Foundation's mission is to foster greater understanding and mutual respect between the United States and China through effective investment in community service and cultural exchanges. It is involved in the promotion of education and healthcare for Americans and supports civic activities that enable Asian immigrants to better integrate into American society.

www.tangfoundation.org

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The 2008 General Election was historic. Embracing themes of hope and change, Americans elected this country's first African American President, a former community organizer born of a White mother and Kenyan father in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Despite increased attention to a racially diverse electorate, Asian Americans were often overlooked in deliberations over swing states and swing votes. Yet the face of America is changing in part because of us. Growth in our communities have made Asian Americans a vibrant part of life here in Los Angeles and throughout California. Challenging that invisibility requires us to change. It requires us to become more politically engaged.

By compiling the most accurate information available on the Asian American electorate, *Asian Americans at the Ballot Box: The 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County* will allow voter engagement efforts to strategically target those least engaged in our communities, moving them toward becoming more active participants in the political process. It will assist elected officials, community organizations, foundations, and others in their efforts to better understand Asian American communities and respond to our concerns about this country's future. Finally, the report will help government agencies administering elections better meet the needs of voters facing language barriers, providing them equal access to the ballot.

Once again, APALC would like to extend a special thanks to the Cyrus Chung Ying Tang Foundation for its ongoing support of this important research.



Stewart Kwoh, Esq.
President and Executive Director
Asian Pacific American Legal Center

More Asian Americans are voting than ever before

The number of Asian Americans voting in both Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections countywide has increased steadily over the past decade. In Los Angeles County, a record number 293,000 Asian Americans cast ballots during the 2008 General Election. Yet the Asian American electorate did not increase as a proportion of the county's total electorate, indicating greater mobilization in other communities. While Asian Americans already registered to vote are being effectively mobilized to the ballot box, more resources and work are needed to help Asian Americans become citizens and register to vote.

Asian Americans strongly supported Barack Obama

In a high profile Presidential Election, 63% of Asian Americans casting ballots in Los Angeles County voted for Democrat Barack Obama. Support for President Obama was strong among nearly all ethnic groups surveyed, including Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean American voters. Among Asian American voters, 76% of the native-born and 56% of immigrants voted for the President.

Asian Americans overwhelmingly support universal healthcare

Speaking out on one of today's most controversial policy issues, 90% of Asian Americans voting on Election Day said they supported universal healthcare. Nearly three-fourths supported providing healthcare to all, regardless of immigration status, and just over half would be willing to pay higher taxes to fund the changes. With disproportionate numbers of Asian Americans without health insurance, it is critical that the Asian American community's concerns around healthcare reform be addressed by lawmakers.

More Asian Americans live in Los Angeles County than any other county in the United States.

The number of Asian Americans in the United States continues to grow, both in existing and emerging Asian American communities throughout the country.

There are now nearly 15.5 million Asian Americans nationwide: we make up 5% of our nation's total population. Asian Americans live in cities throughout the United States, not just in historic cores. Yet the largest community remains here in Los Angeles. Nearly 1.4 million Asian Americans live in Los Angeles County, more than in any other county nationwide.¹

Despite rapid growth, Asian Americans face challenges to

realizing their full potential as participants in the political process. Many have yet to become citizens or register to vote. Many registered to vote still do not vote. Many face language barriers that prevent access to information on how to vote, where candidates stand on critical issues, and the details of complex ballot measures. Understanding these challenges is important if we are to address them systematically and with real effectiveness.

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box: The 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County compiles information on Asian American political participation in Los Angeles County during the 2008 General Election. Drawing on analyses of data from the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters Office and the 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, the report documents Asian American voter registration, turnout, voter preferences, and need for and use of bilingual voter assistance during a historic Presidential Election.

The report also details Asian American attitudes toward healthcare reform. Because proposals to reform the nation's healthcare

system will impact millions in Asian American communities, it is important to understand where they stand on the issue. Do Asian Americans support or oppose universal healthcare? Do they think benefits should be extended to everyone, regardless of immigration status? Are they willing to help pay for these critical changes?

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box fills an important niche in the scholarship on Asian American political participation by providing user-friendly data used to both track trends in voter registration and turnout countywide and facilitate the targeting of local voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts by city, ethnic group, age, nativity (native versus foreign-born), and gender.

¹ United States Census Bureau 2008 Population Estimates.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Registered Voters: Those who were registered to vote by October 20, 2008 and eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election.

Voters: Registered voters who cast ballots in the 2008 General Election.

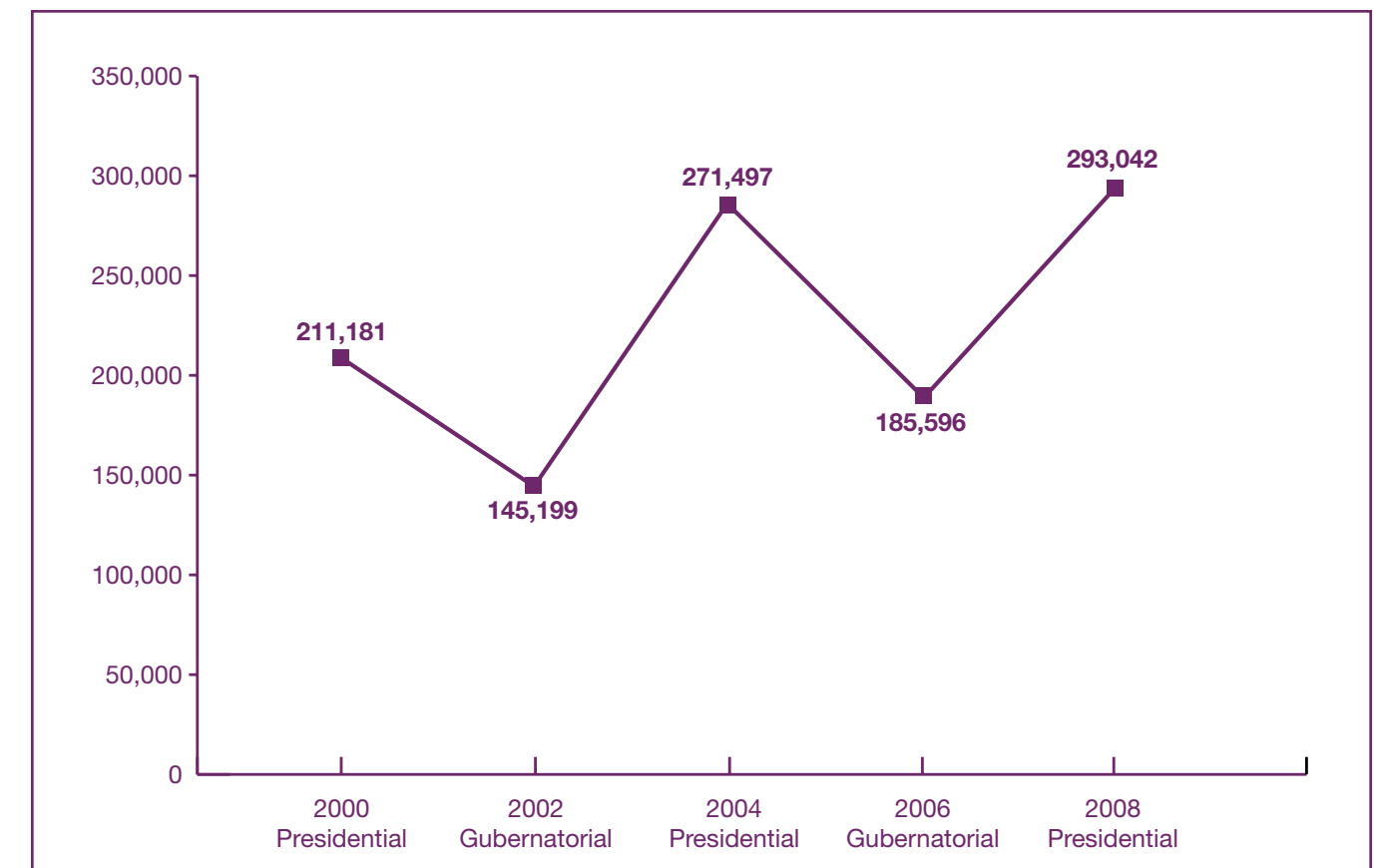
Voter Turnout: Percent of registered voters who cast ballots in the 2008 General Election.

The number of Asian Americans voting in both Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections countywide has increased steadily over the past decade. A record number voted in Los Angeles County during the 2008 General Election, with over 293,000 Asian Americans casting ballots in what was a high profile Presidential race. Asian Americans made up 10% of those registered to vote and 9% of those casting ballots.

Despite these record numbers, the Asian American electorate did not mobilize to its full potential. Asian Americans did not increase as a proportion of the overall electorate countrywide, indicating greater mobilization amongst non-Asian American voters.

In Los Angeles County, 10% of those registered to vote and 9% of those casting ballots were Asian American.

Figure 1: Asian American Voters in L.A. County, 2000 through 2008 General Elections



Source: Los Angeles County Voter Files (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout Overview

Figure 2: Demographics of Asian American Registered Voters in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

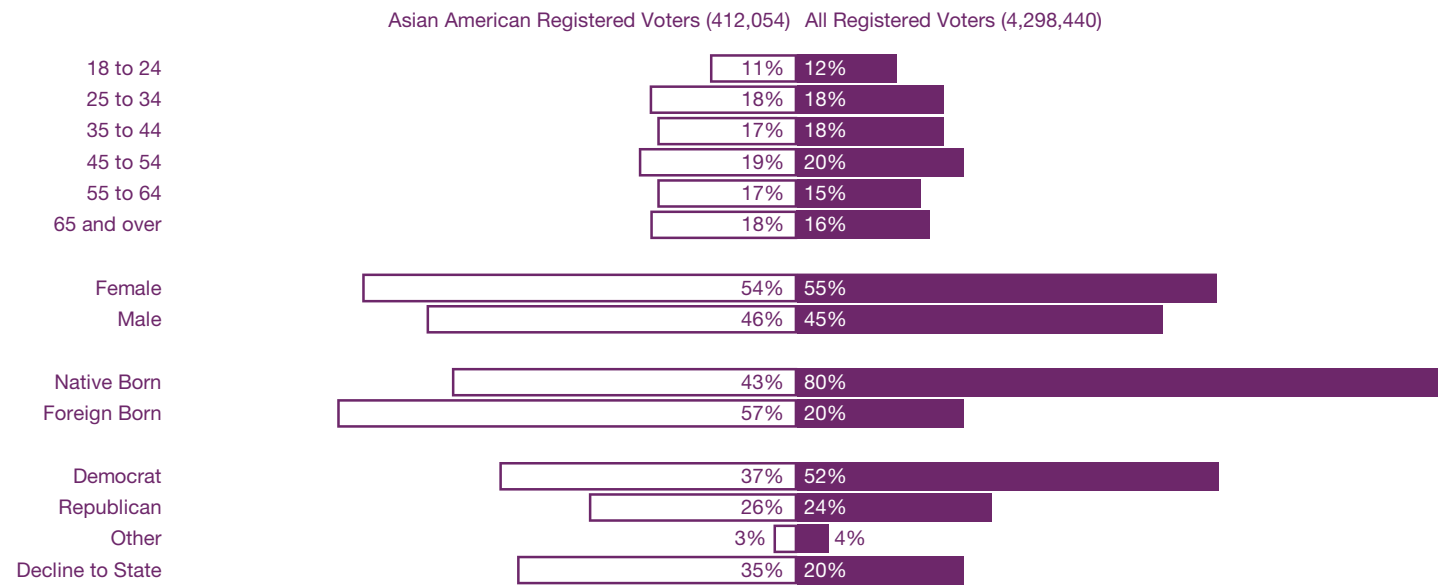
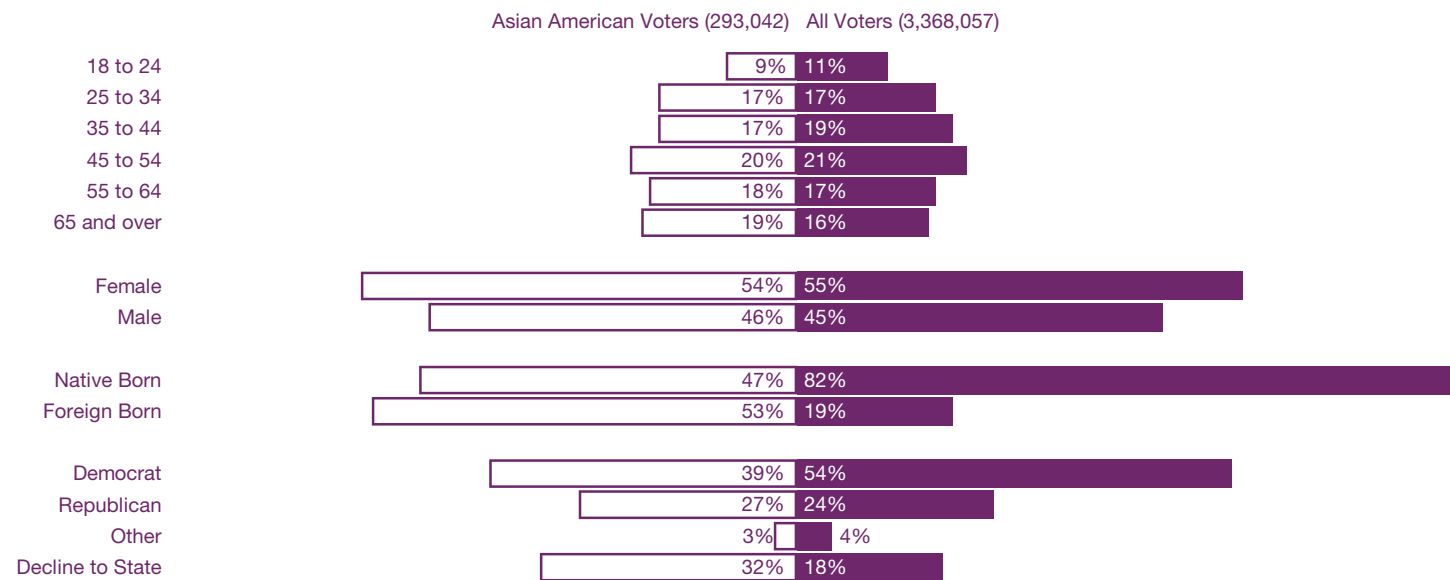


Figure 3: Demographics of Asian American Voters in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout Demographics

As in past elections, Los Angeles County's Asian American electorate was distinct in two key ways.

First, Asian American registered voters and voters countywide were disproportionately immigrant. Roughly 57% of Asian American registered voters and 53% of Asian Americans casting ballots were born outside the United States. By comparison, only 20% of all registered voters and 19% of all voters were foreign-born.

Second, Asian Americans are less likely to be affiliated with a political party. Approximately 35% of Asian American registered voters and 32% of Asian Americans casting ballots held no party affiliation. In contrast, only 20% of all registered voters and 18% of all voters were unaffiliated with a political party.

Much was made of voter turnout among young voters. Roughly 11% of Asian American registered voters and 9% of Asian Americans casting ballots were between the ages of 18 and 24. During the 2006 General Election, 11% of Asian Americans registered to vote were between the ages of 18 and 24, but only 5% of Asian American voters were young. Clearly, the presidential election galvanized young people, including Asian American youth.

The ethnic distribution of the Asian American electorate mirrored that of the total Asian American population. Among Asian American registered voters, 30% were Chinese, 23% were Filipino, 14% were Korean, 10% were Japanese, and 9% were Vietnamese. Among Asian Americans casting ballots, 29% were Chinese, 24% were Filipino, 14% were Korean, 11% were Japanese, and 9% were Vietnamese.

Table 1: Asian American Registered Voters by Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

GROUP	Registered Voters	% of Asian American Registered Voters
Asian Indian	20,883	5%
Cambodian	8,553	2%
Chinese	124,531	30%
Filipino	94,876	23%
Japanese	39,250	10%
Korean	59,513	14%
Vietnamese	38,499	9%
TOTAL ASIAN AMERICAN	412,054	100%

NOTE: Figures do not include all Asian American ethnic groups, will not sum to total.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Table 2: Asian American Voters by Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

GROUP	Voters	% of Asian American Voters
Asian Indian	15,695	5%
Cambodian	4,819	2%
Chinese	85,527	29%
Filipino	71,645	24%
Japanese	32,426	11%
Korean	40,095	14%
Vietnamese	25,284	9%
TOTAL ASIAN AMERICAN	293,042	100%

NOTE: Figures do not include all Asian American ethnic groups, will not sum to total.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout By Ethnic Group

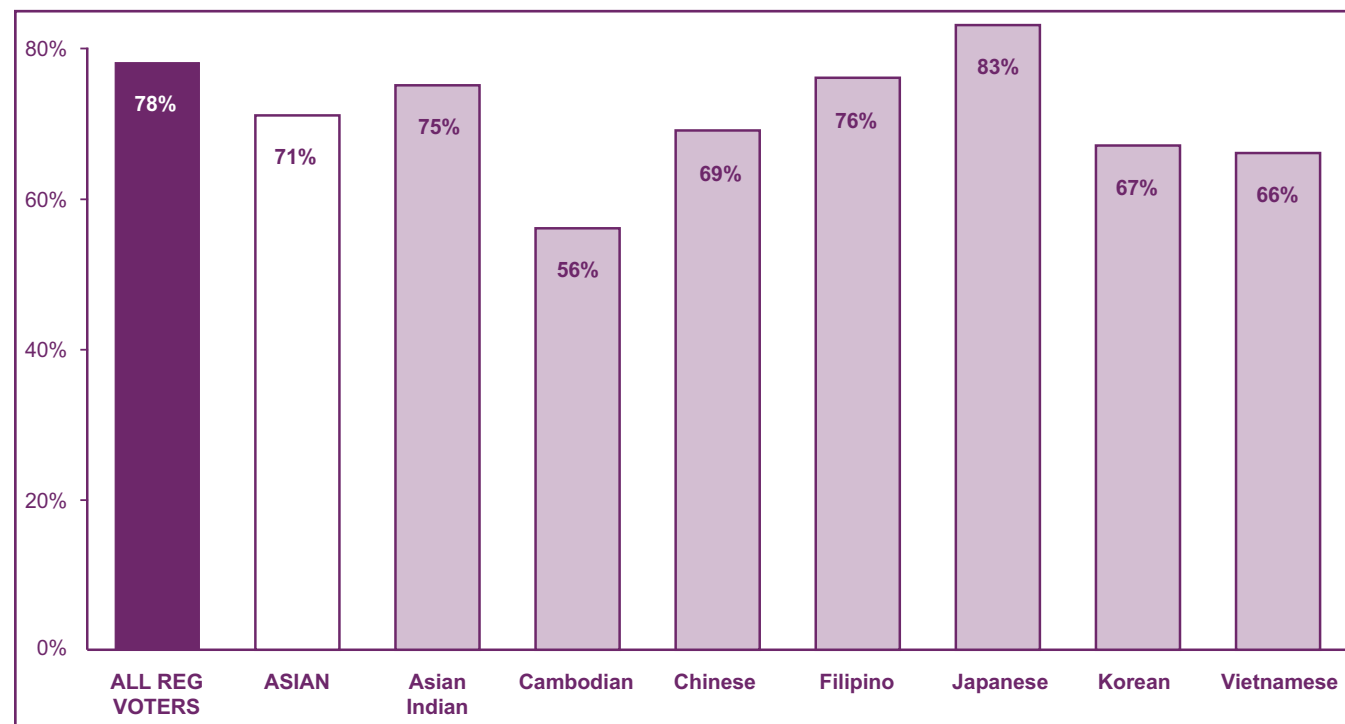
Roughly 83% of Japanese Americans registered to vote cast ballots on Election Day.

Despite record numbers of Asian Americans casting ballots in Los Angeles County on Election Day, turnout among Asian Americans registered to vote still lagged behind that of all registered voters.

While 78% of all registered voters countywide cast ballots, only 71% of Asian Americans registered to vote did so. Among Asian Americans, turnout varied by ethnic group. Historically the most likely of Asian American ethnic groups to vote, turnout among Japanese Americans registered to vote was 83%, highest among Asian American ethnic groups and higher than the turnout of all registered voters countywide. The turnout of Filipinos (76%) and

Asian Indians (75%) approached that of all voters, while the turnout of Chinese (69%), Koreans (67%), Vietnamese (66%), and Cambodians (56%) lagged significantly behind.

Figure 4: Asian American Voter Turnout* by Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



*Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout By Geography

How is the Asian American vote geographically distributed?

Asian American registered voters and voters generally live in cities with large Asian American populations, with many in Los Angeles, Torrance, Long Beach, Monterey Park, and Alhambra. Asian Americans make up the highest proportion of the electorate in cities throughout the San Gabriel Valley. As in past elections, Monterey Park stands as the only city whose electorate is majority Asian American. Other areas with heavily Asian American electorates include Rosemead,

Rowland Heights, Cerritos, Walnut, Arcadia, Alhambra, Diamond Bar, and Hacienda Heights.

Despite making up a high proportion of the electorate in the San Gabriel Valley, voter turnout was below average for Asian American registered voters there. Turnout was particularly low in Rosemead and El Monte, with only 58% and 61% of Asian American registered voters, respectively, casting ballots. In contrast, turnout was above average for Asian American registered voters in cities outside the San Gabriel Valley, including Los Angeles, Torrance,

Cerritos, and Glendale. That Asian American political power has yet to be fully realized is no more apparent than in the San Gabriel Valley.

Table 3: Asian American Registered Voters, Voters by City, 2008 General Election

CITY NAME	# Asian American Registered Voters	% Registered Voters Asian American	# Asian American Voters	% Voters Asian American	Asian American Voter Turnout*
Los Angeles	119,898	8%	86,968	7%	73%
Torrance	15,962	20%	12,338	19%	77%
Long Beach	15,735	7%	10,408	6%	66%
Monterey Park	14,098	54%	9,498	50%	67%
Alhambra	13,324	37%	8,932	33%	67%
Cerritos	12,976	43%	9,355	39%	72%
Arcadia	11,575	40%	7,568	35%	65%
Diamond Bar	10,095	34%	6,867	29%	68%
Rowland Hgths	9,260	45%	5,911	40%	64%
Rosemead	8,962	48%	5,234	41%	58%
Hacienda Hgths	8,722	31%	5,844	27%	67%
Glendale	8,577	10%	6,300	9%	73%
El Monte	7,958	25%	4,816	22%	61%
West Covina	7,354	15%	5,134	13%	70%
Walnut	7,168	42%	4,918	38%	69%
L.A. COUNTY	412,054	10%	293,042	9%	71%

*Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout By Age

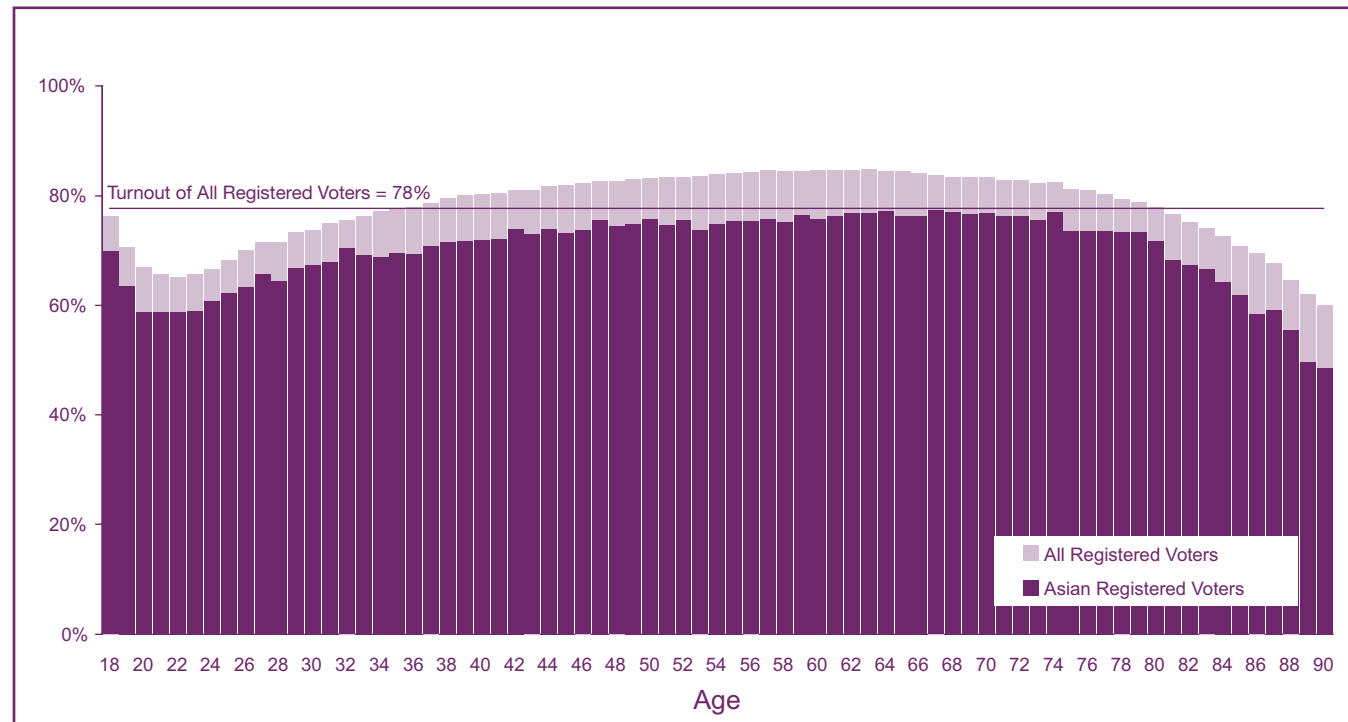
The turnout gap between young and old narrowed during the Presidential election.

While turnout is historically high among older registered voters and low among younger ones, the gap between the two age groups typically narrows during Presidential Elections. For Asian Americans, the 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County was no exception.

More than 71% of all Asian American registered voters cast ballots on Election Day, with 61% between the ages of 18 and 24 and 72% age 65 and over doing so. While the turnout gap between younger and older Asian Americans was 11 percentage points during this past Presidential Election, the gap stood at 35 percentage points during the 2006

General Election, a Gubernatorial Election. These differences are similar to those that exist between all younger and older voters: the gap between all younger and older registered voters was 11 percentage points during the 2008 General Election and 40 percentage points during the 2006 General Election.

Figure 5: Voter Turnout* by Age in Los Angeles County, 2008 General Election



* Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Voter Registration and Turnout By Nativity

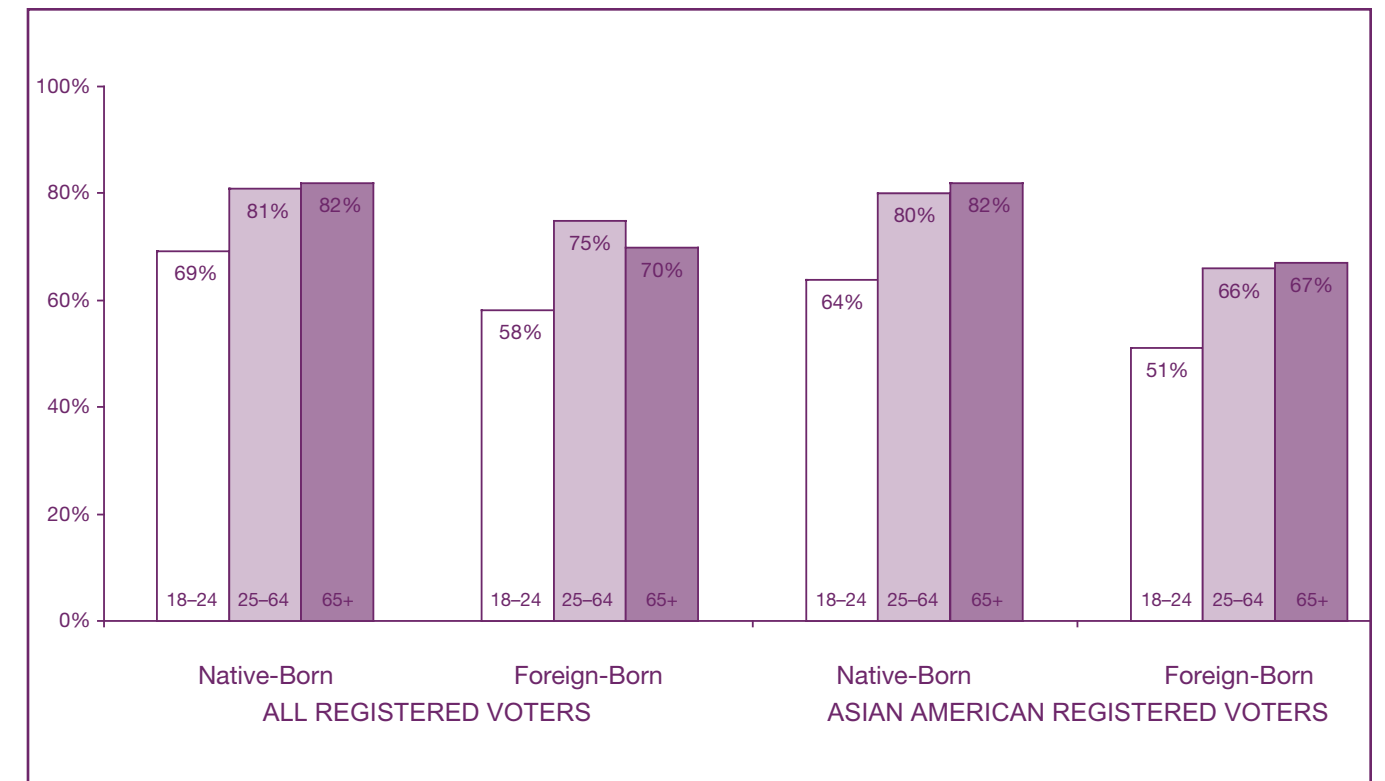
Native-born Asian American registered voters were more likely than the foreign-born to cast ballots on Election Day.

While roughly 76% of native-born Asian American registered voters cast ballots, only 66% of foreign-born Asian American registered voters did so. Examining turnout by nativity and age (Figure 6) shows that, with the exception of young voters, the turnout of native-born Asian Americans was similar to that of all native-born voters. The turnout of foreign-born Asian Americans fell well below that of all native-born voters and below that of all foreign-born voters, regardless of age.

Increasing Asian American political participation means addressing the barriers that young Asian Americans and Asian American immigrants face in voting.

The turnout of native-born Asian Americans was similar to that of all native-born voters.

Figure 6: Voter Turnout* by Age, Nativity in Los Angeles County, 2008 General Election



* Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

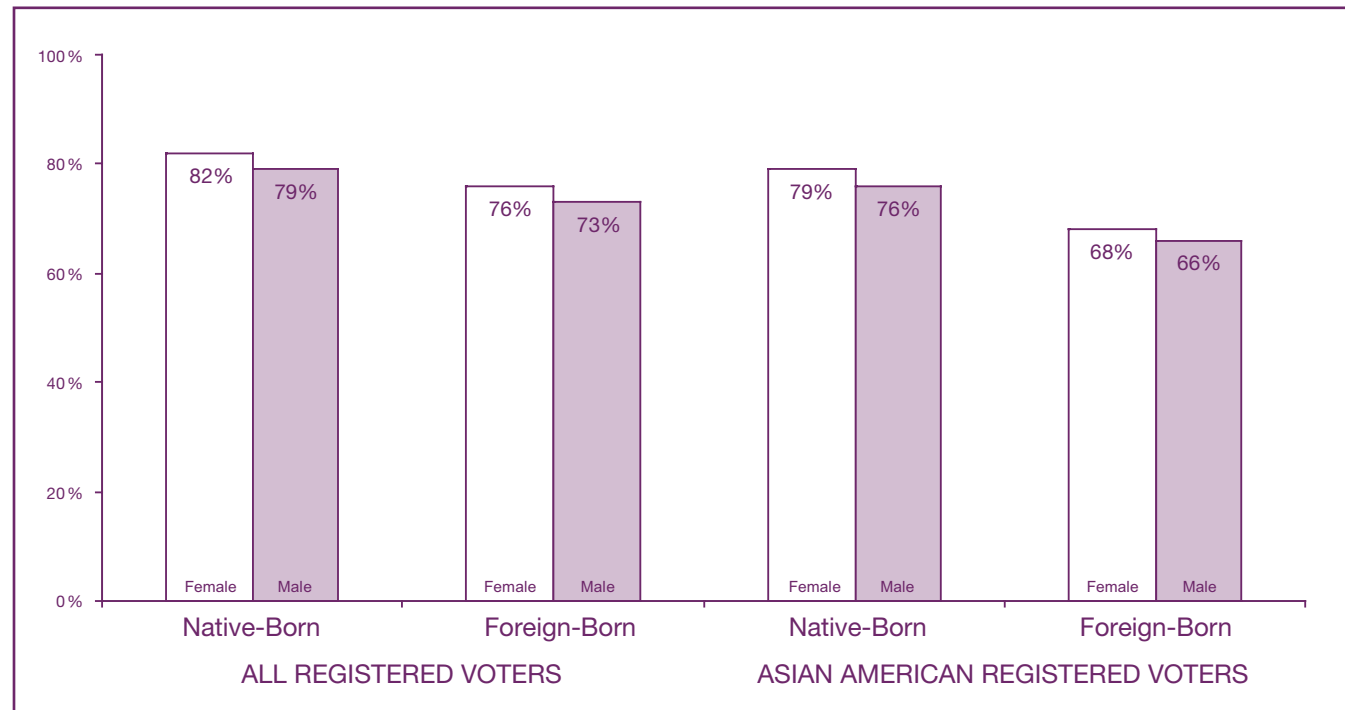
Voter Registration and Turnout By Gender

Women outnumbered men among both registered voters and those casting ballots.

During the 2008 General Election, women outnumbered men among both registered voters and those casting ballots.

This was true for the total electorate, as well as Asian Americans. Among Asian Americans, 54% of both registered voters and voters were women. As with all registered voters, Asian American women who were registered to vote were more likely than men to actually vote. While 72% of Asian American women registered to vote cast ballots, 70% of Asian American men registered to vote did so. This narrow gender gap existed among both the native and foreign-born.

Figure 7: Voter Turnout* by Gender, Racial and Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Voter turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election. Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

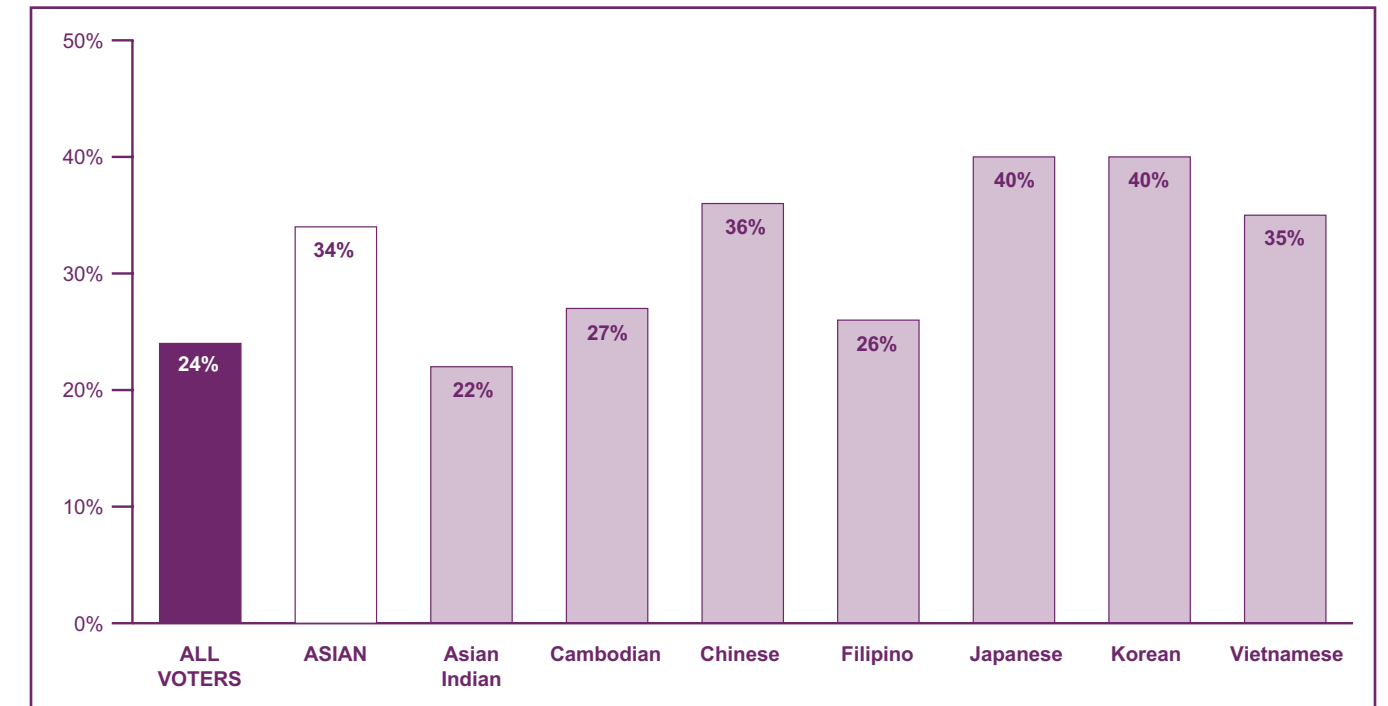
Voter Registration and Turnout Voting by Mail

Roughly one in four voters in Los Angeles County voted by mail during the 2008 General Election.

Asian Americans were even more likely to vote by mail. More than one-third of all Asian American voters voted by absentee ballot. Among Asian American ethnic groups, 40% of Japanese, 40% of Korean, 36% of Chinese, 35% of Vietnamese, 27% of Cambodian, and 25% of Filipino American voters voted by mail. Asian Indian voters were the only Asian American ethnic group less likely than the average voter to vote by absentee ballot.

More than one-third of Asian Americans who voted in the 2008 General Election voted by mail.

Figure 8: Percent of Voters Voting by Absentee Ballot by Racial and Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Presidential Race

A significant majority of Asian American voters in Los Angeles County supported Barack Obama.

Record numbers of Asian Americans voted in Los Angeles County on Election Day. But how did they vote?

In a historic Presidential race, nearly two-thirds of Asian American voters countywide supported Barack Obama. Support for President Obama cut across ethnic boundaries, with clear majorities of Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean voters in Los Angeles County voting for

the Democrat. Vietnamese American voters were divided between the two candidates.

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Presidential Race

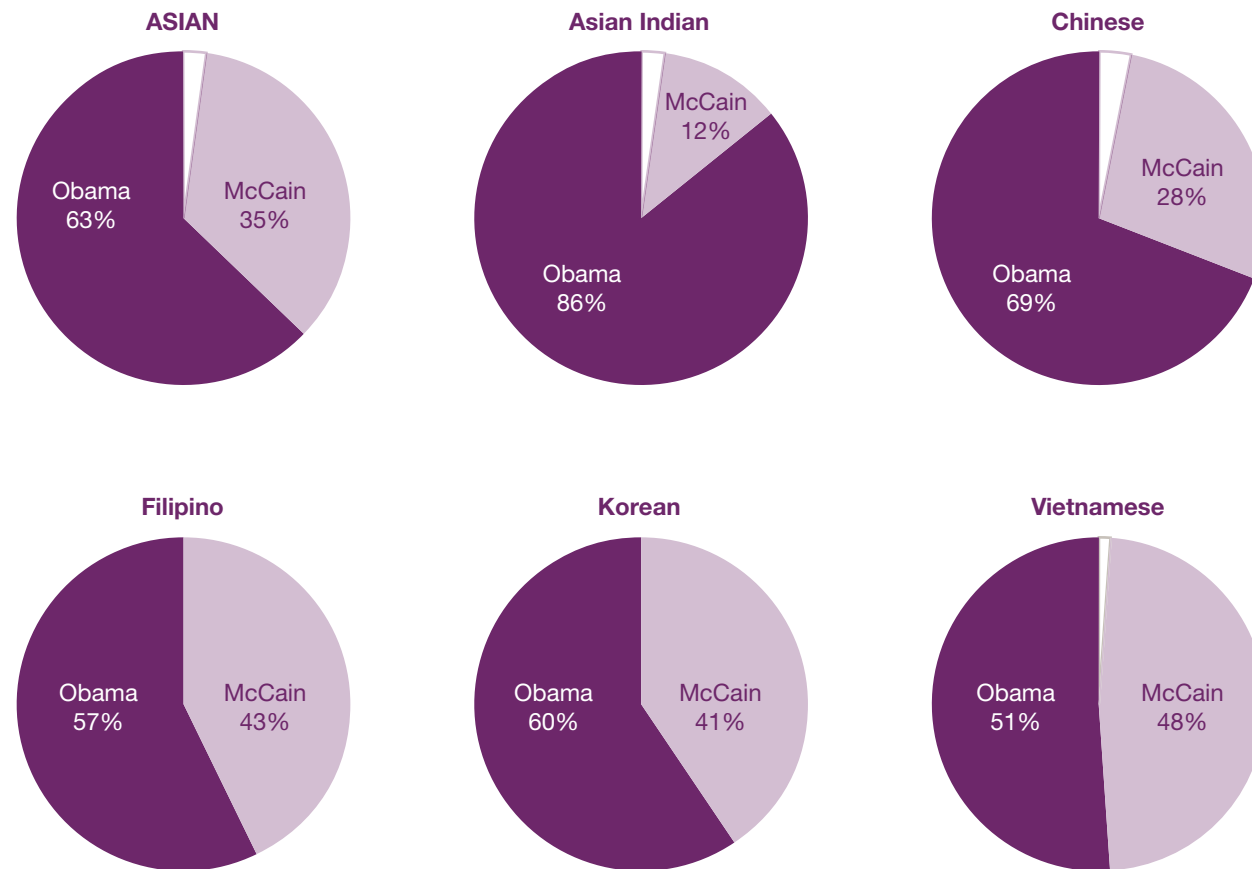
Among Asian Americans, both native and foreign-born voters supported President Obama.

Roughly 76% of native and 56% of foreign-born Asian American voters voted for the Democrat. Among native-born Asian American voters, support for the President cut across age groups, with voters 18 to 34, 35 to 54, and 55 years and over all voting for him. Among foreign-born Asian American voters, support for the President was strong among younger voters, with 79% of those 18 to 34 years-of-age voting for the Democrat,

and mixed among older voters, with equal numbers voting for President Obama and John McCain.

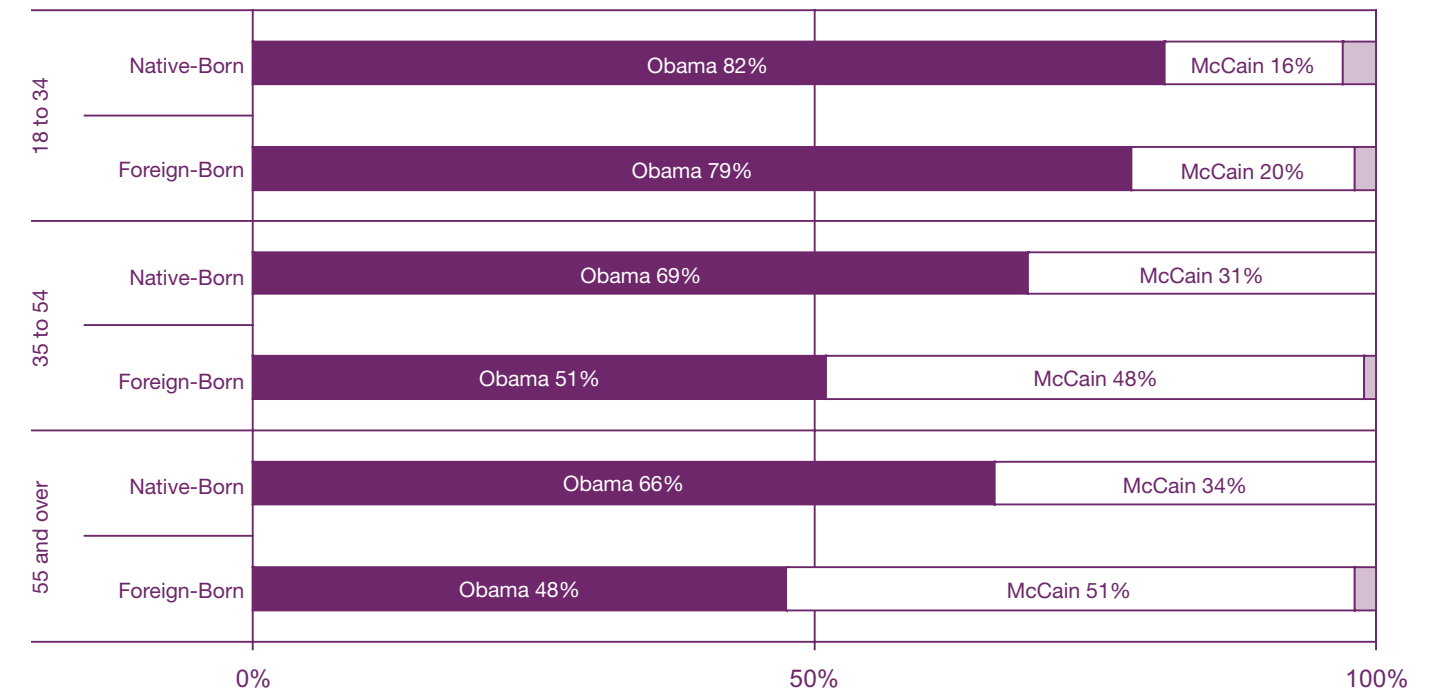
Among Asian Americans, 76% of Native and 56% of foreign-born voters supported President Obama.

Figure 9: Presidential Vote by Race, Ethnicity in Los Angeles County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Figure 10: Asian American Presidential Vote by Age, Nativity in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Ballot Measures

The Asian American electorate was divided on the highest profile measures.

While the Presidential race received the most attention, several ballot measures were also considered by voters. The Asian American electorate was divided on the highest profile measures.

Proposition 4, which would have instituted a waiting period and parental notification before a minor could terminate her pregnancy, received tepid support from Asian Americans on Election Day, with 56% voting in favor of the initiative.

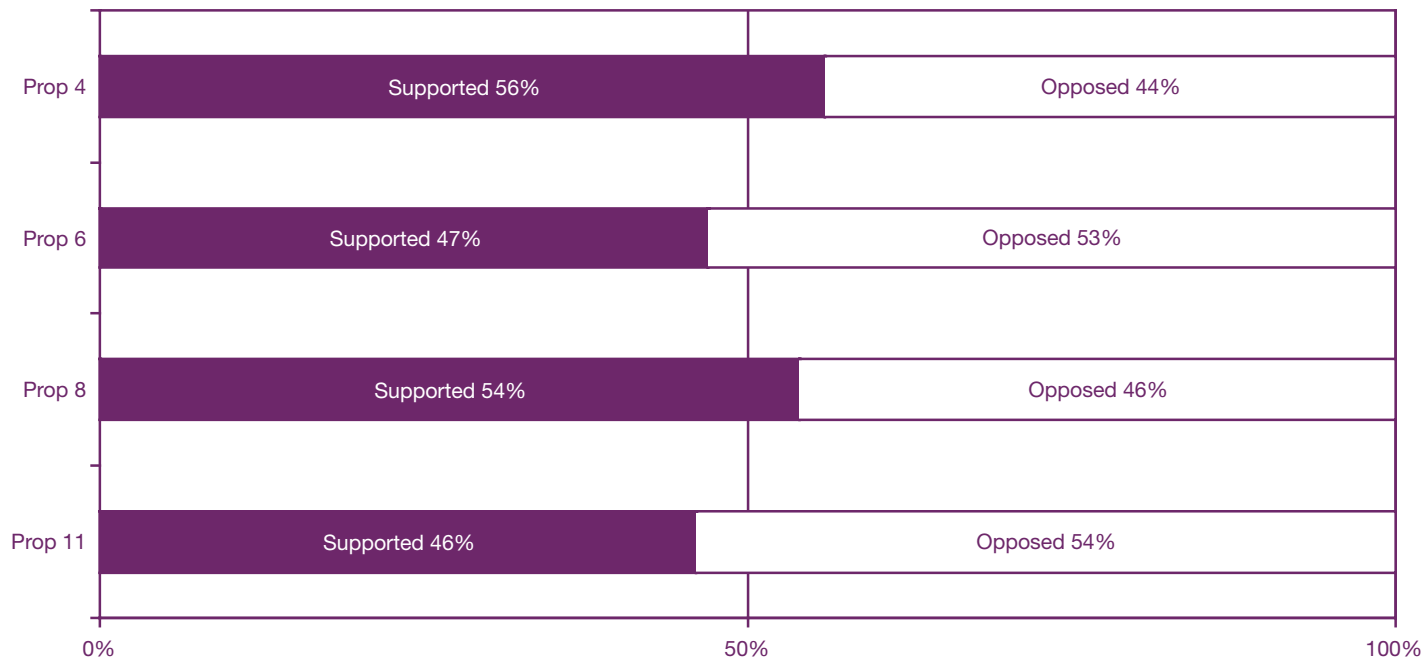
Nearly equal numbers of Asian Americans voted in support of and opposition to Proposition 6, which would have increased both funding

for police and law enforcement and criminal penalties for certain crimes.

Perhaps the most contentious initiative on the ballot, Proposition 8 eliminated the right of same-sex couples to marry in the state of California. A slim majority of Asian American voters supported the initiative.

Proposition 11, which placed the redistricting process into the hands of an independent commission, was opposed by a slim majority of Asian Americans.

Figure 11: Asian American Vote on Statewide Ballot Measures in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

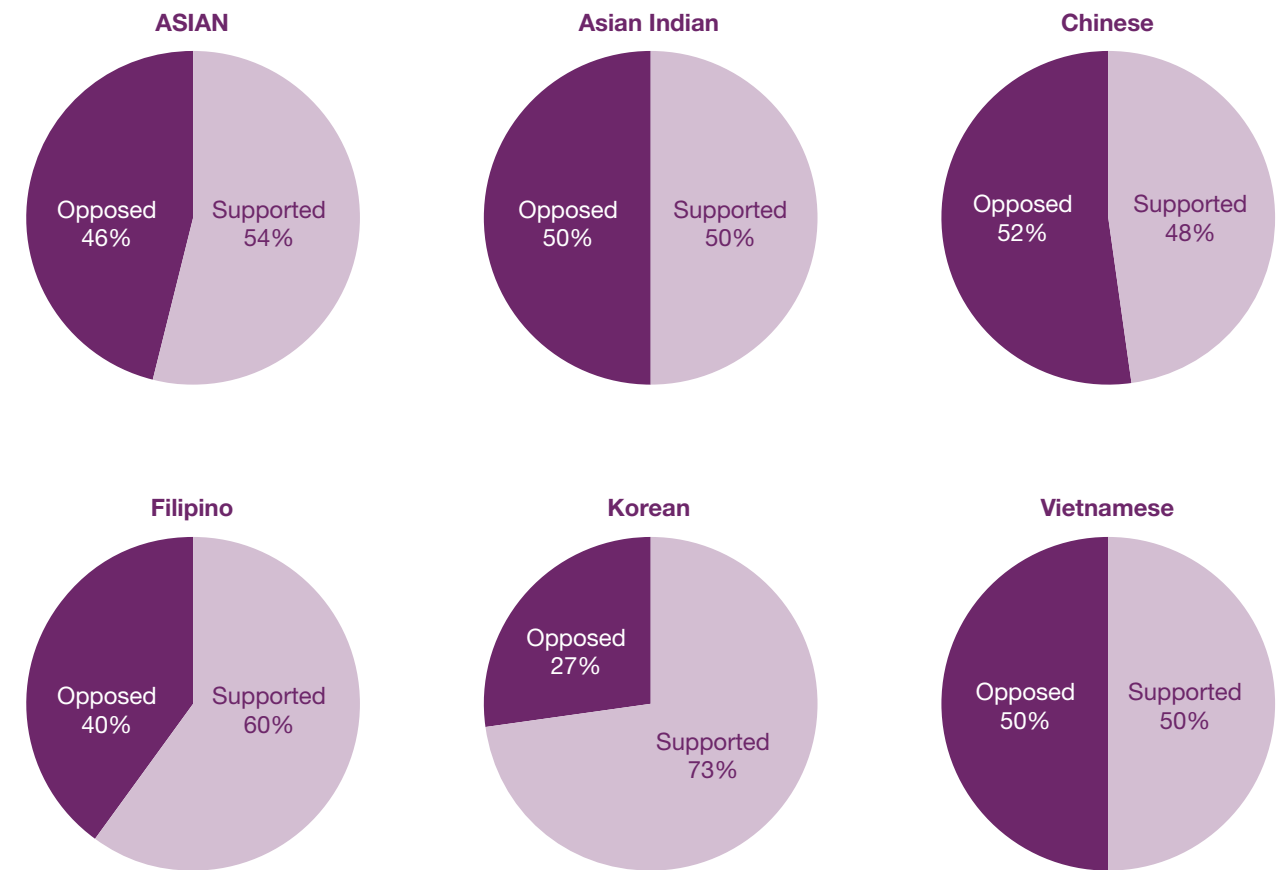
How Did Asian Americans Vote? Proposition 8

Asian Americans were divided on Proposition 8, the ballot initiative that eliminated the rights of same-sex couples to marry in the state of California. While roughly 54% of Asian American voters surveyed supported Proposition 8, nearly 46% opposed the initiative. Equal numbers of Asian Indians, Chinese, and Vietnamese supported and opposed the measure, indicating controversy around the issue in these communities. In contrast, a clear majority of Filipinos and Koreans voted to ban same-sex marriage statewide.

Did religion play a role in how Asian Americans voted on Election Day? Asian American ethnic groups supporting Proposition 8 were more likely to attend church, temple, mosque, etc. on a regular basis. Nearly 63% of Korean and 62% of Filipino American voters surveyed said they attended church, temple, mosque, etc. regularly. In contrast, only 20% of Chinese, 30% of Vietnamese, and 31% of Asian Indians indicated they regularly attended church, temple, mosque, etc.

Proposition 8 proved controversial among Asian American voters, with a slim majority supporting the initiative.

Figure 12: Proposition 8 Vote by Race, Ethnicity in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Proposition 8

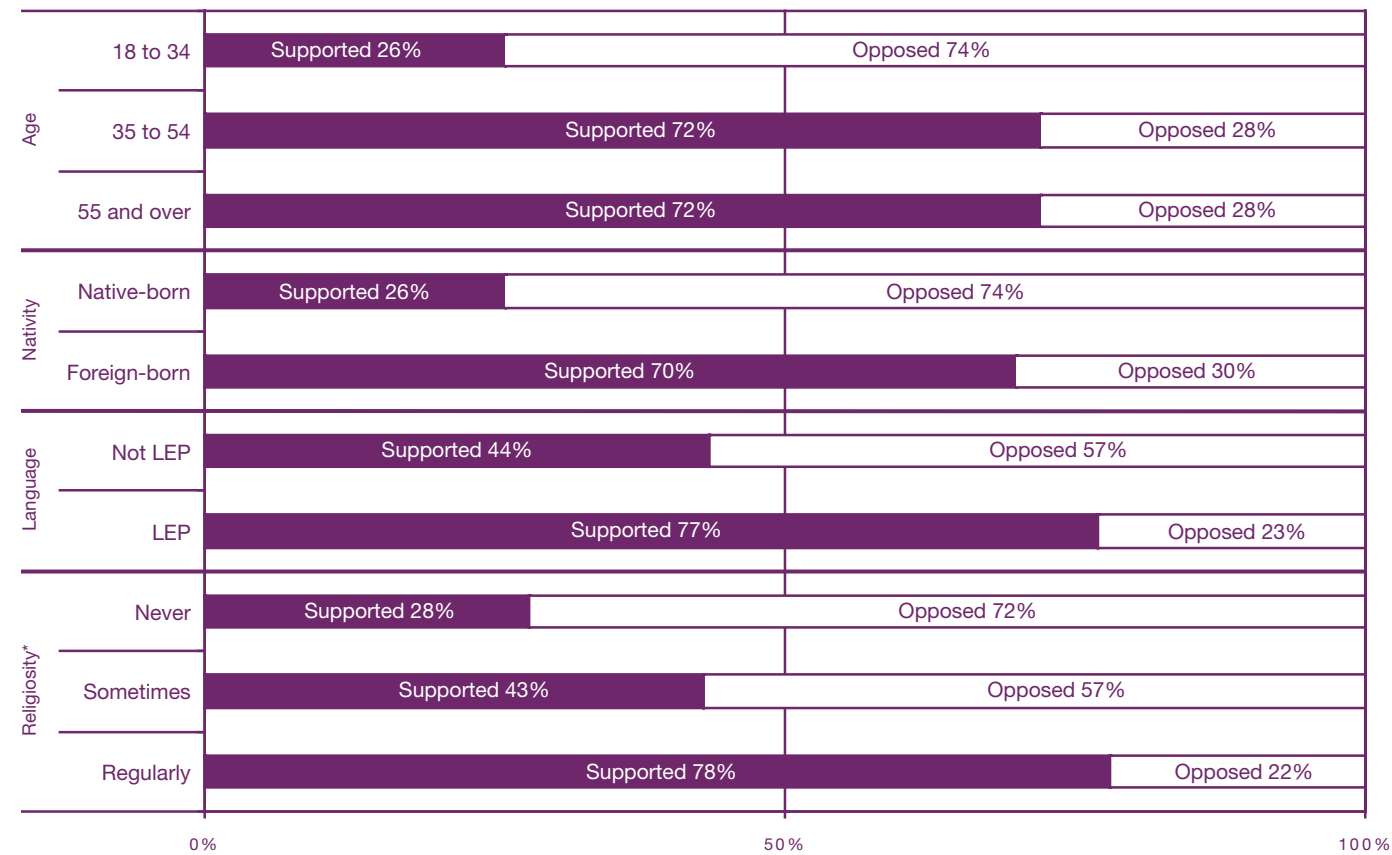
The Proposition 8 vote shows a community divided according to age, nativity, language, and religiosity.

Dissecting the Asian American vote on Proposition 8 shows where support for and opposition to the ballot measure was strongest.

The analysis shows a community divided according to age, nativity, language, and religiosity, or how often a voter attends church, temple, mosque, etc. Opposition to Proposition 8 came from younger, native-born, English-proficient, and less-religious Asian American voters, while support for the ballot

measure came from older, foreign-born, limited-English proficient, and more-religious voters.

Figure 13: Asian American Vote on Proposition 8 by Age, Nativity, Language, and Religiosity* in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



*Religiosity is measured as how often a voter attends church, temple, mosque, etc.
Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Attitudes on English as a Second Language

It is critical that providers of life-saving assistance like healthcare and police protection be able to serve limited-English proficient communities in languages other than English. Yet learning English is also important, providing a critical mechanism for upward mobility and a means of building bridges with other communities.

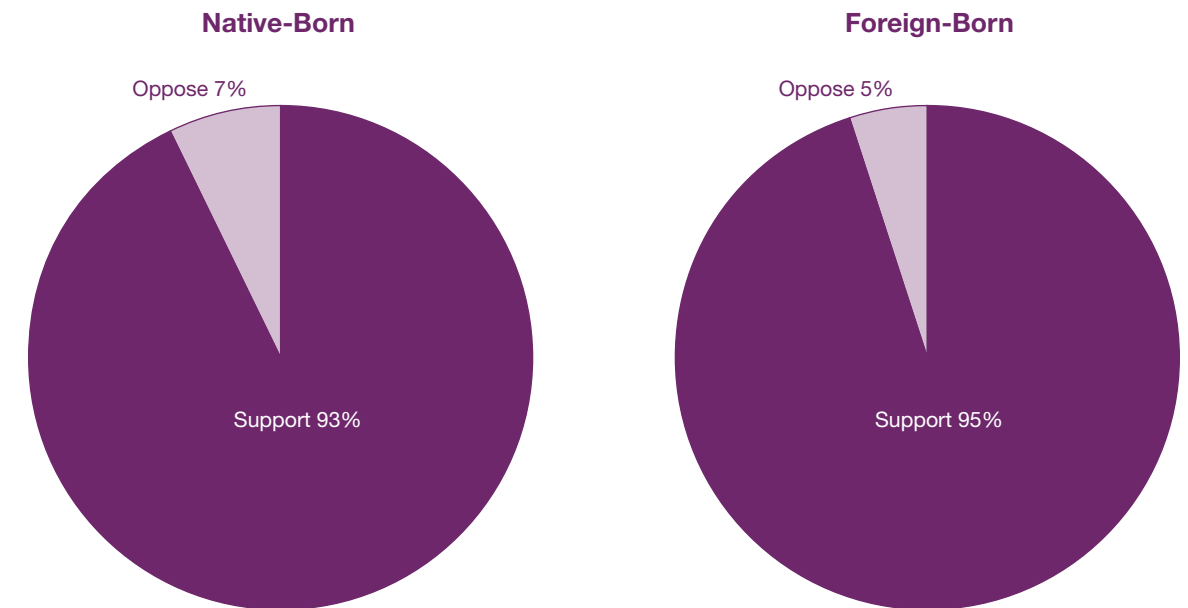
Asian American voters surveyed overwhelmingly supported increasing the availability of programs, like English as a Second Language

(ESL) courses, designed to help immigrants learn English. Support was tremendous among both native (93%) and foreign-born (95%) Asian American voters, demonstrating support among both those who are likely to need such programs and those already fluent in English.

Among Asian American ethnic groups, 95% of Chinese, 97% of Filipino, 90% of Indian, 96% of Korean, and 92% of Vietnamese voters indicated support for programs like ESL.

Asian American voters support programs to help immigrants learn English.

Figure 14: Percent of Asian American Voters Supporting Increasing Programs to Help Immigrants Learn English in Los Angeles County 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Attitudes on Healthcare Reform

Asian American voters polled on Election Day overwhelmingly supported universal healthcare.

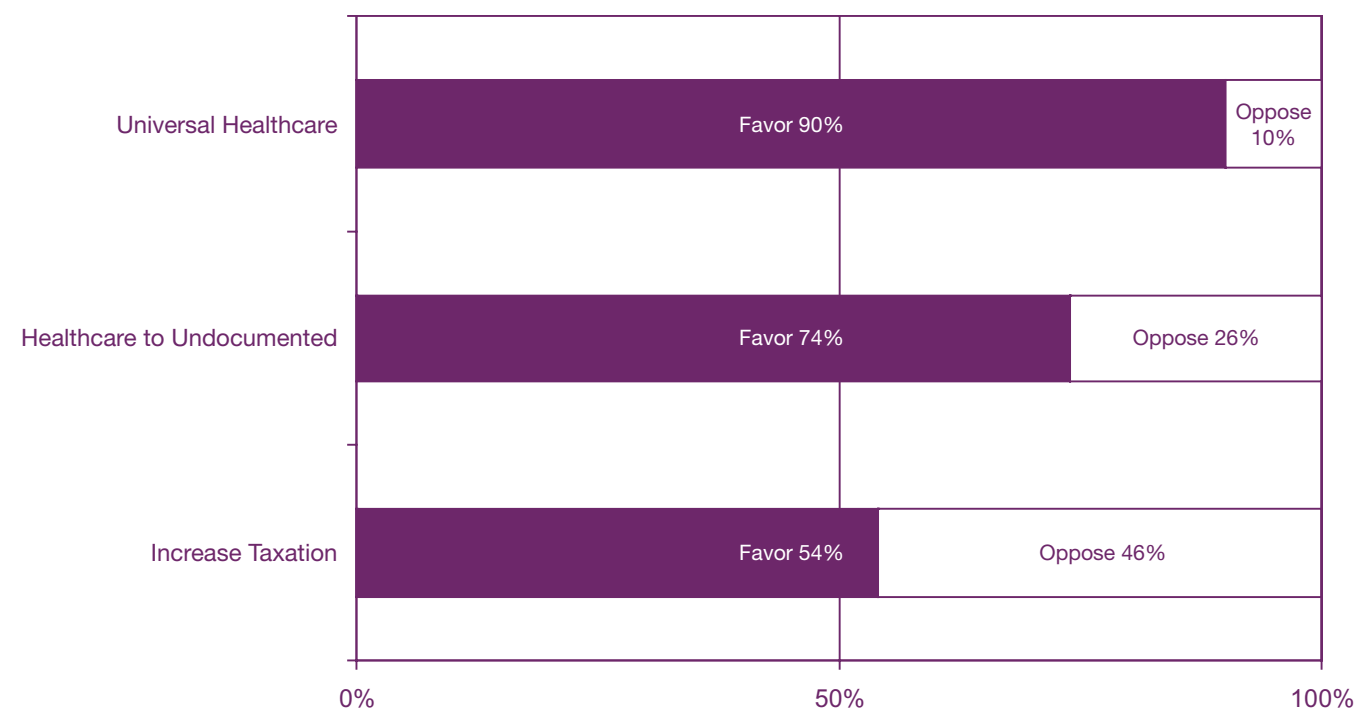
Healthcare reform has become one of the most highly contested issues of the new administration. Yet the issue is not particularly contentious among Asian American voters in Los Angeles.

Asian American voters polled during the 2008 General Election overwhelmingly supported universal healthcare: roughly 90% supported making healthcare a public good. Among Asian American voters, support for universal healthcare cut

across ethnic groups, with nearly all Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese American voters surveyed in support.

Asian American voters felt healthcare should be made available to all, regardless of immigration status, and a slim majority indicated they were even willing to pay higher taxes to see universal healthcare implemented.

Figure 15: Percent of Asian American Voters Supporting, Opposing Positions on Healthcare Reform in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

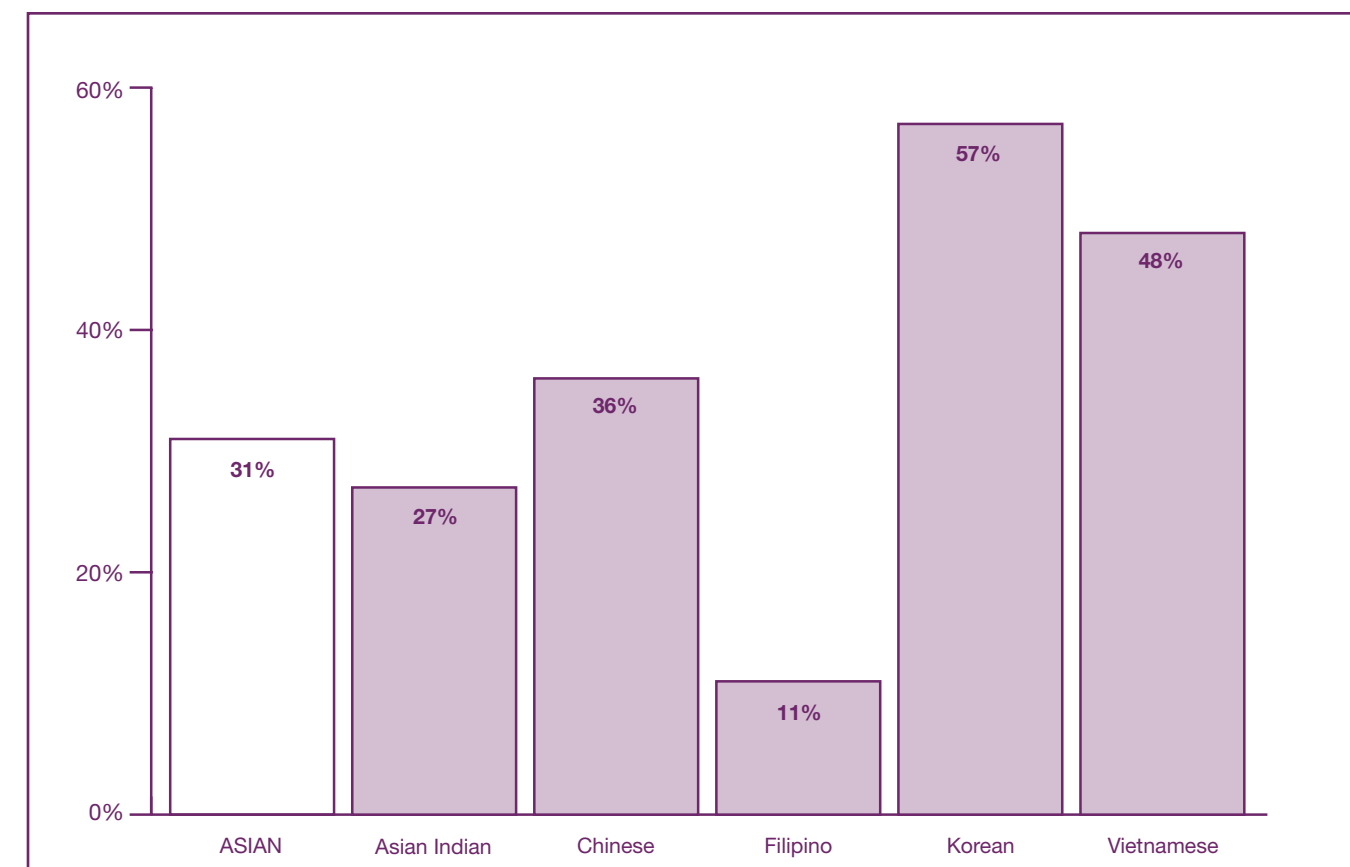
How Did Asian Americans Vote? Language Assistance

Many assume that voters do not face the same language barriers that others face. Polling consistently shows this is not the case.

Nearly one-third of Asian American voters surveyed indicated they were limited-English proficient, or experienced some difficulty communicating in English. Korean and Vietnamese American voters faced the greatest challenges: over half of Korean and nearly half of Vietnamese American voters were LEP. Roughly 36% of Chinese, 27% of Asian Indian, and 11% of Filipino American voters were also LEP.

As a largely immigrant population, many Asian American voters face language barriers.

Figure 16: Limited English Proficiency Among Asian American Voters by Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

How Did Asian Americans Vote? Language Assistance

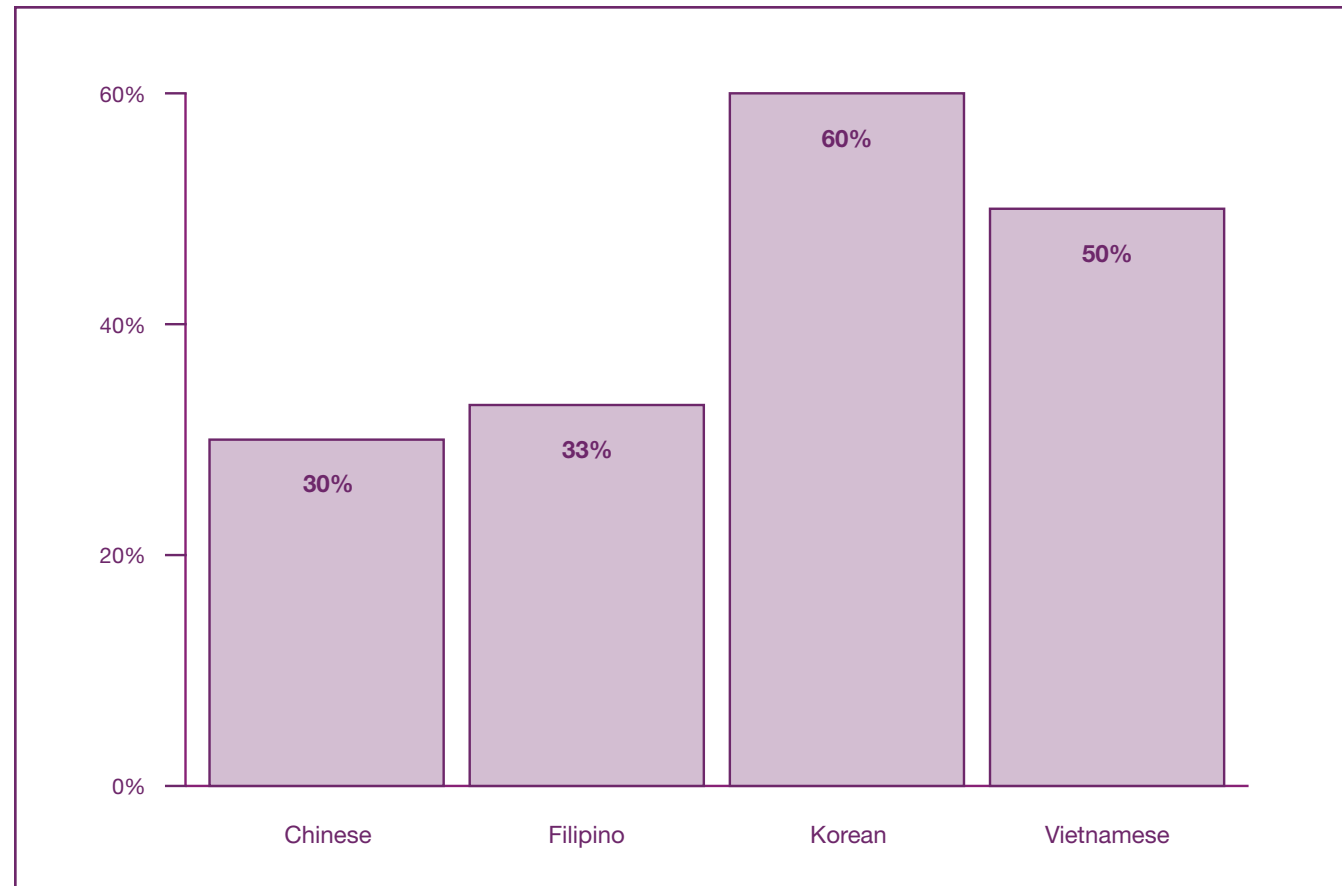
Many Asian American voters used the language assistance provided under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act.

Federal law recognizes that elections conducted only in English disenfranchise thousands of limited-English proficient voters.

Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act requires certain counties to provide assistance to voters in languages other than English. Under Section 203, Los Angeles County is required to provide written and oral assistance to voters in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Polling consistently finds that Asian American voters use the language assistance provided under Section 203. Approximately 60% of Korean, 50% of Vietnamese, 33% of Filipino, and 30% of Chinese American voters surveyed in Los Angeles during the 2008 General Election indicated they used some form of written or oral language assistance provided by the government.

Figure 17: Use of Language Assistance by Asian American Voters by Ethnic Group in L.A. County, 2008 General Election.



Source: 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Policy Recommendations

Civic Engagement Efforts Targeting Asian Americans are Needed

Asian Americans are among the fastest growing racial groups in the United States. Recent elections have demonstrated that this growth is being seen at the ballot box: Asian Americans in Los Angeles County turned out to vote in the 2008 General Election in record numbers. Yet thousands of Asian Americans who are old enough to vote are ineligible to do so because they have not naturalized or registered to vote.

An evaluation of voter mobilization work supported by the James Irvine Foundation has shown get-out-the-vote efforts to be effective in increasing turnout among low-propensity Asian American registered voters in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Yet comparable programs aimed at helping Asian Americans become citizens and register to vote have not been well supported, despite being critical to increasing the community's civic engagement.

Address Asian American Concerns Around Healthcare Reform

Healthcare has proven to be among the most controversial issues facing President Obama's new administration. Yet the issue is not particularly controversial among Asian American voters in Los Angeles. Nearly all support universal healthcare, a significant majority support extending benefits to persons regardless of immigration status, and a slim majority are even willing to pay more in taxes to see such reform implemented.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 17% of Asian Americans nationwide are without health insurance, compared to only 11% of non-Hispanic Whites. Asian Americans clearly have an important stake in the ongoing public debate around healthcare reform. Their voices should be heard in Washington, DC.

Maintain, Improve Asian Language Assistance to Voters

Findings from the Southern California Voter Survey consistently demonstrate that voters in Los Angeles County both need and use written and oral assistance in Asian languages. While the State of California and local election officials have generally attempted to comply with Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act, few have attempted to comply with a similar state law that requires language assistance in precincts statewide where three percent of an ethnic group's voting-age population is limited-English proficient.

The state law requires the California Secretary of State's office to conduct an analysis of precincts subject to its jurisdiction in advance of each gubernatorial election. With the next governor's race in 2010, the Secretary of State's office should conduct the required analysis now if it is to be in compliance with state law.

Asian Americans at the Ballot Box draws from two sources of data: (1) the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters' Los Angeles County Voter File and (2) the 2008 Southern California Voter Survey.

Los Angeles County Voter File

Information on Asian American voter registration and turnout was drawn from the Los Angeles County Voter File, purchased from Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters Office on December 29, 2008 under strict disclosure limitations. Also referred to as the voter file, these data include information on every voter in Los Angeles County, including their location, age, place of birth, and party affiliation. APALC estimated the racial and ethnic background of Asian American voters by matching voter names to ethnic name lists developed through an analysis of over 15 million birth and death records obtained from the California Department of Health Services (now referred to as the Department of Health Care Services).

2008 Southern California Voter Survey

Information on how Asian Americans voted was drawn from the 2008 Southern California Voter Survey. The Voter Survey is an exit poll, or survey of voters as they emerge from a polling place after having cast their vote on Election Day. On November 4, 2008, APALC surveyed 3,269 voters in Los Angeles County, including 952 Asian Americans, asking about (1) their positions on candidates, ballot measures, and public policy issues, (2) their language ability and use of bilingual voter assistance mandated under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, and (3) general demographic characteristics. Specifically, voters were asked how they voted in the Presidential race, how they voted on four statewide ballot measures (Propositions 4, 6, 8, and 11), and their positions on key immigration and healthcare issues.

The questionnaire instrument was translated from English into eight languages: Chinese, Hindi, Khmer, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Languages were chosen based on an analysis of language need in Los Angeles County. To draw a representative sample of AAPIs, APALC employed a research design that augmented a random sample of precincts throughout Los Angeles County with an oversample of precincts with high AAPI registration. Precincts were randomly selected for inclusion from a list of all precincts in Los Angeles County. Because a simple random sample of precincts was likely to yield an inadequate number of AAPI voters, an oversample of precincts with high AAPI registration was conducted. Overall, voters were surveyed in 36 precincts countywide by student and other volunteers trained to administer questionnaire instruments.

Cambodian American Voters

Chinese American Voters

Filipino American Voters

Indian American Voters

Japanese American Voters

Korean American Voters

Vietnamese American Voters

Fact Sheet Cambodian American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Cambodian Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

55% Foreign-Born
19% 18 to 24
53% Female, 47% Male
37% Democrat, 30% Republican
29% Decline to State
27% Absentee Voters

Among Asian American registered voters in Los Angeles County, Cambodian Americans were most in need of mobilization, with only 56% voting in the 2008 General Election.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table CA1: Largest Number of Cambodian American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Cambodian Am Voter Turnout*
	# Cambodian Am	% Cambodian Am	# Cambodian Am	% Cambodian Am	
Long Beach	3,992	2%	1,998	1%	50%
Los Angeles	1,338	<1%	894	<1%	67%
Signal Hill	232	4%	120	3%	52%
Lakewood	210	<1%	109	<1%	52%
Rosemead	175	1%	82	1%	47%
L.A. County	8,553	<1%	4,819	<1%	56%

BY AGE

Table CA2: Turnout* of Cambodian American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Cambodian American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Cambodian American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	49%	59%	58%	56%

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

Fact Sheet Chinese American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Chinese Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

58% Foreign-Born
10% 18 to 24
54% Female, 46% Male
31% Democrat, 25% Republican
42% Decline to State
36% Absentee Voters

Chinese Americans were Los Angeles County's largest Asian American electorate, with nearly 125,000 registered to vote and 86,000 casting ballots in the 2008 General Election.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center. 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table CH1: Largest Number of Chinese American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Chinese Am Voter Turnout*
	# Chinese Am	% Chinese Am	# Chinese Am	% Chinese Am	
Los Angeles	24,173	2%	17,573	1%	73%
Monterey Park	7,829	30%	5,101	27%	65%
Alhambra	7,568	21%	4,981	19%	66%
Arcadia	7,512	26%	4,773	22%	64%
Rowland Heights	5,096	25%	3,152	21%	62%
L.A. County	124,531	3%	85,527	3%	69%

BY AGE

Table CH2: Turnout* of Chinese American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Chinese American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Chinese American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	61%	70%	67%	69%

VOTER BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES

Tables CH3-5: Chinese American Voter Behavior, Attitudes in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

Presidential Race		Proposition 8		Healthcare	
Who did you vote for President?	% of Chinese Am Voters	How did you vote on Prop 8 (Marriage)?	% of Chinese Am Voters	Would you favor or oppose making affordable health insurance and basic medical care available to all persons, regardless of their immigration status?	% of Chinese Am Voters
McCain	28%	Yes	48%	Favor	72%
Obama	69%	No	52%	Oppose	28%

* Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

Fact Sheet Filipino American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Filipino Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

59% Foreign-Born
9% 18 to 24
57% Female, 43% Male
43% Democrat, 29% Republican
26% Decline to State
26% Absentee Voters

The second largest Asian American electorate in Los Angeles County, Filipino Americans voted in large numbers in cities countywide, including Los Angeles, Carson, and Long Beach.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center. 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table FI1: Largest Number of Filipino American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Filipino Am Voter Turnout*
	# Filipino Am	% Filipino Am	# Filipino Am	% Filipino Am	
Los Angeles	33,882	2%	25,565	2%	75%
Carson	6,111	12%	4,253	11%	70%
Long Beach	5,891	3%	4,228	3%	72%
Glendale	3,084	3%	2,340	3%	76%
West Covina	2,785	6%	2,032	5%	73%
L.A. County	94,876	2%	71,645	2%	76%

BY AGE

Table FI2: Turnout* of Filipino American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Filipino American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Filipino American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	65%	77%	74%	76%

VOTER BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES

Tables FI3-5: Filipino American Voter Behavior, Attitudes in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

Presidential Race		Proposition 8		Healthcare	
Who did you vote for President?	% of Filipino Am Voters	How did you vote on Prop 8 (Marriage)?	% of Filipino Am Voters	Would you favor or oppose making affordable health insurance and basic medical care available to all persons, regardless of their immigration status?	% of Filipino Am Voters
McCain	43%	Yes	60%	Favor	79%
Obama	57%	No	40%	Oppose	21%

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

Fact Sheet Indian American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Indian Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

54% Foreign-Born
11% 18 to 24
49% Female, 51% Male
52% Democrat, 16% Republican
29% Decline to State
22% Absentee Voters

Smaller in number, Indian American voters had the highest Democratic registration among Asian Americans and overwhelmingly supported Barack Obama for President.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center. 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table IN1: Largest Number of Indian American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Indian Am Voter Turnout*
	# Indian Am	% Indian Am	# Indian Am	% Indian Am	
Los Angeles	7,989	1%	5,973	<1%	75%
Cerritos	1,179	4%	890	4%	75%
Diamond Bar	838	3%	614	3%	73%
Torrance	542	1%	425	1%	78%
Long Beach	483	<1%	358	<1%	74%
L.A. County	20,883	<1%	15,695	<1%	75%

BY AGE

Table IN2: Turnout* of Indian American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Indian American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Indian American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	66%	77%	75%	75%

VOTER BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES

Tables IN3-5: Indian American Voter Behavior, Attitudes in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

Presidential Race		Proposition 8		Healthcare	
Who did you vote for President?	% of Indian Am Voters	How did you vote on Prop 8 (Marriage)?	% of Indian Am Voters	Would you favor or oppose making affordable health insurance and basic medical care available to all persons, regardless of their immigration status?	% of Indian Am Voters
McCain	12%	Yes	50%	Favor	75%
Obama	86%	No	50%	Oppose	25%

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

Fact Sheet

Japanese American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Japanese Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

- 10% Foreign-Born
- 7% 18 to 24
- 57% Female, 43% Male
- 48% Democrat, 29% Republican
- 20% Decline to State
- 40% Absentee Voters

Disproportionately native-born, Japanese American registered voters turned out to vote in large numbers, with 83% casting ballots in the 2008 General Election.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table JA1: Largest Number of Japanese American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Japanese Am Voter Turnout*
	# Japanese Am	% Japanese Am	# Japanese Am	% Japanese Am	
Los Angeles	11,814	1%	9,643	1%	82%
Torrance	4,716	6%	3,989	6%	85%
Gardena	2,036	8%	1,568	8%	77%
Monterey Park	1,618	6%	1,329	7%	82%
Long Beach	1,260	1%	1,048	1%	83%
L.A. County	39,250	1%	32,426	1%	83%

BY AGE

Table JA2: Turnout* of Japanese American Registered Voters by Nativity and Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Japanese American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Japanese American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	69%	85%	82%	83%

Fact Sheet

Korean American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Korean Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

- 71% Foreign-Born
- 7% 18 to 24
- 55% Female, 45% Male
- 41% Democrat, 28% Republican
- 29% Decline to State
- 40% Absentee Voters

An overwhelmingly immigrant electorate, nearly 44% of Korean Americans registered to vote countywide reside in the city of Los Angeles.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center. 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table KO1: Largest Number of Korean American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Korean Am Voter Turnout*
	# Korean Am	% Korean Am	# Korean Am	% Korean Am	
Los Angeles	26,069	2%	17,363	1%	67%
Cerritos	2,851	9%	1,912	8%	67%
Torrance	2,838	4%	1,930	3%	68%
Glendale	2,736	3%	1,835	3%	67%
Diamond Bar	1,491	5%	969	4%	65%
L.A. County	59,513	1%	40,095	1%	67%

BY AGE

Table KO2: Turnout* of Korean American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Korean American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
Percent of Korean American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	55%	67%	73%	67%

VOTER BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES

Tables KO3-5: Korean American Voter Behavior, Attitudes in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

Presidential Race		Proposition 8		Healthcare	
Who did you vote for President?	% of Korean Am Voters	How did you vote on Prop 8 (Marriage)?	% of Korean Am Voters	Would you favor or oppose making affordable health insurance and basic medical care available to all persons, regardless of their immigration status?	% of Korean Am Voters
McCain	41%	Yes	73%	Favor	72%
Obama	60%	No	27%	Oppose	28%

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

Fact Sheet

Vietnamese American Voters, Los Angeles County 2008

Vietnamese Americans voting in the 2008 General Election were...

- 70% Foreign-Born**
- 11% 18 to 24**
- 52% Female, 48% Male**
- 35% Democrat, 31% Republican**
- 30% Decline to State**
- 35% Absentee Voters**

A large proportion of the electorate in the cities of Rosemead and El Monte, Vietnamese American voters most strongly supported universal healthcare.

Source: Los Angeles County Voter File (December 29, 2008), Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and Asian Pacific American Legal Center. 2008 Southern California Voter Survey, Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

BY CITY

Table VI1: Largest Number of Vietnamese American Registered Voters by City, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

CITY	Registered Voters		Voters		Vietnamese Am Voter Turnout*
	# Vietnamese Am	% Vietnamese Am	# Vietnamese Am	% Vietnamese Am	
Los Angeles	9,075	1%	6,229	1%	69%
Rosemead	2,912	15%	1,655	13%	57%
El Monte	2,844	9%	1,659	8%	58%
Long Beach	2,192	1%	1,389	1%	63%
Alhambra	2,045	6%	1,314	5%	64%
L.A. County	38,499	1%	25,284	1%	66%

BY AGE

Table VI2: Turnout* of Vietnamese American Registered Voters by Age, L.A. County, 2008 General Election

	Age			All Vietnamese American Voters
	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 & Over	
% of Vietnamese American Registered Voters Who Voted in 2008 General Election	58%	67%	68%	66%

VOTER BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES

Tables VI3-5: Vietnamese American Voter Behavior, Attitudes in L.A. County, 2008 General Election

Presidential Race		Proposition 8		Healthcare	
Who did you vote for President?	% of Vietnamese Am Voters	How did you vote on Prop 8 (Marriage)?	% of Vietnamese Am Voters	Would you favor or oppose making affordable health insurance and basic medical care available to all persons, regardless of their immigration status?	% of Vietnamese Am Voters
McCain	48%	Yes	50%	Favor	81%
Obama	51%	No	50%	Oppose	19%

*Turnout represents the percent of registered voters eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election who cast ballots in that election.

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