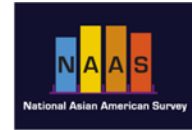


ASIAN AMERICAN
JUSTICE CENTER



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EMBARGOED UNTIL DECEMBER 12, 2012, 2 P.M.

Behind the Numbers:
Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters
in 2012

Preliminary Report
December 2012

Executive Summary

Asian Americans are an important and growing political constituency. As the fastest growing racial group in the U.S., the Asian American community demonstrated its strength and active civic participation by turning out in record numbers this past election. The findings emphasize that the Asian American voting bloc is truly up for grabs. While overall engagement increased, Asian Americans do not strongly identify with any political party, thus voting for candidates who support and promote progress on issues that matter to Asian American families and communities.

This report showcases results from the **Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012** (hereafter, “Post-Election Survey”), the largest nationally representative survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander voters in 2012. The Post-Election Survey is the only one of its kind to be conducted in nine Asian languages, as well as English and Spanish. To date, 2,785 interviews have been conducted, and we expect 7,000 interviews to complete the data collection. This report provides a preliminary look at data on Asian Americans, with more detailed information on Pacific Islanders and broken out by national origin forthcoming as more data are available.

Significant findings in this report:

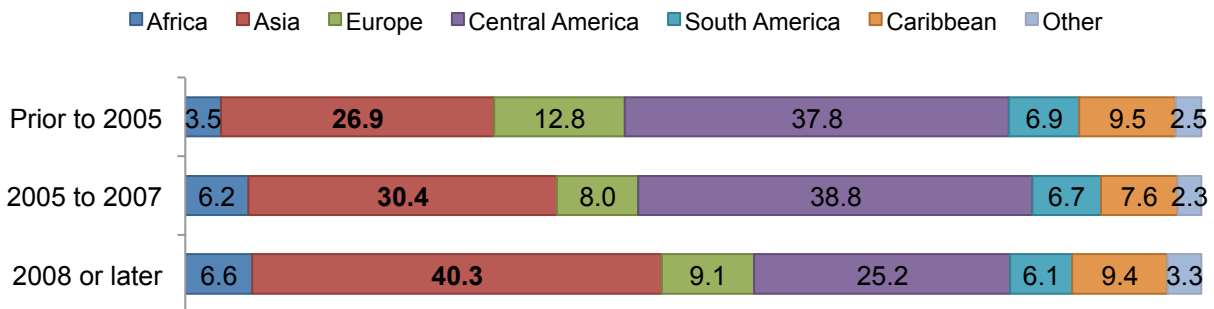
- The Asian American electorate has been steadily growing with each presidential election and is projected to be close to 3% of all votes cast in the 2012 election. (p. 3–4).
- 71% of Asian Americans voters in 2012 cast their ballot for President Barack Obama, and 28% voted for Governor Mitt Romney. (p. 5).
- We estimate that about 3.2 million Asian Americans cast ballots in November 2012, with about 2.3 million for Barack Obama and 900,000 thousand for Mitt Romney. (p. 5).
- Without the AAPI vote, Obama's popular vote margin would have been 3.3 million. The AAPI vote contributed a *net* of 1.4 million votes to Obama's popular vote margin, increasing it to about 4.7 million overall. (p. 5).
- In 2012, there was a significant increase in voter mobilization efforts by community organizations; still, most Asian American voters (65%) report that they received no contact about the election. (p. 7).
- Among those who were contacted by political parties, contact by Democrats was more frequent than contact by Republicans. (p. 7).
- On issues relevant to Asian American voters, the strongest gaps in support for Obama over Romney were on issues of immigration, racial discrimination, health and environment. The smallest gap was on national security issues. (p. 9).
- Nearly one half of Asian American registered voters remain independent or undecided with respect to their party identification, pointing to the possibility that many remain open to persuasion and outreach in future elections. (p. 9–10).

Introduction to Asian American Community

Growth in Numbers

Since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act and the end of race-based immigration quotas, Asian American communities in the United States have grown dramatically. With a population growth rate of 46% between 2000 and 2010¹ and accounting for a growing share of recent immigrants to the United States (Fig. 1), Asian Americans are the nation’s fastest growing racial group. As of 2011, there are over 17.6 million Asian Americans living in the United States, and over 1.2 million Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.² According to the 2010 Census, Asian Americans now make up 6% of the U.S. population.³

Figure 1: Foreign Born Population By Region of Birth (Percent Distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau⁴

There is great diversity within the Asian American community. Asian Americans hail from many countries of origin, and much of the growth in recent years has been fueled by growth in South Asian communities.⁵

Table 1: Asian American Ethnic Groups, Ranked in Order of Population Size

Ethnic Group	Number	Ethnic Group	Number	Ethnic Group	Number	Ethnic Group	Number	Ethnic Group	Number
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	3,794,673	Filipino	3,416,840	Indian	3,183,063	Vietnamese	1,737,433	Korean	1,706,822
Japanese	1,304,296	Pakistani	409,163	Cambodian	276,667	Hmong	260,073	Thai	237,583
Laotian	232,130	Taiwanese	230,382	Bangladeshi	147,300	Burmese	100,200	Indonesian	95,270
Nepalese	59,490	Sri Lankan	45,381	Malaysian	26,179	Bhutanese	19,439		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

¹ Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States, 2011*, (Los Angeles, 2011), 7, http://www.advancingjustice.org/pdf/Community_of_Contrast.pdf.

² American Community Survey, 2011 1-year estimate using American FactFinder, using “race alone or in combination with one or more races.”

³ Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts*, 6.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010*, (Washington, DC, 2011), 2, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-16.pdf>.

⁵ Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts*, 9.

Geography

Looking across states, the Asian American population continues to grow in areas of historic concentration, such as California and New York. At the same time, Asian American populations are also growing in non-traditional states like Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, and Georgia.⁶

Tables 2 and 3: Asian American Population Size and Growth by States

States with Highest Number of Asian Americans

U.S. States	Number	%
California	5,556,592	14.9%
New York	1,549,494	8.2%
Texas	1,110,666	4.4%
New Jersey	795,163	9.0%
Hawaii	780,968	57.4%

States with Highest Growth Rate of Asian Americans

U.S. States	Growth Rate
Nevada	116%
Arizona	95%
North Carolina	85%
Georgia	83%
New Hampshire	80%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

- Asian American populations in **Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, and Georgia** were the fastest growing nationwide between 2000 and 2010. In addition to these states, the 2012 presidential battleground states of **Florida** and **Virginia** had Asian American growth rates faster than the national average.
- **California's** Asian American population remained by far the country's largest, numbering over 5.5 million in 2010, followed by **New York, Texas, New Jersey, and Hawaii**.

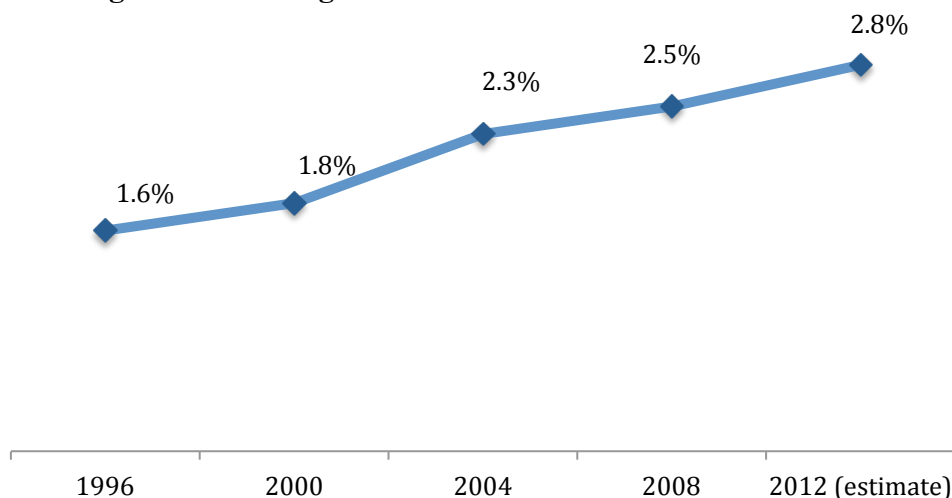
Growing Political Importance

Voter participation among Asian American adult residents lags behind the national average because of two main factors: lower rates of citizenship (61% for Asian Americans vs. 91% for the national average) and lower rates of registration (55% vs. 71%, respectively).⁷ Nevertheless, because of the annual growth of naturalized citizens and native-born children entering adulthood, the Asian American share of the electorate has been increasing steadily over the past few presidential elections—from 1.6% in 1996 and 1.8% in 2000, to 2.3% in 2004 and nearly 2.5% in 2008 (Fig. 2). In 2008, about 600,000 new Asian Americans entered the electorate, and we anticipate a similar increase in 2012, approaching 3% of all votes cast.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁷ Ibid., 16.

Figure 2: Growing Asian American Share of the Electorate



Source: Authors calculations based on Current Population Survey Voter Supplements

The Presidential Vote of Asian Americans in 2012

In this section, we report on two pre-election polls (one in the spring and one in the fall of 2012),⁸ as well as current results from the Post-Election Survey.

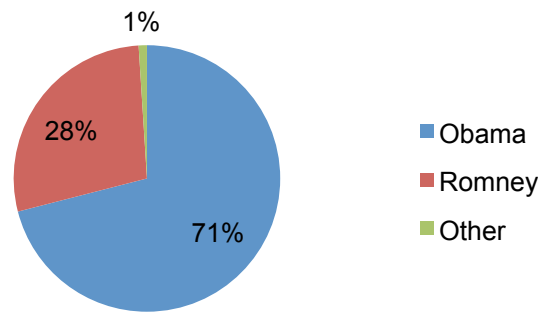
In the spring, 59% of those interviewed stated they would vote for Barack Obama, 13% for Mitt Romney and 27% were undecided. Similarly, of those interviewed in the fall, 50% indicated that they would vote for Barack Obama, 19% for Mitt Romney, 1% for someone else, and 30% indicated that they were still unsure how they would vote,⁹ a ratio about four times as large as the national average during this time. The candidate vote split in October 2012, excluding undecided likely voters, was 71.5% for Barack Obama, 27% for Mitt Romney.

Current results for the Post-Election Survey are in line with these pre-election estimates. Based on 2,238 Asian American respondents who had voted in the 2012 election, the survey shows that 71% had voted for Obama, 28% had voted for Romney, and 1% voted for someone else.

⁸ In the Spring, the Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center and APIAVote, in conjunction with the Lake Research Partners, conducted a telephone survey of 1,100 potential Asian American voters, with an oversample in Florida, Virginia, Nevada, and Illinois. This was the first poll of Asian American voter attitudes for the 2012 Election and helped to illustrate the potential political clout of the community. See <http://www.advancingequality.org/new-poll-on-asian-american-voters>. In the fall, the National Asian American Survey (NAAS) conducted a second telephone survey of 3,376 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, asking their opinions on a range of policy issues and matters related to the 2012 election. See <http://www.naasurvey.com/presentations.html>.

⁹ See National Asian American Survey, *Asian American Likely Voters: Update on the Presidential Race*, (Riverside, CA, 2012), <http://naasurvey.com/resources/Home/NAAS12-president-oct15update.pdf>.

Figure 3: Presidential Vote Choice of Asian Americans in 2012¹⁰



Source: *Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012*

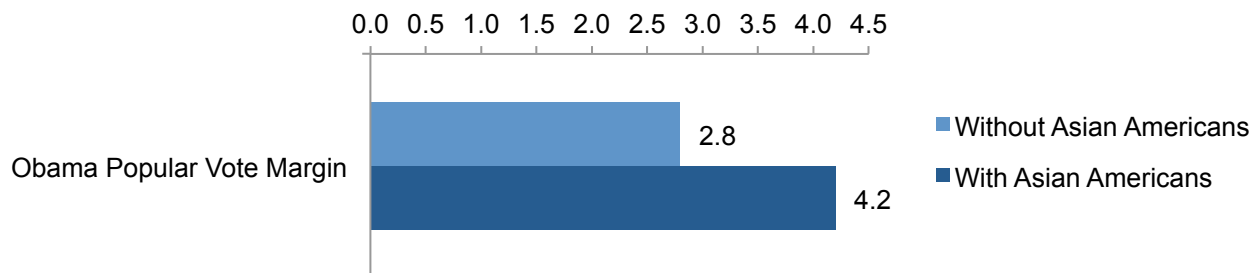
Impact of Asian American Vote on the Presidential Election

What was the impact of the Asian American vote on the 2012 presidential election? At present, we can only estimate the popular vote totals for Barack Obama and Mitt Romney because final voter turnout data await official certification in all states. Also, the estimated proportion of Asian Americans in the voting population can only be determined after data from the 2012 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement are released.

Using the popular vote tallies as of December 10, 2012,¹¹ and the Asian American share of the electorate from the 2008 election (2.48%), we estimate that at least 3.2 million Asian Americans voted in the 2012 presidential election out of about 128 million votes cast. When we combine this data on likely turnout with our post-election survey results on vote choice, we estimate that about 2.3 million Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama and 0.9 million voted for Mitt Romney.

Without the AAPI vote, Obama's popular vote margin would have been 3.3 million. The AAPI vote contributed a *net* of 1.4 million votes to Obama's popular vote margin (Fig. 4). These additional votes can be interpreted either as *augmenting Obama's popular vote margin by 42%* (1.4 million contributed on top of 3.3 million votes separating Obama and Romney), or as accounting for about *30% of Barack Obama's popular vote margin* (1.4 million votes out of a total popular vote margin of 4.7 million).

Figure 4: Popular Vote Margin for Barack Obama Over Mitt Romney (in millions)



Source: Authors' calculations¹²

¹⁰ These figures have a margin of error of +/- 2%.

¹¹ See Cook Political Report, "Cook Popular Vote Tracker," <http://cookpolitical.com/about/staff/david-wasserman> (retrieved December 10, 2012)

¹² Based on Asian American vote choice, popular vote tallies, estimates of Asian American share of the electorate.

Estimating the Asian American impact on the Electoral College using our survey data is considerably more difficult, given the relatively small sample sizes in our survey for individual states such as Florida, Virginia, and Nevada. Still, using Asian American vote shares from the 2008 elections as a conservative floor, we can say that the Asian American share of the 2012 presidential vote was likely greater than the margin of victory in Florida and Virginia, and about half the margin of victory in Nevada and Ohio (Table 4).

Table 4: Obama Margin of Victory Compared to Asian American Vote Share in Select States

State	Electoral Votes	Obama Margin of Victory (2012)	Asian American Share of Vote (2008)
Florida	29	0.9%	1.1%
Virginia	13	3%	3.7%
Nevada	6	6.6%	3.2%
Ohio	18	1.9%	0.9%
North Carolina	15	-2.2%	1%

Taking a broader view, our estimates of the potential AAPI electorate (the citizen voting-age population) suggest that greater voter registration, party outreach, and mobilization could have made the presidential race in North Carolina more competitive and made the Asian American electorate even more pivotal to presidential and U.S. Senate races in Nevada and Virginia (Table 5).

Table 5: AAPI Citizen Voting Age Population in Select States

	Margin of Difference – Presidential Race	AAPI Citizen Voting Age Population
Nevada	66,379	122,710
Florida	73,858	255,855
North Carolina	97,465	93,940
Ohio	103,481	92,630
Colorado	113,099	81,555
Virginia	115,910	227,750

	Margin of Difference – Senate Race	AAPI Citizen Voting Age Population
Nevada	12,134	122,710
Virginia	186,135	227,750

Mobilization by Parties and Grassroots Organizations

One of the key stories about Asian American voters for 2012 was the lack of investment in outreach to this ever-growing electorate. Pre-election surveys found that Asian Americans had minimal contact by candidates, parties, or other groups and that about 2 in 3 Asian American likely voters were not contacted about the upcoming election. Considering that almost a third of the community was still undecided a month prior to Election Day, parties and other organizations missed an important opportunity to educate Asian American voters, and potentially build future bases of support.

The Post-Election Survey shows similar findings about whether Asian American voters were contacted by parties or other organizations, with only 35% contacted prior to the election. However, the Post-Election Survey provides more detail about who reached out to the community. For those contacted,

46% stated they were contacted “some” or “a great deal” by Democrats, 38% by Republicans, and 27% by other organizations.

Table 6: Post-Election Survey Results on Outreach Efforts to Asian American Voters

Among those contacted... contact by

Were Asian American Voters Contacted?		Democrats	Republicans	Other Organizations
Yes	35%	24%	24%	10%
No	62%	22%	14%	17%
Don't Know	3%	13%	15%	12%
		22%	28%	40%
		18%	18%	21%

Source: Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012

Going beyond the national numbers, what do we know about voter mobilization efforts “on the ground?” Here, we rely on qualitative assessments of campaign and grassroots outreach.¹³ Unlike previous election cycles, where the Asian American vote was viewed as marginal to presidential campaigns, 2012 saw attention and some strategic efforts by the parties to focus on Asian American voters in Nevada, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

For example, the Democrats and the Obama campaign hired field organizers who used their bilingual and cultural skills to recruit hundreds of volunteers in Virginia and Nevada targeting Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, and Filipino voters. Asian American political PACs and AAPI Democratic networks supporting the Democrats also hired field staff, conducted outreach to Asian American voters, placed ads and editorials in ethnic media, and implemented earned media strategies.

The Republicans and the Romney campaign disseminated a robocall from Secretary Elaine Chao to target Chinese voters in Virginia. A Political Action Committee supporting the Republicans sent mailers and implemented phone banks for Nevada targeting Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese voters. In Ohio, similar efforts focused on Chinese and Indian voters. An Asian Pacific American Republican network placed press releases, held grassroots events, and paid for ads in ethnic newspapers.

Outreach by the parties, however, is only part of the story. The 2012 election cycle was a turning point for the Asian American community. In early 2012, many Asian American grassroots organizations indicated interest to register Asian American voters and educate them on the election process and voting rights, resulting in significant non-partisan mobilization efforts—both in battleground states and elsewhere such as in California, New York, Texas, and Washington.

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, AAJC, and other partners, worked with over 75 organizations in 15 states to increase civic participation in the Asian American community.¹⁴ For example, APIAVote conducted regional trainings, introduced organizations to tools, tactics, and strategies for voter engagement, and briefed them on changing election regulations. Organizations created regional field plans focusing on translated materials, encouraging early voting, and recruiting volunteers to provide assistance on Election Day. Volunteers door knocked, conducted exit surveys, worked with poll workers, and drove seniors to the polls on Election Day. AAJC worked with

¹³ Outreach assessments of grassroots organizations who partnered with APIAVote in the 2012 election.

¹⁴ States included: CA, FL, GA, HI, IL, MI, MN, NC, NY, NV, OH, OR, TX, VA, and WA.

organizations in certain jurisdictions to ensure that required language assistance was available to Asian American voters and disseminated translated voter rights palm cards to Asian American voters in nine states. On Election Day, APIAVote and AAJC hosted an Asian language Election Protection hotline, helping voters in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Thai. Such extensive outreach by grassroots organizations was unprecedented. Examples of outreach by organizations can be found in Appendix B.

Issues Important to Vote Choice

One strategy to mobilize Asian American voters was to address the community’s issues of concern. Asian American voters were interested in the views of candidates on a number of issues in deciding who to vote for in the elections. Like all voters, Asian American voters are highly concerned about the country’s economy, including policies regarding jobs, the budget deficit, and social security. Prior to the election, three out of four Asian American voters viewed jobs as a key issue.¹⁵ More than a majority of AAPI voters thought candidate views on education and health care were important in helping them decide how to vote. Also, 4 in 10 Asian American voters were concerned about candidate views on foreign policy, women’s rights, and immigration.

The Post-Election Survey showed that many of the same issues remained key issues for Asian American voters (Table 8). In addition to economic issues, education, health care, and immigration were also important for Asian American voters, as are the environment and racial discrimination. Finally, Asian American voters were concerned about how candidates plan on dealing with national security and foreign policy issues.

Table 8: Post-Election Issues of Importance for Asian American Voters

	Key Issue for Vote
Economy and Jobs	85%
Health Care	78%
Education	77%
Social Security	68%
National Security	67%
Environment	56%
Racial Discrimination	55%
Immigration	41%

Source: Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012

Among Asian Americans who ranked the economy and jobs as “very important” to their vote, 70% voted for Obama and 30% for Romney (Table 9). The Obama advantage over Romney was even greater for voters who ranked racial discrimination, environment, immigration, health, education, and social security as “very important issues.” National security accounted for the smallest gap in the Obama-Romney vote margin but even there, 68% of Asian Americans who ranked it as a “very important” issue voted for Obama while 32% voted for Romney.

¹⁵ National Asian American Survey, *Public Opinion of a Growing Electorate: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 2012*, (Riverside, CA, 2012). <http://www.naasurvey.com/presentations.html>.

Table 9: Presidential choice, by issue ranked as “very important” to vote choice¹⁶

Issue	Obama	Romney
Economy and Jobs	70%	30%
Health Care	74%	26%
Education	74%	26%
Social Security	73%	27%
National Security	68%	32%
Environment	76%	24%
Racial Discrimination	77%	23%
Immigration	74%	26%

Source: *Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012*

Conclusion: Future Trends

Our post-election survey of Asian Americans shows overwhelming support for President Barack Obama over Governor Mitt Romney, by well over a 2-to-1 margin. Still, one of the persistent dynamics of the Asian American electorate is its continued potential for persuasion by candidates of either party. As noted in the NAAS pre-election survey,¹⁷ the proportion of undecided voters among Asian Americans a month before Election Day was about 3–4 times greater than the national average.

Further examination of party identification among Asian Americans reveals that a sizable proportion does not identify with either party. The Post-Election Survey reveals that 46% of Asian American registered voters, and 43% of those who voted in the 2012 election, do not identify as either Democrat or Republican. These results indicate that party outreach (which, so far, has been relatively lacking among Asian Americans when compared to other groups), can play a significant role in shaping the future vote choices of Asian Americans.

Table 10: Party Identification among Asian Americans¹⁸

	Registered Voters	Voted in 2012
Democrat	37%	39%
Republican	16%	19%
Other Party	< 1%	< 1%
Independent	24%	25%
Don't Know/Don't Think in these terms	22%	18%

Source: *Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012*

For future campaigns, it is clear that this untapped potential in the Asian American community requires a commitment and investment in outreach efforts by candidates, parties, and other organizations to engage with this sizable and rapidly growing group of voters.

¹⁶ Two-way vote split between Obama and Romney, with “other” excluded.

¹⁷ See National Asian American Survey, *Public Opinion of a Growing Electorate*, <http://www.naasurvey.com/presentations.html>.

¹⁸ Numbers may not total 100% because of rounding.

These outreach efforts must recognize the diversity in the Asian American community and should include in-language materials and staffing that reflects ethnic and language diversity. These outreach efforts will complement the existing and ongoing grassroots efforts by Asian American organizations working to increase the civic engagement participation of Asian American voters.

The power of the Asian American electorate is on the rise. The Post-Election Survey, in conjunction with various pre-election surveys, helps to lay out the blueprint for engaging the community and unleashing the untapped potential of Asian American voters.

APPENDIX A

Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American Voters in 2012 is a collaborative effort of Asian American Justice Center, Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIA Vote), and the National Asian American Survey. We are also grateful for Dan Ichinose and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center for assistance with questionnaire development and sample selection.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on data collected from 2,785 telephone interviews of adults in the United States who identify themselves as Asian American or of any ethnicity or national origin recognized in the Asian race category by the U.S. Census Bureau. Interviews were conducted by telephone from November 7, 2012 through November 25, 2012. Additional interviews of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are ongoing, and a total of about 7,000 interviews will complete the data collection.

Respondents were offered a choice of language to be interviewed in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

The randomly-drawn list sample was obtained from TargetSmart with ethnicity coded by Ethnic Technologies (and Catalist for the Hmong sample, for which TargetSmart does not have an ethnic classification). Lists of registered voters are obtained from state registrars, matched to consumer information data, and updated for address changes.

The margin of error, given the sample size, is +/- 2%. Sampling error from the size of our sample is only one type of error possible in surveys like the 2012 NAAS. Findings may also be subject to variation from question wording, question order, and the time and date when the survey was conducted.

The findings in this report are weighted statistically to account for any demographic differences of interest between the sample and population parameters for analyses of the national Asian American population, as well as for subgroups of the population, on the following dimensions: size of group within a state, educational attainment, and gender.

The survey was conducted by Interviewing Services of America, Inc. (ISA) of Van Nuys, California, under the supervision of Francine Cafarchia, John Roses, and Frank Weimer. Mobile phones were included in the dialing procedure. Interview translations were conducted by ISA, and audited by a team of bilingual staff in partner organizations.

APPENDIX B

Examples of outreach by Asian American grassroots organizations for the 2012 Elections include the following:

- Asian Services In Action, Inc. (ASIA) in Ohio partnered with AAPI organizations and activists in Cincinnati, Cleveland (Organization of Chinese Americans of Greater Cleveland), Columbus (Ohio Asian American Health Coalition and Ohio AAPI Advisory Council), Dayton (Asian American Council), and Oberlin (Oberlin College Multicultural Center) to mobilize the AAPI vote in Ohio. Each local partner implemented voter turnout strategies. Partner activities included voter registration in places of worship, translation and placement of voting PSAs in local media, phone banking before and on Election Day, rides to the polls, presidential debate watch parties, and presentations at professional events.
- In Houston, OCA-Greater Houston organized an effort to drive over 160 people to the polls during early voting while BPSOS organized high school youth to door knock and remind Vietnamese-speaking voters to vote on Election Day.
- Voices of Vietnamese Americans in Virginia helped a first-time 18-year-old Vietnamese American young woman register to vote on the last day of voter registration. On November 3, she called Voices of Vietnamese Americans to tell them she hadn't received her ballot. With the help of a partner, they were able to validate her voter registration, and on November 6, she was able to vote for the first time.
- The Minnesota Collaborative reached out to over 13,000 Asian Americans, recruited over 800 volunteers, and interpreted and gave over 600 rides. It also responded to incidents at the polls, and answered over 150 requests received through its live bilingual hotline on Election Day.
- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) recruited 12 individuals with strong community connections and capacity to outreach in-language at cultural events, staff multilingual phone banks, and provide language translation for GOTV. APANO worked to reach over 10,000 API through ballot parties, canvassing and distributing voter guides in 7 languages.
- The MinKwon Center joined "Vote 2012: Your Voice, Your Vote," a voter engagement coalition of Asian American groups across New York City, to bolster awareness particularly among recent immigrants and limited-English-proficient voters. This joint campaign contacted over 25,000 voters for the 2012 primary and general elections through a new 2012 Voter Guide, a voter registration drive, and intensive get-out-the-vote efforts. While Hurricane Sandy disrupted their outreach efforts, the MinKwon Center found new locales and resources to accommodate displaced coalition partners just days before the elections. They doubled door knocking and phone banking efforts, and made extra efforts to ensure that voters were informed about poll location changes for Election Day.