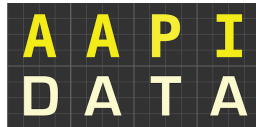


**AN AGENDA FOR JUSTICE  
CONTOURS OF PUBLIC OPINION AMONG ASIAN  
AMERICANS**

*An analysis and presentation of the  
APIAVote & Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC 2014 Voter Survey*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asian Americans have, for decades, been a rapidly growing population segment in the United States. More recently, they have also been growing significantly in their political presence, as measured by the growth of registered voters (an average increase of 600,000 per midterm election cycle), Congressional candidates (from 10 candidates in 2010, 30 in 2012 and 39 in 2014), or the number of organizations involved in voter registration (from 154 participating in National Voter Registration Day in 2012 to 317 organizations in 2014).

Along with the growing presence of Asian American voters is a growing interest in the opinions and priorities of this electorate. This report presents the results of interviews conducted by telephone from August 14 to September 11, 2014, of 1,337 registered voters who identify as Asian American, producing an overall margin of sampling error of +/- 2.7%. Sampling was targeted towards the six largest national origin groups that together account for more than 75% of the Asian American adult citizen population. Interviews were conducted in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese, and included landlines and mobile phones.

The data on Asian American registered voter opinion reveal that:

- Asian Americans are strongly supportive of policies that address growing income inequality
  - About 3 in 4 say that the decline in real income for American workers is a “very important” or “extremely important” problem
  - 72% support an increase in the federal minimum wage, in line with the U.S. average. Support for the increase ranges from 80% among Asian Indians to 67% among Chinese Americans.
  - 69% believe that the government should work to substantially reduce the gap between rich and poor, in line with the U.S. average.
  - We find strong support for limits to political spending overall (69%), and across national origin groups. Support for campaign spending limits is highest among young voters (75%) and the U.S. born (79%).
  - These findings are in line with other past surveys of Asian Americans, which indicate support for more taxes and more spending on social services.
- On matters of racial justice, the vast majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action (68%)
  - This support remains high even when respondents are asked specifically about affirmative action in higher education (69%).
- Gun control is a significant issue for Asian American voters
  - 71% identify the issue as “very important” or “extremely important” for the November 2014 election
  - 80% support stricter laws on gun control in the United States, a figure that is substantially higher than the U.S. average of 50% support.

## **BACKGROUND: THE RAPIDLY GROWING ASIAN AMERICAN ELECTORATE**

The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has long been among the fastest growing populations in the United States, with immigration playing a significant role. More recently, these communities have been notable for their quickly developing civic and political infrastructure, including a growing base of voters, donors, elected officials, appointees, and public policy advocates. This transformation is ongoing, but the potential is already being realized in many states and localities, and especially in elections with narrow margins.

According to a report from the Center for American Progress and AAPI Data, the number of Asian American voters in the last decade has nearly doubled from more than 2 million voters in 2000 to 3.9 million voters in 2012.<sup>1</sup> The report estimates that Asian Americans will reach 5 percent of voters nationally by 2025 and 10 percent of voters by 2044. In many states and localities, however, these milestones have already been achieved. For example, AAPIs are already 5 percent or more of the citizen voting age population (CVAP) in 7 states, including two (California and Hawaii) where they are over 10% of the CVAP. Looking next at counties, AAPIs are 5 percent or more of the CVAP in 73 jurisdictions, including 33 jurisdictions where they are greater than 10 percent. When looking at congressional districts, there are 10 where AAPIs account for more than 25 percent of the CVAP, 35 districts where they account for between 10 percent and 25 percent, and 58 districts where they account for between 5 percent and 10 percent.

Just as the population of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders has grown, so too has the number of registered voters. And this has been true, not only during presidential election years but also in midterm elections. In midterm elections over the last two decades, the number of AAPI registered voters has increased by an average of about 600,000 over the prior cycle—from about 1.4 million AAPI registered voters in 1994 to 3.9 million in 2010.<sup>2</sup> More recently, there has also been a rapid growth in the civic infrastructure of AAPI communities. For example, this year 317 AAPI serving organizations participated in National Voter Registration Day, more than double the number of organizations who participated in 2012 (154). Importantly, a growing number of community-based organizations are integrating voter registration into their regular activities and programs throughout the year. In doing so, these organizations amplify and reinforce the importance of civic engagement, especially as growing civic participation increases the ability of organizations to advocate for their communities' interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for American Progress and AAPI Data, “State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders” (2014), available at <http://ampr.gs/AAPIREports2014> (last accessed October 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Analysis by AAPI Data of Current Population Survey Voter Supplement data from 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010.

The growth of AAPI civic participation is due, not only because community organizations are getting more involved, but also because of the growing number of AAPI elected officials and candidates running for office. Each time a leader from the community decides to run for office or secure an appointment, they engage their network of extended family and friends to become involved. According to the 2014 UCLA Asian Pacific American Political Almanac, there are at least 4000 Asian American and Pacific Islander elected officials and appointees from 39 states.<sup>3</sup> Recent years have seen a surge of Asian Americans running for Congress, from 8 in 2008 and 10 in 2010, to 30 in 2012,<sup>4</sup> and 39 in 2014.<sup>5</sup> In addition to Congress, there are hundreds of AAPI elected officials at the state and local levels, including 182 state representatives from 21 states and territories.<sup>6</sup>

The growth of these elected officials is supported with the growing political infrastructure. The last two decades, more political PACs and Democratic and Republican clubs and caucuses have been established. There is also a growing number of staffers of Asian descent involved with campaigns. The Democratic National Committee has had an AAPI community desk focused on engagement with the AAPI community since the 1990s. More recently, the Republican National Committee has hired staff and provided assistance in outreach to AAPIs in several states.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Don T. Nakanishi and James Lai, eds., “National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac” (2014), University of California Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Stein, “With Surging Numbers, Asian-Americans Look for Congressional Gains” (2012) CNN, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/15/politics/asian-americans-congress/> (last accessed October 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, “Advancement in Congress with 39 AAPI Candidates in the 2014 Elections,” (2014) available at <http://apaics.org/advancement-in-congress-with-39-aapi-candidates-in-the-2014-elections/> (last accessed October 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Nakanishi and Lai, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Moore, Martha T. “GOP Sees Need to Woo Asian-American Voters.” (2013) *USA Today* <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/04/11/republicans-asian-americans/2066389/> (last accessed October 2014)

## VIEWS ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### Relevance for 2014 Election

Income inequality has reached record levels in the United States, and is now at levels even greater than those found in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Even as the United States officially came out of a severe recession in June 2009, the recovery has been marked with persistently high levels of joblessness and stagnating incomes for most working Americans.<sup>9</sup> Given this backdrop, we a few questions related to economic inequality and its relevance for the 2014 election.

Respondents were asked “Now I'd like to ask you about some issues that might be important in the elections in November. Please tell me how important the following issues are to you personally in deciding how to vote.” Respondents were given a choice of “extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not that important.”

“Jobs and the economy” was rated as an extremely important issue by 41% of Asian American registered voters, a level that was comparable to the top issue of “national security,” which was ranked as extremely important by 42%, and to health care which was mentioned as an extremely important issue by 40%. When adding the proportion of those indicating issues as “very important,” voter concern about the economy was highest among all issues, totaling 88%.

In addition to asking about the importance of the economy, we also asked registered voters to rate the importance of the “decline in real income for American workers.” Nearly three in four Asian Americans (74%) said that this was a “very important” or “extremely important” issue for the November election.

In addition to gauging the general importance of the issue of stagnating incomes, we also asked respondents if they thought that the Democratic Party or Republican Party is doing a better job in terms of “standing up for the middle class.”<sup>10</sup> Voters generally gave the Democratic Party the advantage on this issue; 42% of registered voters said Democrats were doing a better job on this issue, compared to 19% who said that the Republican Party was doing a better job.

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<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Saez, “Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States,” available at <http://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-USTopIncomes-2012.pdf>

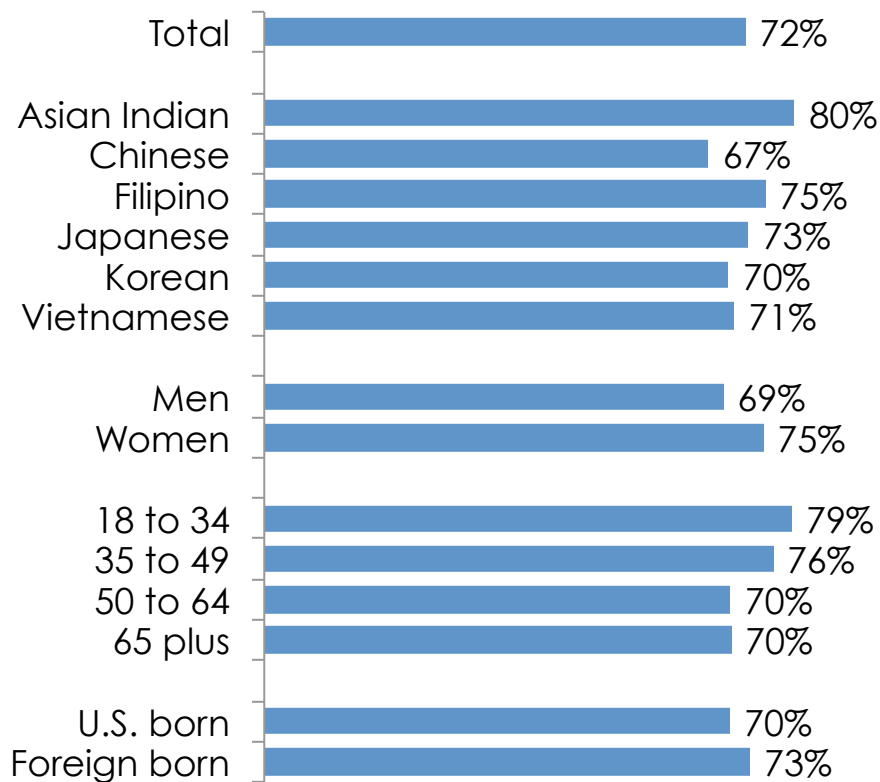
<sup>9</sup> Tankersley, Jim. “Jobless Recoveries Are Here to Stay, Economists Say, but It’s a Mystery Why.” *The Washington Post*, September 19, 2013. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/jobless-recoveries-are-here-to-stay-economists-say-but-its-a-mystery-why/2013/09/19/6034bcb4-20c7-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/jobless-recoveries-are-here-to-stay-economists-say-but-its-a-mystery-why/2013/09/19/6034bcb4-20c7-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe_story.html).

<sup>10</sup> For a more complete list of voter views on parties on various issues, see the “Left, Right, or Center?” report released on October 7, 2014. Available at <http://apiavote.org/research>.

## Minimum Wage

In addition to asking about the importance of economic justice issues to the November election, we asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that “Congress should increase the federal minimum wage from its current level of \$7.25 an hour.” Figure 1 presents the proportion of respondents who agree by national origin, gender, age, and nativity. Overall, the proportion of Asian American registered voters is in line with the national average. For example, in September 2014, the CBS News/New York Times Poll found that 70% of American adults support raising the minimum wage.<sup>11</sup> We find majority support among all national origin groups surveyed, ranging from 80% among Asian Indians to 67% among Chinese Americans. Support is also higher among women than men, and among younger adults.

**Figure 1. Support for increase in federal minimum wage among Asian American registered voters**

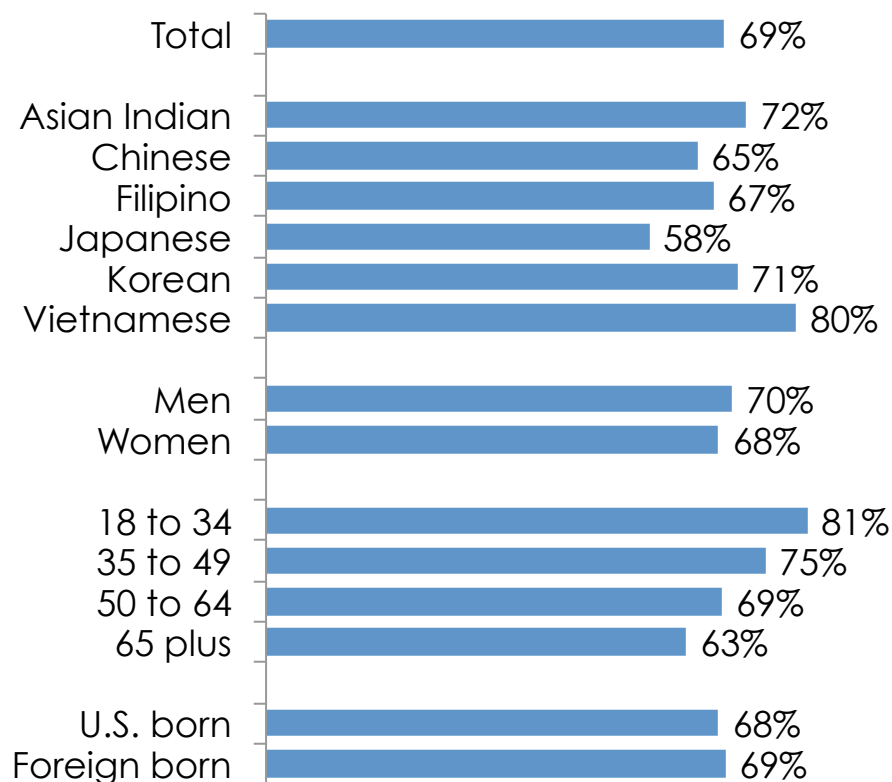


<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/09/18/us/politics/18EVENING-POLL-DOC.html>

## Income Inequality

Respondents were asked the extent whether they agree or disagree that “The government should work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor.” Figure 2 presents the proportion of respondents who agree by national origin, gender, age, and nativity. Overall, the proportion of Asian American registered voters is in line with the national average. For example, in February 2014, the CNN/ORC Poll found that 66% of American adults support this policy.<sup>12</sup> We find majority support among all national origin groups surveyed, ranging from 80% among Vietnamese Americans to 58% among Japanese Americans. Support is very high among younger Asian American adults, with about 4 in 5 agreeing that government should work to substantially reduce income inequality.

**Figure 2. Percent who agree that government should work to substantially reduce the gap between rich and poor**



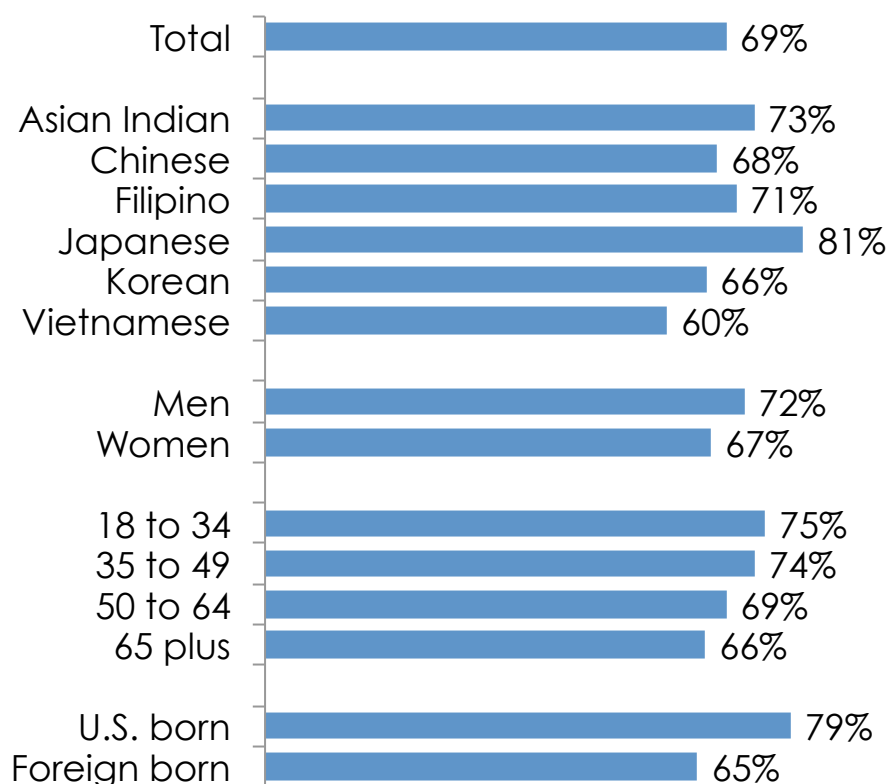
<sup>12</sup> <http://cnnpoliticalticker.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/rel3d.pdf>



### Limits on Money in Politics

Respondents were asked the extent whether they agree or disagree that “There should be limits on the amount of money that corporations and organizations can contribute to political campaigns.” Figure 3 presents the proportion of respondents who agree by national origin, gender, age, and nativity. Comparable questions on public support for limits on money in politics find support for contribution limits ranging from 71% to 76%.<sup>13</sup> We find strong support for limits to political spending overall (69%), and across national origin groups, ranging from 81% among Japanese Americans to 60% among Vietnamese Americans. Support for campaign spending limits is very high among younger Asian American adults (75%) and among the U.S. born (79%).

**Figure 3. Percent who agree that there should be limits on political contributions by corporations and organizations**



<sup>13</sup> [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/docs/2014/CBS\\_Poll\\_0514.pdf](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/docs/2014/CBS_Poll_0514.pdf)

## VIEWS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

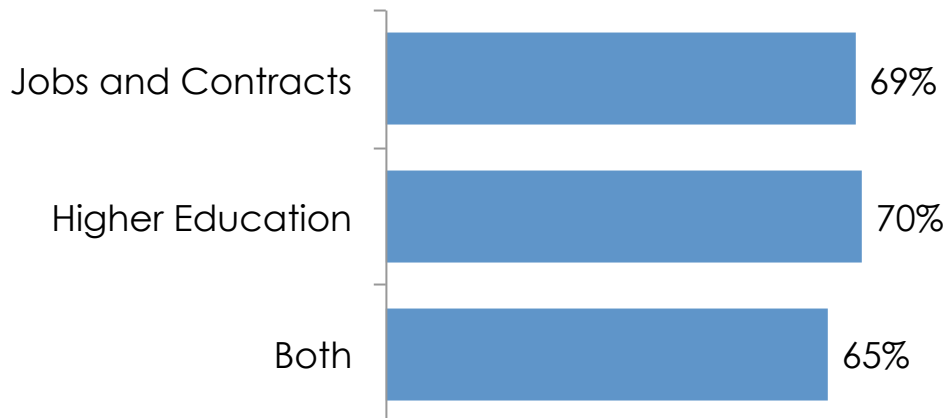
The issue of affirmative action has been a salient issue in the past two years, with the U.S. Supreme Court deciding on the constitutionality of considering race in college admissions in 2012 (*Fisher v. University of Texas*), and the California legislature debating in early 2014 whether or not to put a measure before voters that would change California’s constitution to allow for the consideration of race in admissions to state universities and colleges.

In 2012, the National Asian American Survey asked respondents, “Do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs designed to help blacks, women, and other minorities get better jobs and education?” This question, in turn, was modeled on those asked in prior surveys by Quinnipiac and Pew Research Center.<sup>14</sup>

In the *APIAVote & Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC 2014 Voter Survey*, we were able to replicate the question from the 2012 National Asian American Survey. We asked one-third of survey respondents the same question as in the 2012 NAAS. In addition, we asked two other variations of the same question: one focused on “jobs and business contracts,” and another focused on “better access to higher education.”

As the results indicate in Figure 4, the vast majority of Asian American registered voters support affirmative action, and support remains high even when respondents are asked only about affirmative action as it applies to higher education.

**Figure 4. Support for Affirmative Action Among Asian American Registered Voters, 2014**

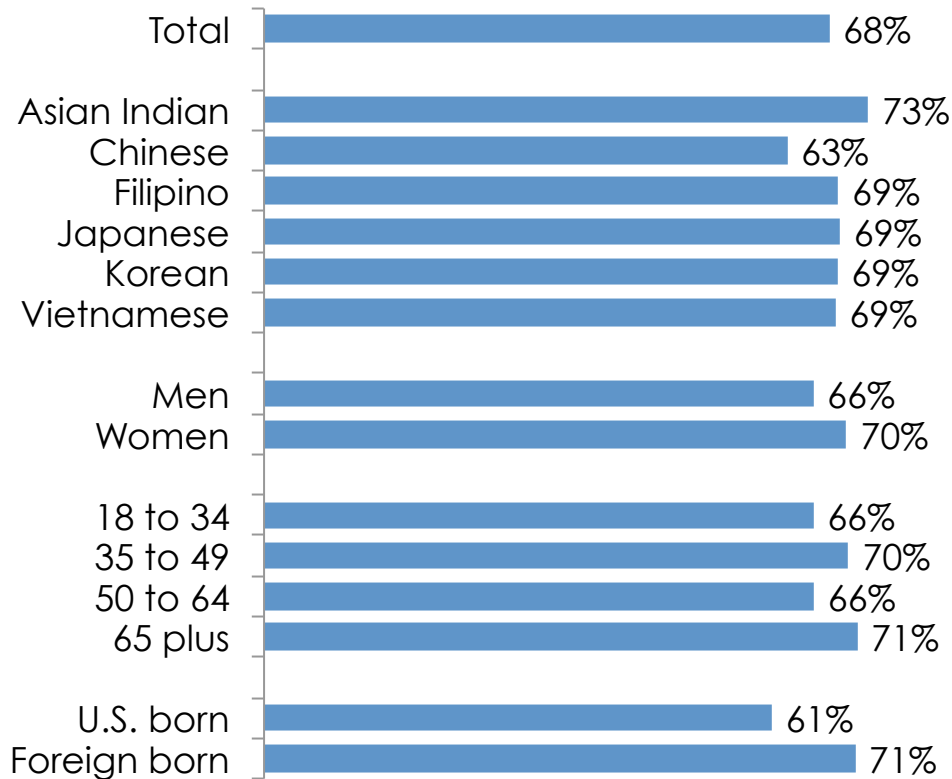


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<sup>14</sup>

Given the three-way split in our sample, the margins of error grow to +/- 12% if we examine support for these three measures of affirmative action by national origin group. Even doing so, however, we find a clear majority of support for all of these measures for all national origin groups, with a few exceptions.<sup>15</sup> Combining responses across these three categories, we find that a majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action, regardless of national origin, gender, age, and nativity.

**Figure 5. Support for Affirmative Action Among Asian American Registered Voters, 2014**



<sup>15</sup> Support for affirmative action in jobs/contracts is at 54% among Chinese Americans, 53% among Japanese Americans when focused on higher education, and 58% among Chinese Americans and 59% among Vietnamese Americans when the question includes both jobs and education.

## VIEWS ON GUN CONTROL

### Relevance for 2014 Election

The issue of gun control rose to national prominence in December 2012, when a 20-year old gunman entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT and fatally shot 20 children and 6 staff members. While there were several national surveys indicating strong support for stronger gun control measures in the wake of Sandy Hook, there has until now been no survey data on Asian American opinion on gun control. Here, we present data on how important Asian Americans view the issue, where they see the parties on the issue, and what their opinion is on gun control.

Respondents were asked “Now I'd like to ask you about some issues that might be important in the elections in November. Please tell me how important the following issues are to you personally in deciding how to vote.” Respondents were given a choice of “extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not that important.”

As noted earlier, Asian American voters were most likely to rank national security (42%), jobs and the economy (41%), and health care (40%) as issues that were extremely important. Gun control also made this top list, as 40% of Asian American voters rated it as an “extremely important” issue. When adding the proportion of those indicating issues as “very important,” voter concern about gun control rises to 71%.

In addition to gauging the general importance of the issue of stagnating incomes, we also asked respondents if they thought that the Democratic Party or Republican Party is doing a better job in terms of “standing up for the middle class.”<sup>16</sup> Voters generally gave the Democratic Party the advantage on this issue; 35% of registered voters said Democrats were doing a better job on this issue, compared to 20% who said that the Republican Party was doing a better job. This party advantage is weaker than the one found on matters such as “standing up for the middle class” (42%D, 19%R), treating all Americans equally and fairly (39%D, 12%R), and health care (47%D, 17%R).

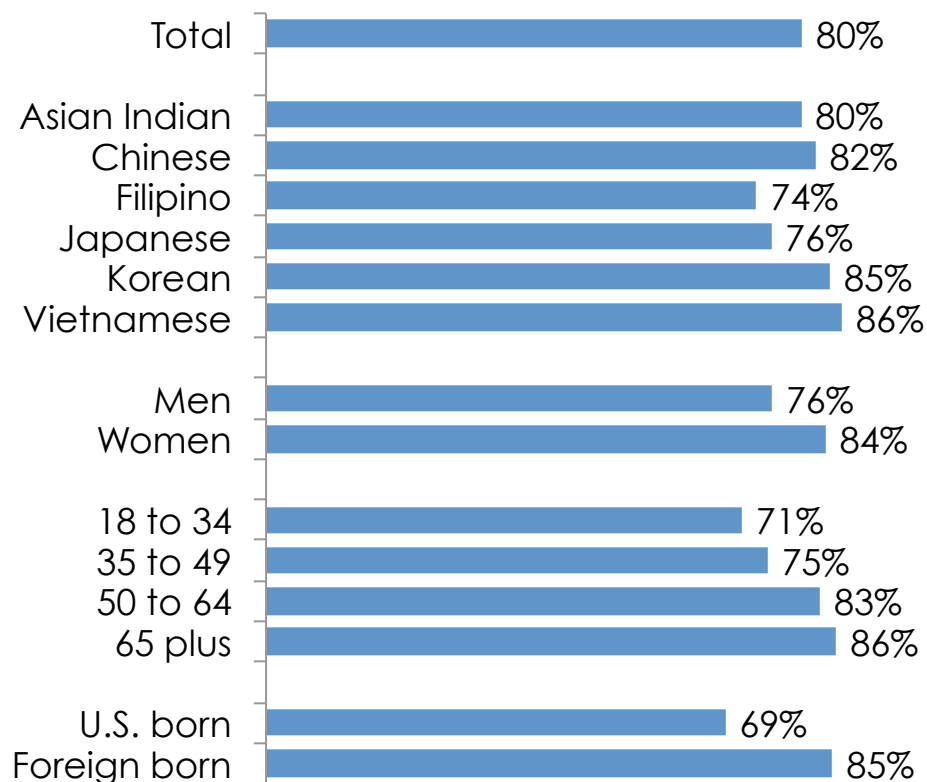
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<sup>16</sup> For a more complete list of voter views on parties on various issues, see the “Left, Right, or Center?” report released on October 7, 2014. Available at <http://apiavote.org/research>.

## Opinion on Gun Control

Respondents were asked the extent whether they agree or disagree with the statement: “We should have stricter gun laws in the United States.” Figure 6 presents the proportion of respondents who agree by national origin, gender, age, and nativity. Overall, the proportion of Asian American registered voters supporting stricter gun laws (80%) is much higher than the national average. For example, in June 2014, the Quinnipiac Poll found that 50% of American registered voters supported stricter gun laws.<sup>17</sup> We find majority support among all national origin groups surveyed, ranging from 86% among Vietnamese Americans to 74% among Filipino Americans. Finally, support for gun control is higher among women, among those in older age groups, and Asian American registered voters who are foreign born.

**Figure 6. Support for Stricter Gun Laws Among Asian American Registered Voters, 2014**



<sup>17</sup> <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/news-and-events/quinnipiac-university-poll/national/release-detail?ReleaseID=2057>

## APPENDIX

### Survey Questionnaire

Complete survey questionnaire can be found in the “Left, Right, or Center?” report released on October 7, 2014. Available at <http://apiavote.org/research>.

### Methodology

This report is based on telephone interviews conducted from August 14 to September 11, 2014, of 1,337 registered voters who identify as Asian American. Sampling was targeted towards the six largest national origin groups that together account for more than 75% of the Asian American adult citizen population.

Interviews were conducted in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese, and included landlines and mobile phones. 45 percent of the interviews were conducted in an Asian language.

The sample sizes by ethnicity are as follows, along with an estimation of the maximum margin of error associated with each sample size (in parentheses):

Total: 1,337 (+/- 2.7%)

Asian Indian: 230 (+/- 6.5%)

Chinese: 230 (+/- 6.5%)

Filipino: 210 (+/- 6.8%)

Japanese: 212 (+/- 6.8%)

Korean: 224 (+/- 6.5%)

Vietnamese: 231 (+/- 6.5%)

Sampling error from the size of our sample is only one type of error possible in surveys like the 2014 APIAVote & Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC survey. 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, gender and nativity.

### Contact information

For additional questions on survey methodology or design, contact Karthick Ramakrishnan at 818-305-4865 or [karthick@aapidata.com](mailto:karthick@aapidata.com). For information on voter demographics and outreach, contact Christine Chen at 202-223-9170 or [cchen@apiavote.org](mailto:cchen@apiavote.org). For any other media inquiries, contact Sandhya Bhatija [sbathija@advancingjustice-aaajc.org](mailto:sbathija@advancingjustice-aaajc.org).