



Asian Americans in California: Results from a 2022 Survey

Milan Vaishnav and Nitya Labh

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Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Publications Department
1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
P: + 1 202 483 7600
F: + 1 202 483 1840
CarnegieEndowment.org

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INTRODUCTION

From the Periphery to Centerstage: Asian Americans in California

By 2060, Asian Americans are [projected](#) to be the United States' largest immigrant group, with their numbers estimated to surpass 46 million, or more than 10 percent of the [total U.S. population](#). Asian Americans are already the fastest-growing racial/ethnic demographic in the country, with their size nearly doubling between 2000 and 2019. And, the community is steadily translating this demographic growth into increased political influence. According to the political data firm [TargetSmart](#), Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) voter turnout in 2020 battleground states increased more than that of any other minority group.

This community's growing demographic strength and corresponding increase in political visibility are occurring amid significant churning in America. Consider three recent developments. First, the coronavirus pandemic has triggered a [worrying spike](#) in hate crimes directed toward people of Asian heritage in many parts of the United States. Second, while Asian Americans have historically been supporters of the Democratic Party, recent evidence suggests that areas with the greatest concentration of Asian residents have seen significant [vote swings](#) toward the Republican Party. Third, the U.S. foreign policy establishment's growing preoccupation with the China threat, and its efforts to build firmer partnerships with many of China's neighbors, have introduced a [new layer of complexity](#) in the building of Asian American civic and political coalitions.

Nowhere is the demographic significance of Asian Americans more readily apparent than in California, the most populous state in the union. AAPI residents comprise roughly [15.5 percent](#) of California's population, or [6 million people](#). According to 2020 U.S. Census data, California's AAPI population grew by [25 percent](#) in the past decade, faster than any other ethnic group in the state.

Over the course of the past year, the Carnegie South Asia Program published a series of five articles on the political and social preferences of Asian Americans in the Golden State. These articles draw on a September 2022 online survey of 1,000 California-based Asian Americans conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in partnership with the data and analytics firm YouGov. The sample includes respondents from twenty-one Asian ethnic origin groups but excludes Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. This compendium presents all five essays in one place so readers can enjoy a comprehensive look at the views and attitudes of this important, fast-growing population. The essays are presented in their original condition, with very modest changes to account for readability and timing. The themes of the essays are briefly introduced below.

Essay 1: Political Behavior

A wealth of survey evidence demonstrates that Asian Americans, in California and across the country, are strong supporters of the Democratic Party. However, evidence from the 2020 presidential election suggests that the Democrats' considerable advantage over Republicans in this demographic may be diminishing. A 2022 *Wall Street Journal* [analysis](#) found that, in local communities where Asian Americans make up at least 70 percent of the population, there was a median shift of five percentage points toward then president Donald Trump in the 2020 election. Data compiled by the [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund](#) shows that only 18 percent of Asian American voters backed the Republican Party in the 2016 presidential election in which Trump was first elected. But by the 2022 congressional midterms, that share stood at 32 percent—a stark increase in just six years.

The first essay in this series examines the political attitudes and preferences of Asian Americans in California in the context of the 2022 midterm elections. The essay seeks to provide a core set of baseline statistics about the political behavior of this important, yet understudied demographic, relating to partisan identity, political ideology, and vote choice. It also offers an assessment of political leadership, both at the state and national levels, including a look at how Asian Americans in California assess the emerging contours of the 2024 presidential race.

Essay 2: Policy Priorities

As important as political preferences are, a narrow focus on the political clout of the Asian American community and its political behavior can sometimes obscure a more fundamental question: what are the policy priorities and preferences of this emerging demographic? Put another way, what exactly do Asian American voters want from their government?

In recent years, close observers have mounted several attempts to answer this question. There is a well-regarded body of scholarship, drawn from [public opinion data](#), that shines a light on the policy priorities of this burgeoning community. “What makes Asian American voters

tick?” has also been the subject of growing [media attention](#), especially as the community’s general tilt toward the Democratic Party can no longer be taken for granted. Some [evidence](#) suggests that the partisan inclinations of Asian Americans have been diversifying. In addition, in the wake of a worrying rise in hate crimes targeting people of Asian origin following the coronavirus pandemic, civil society organizations have devoted [greater attention](#) to ensuring Asian Americans voices are heard in the corridors of power.

The second essay in this series represents a modest attempt to add to this growing body of work. Specifically, it explores the policy preferences of California’s Asian Americans on the eve of the 2022 midterm elections. It looks at policy attitudes through four prisms: prominent issues of contemporary relevance; key ballot initiatives scheduled for 2022 and 2024; the technology sector; and higher education.

Essay 3: Identity Considerations

While the recent attention showered on the political preferences of Asian Americans is welcome—as it has long existed as a [footnote](#) in accounts of contemporary American politics—discussions of the political mobilization, partisan leanings, and policy priorities of “Asian Americans” often [ignore](#) the fact that this demographic is large and internally heterogeneous.

Indeed, the question “What does it mean to be Asian in America?” is not a question with a simple, universal answer. As a Pew Research Center study on Asian Americans eloquently puts it, “No single experience defines what it means to be Asian in the United States today. . . . Asian Americans’ lived experiences are in part shaped by where they were born, how connected they are to their family’s ethnic origins, and how others—both Asians and non-Asians—see and engage with them in their daily lives.”

The third essay in the series delves into what it means to be an Asian American in California in the contemporary period. Once one discards the assumption that “Asian American” is a static identity viewed in the same way by all members of the community, a set of questions emerges: How do Asian Americans conceive of their identity? Do Indian-origin and Chinese-origin Americans embrace the “Asian American” label to the same degree? How do Asians in the United States balance their own national origin identities with their connection to America? To what extent are the social networks of Asian-origin Americans comprised of other Asian Americans who come from similar backgrounds? And what forms of identity-based discrimination do they experience in America today and on what grounds?

This third essay attempts to answer these and other pertinent questions about Asian American identity.

Essay 4: Patterns of Civic and Political Engagement

One of the most striking statistics to emerge from recent electoral campaign cycles in the United States is the marked increase in the voter turnout of Asian Americans. Following the 2018 midterm elections, the U.S. Current Population Survey estimated that the voting rate among adult citizens belonging to the Asian American community [rose](#) from 28 percent in 2014 to 42 percent just four years later. Analyses of this data by [AAPI Data](#) found that this turnout surge was broad-based with sizable growth evident across demographic categories such as age, gender, and place of birth.

This impressive growth continued in the presidential election year of 2020. [U.S. Census Bureau](#) data found that the turnout of Asian American voters reached nearly 60 percent during the 2020 presidential election, marginally lower than the turnout rate of African Americans but higher than that of Latinos. In fact, Asian American voters increased their turnout [at the polls in every 2020 battleground state](#), more than any other minority group. The increase in Asian American voter turnout even surpassed the narrow vote margin that flipped Georgia and Arizona from Republican to Democrat.

These striking figures herald the rise of a pivotal new voting demographic, a development that has been met with considerable attention by the media, politicians, and America's two major political parties. But these headline numbers, while important, do not shed much light on the broader patterns of civic and political behavior in the Asian American community.

The fourth article in this series explores detailed data on the way in which Asian Americans in California engage with their community, in both political and civic terms. While Asian-origin Americans might vote in greater numbers than before, to what extent do they participate in important political activities other than voting? And beyond the political realm, how do Asian Americans engage in civic life in their own communities?

Essay 5: Foreign Policy Attitudes

In recent years, U.S. foreign policy has engineered a reorientation toward Asia. Whether it is referred to as a [“pivot,” “tilt,”](#) or [“rebalance,”](#) successive U.S. administrations have made it clear, through public statements and policy documents, that they intend to place Asia at the heart of U.S. foreign policy strategy in the twenty-first century.

Recent initiatives from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration have continued, and indeed accelerated, this trend. In February 2022, the White House released its [Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)—a document that outlines its attempts to strengthen America's position in “every corner of the region, from Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, to South Asia and Oceania, including the Pacific Islands.” Through initiatives such as [AUKUS](#) (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and the [Quad](#), a strategic partnership between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, it has attempted to reinforce its words through tangible deeds.

While there are multiple objectives behind this reorientation, arguably the most important is the desire of the United States to contain the economic, political, and security challenges posed by a rising China. Indeed, Democrats and Republicans in Washington, who rarely agree on anything, appear to share a [more hawkish](#) position on China than in years past.

America's dedication to the Asian theater and the rising political temperature in Washington over U.S.-China relations raise intriguing questions about how Asian Americans perceive these changes. This is the subject of the fifth and final essay in our series. How important is foreign policy in the minds of Asian Americans when they select their leaders? To what extent is the United States successfully managing its relations with Asia? Is there popular support for the new "get tough" consensus on China? And how, if at all, is foreign policy dividing—rather than uniting—the Asian diaspora community in America? This essays frames initial answers to these and other pertinent questions.

Survey Design

The data analyzed here are based on an original online survey of 1,000 California-based Asian American residents. The survey was designed by scholars at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and conducted by polling firm YouGov between September 9 and September 26, 2022.

YouGov recruited respondents from its [proprietary panel](#) of nearly 2 million U.S. residents. Only adult respondents (ages eighteen and above) who are full-time residents of California and who belong to one of twenty-one Asian-origin groups were eligible to participate in the survey.¹

These twenty-one ethnic subgroups account for 97.4 percent of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population in California, according to [2020 U.S. Census data](#).² The YouGov survey did not include respondents who principally identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The survey was fielded in English (see the next section for additional discussion).

YouGov employs a sophisticated sample-matching procedure to ensure to the greatest extent possible that the respondent pool is representative of the Asian American community in California; the procedure uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 [American Community Survey](#) as a target sample frame. All the analyses in this study employ sampling weights to ensure representativeness. The overall margin of error for the sample is +/- 3 percent. This margin of error is calculated at the 95 percent confidence interval.

The survey instrument contains an extensive range of questions organized across six modules: basic demographics, identity and discrimination, politics, policy preferences, foreign policy, and civic and political life. Respondents were allowed to skip questions except for important demographic questions that determined the nature of other survey items.

Strengths and Limitations

As [related research](#) has shown, surveys of Asian Americans have to contend with several thorny methodological challenges. While their numbers have increased, Asian Americans are still a distinct minority—even in California, where they make up almost 16 percent of the population—making it difficult to recruit sufficiently large samples for surveys.

One major benefit of working with an extensive survey panel, such as the one maintained by YouGov, is that it provides access to large sample sizes that allow researchers to make reliable estimates about even relatively small populations of interest. However, online panels have a significant drawback: most online survey panels are conducted in English, and [around seven in ten eligible Asian-origin voters](#) report that they only speak English at home or speak the language “very well.”

Therefore, the survey results presented in this article cannot mechanically be extrapolated to the Asian American community in California at large. For instance, this survey’s sample includes a larger share of U.S. citizens than California’s Asian American population [as a whole](#). It is best to treat the survey findings as representative of the views of English-proficient Californians of Asian origin.

Despite this caveat, this survey serves as an important barometer given that, in the years to come, the characteristics of the Asian American population will increasingly resemble those of the sample studied here.

CHAPTER 1

How Will California's Asian Americans Vote in November 2022?

This essay examines the political preferences of California's Asian Americans on the eve of the 2022 midterm elections. It explores their ideological and partisan leanings, voting preferences in the November election, approval of key national and state leaders, and views about the 2024 presidential race. Because this essay is concerned with political behavior in the 2022 elections, the data analyzed here is restricted to a subsample of 927 U.S. citizen respondents.

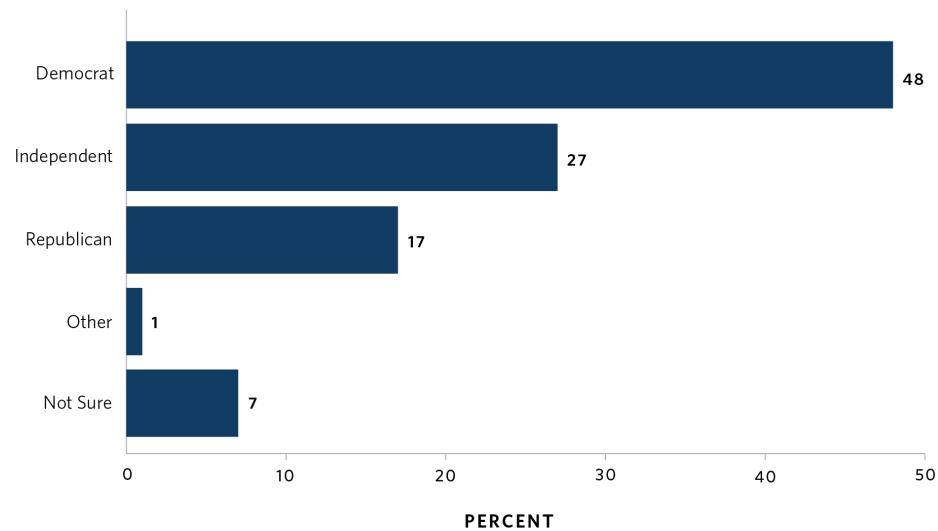
Political Preferences

Party Identification

Consistent with other surveys of the Asian American population at large, the survey finds that a plurality—48 percent—of Asian Americans in California identify with the Democratic Party (see figure 1). In contrast, only 17 percent of respondents identify with the Republican Party, while more than one quarter (27 percent) identify as independents. A total of 7 percent of the sample are not sure about their partisan affiliation, while 1 percent identify with another, smaller political party.

FIGURE 1
Partisan Identity

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...?



SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

These numbers are not dissimilar from the findings of the [2022 Asian American Voter Survey](#) (AAVS), which was conducted between April and June of this year. The AAVS found that 44 percent of Asian Americans nationwide identify as Democrats, 19 percent identify as Republicans, 35 percent report they are independents, and 2 percent don't know.

The intensity of partisan identification is also illuminating. Specifically, 21 percent of respondents in the Carnegie survey identify as “strong” Democrats, 27 percent identify as “not very strong” Democrats, and 8 percent report they “lean” Democratic. On the other end of the political spectrum, only 7 percent identify as “strong Republicans,” while 11 percent identify as “not very strong” Republicans and 3 percent “lean” Republican.

There is notable variation in respondents’ reported party identification along several key demographic indicators. U.S.-born respondents are much more likely to identify as Democrats (55 percent) and are much less likely to identify as Republicans than their foreign-born counterparts (38 percent). With respect to ethnicity, Japanese respondents are the most likely to identify as Democrats (66 percent) followed most closely by Indian participants (57 percent). Meanwhile, Korean respondents (26 percent), Vietnamese participants (24 percent), and those belonging to smaller ethnic groups (28 percent) are the most likely to report identifying as Republicans.

Age also presents an interesting picture. As one might expect, a near majority of respondents aged eighteen to twenty-nine report identifying with the Democrats (50 percent), but the same is also true of those over the age of fifty. The biggest difference between the two groups is the share of respondents who are unsure about where they stand; respondents in the younger category are five times more likely to be unsure of their partisan affiliation when compared to the oldest respondents. A plurality of respondents between the ages of thirty

and forty-nine also favor Democrats (45 percent), but this age group also has a much larger share that identifies as independents (nearly one-third as opposed to one-quarter for the other two age categories).

Finally, there is a discernible gender skew in the data: 53 percent of female respondents report identifying as Democrats compared to 44 percent of males.

Political Ideology

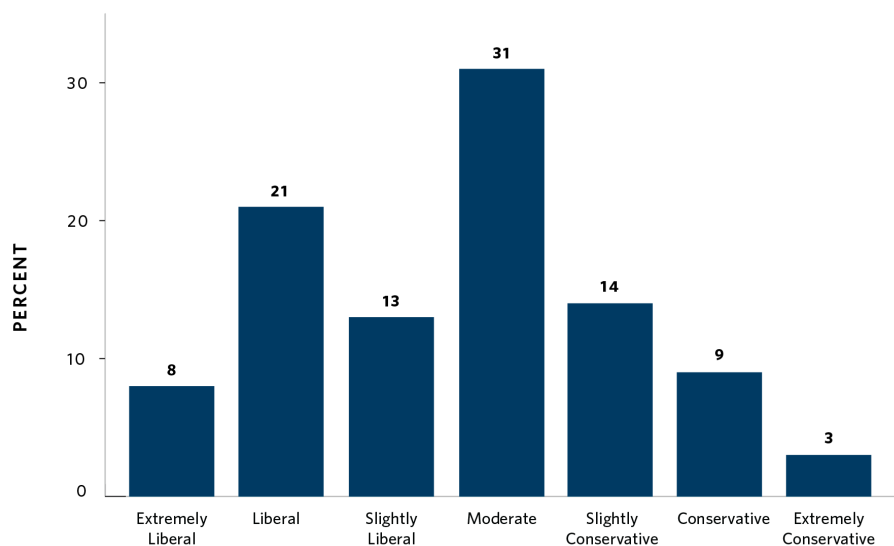
The survey asks respondents to place themselves on a standard, seven-point ideological scale derived from the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey methodology—ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

In response to survey questions on ideology, there is a well-known tendency for respondents to select the centrist position (identifying themselves as moderate). For respondents who selected this option (or who said they have not thought much about this issue), the survey further asked whether, if forced to choose, they would consider themselves to be liberal or conservative. For the purposes of this study, responses from these two questions were combined to array respondents on a single ideological spectrum.

The survey shows a modest leftward skew on this standard left-right ideological spectrum (see figure 2). A total of 42 percent of respondents identify as belonging to the liberal end of the spectrum, while 26 percent place themselves on the conservative end. Nearly one-third of respondents (31 percent), despite being prompted to choose a side, identify as moderate.³

FIGURE 2
Political Ideology

Where would you place yourself on this scale, from extremely liberal to extremely conservative?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

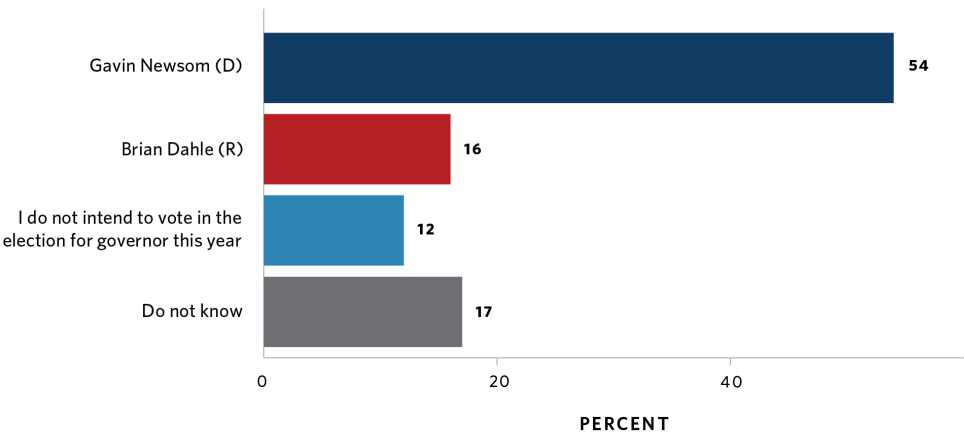
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Midterm Vote Choice

In line with their partisan identification and ideological self-placement, Asian Americans in California overwhelmingly intended to vote for Democrats this past November (see figure 3). A 54- percent share of respondents plan to vote for Gavin Newsom, the Democratic governor, who is seeking his second full term in office. Brian Dahle, the Republican challenger, lags far behind with 16 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, 12 percent of respondents do not intend to vote, despite being eligible to do so, while 17 percent are still undecided.

FIGURE 3
California Gubernatorial Vote Choice

Whom do you intend to vote for in California’s governor race?

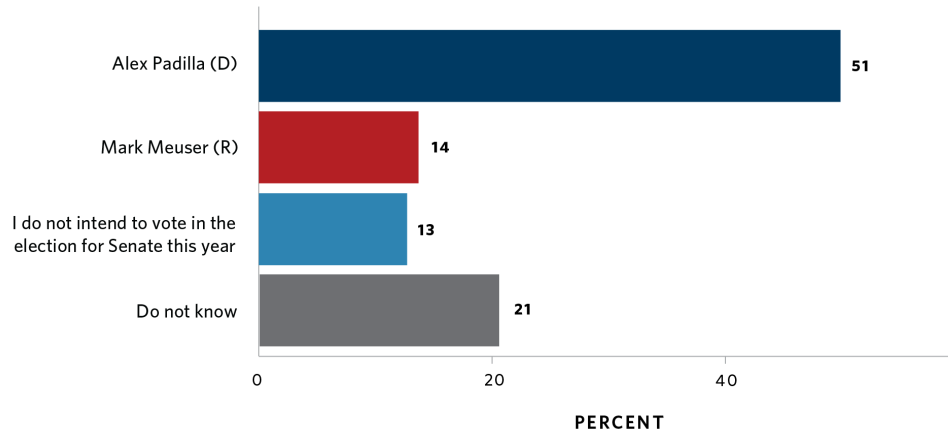


N= 927 U.S. Citizens
NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who intend to vote for a third-party candidate.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

As for the state’s Senate race, 51 percent of respondents indicate that they intend to vote for the incumbent Democrat, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla. Padilla is seeking his first full term in the Senate, after being appointed by Newsom to Vice President Kamala Harris’s former seat (see figure 4). A very small minority—just 14 percent—intend to vote for Padilla’s Republican opponent, Mark Meuser. Another 13 percent of respondents do not intend to vote, while one in five (21 percent) are still undecided.

FIGURE 4
U.S. Senate Vote Choice

Whom do you intend to vote for in California's U.S. Senate race?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

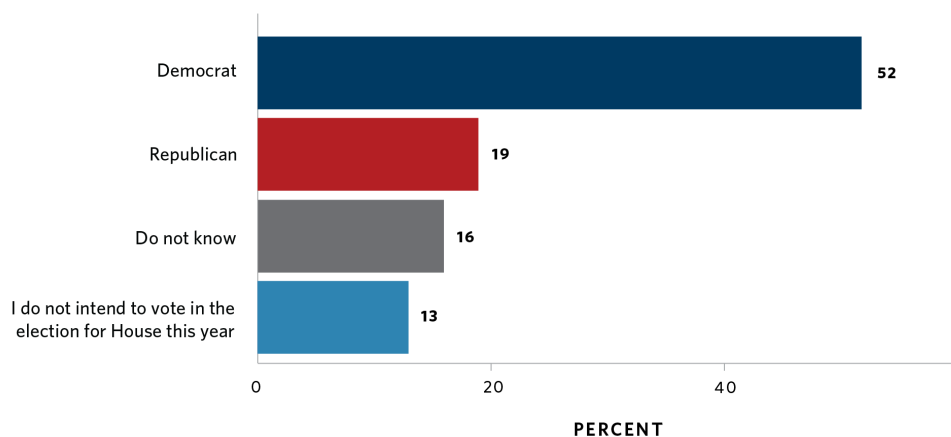
NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who intend to vote for a third-party candidate.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Finally, the survey asks respondents which party's candidate they intend to support in their local U.S. House of Representatives race (see figure 5). Slightly more than half plan to back the Democratic Party's candidate, while 19 percent intend to vote for the Republican candidate. Almost one-third of respondents either do not know (16 percent) or do not plan to vote (13 percent).

FIGURE 5
U.S. House of Representatives Vote Choice

Which party do you intend to vote for in the race for the U.S. House of Representatives?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who intend to vote for a third-party candidate.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

In sum, a majority of respondents indicate that they plan to vote for candidates associated with the Democratic Party in this November’s gubernatorial, Senate, and U.S. House elections.

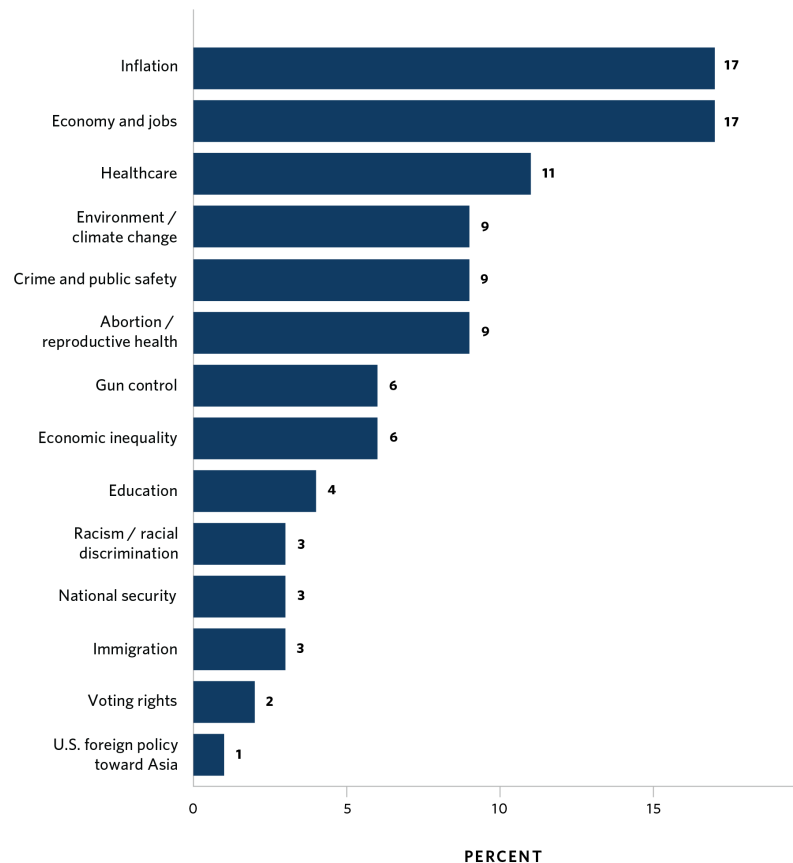
The responses of Asian Americans in California roughly mirror the preferences of the Asian American community as a whole. According to the [AAVS survey](#), 54 percent of Asian American respondents nationwide indicated they would vote for a Democrat in the November House and Senate elections, while between 25 and 27 percent indicated they would vote for a Republican candidate.

Animating Issues

While the next essay delves into the policy preferences of Asian Americans in California, it is worth briefly highlighting here the issues animating the coming midterm election. The survey asks all respondents which issue is the most important for them personally as they cast their ballots in the November election. Respondents were asked to choose one of fourteen issue areas, and their responses suggest that the economy is very much a top priority (see figure 6).

FIGURE 6
Top Issues in the 2022 Election

Which of the following is the most important issue for you personally?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Inflation and the economy (and jobs) were the most popular responses, each named as the top issue by 17 percent of respondents. Meanwhile, 11 percent identified healthcare as the most important issue, while 9 percent chose each of the following: environment/climate change, crime and public safety, and abortion/reproductive health. Questions related to foreign policy appear less salient: just 3 percent and 1 percent, respectively, identify national security and U.S. foreign policy toward Asia as their top issue this November.⁴

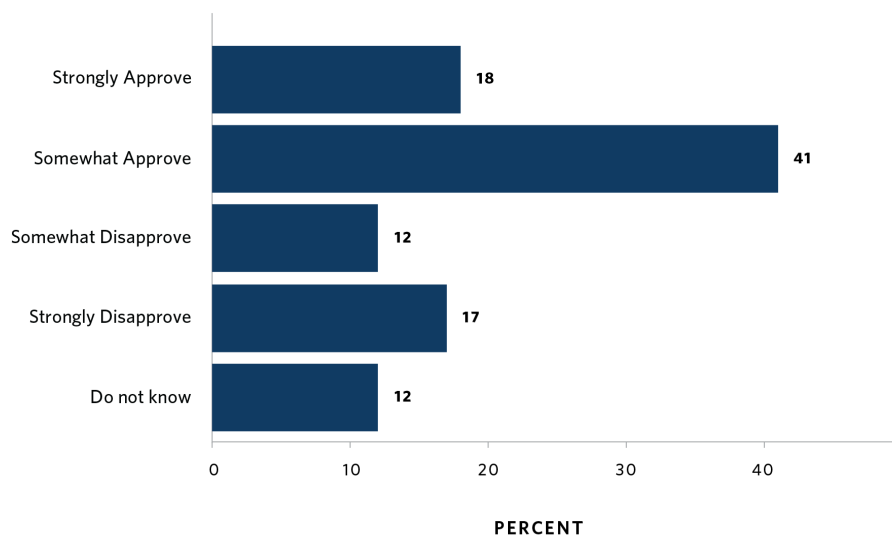
Assessment of Leadership

Leadership Approval

The survey asks respondents how satisfied they are with the performances of Newsom as California’s governor and U.S. President Joe Biden—both Democrats. A total of 59 percent of respondents either “strongly” or “somewhat” approve of Newsom’s job as governor, while 29 percent either “strongly” or “somewhat” disapprove of his performance (see figure 7). Of the remaining respondents, 12 percent of respondents report they do not know how well Newsom is doing.

FIGURE 7
Newsom’s Job Approval

Do you approve of the way Gavin Newsom is handling his job as governor?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

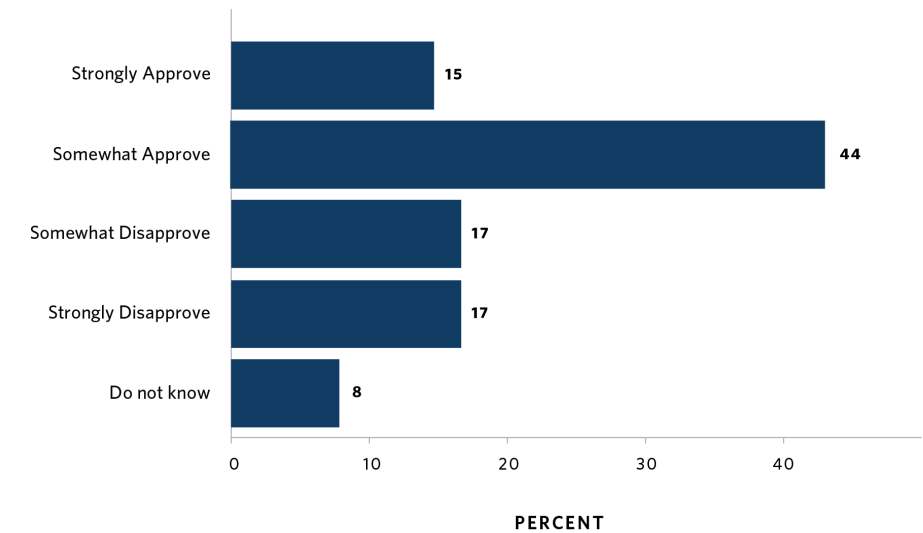
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

How do Newsom’s ratings among Asian Americans compare to the sentiments of voters statewide? A September 2022 [survey](#) by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) found that 52 percent of adult respondents approved of Newsom, with 35 percent disapproving, and 13 percent unsure. Asian Americans’ views of Newsom are not too different compared to those of Californians as a whole.⁵

The numbers for Biden are broadly similar to those Newsom enjoys (see figure 8). A 59-percent share approve of Biden’s performance as president, while 34 percent disapprove and 8 percent are not sure of their opinion.⁶ The same September 2022 PPIC [survey](#) found that Biden’s approval rate was 53 percent and his disapproval rate was 42 percent among all Californians (with 4 percent unsure).

FIGURE 8
Biden’s Job Approval

Do you approve of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as president?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

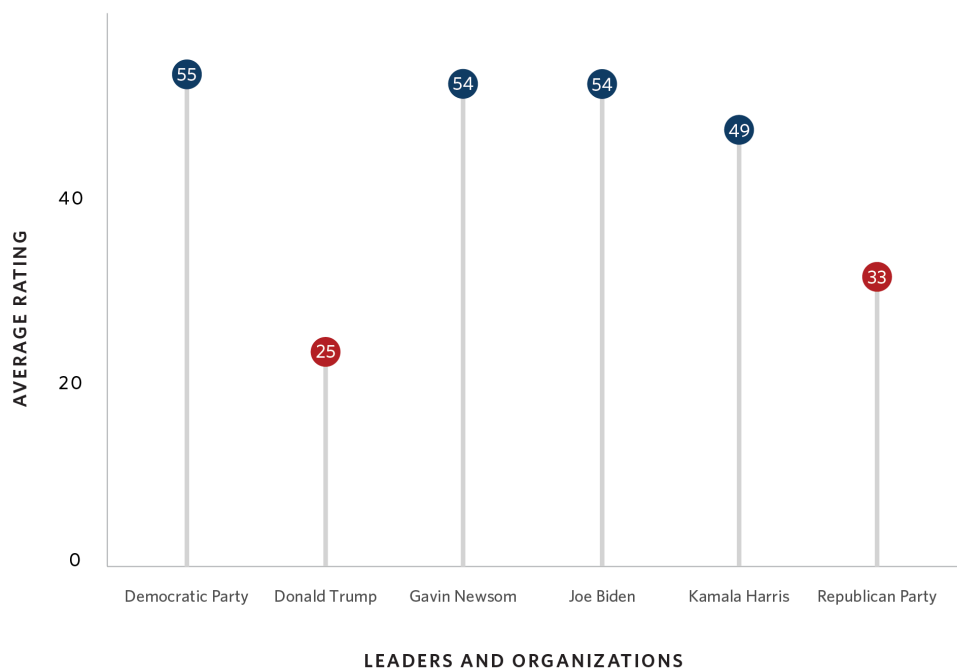
Feeling Thermometer

One of the classic methods of measuring how individuals assess political figures is through a feeling thermometer—a method popularized by the ANES project—whereby respondents are asked to rate political parties or individual leaders on a scale from zero to one hundred. Ratings between zero and forty-nine mean that respondents maintain an unfavorable and cold impression of the person or group, a rating of fifty means that respondents are indifferent, and ratings between fifty-one and one hundred mean that respondents feel favorable and warm toward them.

Biden earns an average rating of fifty-four, placing him in favorable territory, and Newsom's rating is virtually identical (see figure 9). However, Harris lags slightly behind the two men with a forty-nine rating, just barely in unfavorable territory. Former president Donald Trump receives a very low rating—a twenty-five on the hundred-point scale. It is interesting to note that respondents also rate the Democratic Party with a fifty-five, similar to the ratings they give Biden and Newsom. In contrast, survey respondents give the Republican Party a rating of thirty-three—an unfavorable rating, but one higher than Trump's.

FIGURE 9
Assessment of Key Leaders and Parties

What are you feelings toward the following political leaders and organizations?



N= 922-925 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

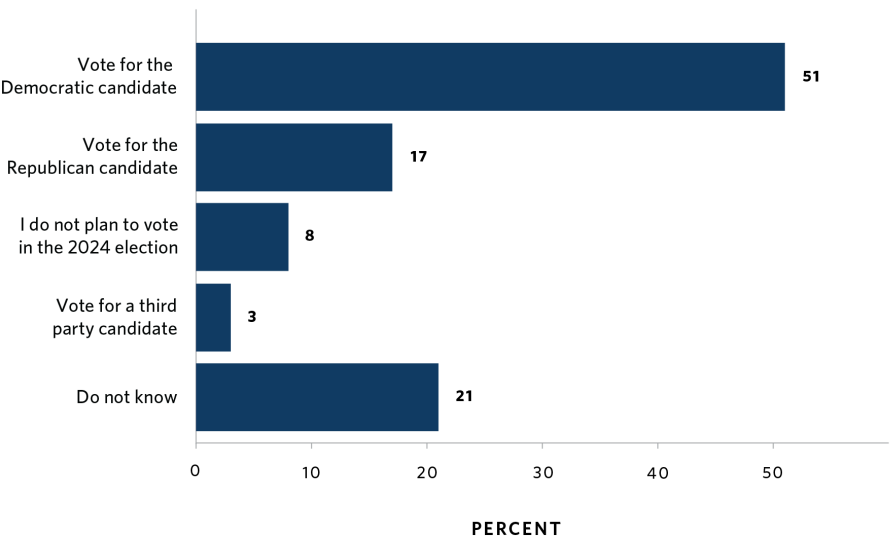
The 2024 Presidential Election

The survey also probes Asian Americans’ views on the coming 2024 presidential election. Due to the uncertainty about which candidates will actually appear on the November 2024 ballot, the survey begins by asking respondents which party’s candidate they would likely support.

If the election were held today, a slim majority of respondents (51 percent) report they would vote for the Democratic candidate (see figure 10). Meanwhile, 17 percent intend to vote for the Republican candidate, and another 3 percent plan to vote for a third-party candidate. At this early stage, 21 percent of the sample is still undecided, with another 8 percent indicating

FIGURE 10
Presidential Vote Choice (2024 Election)

If the election were held today, would you...?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

they do not intend to vote in the next presidential election.

Views of the 2024 election vary in important ways within the Asian American community in California. Table 1 looks at how voting intentions vary with important demographic indicators, such as gender, age, place of birth, education, income, and ethnic identity.

TABLE 1
Demographics and Presidential Vote Choice (2024)

	Democratic voter	Republican voter	Undecided voter
Male	49	22	15
Female	52	13	25
18-29	51	16	18
30-49	43	19	22
50+	56	16	20
U.S.-born	54	14	18
Foreign-born	45	23	24
College-educated	57	19	17
No college	44	16	25
Below \$50,000	47	13	25
\$50,000-\$100,000	47	27	17
Above \$100,000	61	17	16
Chinese	52	18	18
Filipino	45	16	20
Indian	55	15	28
Japanese	70	15	9
Korean	46	27	18
Vietnamese	46	16	25
Other	42	19	29

N= 927 U.S. Citizens (916 for the gender breakdown)

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

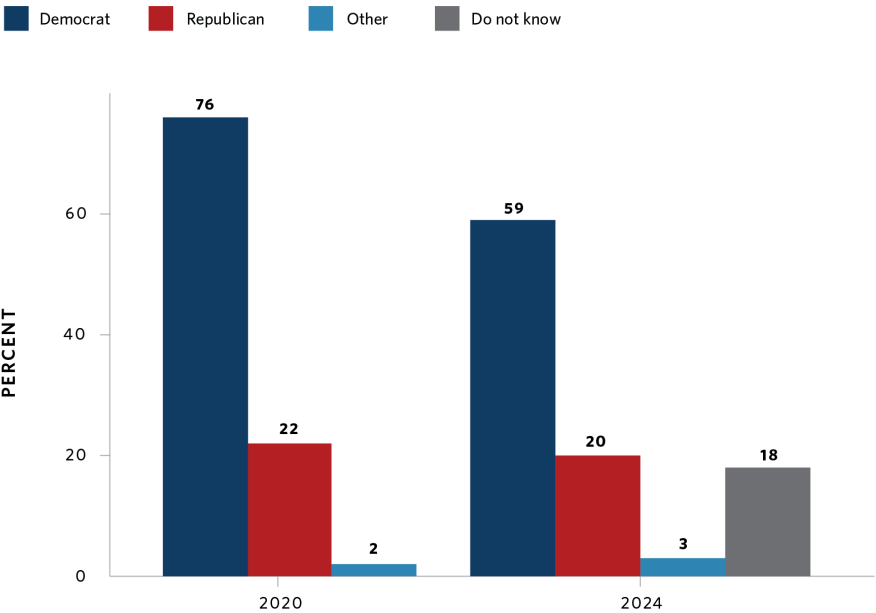
With regards to gender, women are slightly more inclined than men to support the Democratic Party in 2024 and less favorable toward the Republicans, but a larger share are also undecided. Contrary to expectation, it is not the youngest respondents (aged eighteen to twenty-nine) that are the most supportive of the Democratic candidate in 2024, but those aged fifty and above. U.S.-born respondents are more inclined to support the Democratic nominee in 2024 than their foreign-born counterparts by roughly a ten-percentage-point margin (54 to 45 percent). College-educated respondents and those in the highest income bracket (those who report an annual household income above \$100,000) are also the most supportive of the Democrats.

Ethnicity is perhaps the source of greatest variation. The gap between Japanese support of the Democratic candidate in 2024 and that espoused by a wide range of respondents from smaller ethnic groups is 28 percentage points. In some cases, the share of undecided voters is quite high—almost three in ten Indians and those belonging to other smaller ethnic groups report being undecided about which way they will vote in the next presidential election.

How do the topline numbers for the 2024 election track with how respondents voted in the 2020 presidential contest? One can examine this by isolating the 737 survey respondents who voted in the 2020 contest and are eligible to vote in 2024 (see figure 11). In 2020, 76 percent of respondents voted for Biden, 22 percent backed Trump, and 2 percent voted for third-party candidates. Looking ahead at 2024, 59 percent of respondents indicate that they will support the Democratic nominee, while 20 percent report they plan to support the Republican candidate, and 3 percent will vote for another candidate. The big shift between 2020 and today is that 18 percent of respondents are not sure how they will vote in the 2024 presidential election, which explains nearly all of the decline in Democratic support. This suggests that, while respondents continue to back the Democrats in large numbers, there is a fair amount of uncertainty about their 2024 election choices.

FIGURE 11
Presidential Vote Choice (2020 Versus 2024)

How does voter choice compare in 2020 versus 2024?



NOTE: Figure includes respondents who voted in 2020 and indicated they would vote in the 2024 election. Figure excludes respondents who did not recall their prior voting behavior.

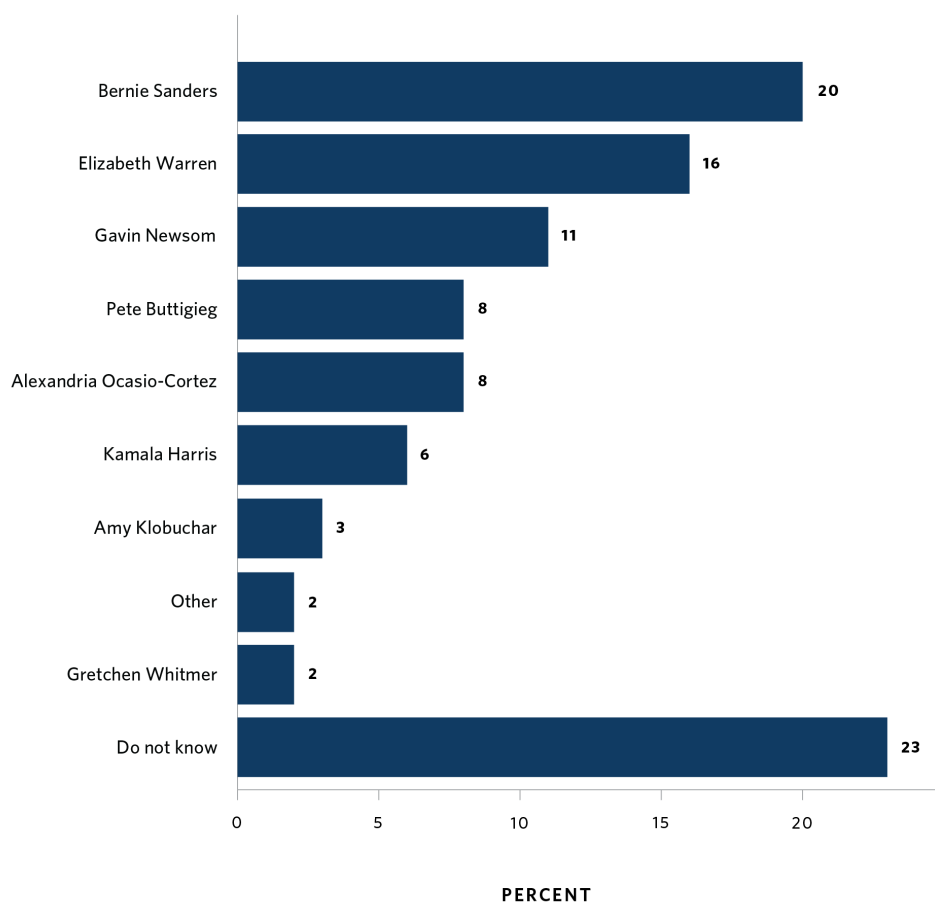
N= 737 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

This uncertainty comes into stark relief when one probes respondent views on candidate choice in 2024. Of respondents who plan to vote for the Democratic candidate in 2024, two-thirds (64 percent) voice support for Biden, while just over one-third (36 percent) would like to see a change at the top of the ticket. For those who indicate they would like to see a Democrat other than Biden as the candidate in 2024 (180 respondents), no candidate appears to be the clear favorite (see figure 12). A plurality of 20 percent would like to see Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders emerge as the candidate, 16 percent prefer Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, and 11 percent prefer Newsom. Only 6 percent indicate that Harris would be their preferred candidate, and another 23 percent are not sure.

FIGURE 12
Support for Democratic Alternatives (2024 Election)

Other than Biden, which of the following would be your most preferred candidate?



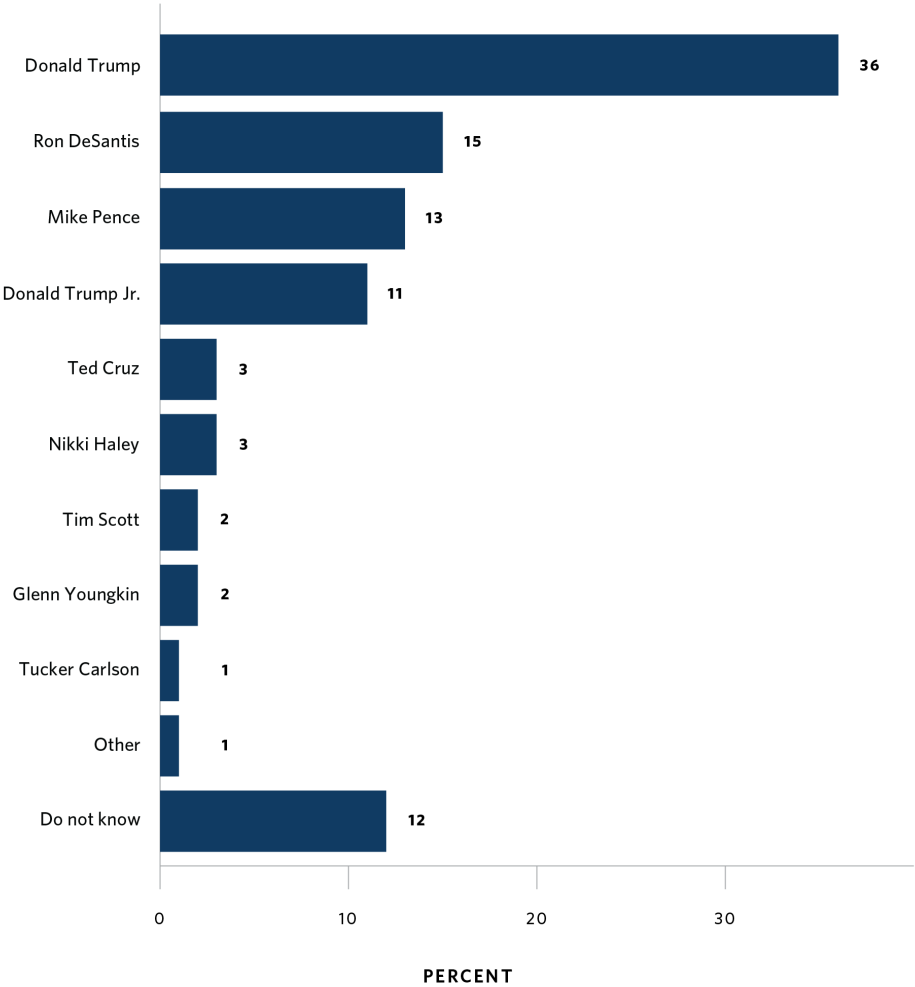
N= 180 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

For those who indicate that they would vote for the Republican candidate (182 respondents), Trump is the most popular choice at 36 percent (see figure 13). Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (with 15 percent) and former vice president Mike Pence (13 percent) lag behind, with 12 percent of respondents unsure.⁷

FIGURE 13
Support for Republican Candidates (2024 Election)

Which of the following would be your most preferred candidate?



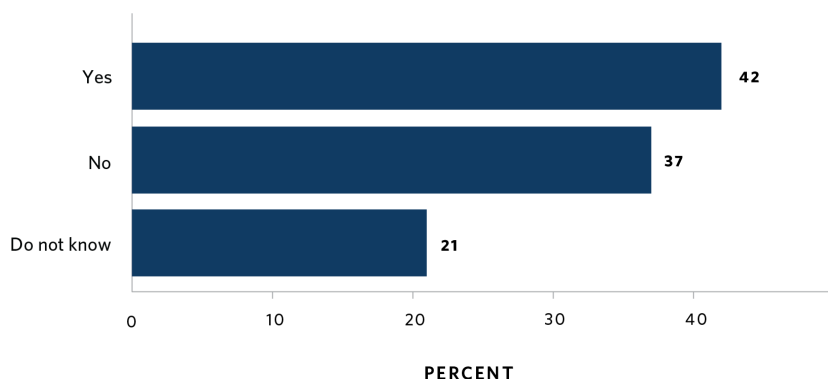
N= 182 U.S. Citizens
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Views on Harris

Given Harris's deep California connections, the survey asks whether respondents would support her as the Democratic presidential nominee in the 2024 general election (see figure 14). Of the total citizen sample, 42 percent indicate they would support her, while 37 percent say they would not. A sizable share, 21 percent of all respondents, are unsure how they would vote if Harris were the nominee. These numbers suggest that Harris is badly underperforming the generic ballot which, as reported above, saw a 51–17 percent Democratic advantage over the Republicans.

FIGURE 14
Support for Harris (2024 Election)

If Kamala Harris were the Democratic presidential nominee in the 2024 general election, would you be inclined to support her?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

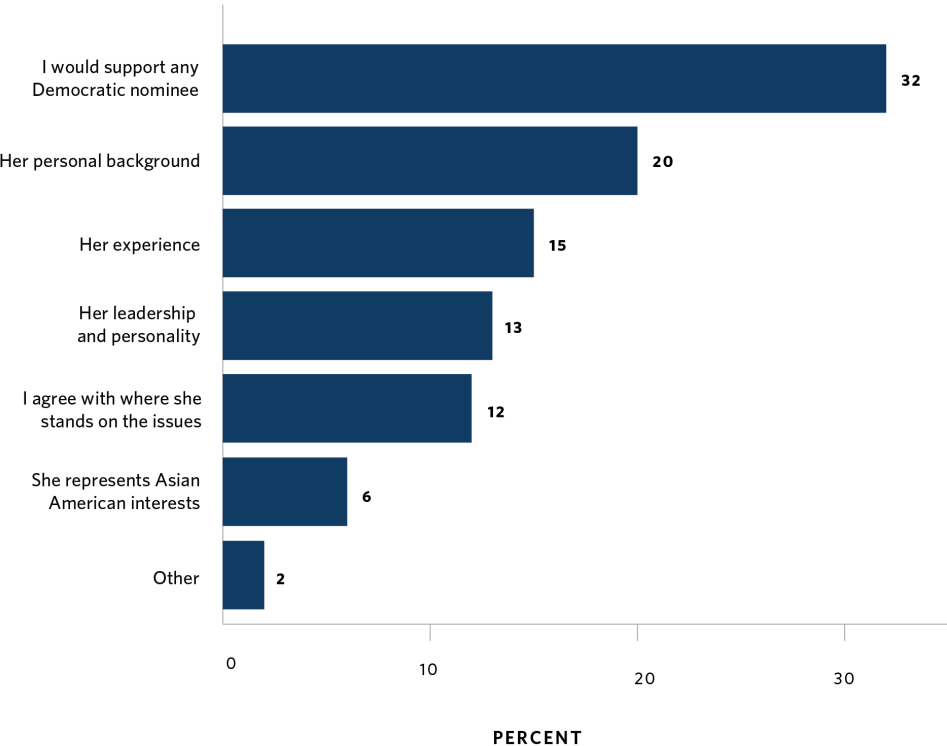
On the question of Harris's nomination, there is interesting variation among ethnic subgroups. Indian-origin (52 percent) and Japanese-origin (51 percent) respondents express the greatest degree of support for Harris if she were the 2024 Democratic nominee. A plurality of Chinese (42 percent) and Filipino (45 percent) respondents are more favorable than not. However, a greater share of Korean, Vietnamese, and respondents from smaller ethnic groups are more likely to oppose her nomination, with only 33 to 35 percent of respondents from these groups inclined to support a Harris nomination.

Among respondents willing to support Harris as the nominee in 2024, it is not Harris herself, but rather her status as the Democratic nominee that most attracts supporters: 32 percent of respondents to this question say they would support whoever the Democratic nominee is, whether that be Harris or someone else (see figure 15). Another 20 percent indicate they would support her because they would like to see a president with Harris's personal background (as someone who is African American, Asian American, Indian

American, and a woman). Meanwhile, 15 percent report they would support Harris due to her experience, 13 percent value her leadership and personality, and 12 percent agree with where Harris stands on the issues. Only 6 percent responded that Harris represents Asian American interests, and 2 percent specify another reason.

FIGURE 15
Sources of Support for Harris

Which of the following best describes why you would support Kamala Harris?

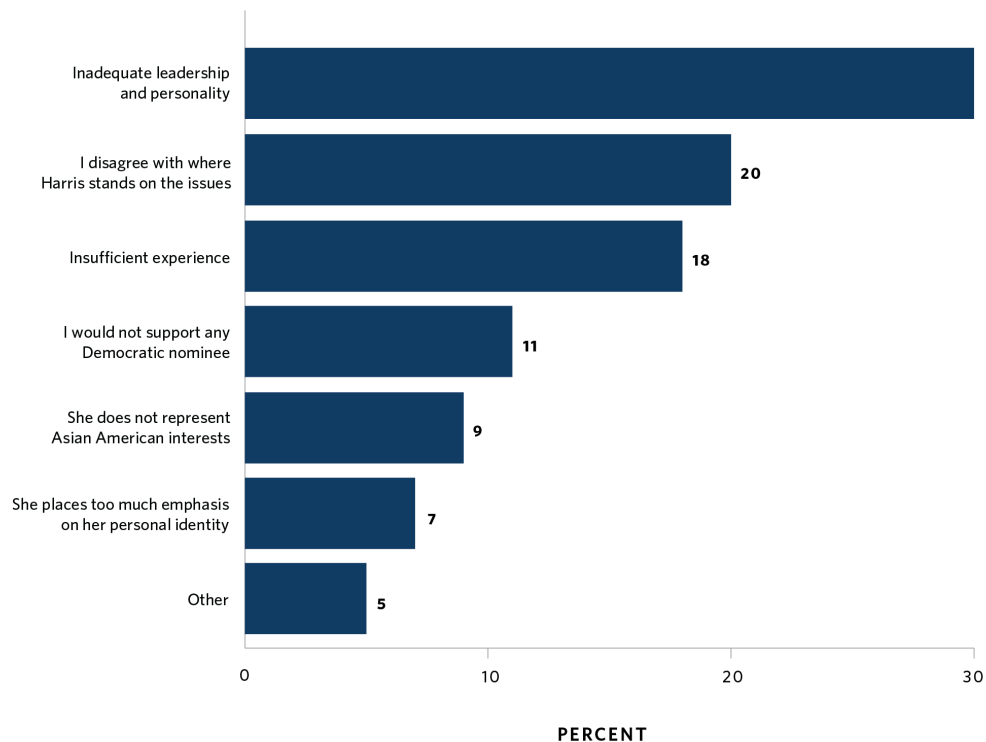


N= 377 U.S. Citizens
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Among those who would not support Harris in 2024, the most popular response for their reasoning—selected by 30 percent of respondents—is that “Harris does not have the leadership or personality needed to serve as president,” as the survey item put it (see figure 16). Another 20 percent report that they disagree with where Harris stands on the issues, and 18 percent do not think she has the requisite experience to serve as president. In addition, 11 percent would not support any Democratic nominee, 9 percent believe she does not represent Asian American interests, and 7 percent report she places too much emphasis on her personal identity. A total of 5 percent provide another reason for not supporting her.

FIGURE 16
Sources of Opposition for Harris

Which of the following best describes why you would not support Kamala Harris?



N= 327 U.S. Citizens in California

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Conclusion

English-proficient Asian Americans in California appear to be strongly behind the Democratic Party. This community is hardly a monolith, however. There is significant variation according to age, gender, place of birth, and ethnic origin. Nevertheless, in advance of the 2022 elections, a majority of respondents signaled their intent to vote for Democratic candidates down the ballot—for the governor’s office, U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Despite these topline results, continued uncertainty of the future of the party is also evident in respondents’ views. On the one hand, Biden’s approval ratings among Asian Americans are much higher than among the general public, at least based on [recent nationwide polls](#). On the other hand, respondents are not wholly convinced he should be the Democratic nominee in 2024. While a slim majority of respondents intend to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate in 2024, more than one-third of respondents would prefer to see someone other than Biden at the top of the ticket.

Even so, respondents are divided over who should take his place. Biden's most obvious successor, Harris, provokes mixed reactions among respondents. While a plurality report they would support her if she were the nominee, nearly one-third of those respondents would support whomever the nominee turns out to be. Their support appears to be expressed not for Harris individually, but for the Democrats as a party.

CHAPTER 2

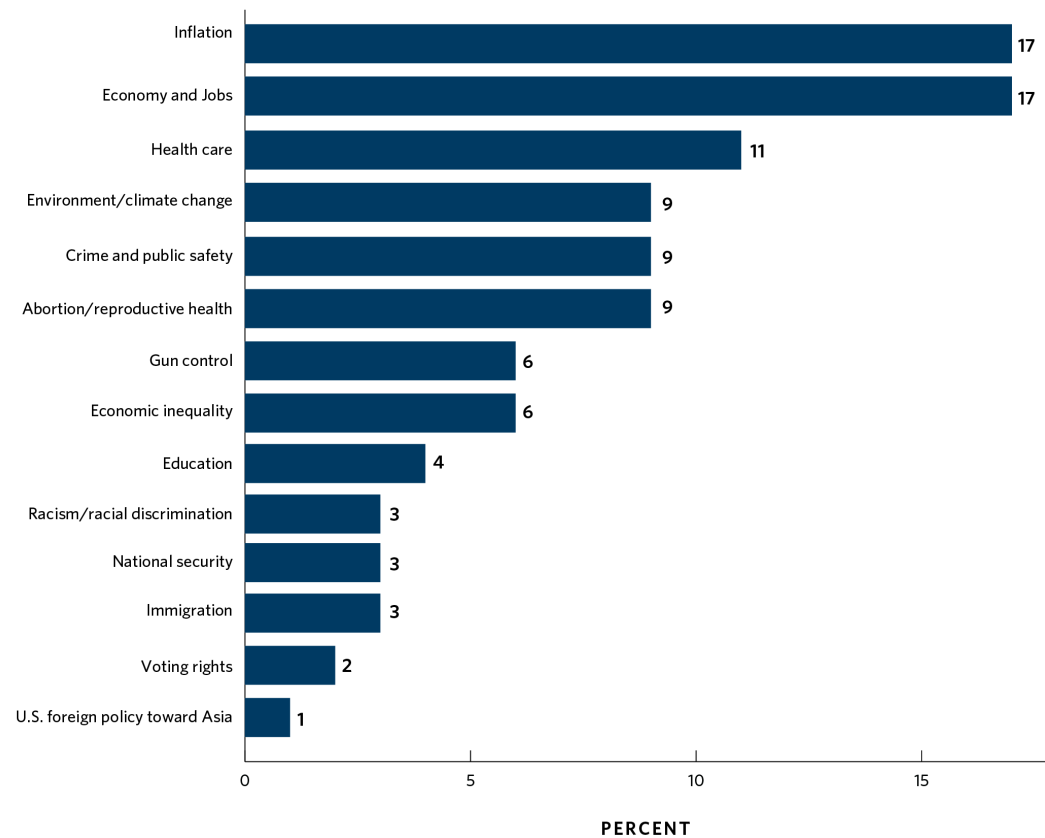
What Do Asian American Voters in California Want?

The previous essay highlighted the fact that kitchen-table issues were front-and-center in the minds of many respondents prior to the 2022 midterm elections. This essay delves deeper into the policy preferences of Asian Americans in California. It does so by examining respondents' policy attitudes across four dimensions: prominent issues of contemporary relevance; key ballot initiatives scheduled for 2022 and 2024; the technology sector; and higher education. As with the previous essay, the data analyzed here is restricted to a subsample of 927 U.S. citizen respondents.

Policy Priorities

To recap, when asked which issue is the most important to them as they prepare to cast their ballot in November, inflation and the economy/jobs were the most popular responses, each named by 17 percent of survey participants (see figure 17).

FIGURE 17
Top Issues in the 2022 Election



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Eleven percent of respondents reported healthcare as their most important issue, followed by 9 percent each identifying environment/climate change, crime and public safety, and abortion/reproductive health. Six percent of respondents each selected gun control and economic inequality, 4 percent highlighted education, and 3 percent each identified racism/racial discrimination, national security, and immigration. Only 2 percent selected voting rights as their topmost concern, and a mere 1 percent pointed to U.S. foreign policy toward Asia.

The survey then asked specific follow-up questions on four policy issues that have special salience in the context of recent policy debates in California: gun regulation, immigration, police funding, and caste.

Gun Regulation

While California has some of the [toughest gun laws](#) in the country, extant evidence suggests that public concern about guns and gun violence remains high, with a large majority of residents preferring more—not less—regulation. A [July 2022](#) poll conducted by the Public

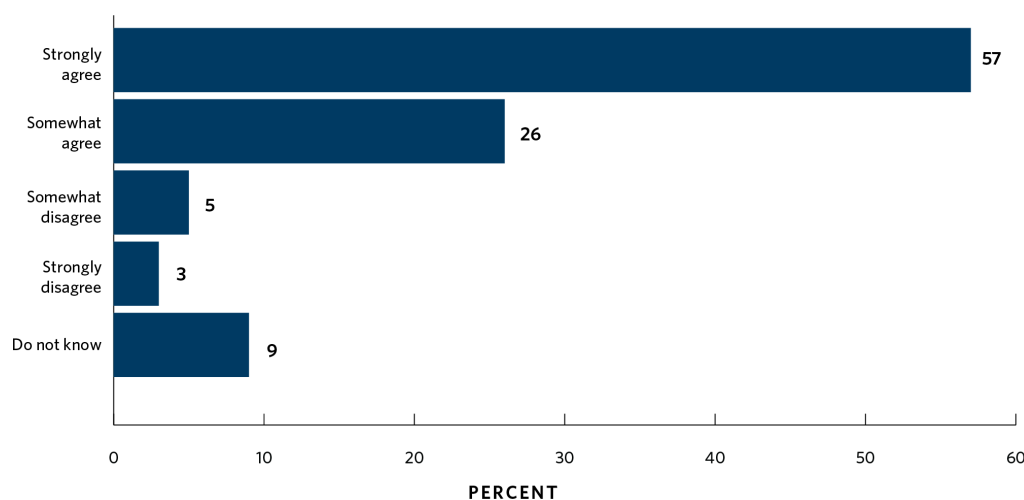
Policy Institute of California (PPIC) found that 73 percent of adult respondents believe that gun laws should be made stricter still.

The Carnegie survey polled Asian Americans along similar lines. California requires individuals who wish to purchase a handgun to obtain a [Firearm Safety Certificate](#). The survey probed whether respondents agree or disagree with a license or permit requirement for ongoing possession of a firearm, as opposed to only new purchases.

An overwhelming majority of respondents—a whopping 83 percent—indicated that they agreed with the need for stricter requirements (see figure 18). The intensity of respondents’ preferences is also striking: 57 percent reported that they “strongly” agreed, and 26 percent “somewhat” agreed. Only 8 percent of respondents “somewhat” or “strongly” disagreed, and 9 percent were unsure of their stance.

FIGURE 18
Gun Regulation

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: While a Firearm Safety Certificate is required for new purchases of firearms in California, a license or permit should also be required for ongoing possession of a firearm.



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

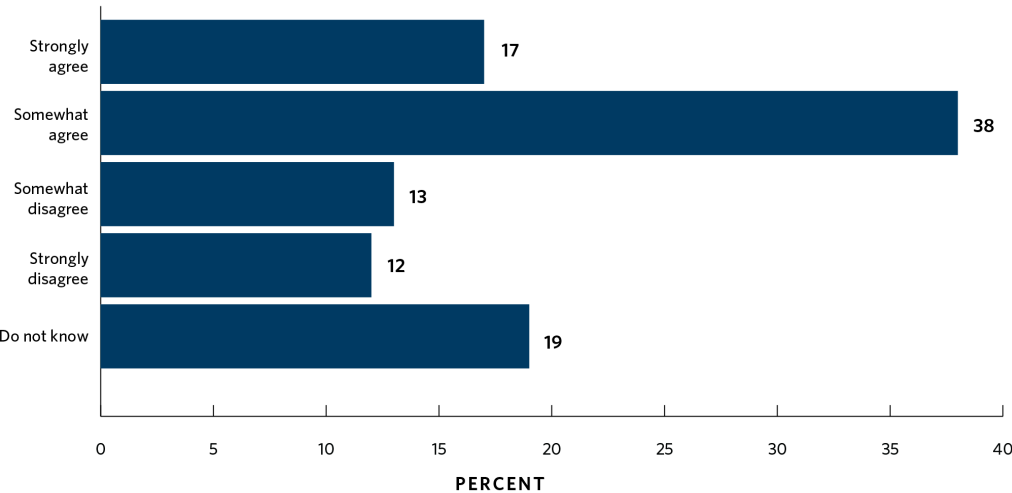
Immigration

California has a reputation for being a [magnet for immigrants](#) from all over the world and, generally speaking, polling suggests that Californians are supportive of more progressive immigration policies. A [May 2022](#) PPIC survey found that 8 in 10 California-based respondents favored the protections offered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects undocumented children from deportation. Similarly, 8 in 10 respondents were in favor of providing a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they met certain requirements (such as background checks).

The Carnegie survey asked respondents if they agree or disagree with allowing state and local governments in California to maintain the ability to make their own policies to protect the legal rights of undocumented migrants, independent of federal government action. A clear majority, 55 percent, of Asian American respondents agreed with the proposition (see figure 19). Twenty-five percent disagreed, and another 19 percent did not have an opinion.

FIGURE 19
Undocumented Immigration

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: State and local governments in California should make their own policies, separate from the federal government, to protect the legal rights of undocumented immigrants in California.

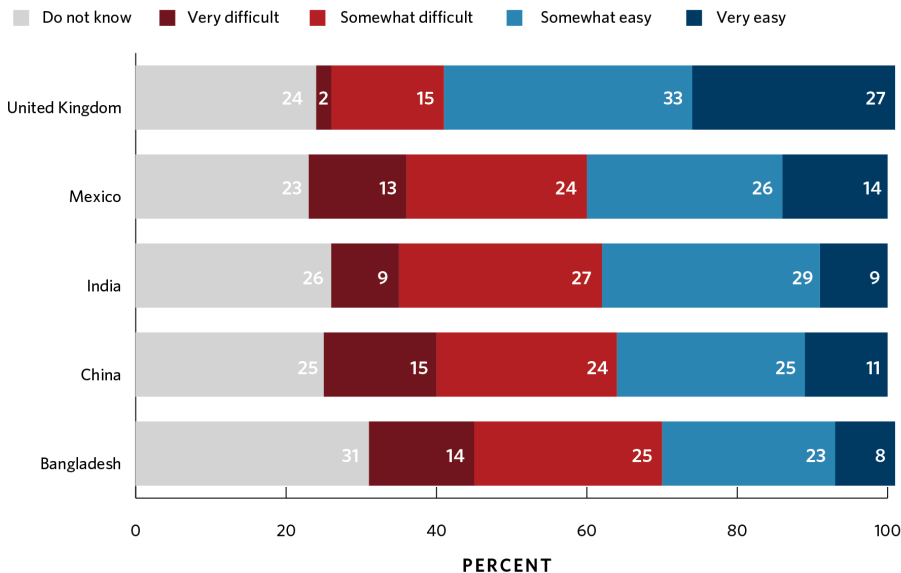


N= 926 U.S. Citizens
NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

It is possible that respondents might hold different views toward different categories of immigrants. For instance, they might be more inclined to favor greater immigration from Asian countries but less inclined to accept immigration from other sending countries. To probe this possibility, the survey asked respondents how easy it should be for individuals to immigrate to the United States from a list of selected countries. The list of countries included Bangladesh, China, India, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. The results are contained in Figure 20.

FIGURE 20
Ease of Immigration

How easy should it be to immigrate from these countries?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

The data run counter to expectation. The most striking data point is that 60 percent of respondents reported that it should be easy for individuals from the United Kingdom to immigrate to the United States. This is markedly higher than the share who believed it should be easy for people to immigrate from Bangladesh (31 percent), China (36 percent), India (38 percent), or Mexico (40 percent). One might expect Asian Americans to be more favorably disposed to immigrants from their own communities; however, this was not the case. An important caveat to this finding is that a large share of respondents answered “do not know” to this series of questions—anywhere from 23 to 31 percent, depending on the country in question.

Police Funding

Given the [spike](#) in U.S. crime rates and, more specifically, the rise in [hate crimes](#) targeting Asian Americans, the salience of crime, policing, and public safety issues has increased among Asian Americans, according to existing survey data.

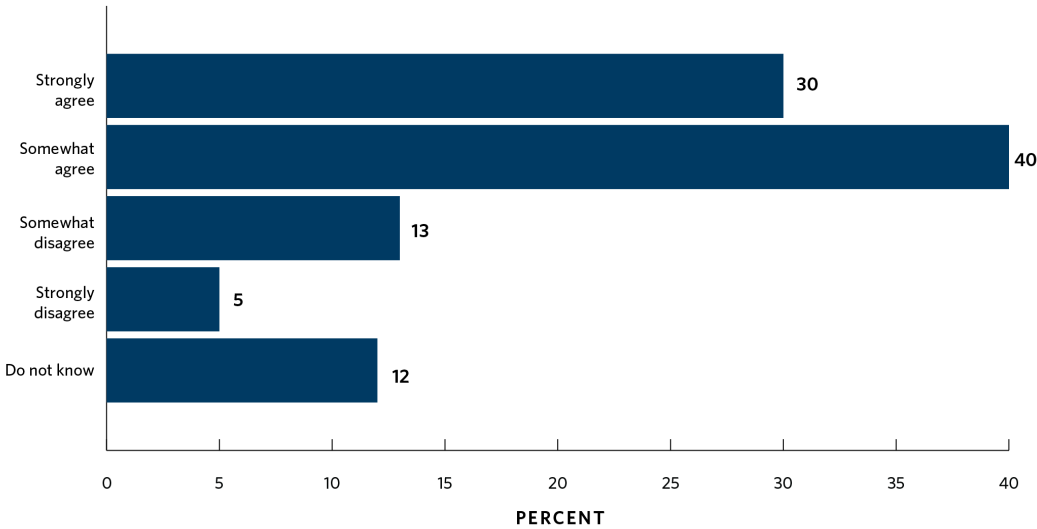
The [2022 Asian American Voter Survey \(AAVS\)](#) found that crime is likely to be influential in shaping Asian Americans’ voting choices this November. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents rated crime either “extremely important” or “very important” in determining

their vote, a rating that only lags the issues of healthcare and economy/jobs. The same survey highlighted that 73 percent of respondents nationwide worried about experiencing a hate crime, harassment, or discrimination at least some of the time.

The survey asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with California devoting greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime. A strong majority—70 percent—of respondents agreed, reflecting an overarching concern with public safety (see figure 21). Just 18 percent of respondents disagreed, and 12 percent did not express an opinion.

FIGURE 21
Police Resources

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: California should devote greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime.



N= 927 U.S. Citizens
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

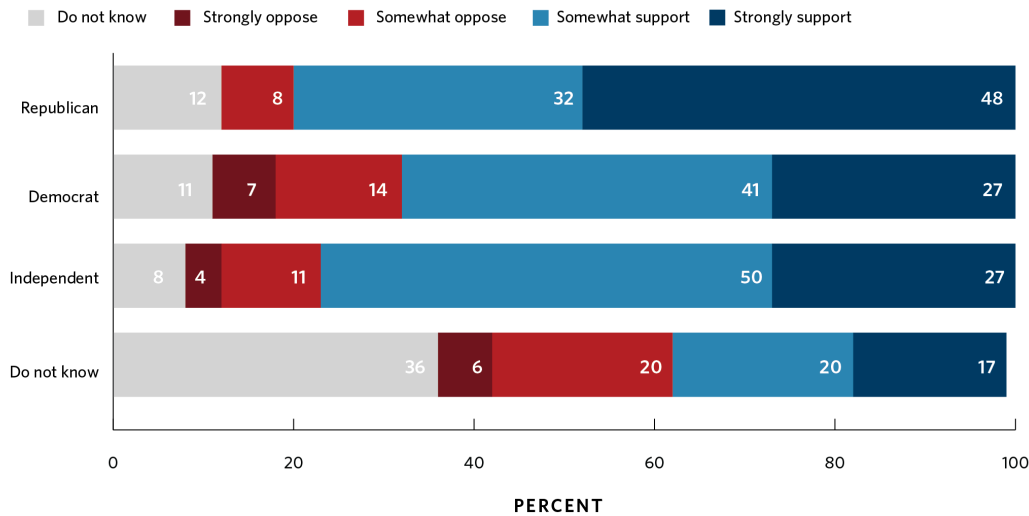
Recent [media reports](#) have suggested that the Republican Party has aggressively courted Asian American voters by painting Democrats as weak on law and order issues. Traditionally, Asian Americans in the United States have voted decisively for the Democratic Party, although there is considerable variation by ethnic subgroup. [Some analysts](#) have suggested crime could be an issue the Republicans might use to induce defections from the Democratic Party.

While our survey cannot necessarily determine whether crime is emerging as a wedge issue, the data do suggest that support for stronger police action is greater among respondents who identify with the Republican Party (see figure 22).

FIGURE 22

Police Resources, by Party Identification

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: California should devote greater financial resources to support police and law enforcement efforts to reduce crime.



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Eighty percent of respondents who identified with the Republican Party “strongly” or “somewhat” also supported California devoting greater resources to support police efforts to curb crime, compared to 68 percent of self-reported Democrats. Somewhat telling is the fact that 77 percent of respondents who identified as independents were also supportive of greater funding for police forces. This could provide a boost to California Republicans if they succeed in convincing unaffiliated voters that they would manage matters of public safety better than their Democratic peers.

Caste

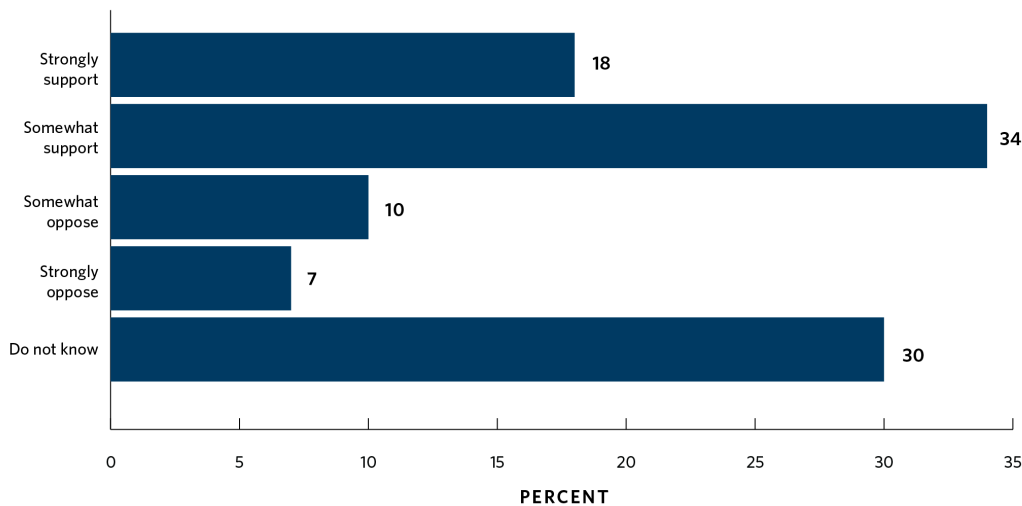
Of late, caste identity has become a renewed topic of conversation in the United States, with much of the debate centering around recent actions in the state of California. In 2016, a heated controversy [erupted](#) over the teaching of caste in middle school textbooks used across the state. In 2020, California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a [lawsuit](#) against U.S.-based technology company Cisco Systems. This came after an employee from one of India’s historically marginalized castes (known as Dalits) alleged that some of his upper caste Indian American colleagues discriminated against him because of his caste identity. The Hindu American Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy organization, responded by [countersuing](#) the government agency in federal court, saying its actions erroneously tied Hindu religious beliefs to the practice of caste discrimination. This countersuit came on the

heels of another California-centric caste controversy—California State University’s January 2022 [announcement](#) adding caste as a protected category in its antidiscrimination policy. Some pro-Hindu groups have denounced the university’s move as unfairly singling out people of the Hindu faith.

The investigation of attitudes and beliefs toward caste merits its own survey. But the Carnegie survey simply asked all respondents, irrespective of their ethnic heritage, whether they supported or opposed California State University’s decision. A slim majority—52 percent—of respondents supported Cal State’s move to add caste as a protected category (see figure 23). Eighteen percent “strongly” supported the measure, and another 34 percent “somewhat” supported the measure. Opposition was muted: just 17 percent either “somewhat” or “strongly” opposed the measure. Somewhat unsurprisingly, given that the salience of caste is primarily confined to the South Asian community, nearly one in three respondents (30 percent) did not express a view.

FIGURE 23
Protection Against Caste Discrimination

In January 2020, California State University announced it added caste as a protected category in its system-wide anti-discrimination policy. Do you support or oppose Cal State’s decision?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens
NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

On this question, the data suggest there is some variation by ethnic origin. Filipino and respondents from other, smaller ethnic subgroups were the most supportive (56 percent) of expanding antidiscrimination policies to include caste, while Koreans were the least (43 percent). Notably, Indian respondents were quite supportive, with 55 percent in favor. However, there is some nuance: only 17 percent of Indian respondents “strongly” supported

the move (one of the smallest shares among ethnic groups) and 17 “strongly” opposed it (the largest of any ethnicity). Indian respondents were also the least likely to respond indifferently, with just 6 percent answering “don’t know,” compared to 35 percent of Chinese respondents.

Ballot Initiatives

Abortion/Reproductive Health

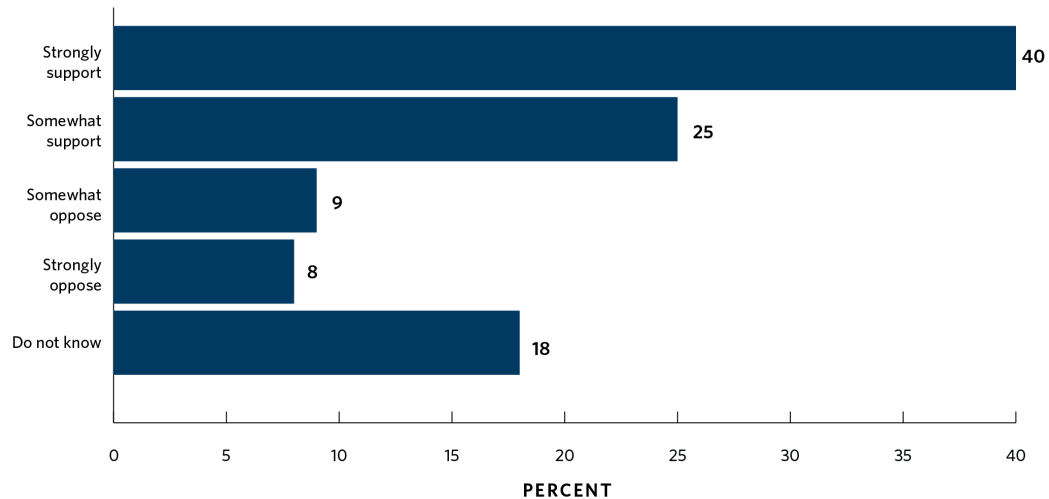
In May 2022, a draft majority opinion of the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling was [leaked](#) to the media. The draft opinion indicated that a majority of justices on the apex court had judged that the U.S. Constitution does not confer a right to abortion. The court’s [final opinion](#), which was issued on June 24, 2022, confirmed the substance of the draft.

In the aftermath of the leak, the California Senate and State Assembly voted to refer a constitutional amendment protecting reproductive freedom to the November 2022 ballot for popular consideration. The amendment, on the ballot as [Proposition 1](#), would insert new language into the state constitution preventing state interference with or denial of one’s right to reproductive freedom, including abortions and contraceptives. The measure will appear on the November ballot and requires popular consent to take effect.

The survey asked respondents whether they support or oppose this constitutional amendment. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of all respondents reported that they support the measure, with just 17 percent opposing (see figure 24). Eighteen percent expressed no opinion either way. The survey also demonstrated that the level of support was noticeably higher among women (70 percent) than men (60 percent), though sizable majorities of both expressed support. Young respondents, between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine, were the most supportive, and their support was uniquely intense: 51 percent of the youngest respondents “strongly” supported the amendment (compared to 37 percent of those aged thirty to forty-nine and 38 percent of the oldest respondents). Upper-income respondents, individuals with a college education, and those living in households with children below the age of 18 were also the most supportive.

FIGURE 24
Proposition 1

On the 2022 California state ballot, there is a proposition to amend the California constitution to prevent the state from interfering with or denying one's right to reproductive freedom, including abortion and contraceptives. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

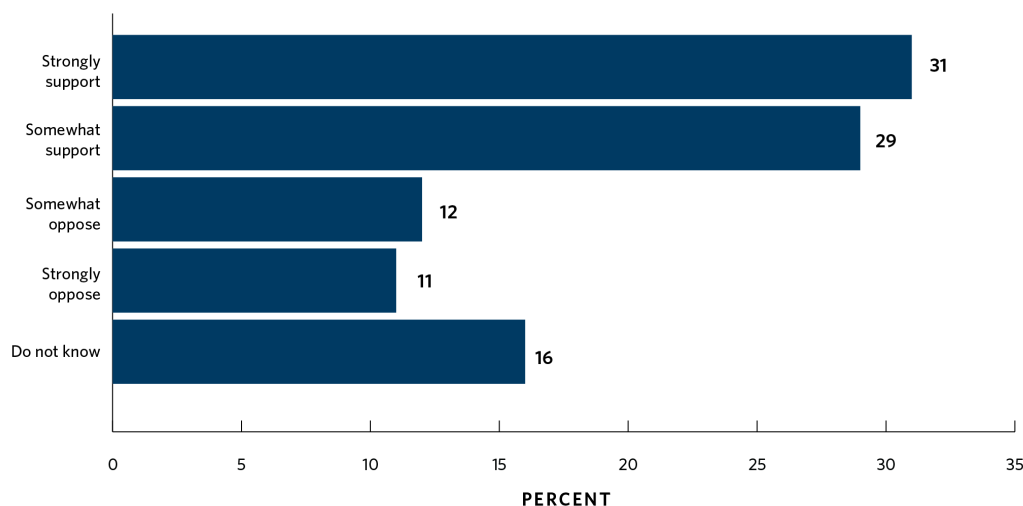
Climate Change/Environment

Whereas Proposition 1 is a constitutional amendment referred to the citizens by the legislature, the November ballot also includes several citizen-initiated ballot measures that—if enacted—would amend state law. Among these citizen-led initiatives is [Proposition 30](#), a measure that would increase the tax on personal incomes above \$2 million by 1.75 percent to fund the Clean Cars and Clean Air Trust Fund. This fund, in turn, would raise public investment in zero-emission vehicles, charging stations, and wildfire suppression and prevention.

The survey asked respondents whether they intend to support or oppose Proposition 30. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they intend to support the measure when they cast their ballots this November (see figure 25). Twenty-three percent intended to oppose, and 16 percent expressed no opinion. Respondents in the youngest age category (those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine) offered the strongest endorsement of the proposition, with 65 percent expressing support. This contrasts with 60 percent of respondents aged twenty to forty-nine and 59 percent of those in the oldest age bracket (above fifty years old).

FIGURE 25
Proposition 30

On the 2022 California state ballot, there is a proposition to increase California's income tax for personal income above \$2 million by 1.75% and use the revenue to subsidize zero-emission vehicles, charging stations, and wildfire suppression/prevention. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

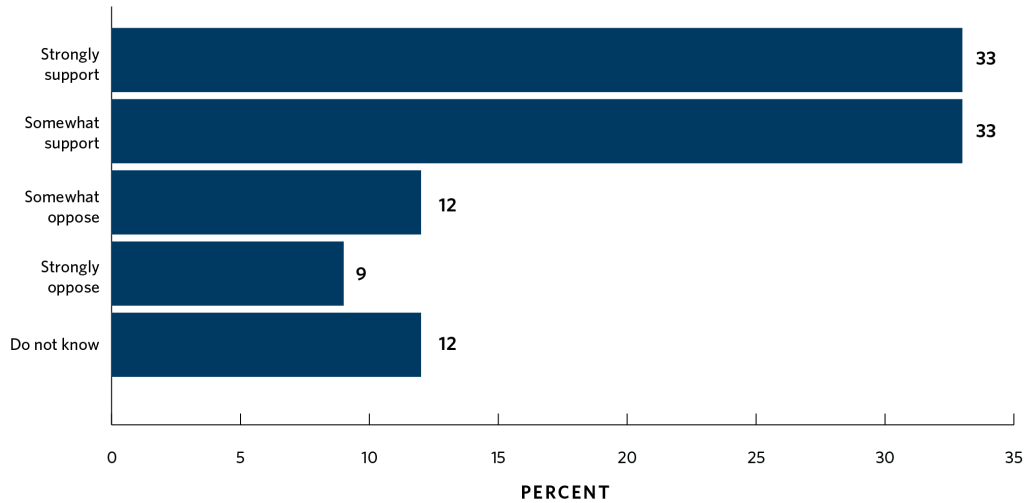
Minimum Wage

Finally, the survey asked about a popular initiative that will show up on California's 2024 ballot. In 2016, the California legislature passed a bill raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In November 2024, California voters will vote on a [popular initiative](#) (known as the California \$18 Minimum Wage Initiative) that, if passed, will increase the minimum wage to \$18 by 2025 and adjust it further each subsequent year in accordance with inflation.

In response to a question inquiring about their support for this initiative, 66 percent of respondents expressed support (split evenly between those who "somewhat" or "strongly" supported the measure) (see figure 26). Twelve percent "somewhat" opposed the proposition while 9 percent "strongly" opposed it, and twelve percent were unsure. Interestingly, there was little variation on this question by respondents' income bracket or education level.

FIGURE 26
The Living Wage Act, 2022

The California \$18 Minimum Wage Initiative proposes increasing the state minimum wage to \$18 per hour by 2026. This measure will be on the November 2024 state ballot. Do you support or oppose this proposition?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Technology Sector

According to [one recent analysis](#), the technology sector accounts for roughly one-fifth of the economic value produced in California. A [March 2022 report](#) notes that 1.4 million Californians work in tech-related jobs, which is more than 50 percent higher than the next closest state, Texas.

However, these impressive facts and figures have not completely insulated the technology sector from backlash. A July 2021 essay in the [Atlantic](#) argues that inequality in California, driven in part by the dominance of the tech sector, is potentially laying the California Dream to rest. As the article notes, “Tech investors and innovators still strike gold in Silicon Valley. Alas, the economic prospects for the typical resident have dimmed.” The implication is that a small minority has enjoyed the fruits of California’s innovation economy while a broad swath of the public still struggles to achieve upward economic mobility. Such concerns have emerged at a time when popular Silicon Valley social media companies, such as Meta and Google, are also coming under [increased scrutiny](#) for practices related to privacy, data consent, content moderation, and norms and standards.

Given the importance of the technology sector to California’s economy and its outsize social impacts, the survey asked a series of questions gauging popular perceptions of the industry.

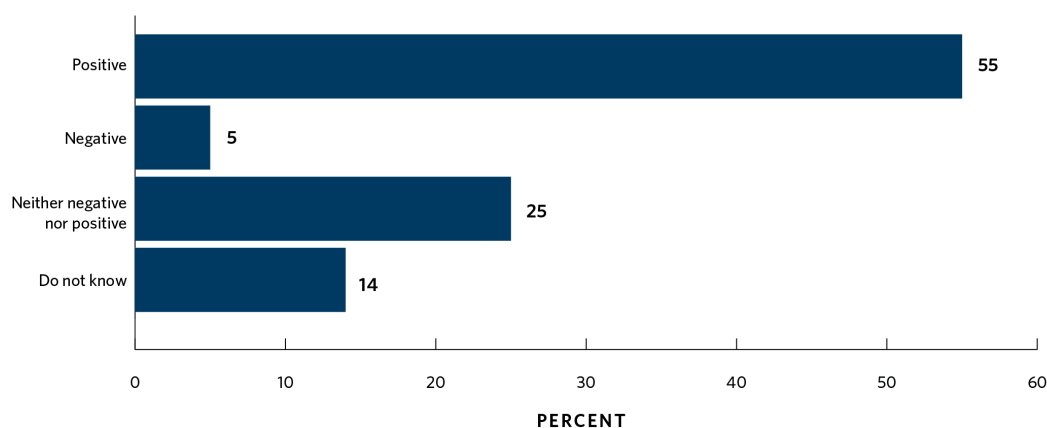
To begin, the survey asked respondents how they view the overall impact of the tech sector. The question reads as follows:

Some people say that the technology sector in California is a major job creator. Others say that new technologies, such as robotics or artificial intelligence, will destroy jobs. On balance, do you think the technology sector is a net positive or negative for the California economy?

Fifty-five percent of respondents reported that the tech sector is a net positive for the California economy (see figure 27). Only 5 percent believed it is a net negative, and 25 percent stated it is neither a negative nor a positive. An additional 14 percent did not have an opinion.

FIGURE 27
Technology Sector Favorability

Some people say that the technology sector in California is a major job creator. Others say that new technologies, such as robotics or artificial intelligence, will destroy jobs. On balance, do you think the technology sector is a net positive or negative for the California economy?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

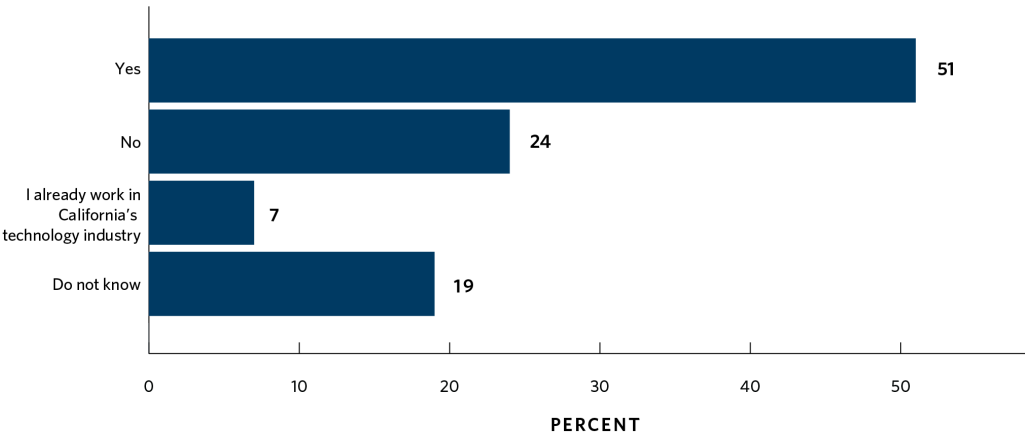
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Opinion on this question is sharply divided along class lines. Whereas 67 percent of respondents in the highest income bracket (those with an annual household income exceeding \$100,000) perceived California's tech sector to be a net positive, just 41 percent of respondents in the lowest bracket (those with an annual household income below \$50,000) held the same opinion. Few respondents across the board reported the sector is a net negative; about 5 percent of low, middle, and high-income respondents felt this way. However, twice as many low-income respondents believed it to be neither negative nor positive compared to those in the high-income bracket.

The survey then asked respondents whether, if given the necessary training and education, they would be interested in working a job in California’s technology industry. The data suggest a narrow majority—51 percent—who indicated that they would indeed be interested in finding a job in the state’s tech sector (see figure 28). Seven percent of respondents indicated they already work in the tech sector, so the share of those positively disposed is presumably even higher. However, a significant proportion, nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of respondents, reported that they would not be interested in the tech sector, and 19 percent did not know where they stand on the question.

FIGURE 28
Attractiveness of Technology Jobs

If given the necessary training and education, would you be interested in working a job in California’s technology industry?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens
NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

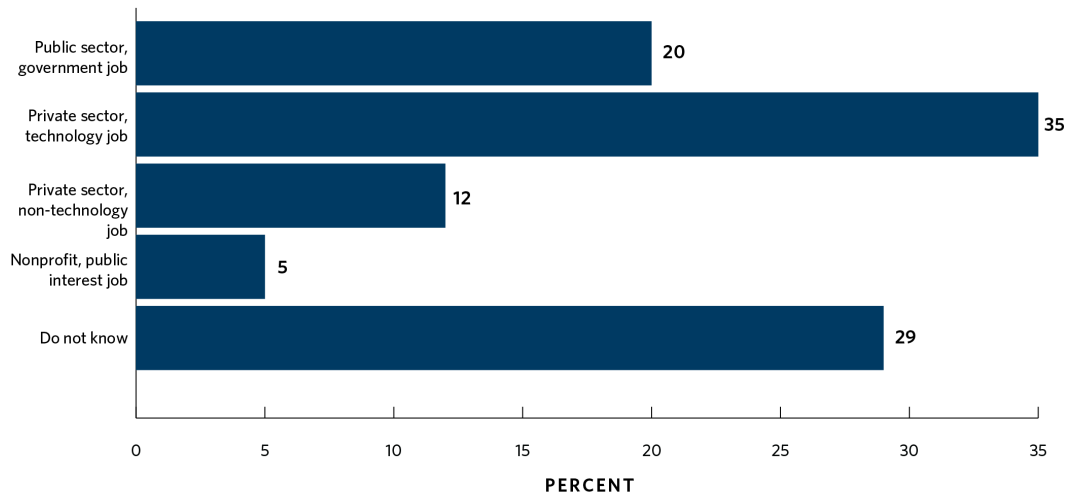
There is a considerable divide on this question according to respondents’ level of education. Fifty-six percent of respondents with at least a college education reported being interested in a technology sector job compared to 45 percent of non-college-educated respondents. Respondents with a college degree are also more likely to already be employed in the sector compared to respondents without such a degree (10 percent versus 3 percent).

Another way of gauging perceptions of the tech sector is to ask whether respondents would encourage a relative to seek employment in the tech field. The survey asked respondents what type of entry-level job they would encourage their child or close family relative to pursue in the state of California. Respondents were asked to select from four options: public sector/government job, private sector technology job, private sector nontechnology job, or a nonprofit/public interest job. Respondents’ opinions were highly mixed on this question (see figure 29).

FIGURE 29

Entry-Level Career Options

If your child or a very close family relative was looking for an entry-level job in California, which type of job would you be most likely to encourage them to pursue?



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

A plurality of respondents (35 percent) reported that they would encourage their relative to pursue a private sector technology job. Twelve percent reported they would push their relative to pursue a private sector job, but one in a nontechnology domain. Twenty percent reported that they would advocate for a public sector/government job, and just five percent reported they would encourage a relative to seek a job in the nonprofit sector. Notably, nearly one in three respondents (29 percent) were unsure about what track they would recommend.

Higher Education

The final domestic policy area the survey probed was higher education. While only 4 percent of respondents indicated education is their foremost concern this midterm election season, other data sources have long established that education is a priority issue for Asian Americans across the United States. For instance, a 2021 Pew analysis noted that more than half of Asians ages twenty-five and older have at least a bachelor's degree, which compared very favorably to the similarly aged total U.S. population (33 percent). And there's been a [long-running debate](#) in the social sciences about whether Asian Americans' emphasis on academic excellence is the product of distinct cultural traits or socioeconomic fundamentals.

California has a well-established [higher education system](#) featuring some of the country's best public and private universities. However, for much of its history, California's higher education system has also been used as a [political football](#) linked to myriad hot-button

issues—from race to housing and access for in-state residents. As one Los Angeles Times columnist has [noted](#), “California’s public universities . . . have existed perilously at the center of political storms since [the] 1960s.”

The survey asked questions on three topics pertaining to the current state of higher education in California: affirmative action, higher education access, and educational quality.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action in higher education is a deeply contested issue among Asian Americans. A recent flashpoint is a [high-profile lawsuit](#) before the Supreme Court involving Harvard University. The suit alleges that Harvard discriminates against Asian Americans by enforcing an informal racial quota that artificially suppresses the number of Asian American students it admits to its undergraduate program. The plaintiffs in the case are a group of anonymous Asian American applicants who were denied admission to the school.

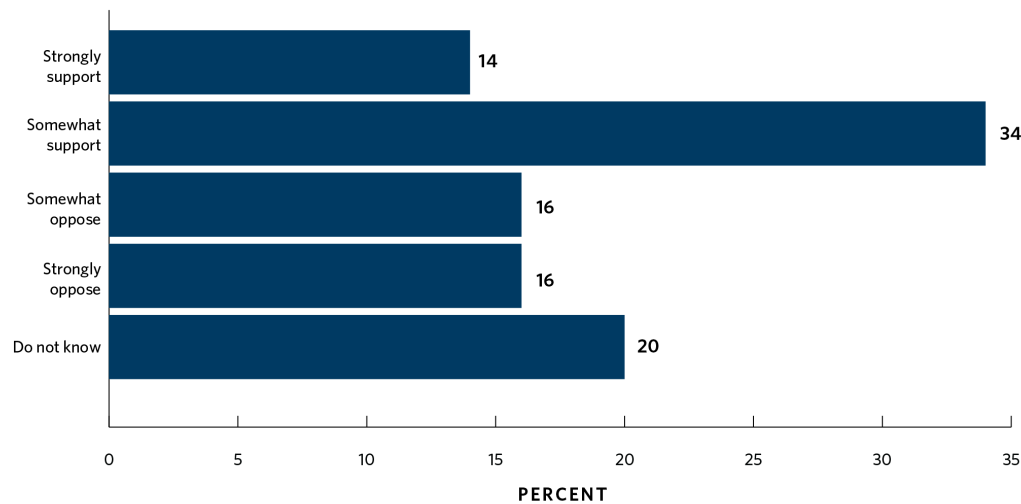
The case, and a similar one involving the University of North Carolina, has revealed significant divides among the Asian American population. While some Asian American groups have [defended](#) university policies that ensure broad racial diversity in its student body, others have [led the fight](#) to curb race-conscious admissions practices.⁸

Existing public opinion data throws up a mixed picture. The [2022 AAVS](#) asked respondents whether they “favor or oppose affirmative action programs designed to help Black people, women, and other minorities get better access to higher education?” Overall, 69 percent of Asian American respondents reported that they favor such policies with 19 percent opposing and 11 percent unsure. Data from the 2020 AAVS showed similar levels of support. But, as an extensive literature shows, the wording of survey questions on affirmative action can have a dramatic impact on responses. The [2020 AAVS](#), for instance, also asked respondents whether they support a California ballot measure repealing an earlier proposition that prohibited considerations of race, color, sex, ethnicity, or national origin in higher education admissions—in essence, restoring affirmative action. In response to this question, 35 percent were in favor with 21 percent opposed and 36 percent undecided (an additional 7 percent responded “don’t know”).

The Carnegie survey considered the subject of affirmative action as well, asking respondents whether they support or oppose the consideration of race or ethnic identity as a factor in university admissions to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans). The data, once again, revealed a mixed picture (see figure 30). When framed in these terms, 48 percent either “strongly” or “somewhat” supported affirmative action. Thirty-two percent, in turn, either “strongly” or “somewhat” opposed the proposition. Twenty percent of respondents did not express an opinion either way.

FIGURE 30
Affirmative Action

Do you support or oppose the consideration of race or ethnic identity as a factor in university admissions to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans)?



N= 926 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

While less than half of respondents endorsed affirmative action in higher education, there was a striking degree of variation by respondent ethnicity. Sixty-three percent of Indian respondents supported the idea that race and ethnicity should be used as a factor in university admissions, but only 39 percent of Chinese respondents felt the same way. Filipino (56 percent), Vietnamese (54 percent), Japanese (47 percent), and Korean (43 percent) respondents fall between these two extremes, as do respondents from other, smaller ethnic subgroups (48 percent).

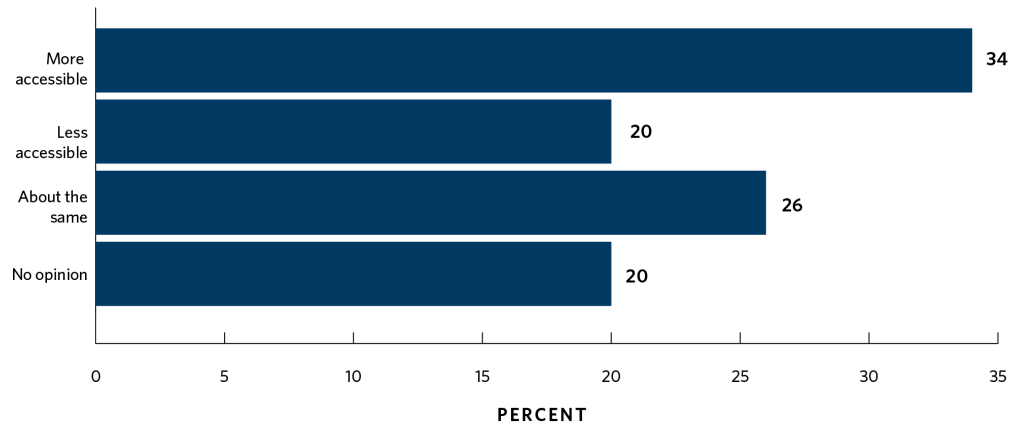
Access and Quality

With regards to access to higher education, the survey asked respondents: how accessible is the California higher education system (defined as the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) for ordinary Californians compared to other states?

Respondents were very divided on this question (see figure 31). One-third of respondents (34 percent) reported that the California higher education system is more accessible to ordinary residents than in other states. Twenty percent thought the California system is less accessible, 26 percent felt it is about the same, and 20 percent expressed no opinion.

FIGURE 31
Access to Higher Education

Do you think the California higher education system (the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) is accessible to ordinary Californians when compared to the situation in other states?



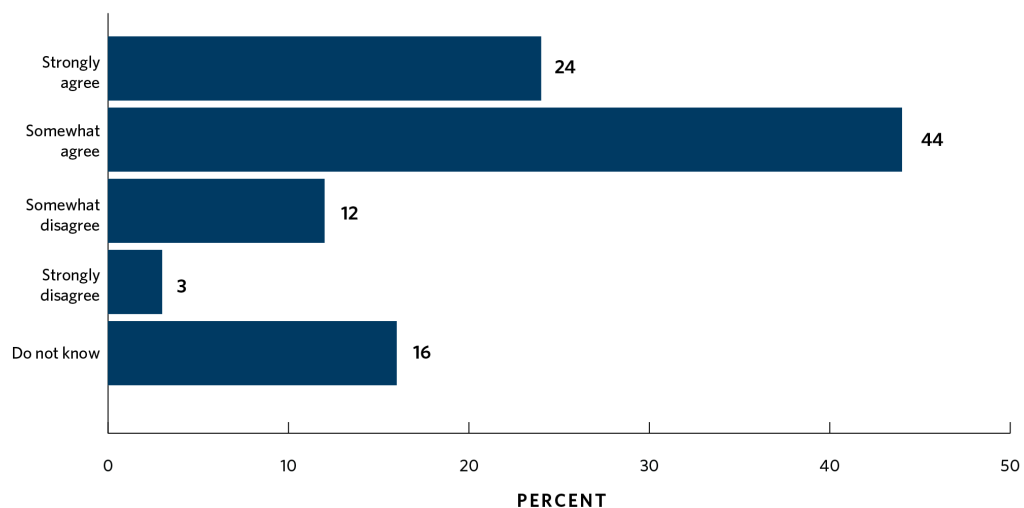
N= 927 U.S. Citizens

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

On the question of quality, respondents were more bullish on the state of higher education (see figure 32). The survey asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that California's system of higher education provides students with the skills they need to succeed in professional careers. Sixty-eight percent either "strongly" or "somewhat" agreed with the proposition. Only 15 percent disagreed with the notion, and another 16 percent did not express an opinion.

FIGURE 32
Quality of Higher Education

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: the California higher education system (the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges) provides students with the skills they need to succeed in their professional careers.



N= 927 U.S. Citizens

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Conclusion

On a range of hot-button policy issues being debated across California and, indeed, across the country, English-proficient Asian Americans in the Golden State maintain progressive stances on most—but not all—policy matters.

Regarding guns and immigration, respondents were in favor of greater gun control and greater flexibility for state and local accommodation of undocumented immigrants. Interestingly, respondents did not uniformly believe that immigrating to the United States should be easier for people from Asian countries; more respondents reported that immigrating should be easier for people originating from Mexico and the United Kingdom than from selected countries in Asia.

When it comes to the decision of the Cal State system to add caste as a protected category under its antidiscrimination policy, a slim majority supported the move (albeit with a sizable share of respondents who did not know). In regard to upcoming ballot initiatives on abortion/reproductive health, environment/climate change, and the minimum wage, large majorities were in favor of policies backed by many in the Democratic and/or liberal establishment.

The one issue on which the Asian American population in California diverges from their traditionally liberal leanings is that of public safety. Asked whether they supported increasing resources for law enforcement, Asian American respondents did not appear to be aligned with the idea of “defunding the police” that is popular among several progressive Democrats. On the contrary, they appeared supportive of providing law enforcement with greater funding to curb crime. The issue of law and order, though an outlier, could emerge as an issue that could drive more Asian Americans toward the Republican Party in the coming elections.

One issue that is especially relevant for Californians is the technology sector, given its sheer economic size. Most respondents viewed the sector favorably and maintained an interest in working in it or recommending that others seek employment in the tech field. However, there is evidence that socioeconomic status shaped respondents’ views—higher-income, better-educated respondents appeared more positively disposed.

Finally, on the subject of higher education, respondents held differing opinions about the accessibility of California’s public higher education system. In contrast, they were much more positive when it comes to the quality of skills the system imparts on students who pass through its halls. On affirmative action, a contentious issue nationally, Asian American respondents were sharply divided. Slightly less than half of all respondents favored a system of affirmative action to improve the representation of historically disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans), and one-third were opposed. Respondents greatly differed based on their ethnic origin, suggesting an even more nuanced picture than the headline numbers suggest.

CHAPTER 3

What Does It Mean to Be Asian American in California?

This essay departs from the political orientation of the previous two essays. Rather, it examines how California's Asian Americans view matters of identity and belonging by analyzing four themes: Asian Americans' perceptions of their own identity; their relative embrace of umbrella ethnic/racial categories like "Asian American" and "Asian American and Pacific Islander"; the composition of their social networks; and their experiences with discrimination, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data in this and following sections takes advantage of the full sample of 1,000 respondents and is not restricted to the subsample of citizen respondents, unless otherwise noted.

Belonging and Identification

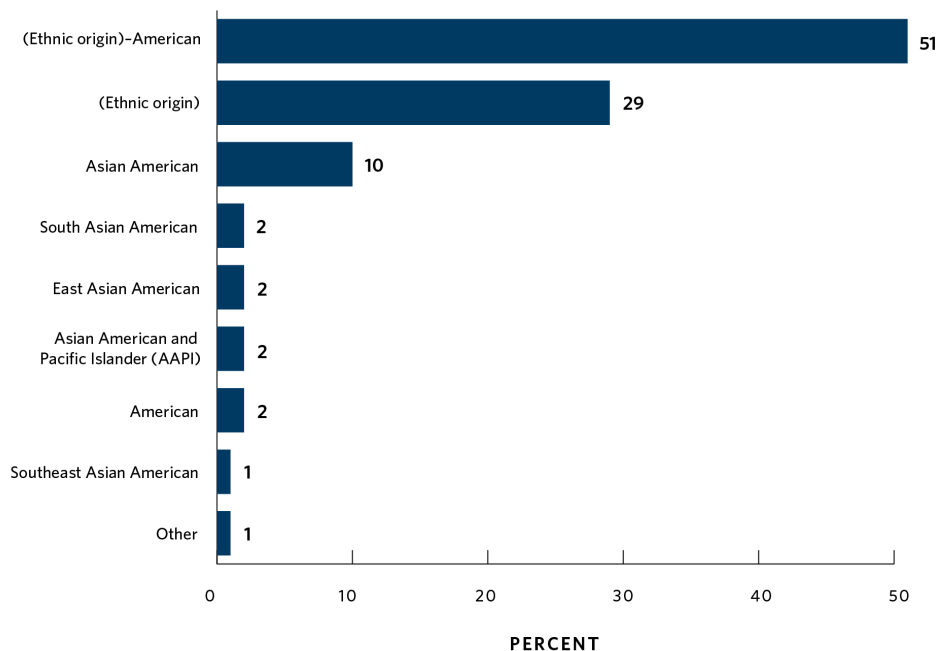
How Asian Americans define their ethnic or racial identity is a subjective, multifaceted endeavor. This section looks at how Asian American respondents describe their own identity, how important their ethnic or immigrant identity is to them, and how they weigh their ethnic and American identities.

Self-Identification

To determine how Asian Americans in California perceive their race or ethnicity, the survey first asked respondents how they would choose to self-identify (see figure 33). When shown a list of plausible options, a narrow majority of respondents chose to identify with a hyphenated identity, fusing their ethnic origin (for example, Chinese, Indian, or Japanese) and "American." Fifty-one percent of respondents believed that "[selected ethnic origin]-American" (for example, Chinese-American, Indian-American, or Japanese-American) is the term that best describes their background.

FIGURE 33
Varieties of Self Identification

Which of the following would you say best describes your background?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: “Ethnic origin” refers to each of the twenty-one ethnic/national origin groups that comprise the Asian American community.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

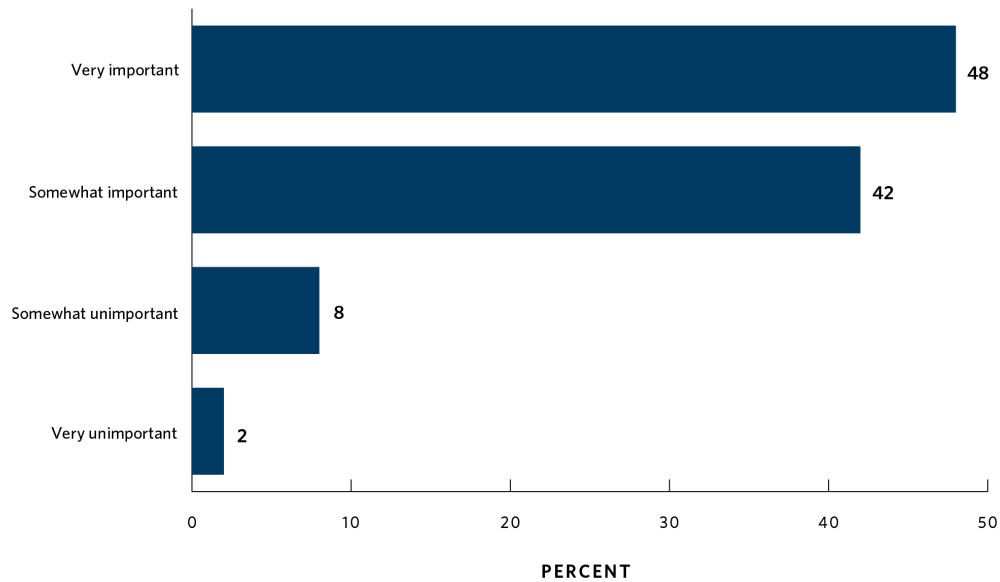
Twenty-nine percent dropped the hyphenation and chose to identify only with their national origin group (for example, Filipino, Korean, or Vietnamese). Ten percent of the sample eschewed their specific ethnic identity and preferred the umbrella term “Asian American.” A very small minority of respondents—around 2 percent each—identified as “South Asian American,” “East Asian American,” “Asian American and Pacific Islander,” or simply “American.” Finally, 1 percent preferred to be identified as “Southeast Asian American,” while another 1 percent preferred some other formulation.

These results are striking. They point to the way in which Asian American respondents emphasize ethnic or national origin groups when asked to define their own identity. In short, broad, umbrella labels appear less popular when narrow, targeted identities are available.

As a follow-up, the survey asked respondents how important it is to them to be a part of their ethnic community (for example, a Chinese, Hmong, Indian, or Pakistani community) (see figure 34). Ninety percent of respondents reported that it is either very or somewhat important, with 48 percent reporting the former. Only 10 percent deemed it somewhat or very unimportant.

FIGURE 34
Importance of Ethnic Origin

How important is being (ethnic origin) to your identity?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: “Ethnic origin” refers to each of the twenty-one ethnic/national origin groups that comprise the Asian American community.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Navigating Multiple Identities

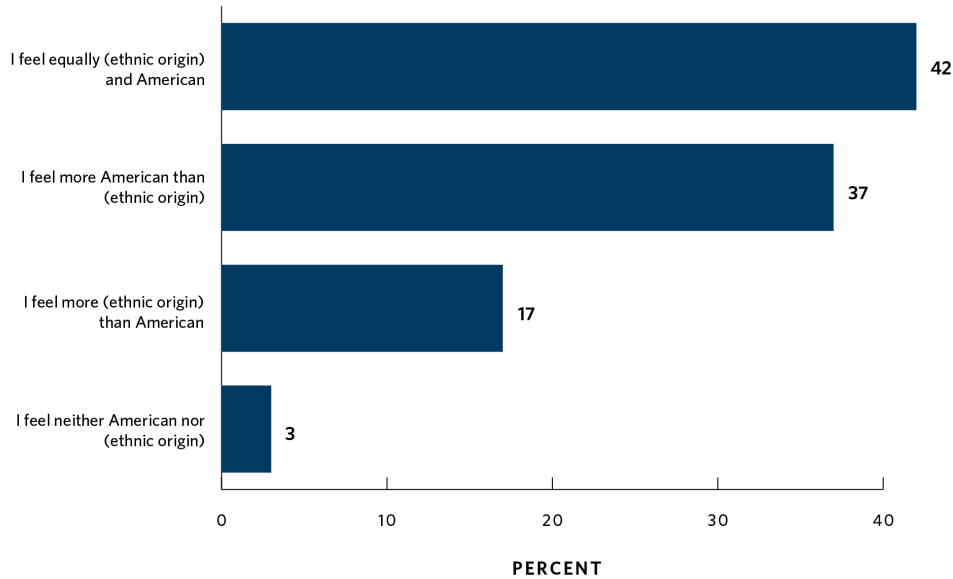
The survey probed further to understand how respondents perceived the push and pull between different aspects of their identity. On the one hand, respondents appeared to embrace a hyphenated identity that reflects their ethnic identity and their American one (for example, the formulation Japanese-American). On the other hand, it is clear from the subsequent question that their connection to their ethnic roots was also important.

To this end, the survey asked respondents how they weighed their ethnic versus American identities. For instance, if one were to consider the Indian Americans in the sample, did Indian American respondents feel more Indian, more American, equally Indian and American, or neither Indian nor American?

The modal response among respondents was that they weighed both sides of their identity equally; 42 percent reported that they felt similarly attached to their ethnic origin as they did to being American (see figure 35). However, more than one-third of survey respondents reported feeling more American, and 17 percent of respondents claimed that they felt more attached to their ethnic origin. Finally, very few respondents—just 3 percent—reported that they felt neither American nor part of their ethnic community.

FIGURE 35
Weighing Ethnic and American Identities

Which of the following best describes your identity?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: “Ethnic origin” refers to each of the twenty-one ethnic/national origin groups that comprise the Asian American community.

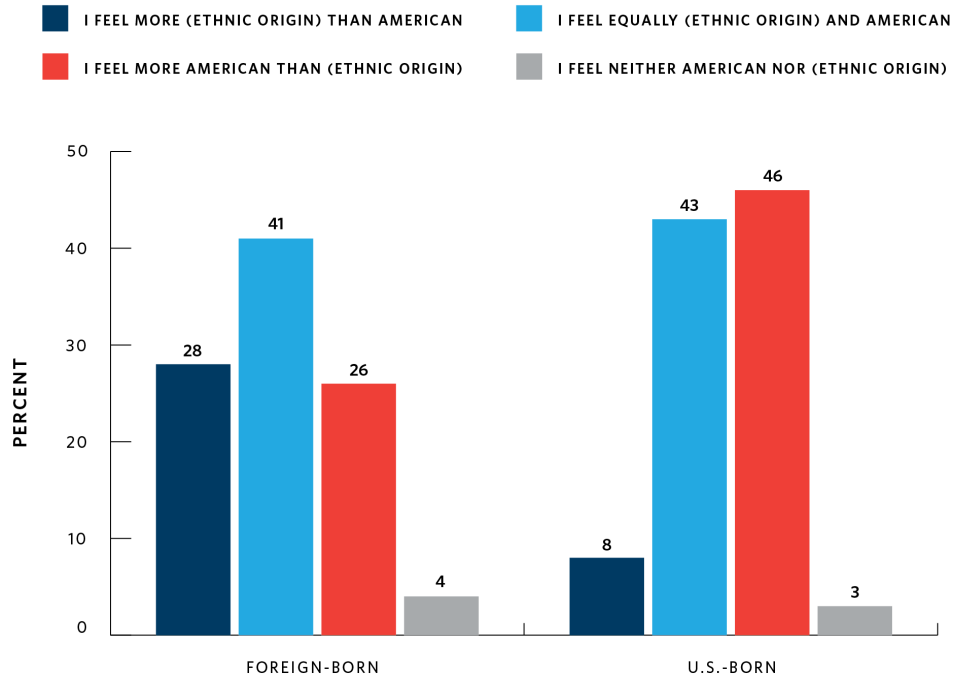
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Not surprisingly, the weight that respondents placed on different aspects of their identity varied considerably based on their place of birth (see figure 36). Nearly three in ten foreign-born respondents reported that they felt more connected to their ethnic origin than to their American identity, while just 8 percent of U.S.-born respondents reported the same. Conversely, 46 percent of U.S.-born respondents reported feeling more connected to their American identity than to their ethnic origin, while just 26 percent of foreign-born respondents reported the same. Notably, the proportions of foreign-born and U.S.-born respondents who felt equally connected to their ethnic and American identities were almost identical, irrespective of country of birth.

FIGURE 36

Weighing Ethnic and American Identities, by Place of Birth

Which of the following best describes your identity?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. “Ethnic origin” refers to each of the twenty-one ethnic/national origin groups that comprise the Asian American community.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Asian American Belonging

This section takes a step back and looks at how Asian-origin residents of California view the umbrella terms “Asian American” and “Asian American and Pacific Islander.” These are contested designations, embraced by some but shunned by others.

Asian American Identity

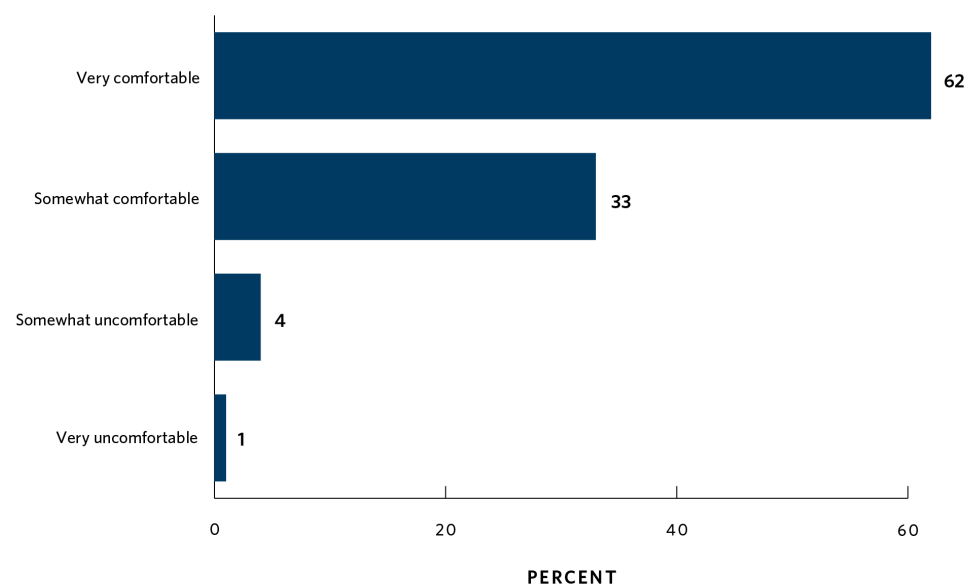
The use of the term “Asian American” dates to the [late 1960s](#) and was advanced as an alternative to the commonplace yet pejorative term “Oriental.” Over the past [six decades](#), civic and political activists have devoted untold hours to developing a feeling of “Asian American” solidarity among the various Asian immigrant communities in the United States. While the phrase “Asian American” is firmly a part of the country’s vocabulary today, it is

not universally embraced by individuals across all Asian ethnic groups. For instance, many South Asians in the United States do not use the term, believing it encapsulates immigrants from East Asia but not South Asia. This conclusion was reinforced in a [2020 Carnegie survey](#) of Indian Americans, which found that only 6 percent of respondents felt that the term “Asian American” best described their background.

To test respondents’ current attitudes toward the “Asian American” label, this survey asked them how comfortable they felt identifying as a member of this community (see figure 37). Overall, there was widespread support for the label: more than six in ten respondents reported that they were very comfortable identifying as Asian American, and one-third reported feeling somewhat comfortable. Only 5 percent of respondents reported feeling either somewhat or very uncomfortable with the term.

FIGURE 37
Asian American Identification

How comfortable do you feel identifying as “Asian American”?



N= 999 California adult residents

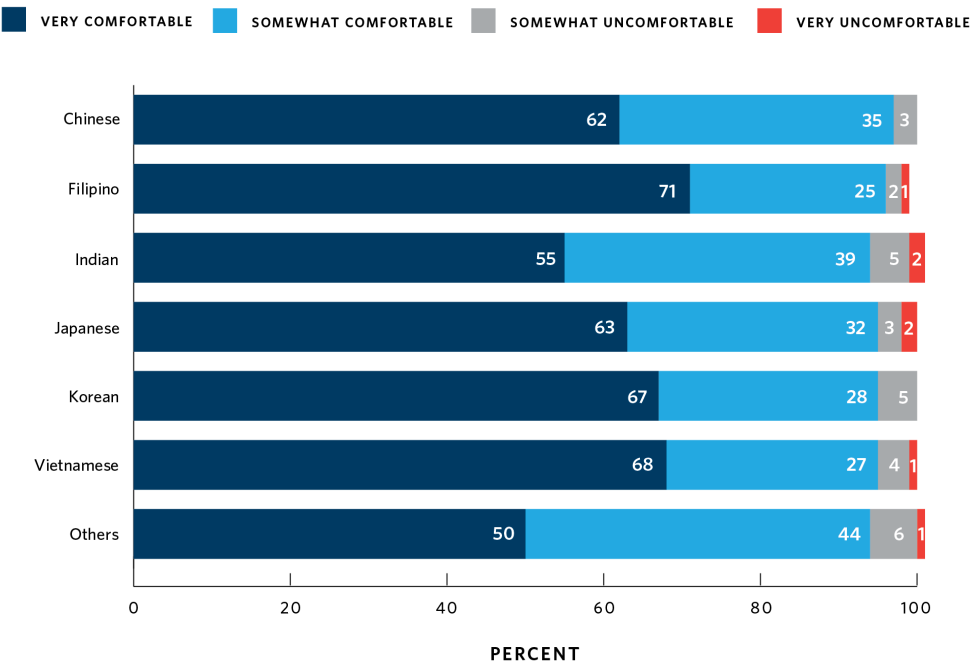
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

However, this acceptance of the term masks some underlying nuance, especially when the data are disaggregated based on respondents’ ethnic origin (see figure 38). Across large ethnic origin groups in the sample (for example, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese origin groups), a clear majority of the total respondents appeared comfortable with the designation of Asian American. The variation between these groups, however, can be seen in the proportion that was very comfortable. Whereas 71 percent of

Filipino-origin respondents reported they were very comfortable with identifying as Asian American, only 62 percent of Chinese-origin and 55 percent of Indian-origin respondents felt the same. Respondents in the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese ethnic groups found themselves somewhere between these two poles. “Others”—a diverse group consisting of respondents from smaller ethnic groups—appeared somewhat less enthusiastic. Nevertheless, 50 percent of these respondents reported that they were very comfortable with the Asian American designation.

FIGURE 38
Asian American Identification, by Ethnic Group

How comfortable do you feel identifying as “Asian American”?



N= 999 California adult residents
NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. “Others” refers to small ethnic/national origin groups in the sample.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

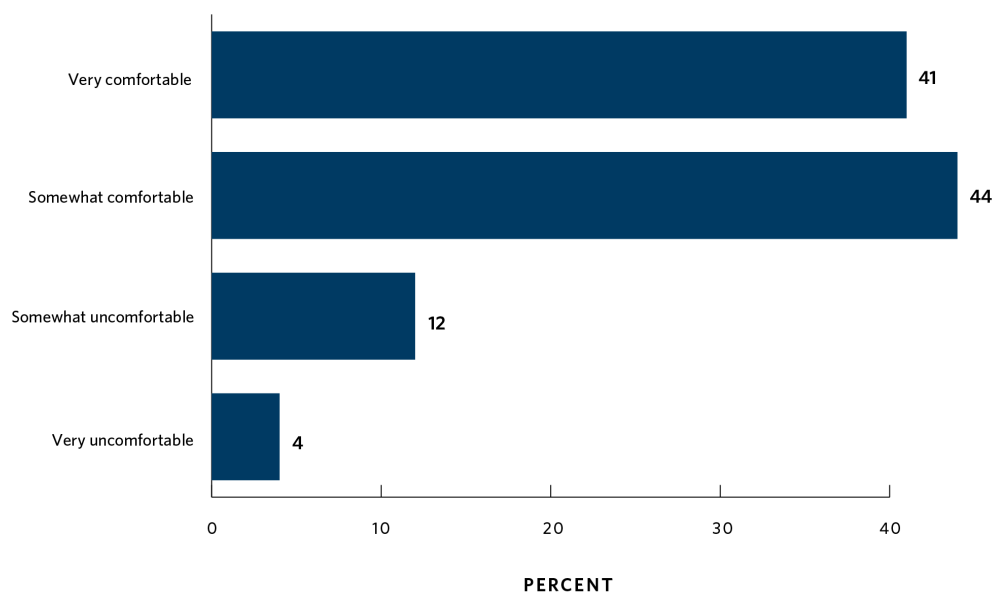
Asian American and Pacific Islander Identity

Shortly after the term “Asian American” began to gain ground, some within the community criticized it for being insufficiently inclusive because it left out individuals hailing from the Pacific Islands (such as Guam, Hawaii, and Samoa, in addition to other Pacific islands). Thus, the term “Asian American and Pacific Islander,” or AAPI for short, was born. In contemporary American society, AAPI is widely used to recognize people whose origins span both the Asian continent and the countries and territories across the vast Pacific Ocean.

Most survey respondents indicated that they were also comfortable with the term “AAPI” (see figure 39). This is notable because the survey respondent pool excluded respondents who principally identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

FIGURE 39
Asian American and Pacific Islander Identification

How comfortable do you feel identifying as “Asian American and Pacific Islander” (AAPI)?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

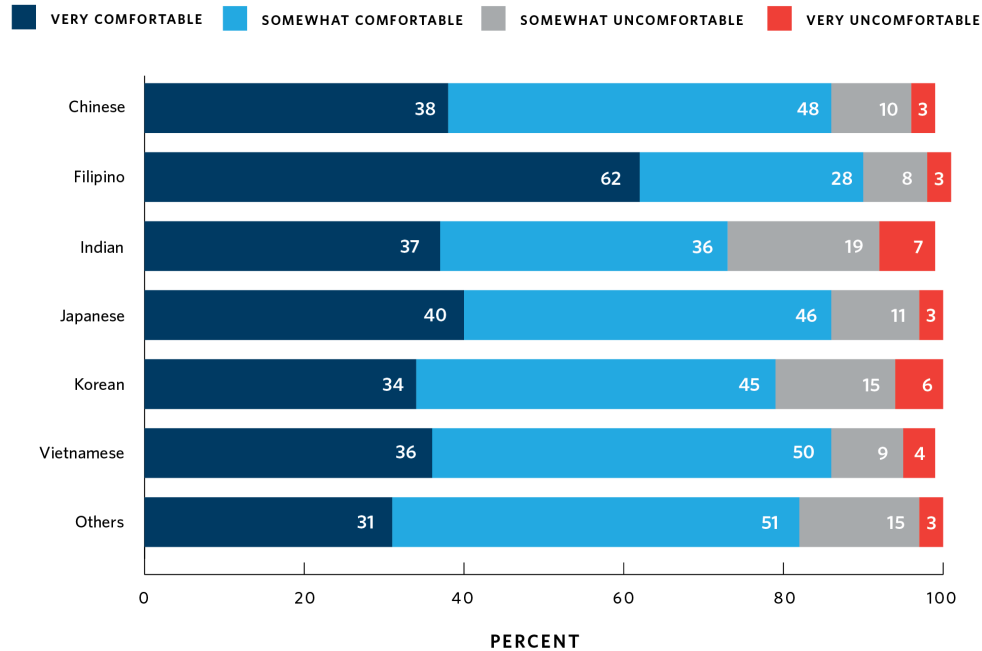
However, the acceptance of the “AAPI” designation is not as widely shared as “Asian American.” Whereas 62 percent of survey respondents reported feeling very comfortable with the phrase “Asian American,” only 41 percent reported that they were very comfortable with the term “AAPI.” A slightly higher proportion reported feeling somewhat comfortable with the AAPI designation (44 percent) compared to those somewhat comfortable with Asian American (33 percent). Finally, 12 percent of respondents reported feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the AAPI label, compared to only 4 percent who were uncomfortable with the Asian American designation.

Disaggregating the data by ethnic origin shows that much lower numbers of respondents in the Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese ethnic groups were very comfortable with the AAPI terminology (see figure 40). Indian-origin respondents recorded the highest level of discomfort, with 26 percent reporting that they were somewhat or very uncomfortable identifying as AAPI.

FIGURE 40

Asian American and Pacific Islander Identification, by Ethnic Group

How comfortable do you feel identifying as “Asian American and Pacific Islander” (AAPI)?



N= 999 California adult residents

NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. “Others” refers to small ethnic/national origin groups in the sample.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Filipino-origin respondents were the outlier among the large ethnic groups in the data: 62 percent of these respondents felt very comfortable with the AAPI label. This makes sense intuitively based on the geographic location of the Philippines, which straddles both Asia and the Pacific Islands. Nevertheless, the vast majority of respondents from large ethnic groups in the sample did affirmatively identify with the AAPI label.

Social Networks

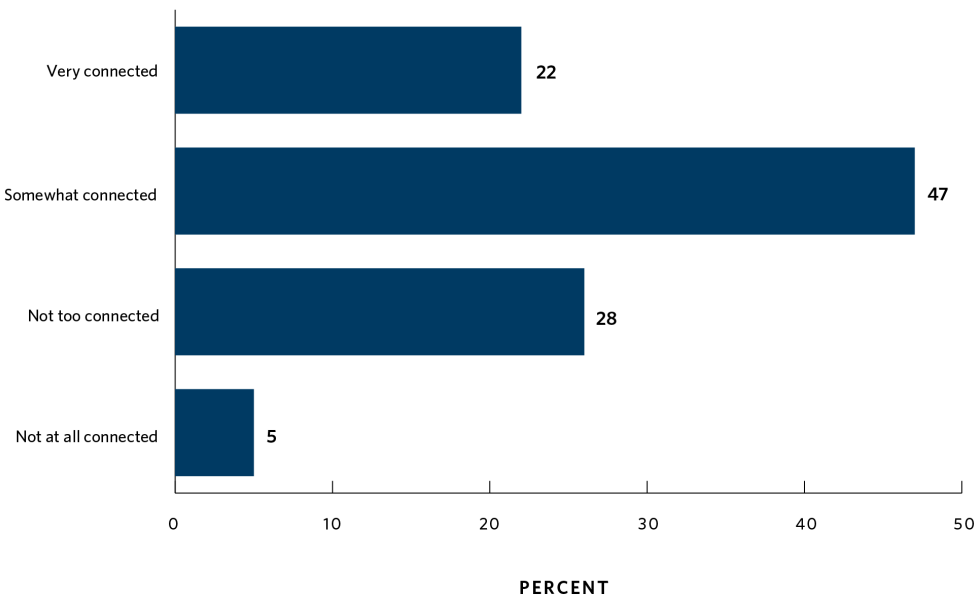
The survey proceeded to ask respondents a series of questions about their social networks. These questions intended to gauge how deeply respondents were embedded within the broader Asian American community in California and the extent to which that community is organized along identifiable cleavages like ethnic origin or language.

Connection with Asian Americans in California

To begin, the survey asked respondents how connected they felt with the Asian American community in California (see figure 41). Twenty-two percent of respondents reported that they felt very connected, while nearly half (47 percent) reported feeling somewhat connected. Twenty-six percent of respondents reported feeling not too connected, while a small minority (5 percent) reported feeling no connection to the Asian American community in the state.

FIGURE 41
Sense of Connection

How connected do you personally feel with the Asian American community in California?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

When one disaggregates by community, it appears that Japanese-origin and Indian-origin respondents were the most likely to feel limited or zero connection with the Asian American community (50 percent and 39 percent, respectively). Vietnamese-origin respondents, on the other hand, were the most likely to feel very or somewhat connected to the Asian American community (83 percent).

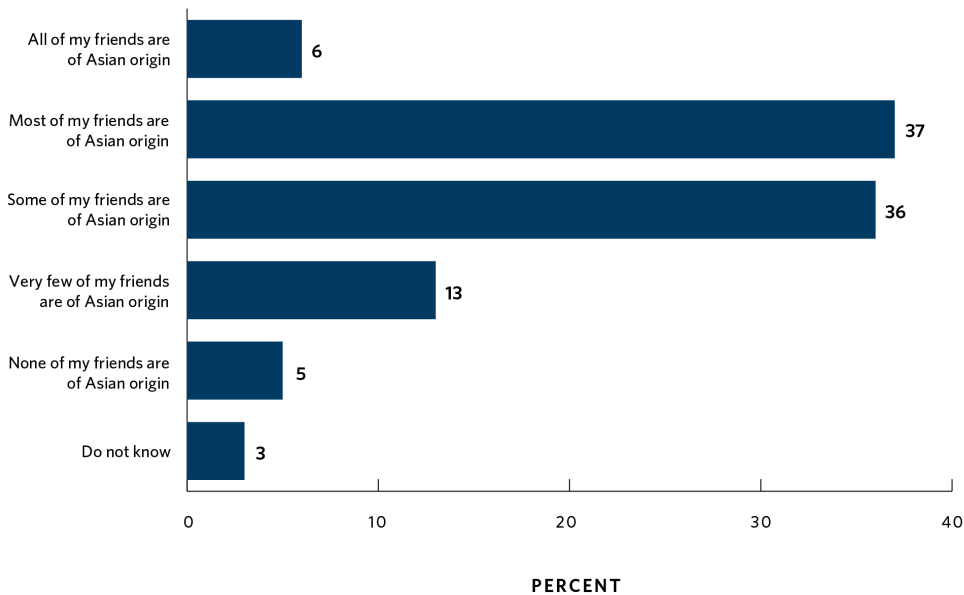
Social Circles

The survey then asked about respondents’ social circles and the groups of people with whom they most regularly associate. Specifically, the survey asked respondents, “Which of the following best describes your personal group of friends?” Respondents chose from the following list of five possible responses (not counting “don’t know”): all, most, some, very few, or none (are of Asian origin) (see figure 42).

The distribution of respondents is instructive. Relatively few respondents reported that all of their friends or none of their friends were of Asian origin (6 percent and 5 percent, respectively). Thirteen percent reported that very few of their friends were of Asian origin. Most respondents were located in the middle of the distribution, with 37 percent reporting that most of their friends were of Asian origin and another 36 percent reporting that some of their friends were of Asian origin. Three percent of respondents reported that they did not know the composition of their social circle.

FIGURE 42
Social Circles

Which of the following best describes your personal group of friends?



N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

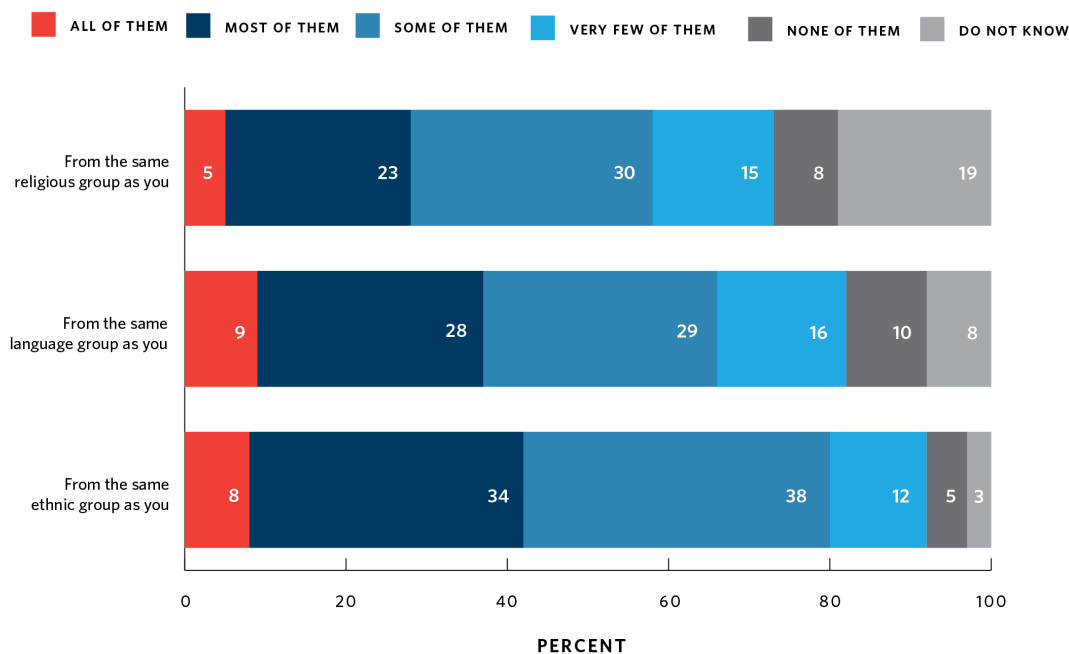
The data suggest that most Asian American respondents' social circles are oriented, to some degree, around other Asian Americans. But this raises obvious questions: Do these social networks consist primarily of people from the same ethnic community, or do they consist of different groups? Are religion or language important determinants that shape one's personal friendships?

To investigate this, the survey asked a follow-up question to respondents who reported having any friends of Asian origin: "Among your Asian-origin friends, how many (a) belong to the same ethnic group as you; (b) speak the same language as you; and (c) are of the same religion as you?"

FIGURE 43

Composition of Social Networks by Ethnic Origin, Religion, and Language

Among your Asian-origin friends, how many are...?



N= 943 California adult residents

NOTE: This question is restricted to respondents who report having Asian-origin friends.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

The results suggest that respondents' social networks are oriented primarily around their own ethnic networks (see figure 43). Eighty percent of respondents reported that all, most, or some of their Asian-origin friends share the same ethnic identity as them. More than half of respondents reported that all, most, or some of their Asian-origin friends speak the same language (66 percent) or share the same religion (58 percent) as themselves.

Discrimination

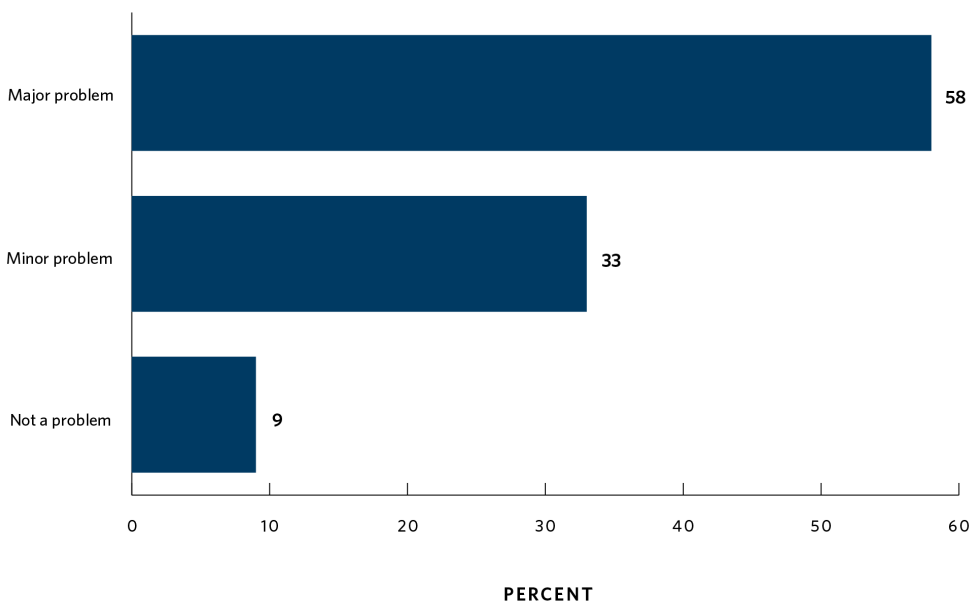
Discrimination against Asian Americans has a long, unfortunate history in the United States, and its relative incidence has increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. One [study](#) estimated that hate crimes targeting Asian Americans grew threefold between 2020 and 2021, a telling statistic given anti-Asian discrimination had also surged between 2019 and 2020. The advocacy organization, [Stop AAPI Hate](#), reported that from mid-March 2020 to December 31, 2021, it had received nearly 11,000 reports of hate incidents against AAPI residents across the country. This section below examines perceptions of discrimination, fears about discrimination in the wake of the pandemic, and firsthand experiences with discrimination, including their diverse sources and forms.

Perceptions of Discrimination

The survey asked respondents to assess the severity of discrimination faced by the Asian American community (see figure 44). A clear majority of respondents (58 percent) reported that it is a major problem. One-third of respondents reported that it is a minor problem, and less than 10 percent perceived that discrimination against the Asian American community is not a problem at all.

FIGURE 44
Perceptions of Discrimination

In general, do you think discrimination against people in the Asian American community is a...?

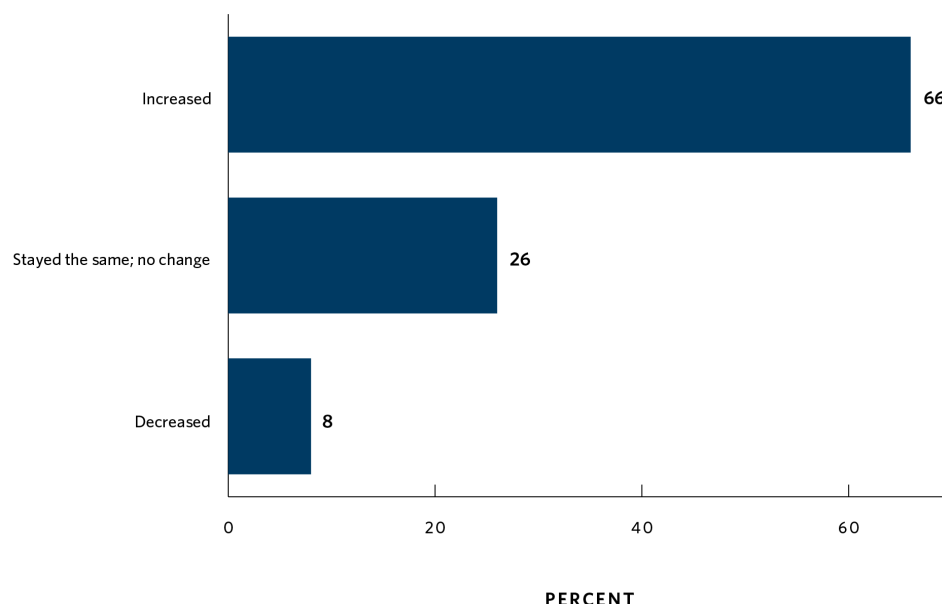


N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Most respondents also believed that intolerance against Asian Americans has increased in the last twelve months (see figure 45). Sixty-six percent of respondents believed discrimination has increased, and only 8 percent believed it has decreased. The remaining 26 percent believed that the level of discrimination Asian Americans experience has stayed the same.

FIGURE 45
Trends in Discrimination

As you look back at the last twelve months, do you think discrimination against people in the Asian American community in the United States has...?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Drivers of Discrimination

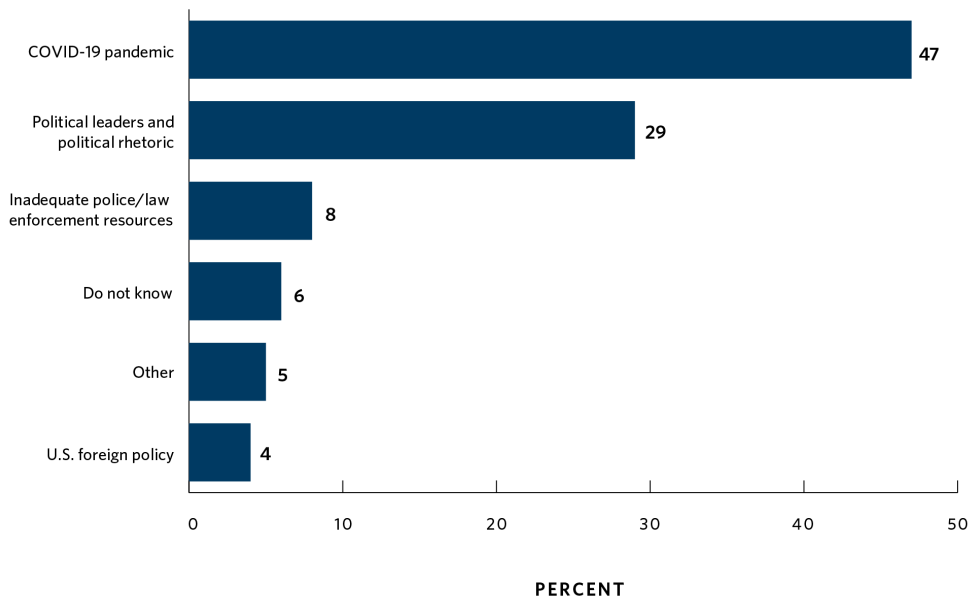
There are many potential drivers of this increasing discrimination. The most prevalent example in recent discourse relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and its origin in China. [Some analysts](#) have highlighted the pandemic as the main driver that has led some Americans to exact retribution on people who hail from Asia, particularly East Asia. Others have highlighted political rhetoric, such as former president Donald Trump's use of the term "[kung flu](#)" to describe the coronavirus pandemic.

To explore this terrain further, the survey asked respondents who reported that discrimination is on the rise (676 respondents in total) what factor they think is most responsible for the increased displays of hate (see figure 46). Nearly half of all respondents (47 percent) pointed the finger at the COVID-19 pandemic. A further 29 percent singled

out political leaders and political rhetoric. Of course, to a certain degree, both factors likely worked together in the last three years. Relatively few respondents selected other options presented to them: 8 percent reported that inadequate police/law enforcement resources are to blame, and 4 percent highlighted the role of U.S. foreign policy. Five percent of respondents chose the “Other” option, and 6 percent chose “Do not know.”

FIGURE 46
Drivers of Increasing Discrimination

While there may be many factors at work, what factor do you think is most responsible for increasing discrimination against Asian Americans?



N= 676 California adult residents
NOTE: This question is restricted to respondents who report that discrimination has increased in the last twelve months.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

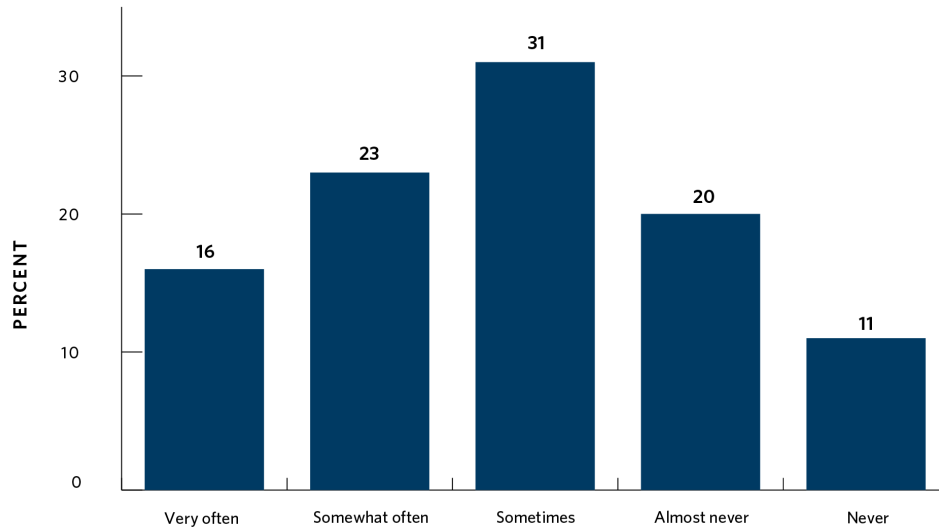
Fears of Discrimination

The data suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic is a major impetus behind the increased levels of discrimination. But how intensely do respondents feel this threat brought on by the pandemic? The survey asked respondents how often they worry about experiencing discrimination, harassment, or hate crimes firsthand because of the pandemic (see figure 47). Sixteen percent of respondents reported that they felt concerned very often, while 23 percent reported that they worried somewhat often. A plurality of respondents, 31 percent, stated that they sometimes worried about rising hate. Thirty-one percent of respondents noted that they almost never or never worried about experiencing discrimination, harassment, or hate crimes in the pandemic’s wake.

FIGURE 47

Discrimination and the Pandemic

How often do you worry about experiencing discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



N= 999 California adult residents

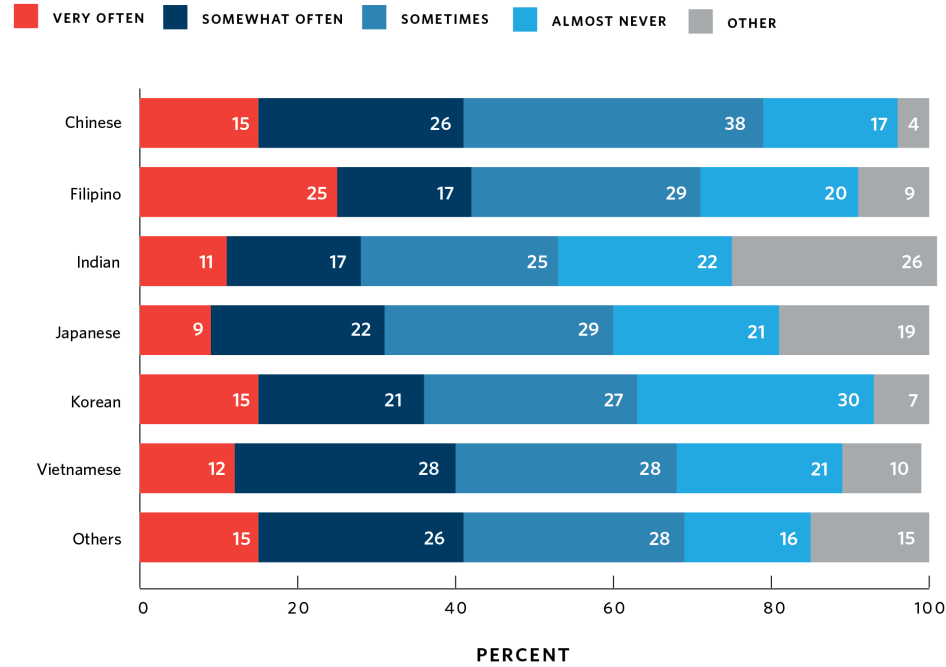
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

There was some variation in respondents' threat perceptions based on ethnic identity (see figure 48). Respondents in the Filipino (42 percent), Chinese (41 percent), Others (41 percent), and Vietnamese (40 percent) ethnic groups reported that they worried about discrimination, harassment, or hate crimes somewhat or very often. Indian Americans were on the opposite end of the spectrum, with just 28 percent expressing similar fears.

FIGURE 48

Discrimination and the Pandemic, by Ethnic Group

How often do you worry about experiencing discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. “Others” refers to small ethnic/national origin groups in the sample.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

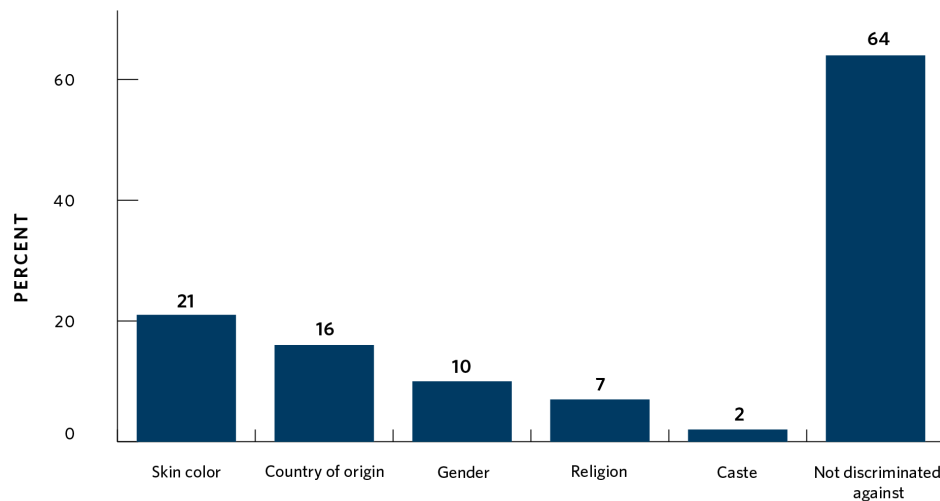
Experience With Discrimination

Having asked about perceptions of discrimination, the survey then asked respondents about their direct, personal experience(s) with discrimination. Specifically, the survey asked whether, in the last twelve months, respondents personally felt discriminated against based on a range of factors: country of origin, skin color, gender, religion, and caste (see figure 49).

FIGURE 49

Experience With Discrimination

*In the last twelve months, have you personally felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons?
Select all that apply.*



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

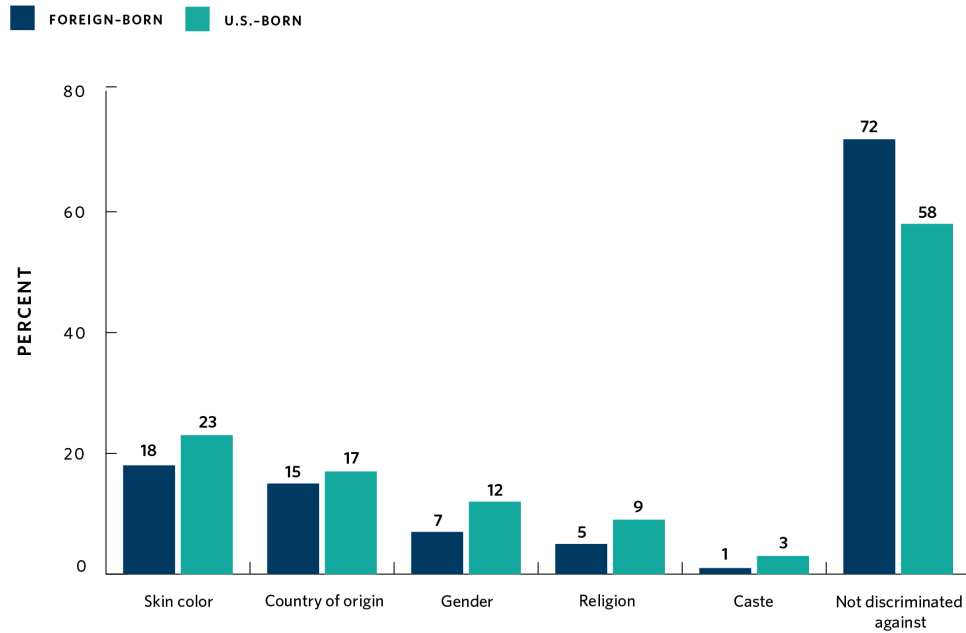
Thirty-six percent of respondents reported that they had been discriminated against based on at least one of the identity dimensions they were asked about. The greatest share, 21 percent, reported being discriminated against due to their skin color. Sixteen percent reported being discriminated against due to their country of origin, and 10 percent reported gender discrimination. Finally, 7 percent of respondents reported being discriminated against due to their religious beliefs, while 2 percent reported discrimination on the basis of their caste.

Interestingly, U.S.-born respondents were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than their foreign-born counterparts (see figure 50). Forty-two percent of those born in the United States reported that they had experienced discrimination in the past year, compared to 28 percent of foreign-born respondents. In fact, across all identity-based dimensions, slightly higher shares of U.S.-born respondents reported being victims of discrimination compared to respondents born elsewhere.

FIGURE 50

Experience With Discrimination, by Place of Birth

*In the last twelve months, have you personally felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons?
Select all that apply.*



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

At first glance, this is puzzling given that foreign-born respondents are likely to possess more easily identifiable characteristics of a foreigner or outsider (such as language, accent, or dress). However, they do not report discrimination to the same extent as those born in the United States. A [2020 Carnegie survey](#) found a similar pattern in the Indian American community. One possible reason for this discrepancy could be higher levels of awareness or sensitivity on the part of respondents born and raised in America. It is also possible that foreign-born residents are concerned about retribution or impacts on their immigration status.

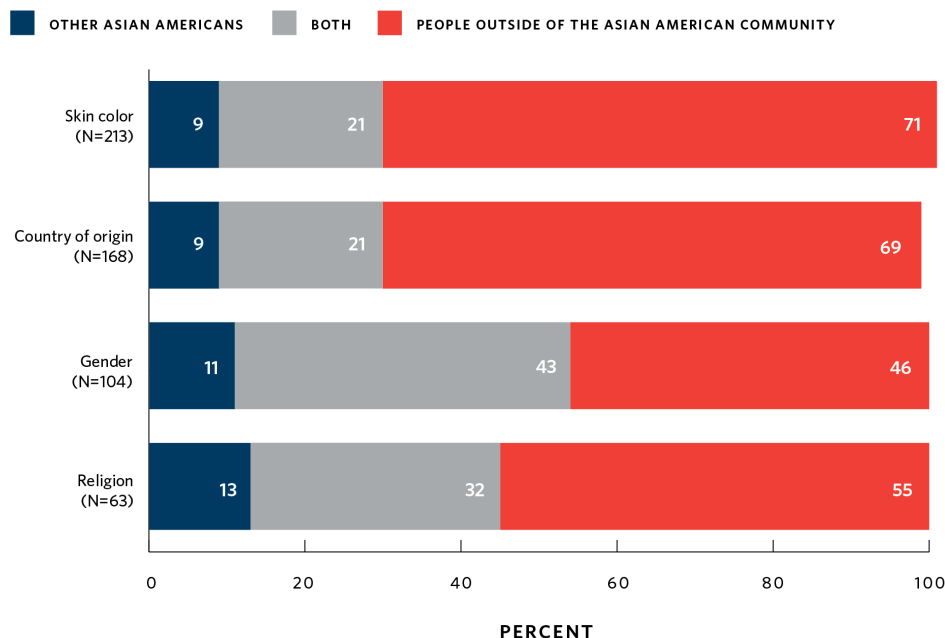
Sources of Discrimination

For the 570 respondents who have had direct, firsthand experience with discrimination in the past year, the survey asked about the source of the discrimination—that is, whether the perpetrators of the discriminatory behavior came from outside of the Asian American community, from within the community, or from both categories (see figure 51).

FIGURE 51

Sources of Discrimination

Who discriminated against you on the basis of your...?



N= 346 California adult residents.

NOTE: This question is restricted to respondents who report being discriminated against in the last twelve months. Respondents can report multiple forms of discrimination. Respondents who only report caste discrimination are dropped due to small sample size. Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. Figure lists unweighted sample size.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

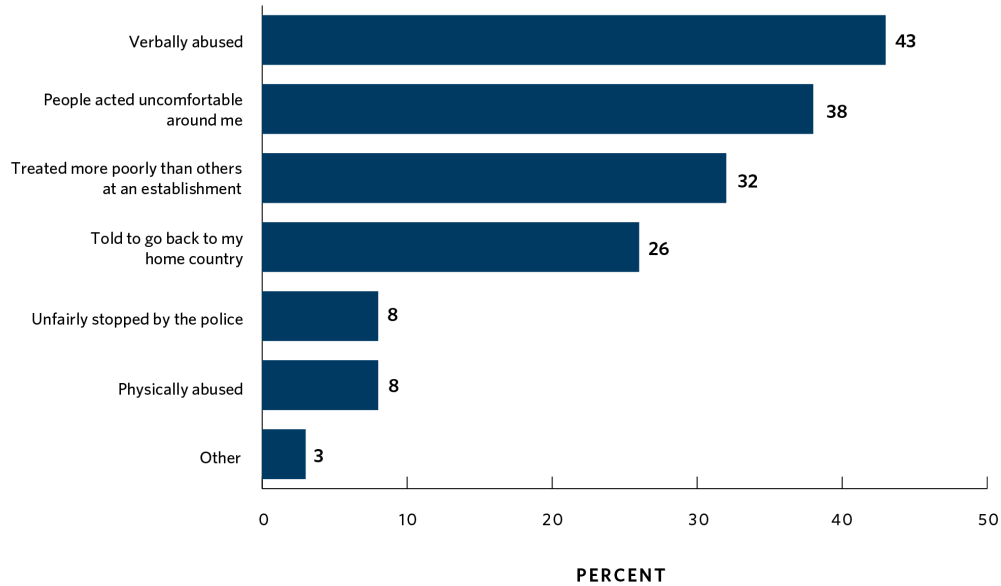
In all cases, the most referenced category was “people outside of the Asian American community.” Seventy-one percent of respondents who had been discriminated against due to their skin color pointed the blame at individuals outside of the Asian American community. Sixty-nine percent of those discriminated against due to their country of origin and 55 percent of those claiming religious discrimination responded similarly. The share of respondents claiming discrimination by other Asian Americans was relatively small: 13 percent for religion, 11 percent for gender, and 9 percent each for skin color and country of origin. Having said that, a significant proportion of respondents believed they were discriminated against by both Asian- and non-Asian-origin individuals. These numbers were especially pronounced for discrimination along religious and gender lines.

Forms of Discrimination

In addition to exploring the incidence of discrimination and the identity of the perpetrators, the survey also examined the forms discrimination may take. The survey asked respondents who reported being discriminated against in the last twelve months about the form of the discrimination they have experienced. The numbers do not add up to 100 because respondents could select multiple forms of discrimination (see figure 52).

FIGURE 52
Forms of Discrimination

*Which of the following forms of discrimination have you experienced in the past twelve months?
Select all that apply.*



N= 368 California adult residents

NOTE: This question is restricted to respondents who report being discriminated against in the last twelve months.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

The most common form of discrimination experienced by respondents is verbal abuse, with 43 percent of respondents reporting that they have been subjected to insensitive comments, jokes, or slurs. Thirty-eight percent reported other people acting uncomfortably around them in a way that suggested they were being singled out, and 32 percent felt that they were treated unfairly at a shop, restaurant, or other establishment. More than one in four respondents who experienced discrimination were told to go back to their home country. Relatively few respondents reported that they were unfairly stopped, searched, or questioned by the police or were subjected to violence or physical threats in some way (8 percent of respondents for each). Three percent of discrimination victims reported experiencing another, unspecified form of discrimination.

Conclusion

Discussions of the social attitudes and political preferences of Asian Americans can often obscure the picture as much as they illuminate it. On the one hand, increased attention to the views of Asian Americans—especially in the political domain—should be welcomed, given the relatively peripheral space the views have occupied to date. On the other hand, it bears repeating that Asian Americans constitute a highly diverse, not monolithic, population. The community's views are shaped by not only their place of birth but also by various other demographic factors such as ethnic/national heritage and generational divides.

Furthermore, while a majority of California-based respondents embraced both the Asian American and AAPI labels, these umbrella designations often took a backseat to a more specific, hyphenated ethnic/national identity. This emphasis on ethnic/national identities is reinforced by the makeup of respondents' social networks, driven to a substantial degree by other individuals who are "co-ethnics."

Irrespective of labels, it is evident that respondents of Asian origin are experiencing elevated levels of discrimination, with majorities stating it is a major problem that is becoming increasingly severe. Respondents believe that the pandemic and political rhetoric—and the interaction between the two—are principally responsible for this shift. How these ugly truths about American society are shaping Asian Americans' civic and political engagement remains an open question, one that the following essay explores in greater detail.

CHAPTER 4

How Do California's Asian Americans Engage in Civic and Political Life?

This essay examines patterns of civic and political engagement among California's Asian Americans. It focuses on how respondents engage with their communities, how they relate to politics, and how they interact with political campaigns—both as campaign contributors and consumers.

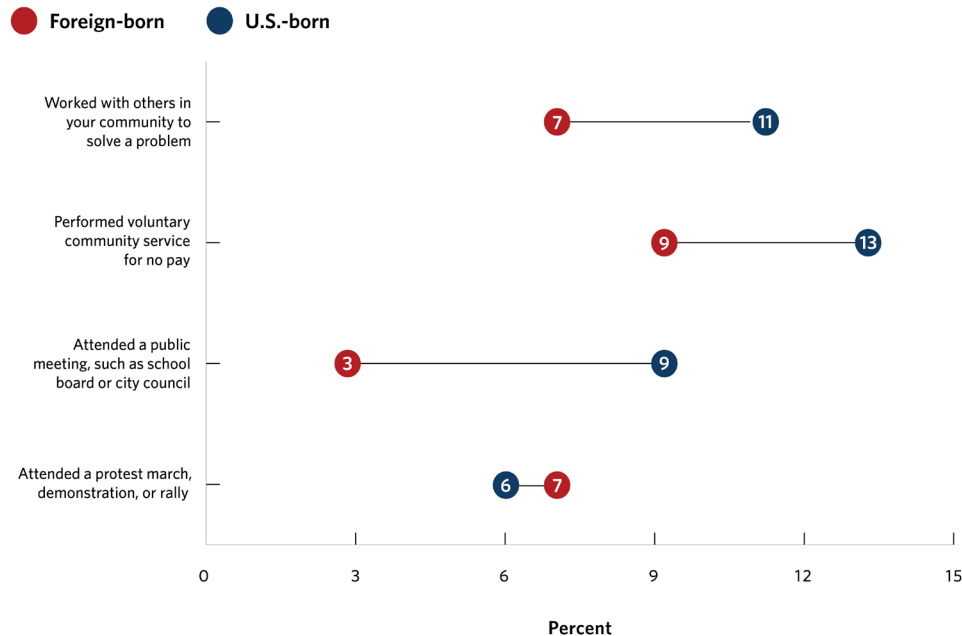
Civic Engagement

The survey asked respondents whether—in the last twelve months—they participated in any of four common methods of civic engagement: performing voluntary community service without pay; working with others in their community to solve a problem; attending a protest march, demonstration, or rally; or attending a public meeting, such as for a school board or city council.

Overall, the level of civic participation appeared muted. Of the four methods of civic engagement the survey examined, the most popular was performing voluntary community service—an activity only 11 percent of respondents reported taking part in. Nine percent reported working with others in their community to solve a collective problem, 6 percent attended a public meeting of some kind, and 6 percent attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally.

FIGURE 53
Civic Engagement

In the last twelve months, have you participated in any of the following activities?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

On three of out of four measures—performing community service, working with community members to solve a problem, and attending a public meeting—U.S.-born respondents reported marginally higher rates of participation (see figure 53). Regarding the fourth category—attending a protest march, demonstration, or rally—participation rates were roughly equal between the two categories of respondents.

Diaspora Engagement

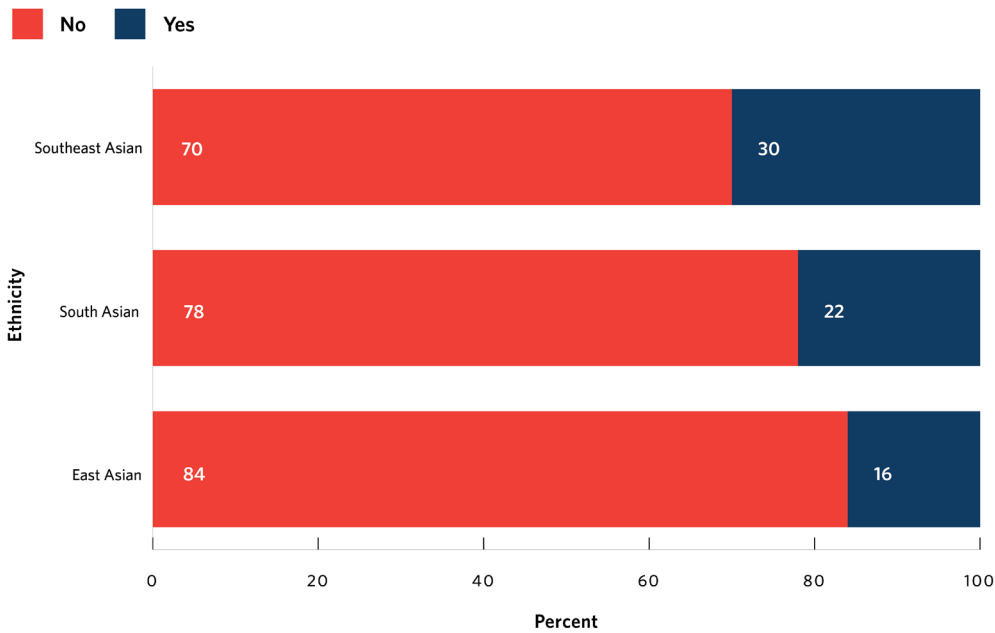
As the size of the Asian American population has grown over time, diaspora groups have invested significant resources in building civic organizations or nonprofit associations that play a variety of roles, including community service, religious expression, and policy and advocacy. Beyond generic measures of civic engagement, the survey asked respondents if they were a member of any Asian American organization or group, be it cultural, ethnic, regional, religious, caste, community, or school related. One in five respondents (21 percent) reported that they were currently involved with such an organization.

U.S.-born respondents were more likely to take part in diaspora activities; 26 percent of them reported engagement with diaspora organizations compared to 16 percent of

foreign-born respondents. There was also variation on this score across Asian American communities (see figure 54). Thirty percent of respondents of Southeast Asian heritage reported membership in a diaspora organization, compared to 22 percent of South Asians and 16 percent of East Asians.

FIGURE 54
Engagement with Diaspora Organizations

Are you a member of any Asian American organization or group? This includes cultural, ethnic, regional, religious, caste, community, or school-based organizations.



N= 1,000 California adult residents
NOTE: Southeast Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, or Vietnamese. South Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, or Sri Lankan. East Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Taiwanese.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

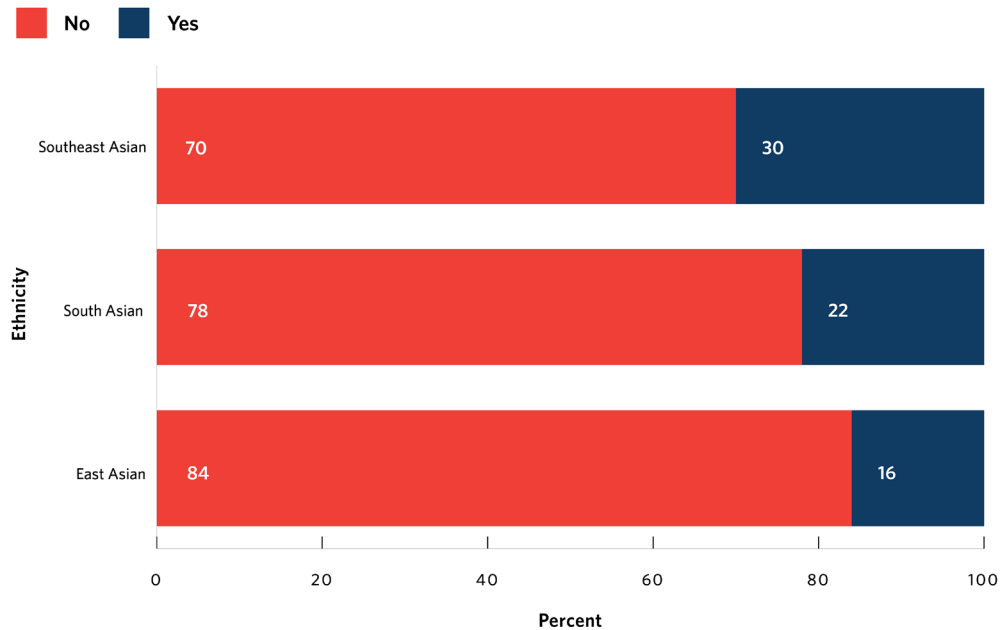
Regardless of their purpose, diaspora organizations could be organized narrowly along ethnic lines or broadly across ethnic communities that comprise the Asian American population.

Examining data on respondents who were members of at least one diaspora-based organization, around four in ten reported that these organizations were comprised of members who shared their ethnic background (see figure 55). However, there was no significant variation across ethnic subgroups. Between 41 and 44 percent of Southeast, South, and East Asians reported taking part in organizations with co-ethnics, while between 44 and 54 percent of respondents reported that their organizations possessed a membership of mixed ethnicities.

FIGURE 55

Compositions of Diaspora Organizations

Are you a member of any Asian American organization or group? This includes cultural, ethnic, regional, religious, caste, community, or school-based organizations.



N= 221 California adult residents

NOTE: This question is only asked of respondents who are members of any Asian American organization or group.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Political Engagement

An individual's propensity to vote is often used as a convenient shorthand for their level of political engagement, but the former is at best a proxy measure. Political engagement is a broader concept that involves activities that include voting but go well beyond it. This section explores the extent of political engagement before delving into the act of voting more specifically.

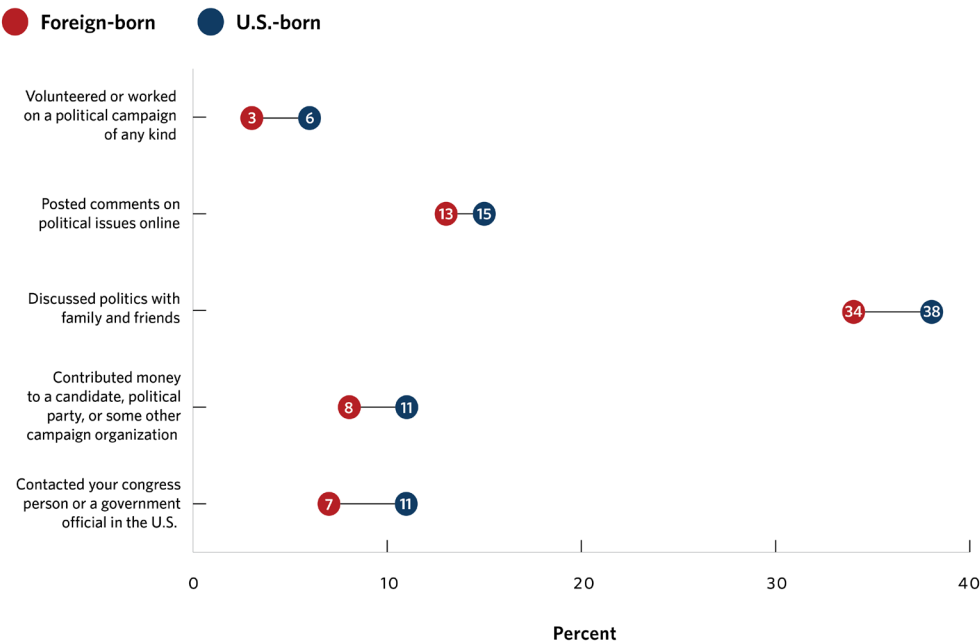
General Political Engagement

The survey queried respondents about whether they participated in any of five political activities in the last year: discussing politics with friends and family; posting comments online about politics; contacting their elected representative or another government official; contributing money to a candidate, party, or campaign organization; or volunteering or working on a political campaign.

By far the most popular mode of political engagement was the simple act of discussing politics with family and friends, an activity 36 percent of respondents reported doing in the past year. Fourteen percent reported posting comments on political issues online, 10 percent contributed money in some form to a political activity, and 9 percent contacted their member of Congress or other government official. The least popular activity was working on a political campaign, something only 4 percent of respondents reported doing in the past year.

FIGURE 56
Political Engagement

In the last twelve months, have you participated in any of the following activities?



N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

As with the measures of civic engagement discussed above, U.S.-born respondents were more likely to engage in political activities, although the difference with their foreign-born counterparts was marginal (see figure 56). Indeed, it was striking how similar participation rates were irrespective of place of birth.

Interest in Politics

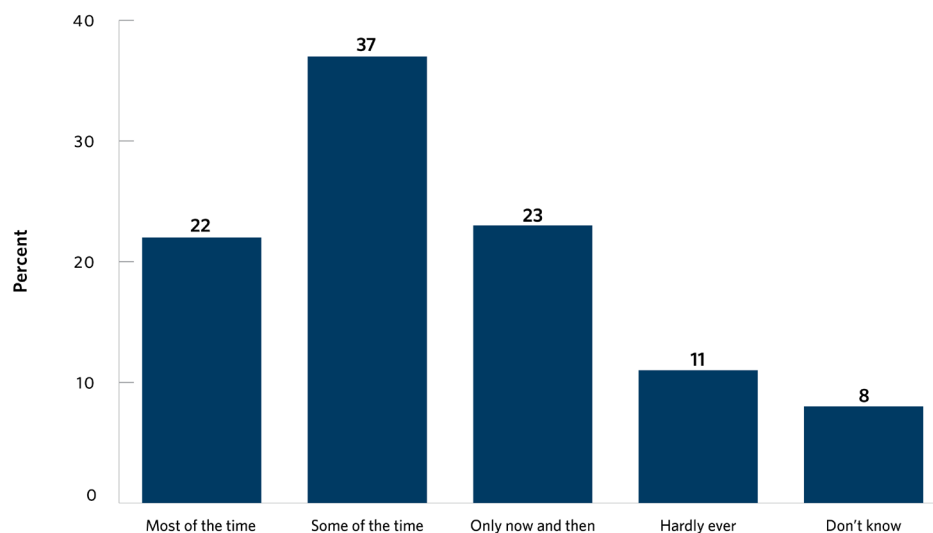
The survey also asked about respondents’ general level of interest in politics, which is a summary measure of political engagement. Specifically, the survey asked respondents the degree to which they followed developments in government and public affairs in the United States.

There was a wide distribution of responses (see figure 57). Twenty-two percent of respondents reported following the latest developments in U.S. politics most of the time, while a plurality of respondents—37 percent—reported tracking current events some of the time. Twenty-three percent reported staying abreast of political issues only now and then and another 11 percent reported that they hardly ever paid attention to government and public affairs in the United States. An additional 8 percent responded with “don’t know.”

FIGURE 57

Interest in Politics

Some people seem to follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs...?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

While there was no significant difference in the political interest of respondents based on their place of birth, there was some evidence of differences on the age dimension. Interest in American politics and public affairs was highest among the eldest respondents in the sample: 61 percent of those ages fifty and above reported regularly following developments in American politics compared to 52 percent of respondents in the eighteen-to-twenty-nine age bracket. College-educated respondents also reported higher levels of political interest when compared to non-college educated counterparts.

Voting

The survey asked all respondents a set of basic questions about their voting behavior. While previous essays in this series explored California-based Asian Americans' [voting patterns](#) and [policy preferences and attitudes](#), this section focuses narrowly on registration and turnout. Based on the U.S. citizen sub-sample of survey respondents (who accounted for 93 percent of the overall sample), 88 percent of citizen respondents were registered to vote. One in ten who were eligible to vote were not registered, with an additional 2 percent unsure of their registration status.

Among unregistered voters, there were few differences by gender, place of birth, or age. However, there were discernible differences based on education and income levels (see table 1). For instance, just 5 percent of college-educated citizen respondents reported that they were not registered to vote. This share more than triples (to 17 percent) when considering respondents without a college degree. Similarly, 6 percent of respondents whose household income is in the range of \$50,000–\$100,000 and 4 percent of respondents who earn over \$100,000 were not registered to vote. This share stood at 16 percent for those with household incomes below \$50,000.

TABLE 2
Respondents' Voter Registration Status

Age	Registered (%)	Unregistered (%)	Don't know (%)
18-29	88	10	2
30-49	87	10	4
50+	90	9	1
Income			
Below \$50,000	79	16	5
\$50,000-\$100,000	94	6	0
Above \$100,000	96	4	0
Education			
College degree	95	5	1
No college degree	79	17	4
Immigration status			
U.S.-born	87	10	3
Foreign-born	90	9	1
Gender			
Male	88	10	2
Female	88	9	2

N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

While voter turnout tends to be lower in primary elections than on Election Day, two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) reported voting in the June 7, 2022, California primary election. In terms of the midterm election itself, held on November 8, the survey was only able to ask about vote intention since it was fielded in the September before the election. Of eligible voting-age citizen respondents, between 12 and 13 percent reported that they did not intend to vote in the midterm election either for governor, Senate, or their respective House of Representatives race. Here too, class loomed large in the decision to vote; respondents without a college degree and/or who are from lower-income households tended to be two to three times more likely to abstain from voting on Election Day.

Although the 2024 presidential elections are still far off, 8 percent of respondents reported that they had no intention of voting in the 2024 race. This figure excluded voters who were undecided about the party they planned to support in the next election; about 21 percent of the citizen sub-sample fell into this “undecided” category.

Campaign Finance

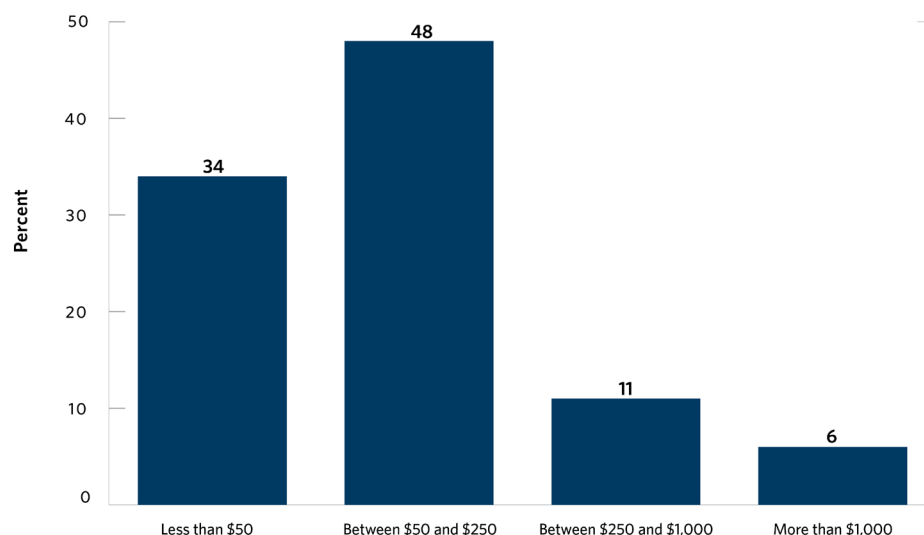
Although there is no comprehensive data on the extent of Asian American campaign giving, anecdotal evidence suggests that Asian-origin citizens are stepping up their involvement as contributors to political campaigns, a [new development](#) that parties have taken note of. In many states and localities, in California and elsewhere, Asian Americans are seen not simply as a crucial voting bloc, but also as a community of contributors and vote mobilizers. This section looks briefly at their campaign finance behavior.

Of the total respondent sample, around 15 percent reported contributing financially to a candidate’s campaign at some level during the course of the 2022 election cycle. By and large, these donations skewed toward the smaller end of the spectrum (see figure 58). Eighty-two percent of campaign contributors reported giving \$250 or less during the 2022 midterm campaign: 34 percent reported giving less than \$50, while 48 percent stated they had given between \$50 and \$250. Relatively few respondents were located on the upper end of this giving spectrum. Eleven percent reported contributing between \$250 and \$1,000 and just 6 percent reported contributing more than \$1,000.

FIGURE 58

Distribution of Campaign Contributions

You previously indicated that you contributed financially to a candidate's campaign. As best you can estimate, how much did you contribute overall this election cycle?



N= 149 California adult residents

NOTE: This question is only asked of respondents who contributed financially to a political campaign or group.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Interestingly, income was not neatly correlated with a respondent's political giving status. While wealthier individuals were somewhat more likely to give than lower-income respondents, the differences were small and nonlinear. One variable that did seem to shape giving patterns was place of birth: 19 percent of U.S.-born respondents reported donating money in the 2022 cycle compared to under 8 percent of foreign-born respondents.

Campaign Contact

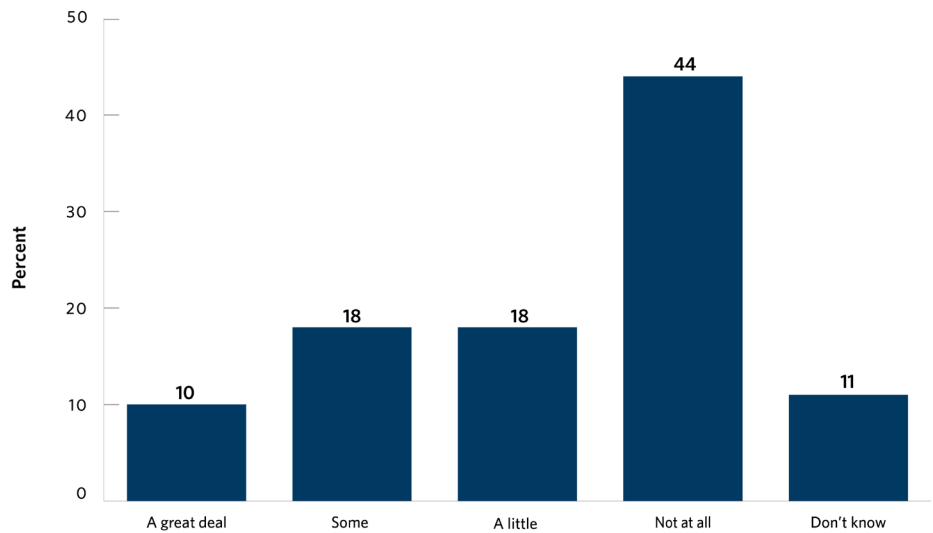
[Existing research](#) demonstrates that Asian Americans overall suffer from a campaign “contact gap.” Despite the fact that their numbers have grown, that their giving profile has risen, and that there is greater awareness of their political heft, most research finds that political campaigns tend to treat them as an afterthought. For instance, a [2020 Pew survey](#) found that Asian voters lagged behind all other ethnic or racial groups in terms of the extent of campaign contact they received (across all methods of contact).

The 2022 Asian American Voter Survey (AAVS), a nationally representative survey conducted months before the 2022 midterm election, found that 45 percent of respondents across the United States reported no campaign contact from either major party.

To probe this issue in the California context, the Carnegie survey also asked respondents whether they were contacted by any political party during the 2022 election campaign (see figure 59). This contact could have been on the phone, in person, or via social media and the internet. A striking 44 percent reported no contact at all from any political campaign, nearly half of the entire sample.

FIGURE 59
Campaign Contact by Political Parties

Were you contacted by any political party during the current 2022 election campaign, either by phone, in person, or via social media?



N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

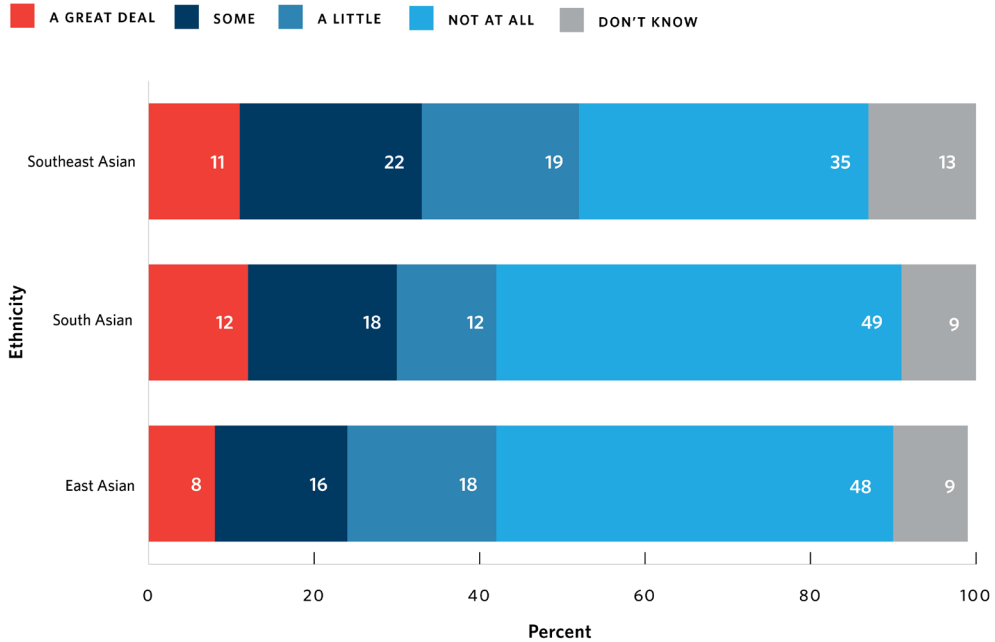
This statistic is almost identical to what the AAVS found on a national level. Thirty-six percent of respondents reported experiencing “some” or “a little” contact, with only 10 percent acknowledging they had received “a great deal” of contact from political parties. Roughly one in ten respondents (11 percent) reported not knowing the extent of political contact.

To be sure, not all Asian Americans experienced the same degree of campaign contact (see figure 60). For instance, 33 percent of Southeast Asian respondents reported either some or a great deal of contact with political parties during the 2022 midterm season, compared to 30 percent and 24 percent for South and East Asians, respectively. Nearly one in two South Asians (49 percent) and East Asians (48 percent) reported no contact with campaigns as against 35 percent of Southeast Asian respondents.

FIGURE 60

Composition of Campaign Contact by Political Parties

Were you contacted by any political party during the current 2022 election campaign, either by phone, in person, or via social media?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Total does not equal 100 due to rounding. Southeast Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, or Vietnamese. South Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, or Sri Lankan. East Asian includes respondents who consider some part of their identity to be Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Taiwanese.

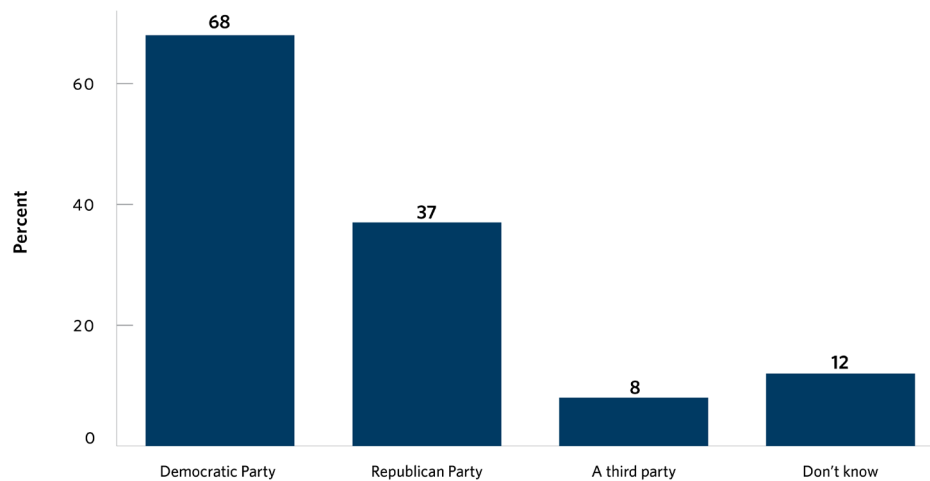
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Of respondents who were contacted by a political campaign, the survey asked which party was responsible for reaching out to them (see figure 61). The overwhelming majority of contact was driven by the Democratic Party; 68 percent of those contacted reported outreach from the Democrats. In contrast, half as many respondents—37 percent—reported outreach from the Republican Party.⁹

FIGURE 61

Partisan Distribution of Campaign Contact

You indicated that you were contacted by a political party during the current 2022 election campaign. Which political party contacted you? Select all that apply.



N= 479 California adult residents

NOTE: This question is only asked of respondents who experienced campaign contact during the 2022 election cycle.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

These outreach figures are not far out of line with the current voting patterns of Asian Americans in California: data analyzed in an [earlier essay](#) suggested that slightly more than half of survey respondents reported voting for Democratic candidates at the House, Senate, and gubernatorial levels in California. However, the extent of campaign contact reported in the Carnegie survey differed from the 2022 AAVS. In the latter survey, [44 percent](#) of respondents reported having at least some campaign outreach from the Democrats while 35 percent of respondents reported experiencing some degree of Republican outreach. The data from the Carnegie survey in California suggested a higher degree of Democratic mobilization in the state, compared to the national average.

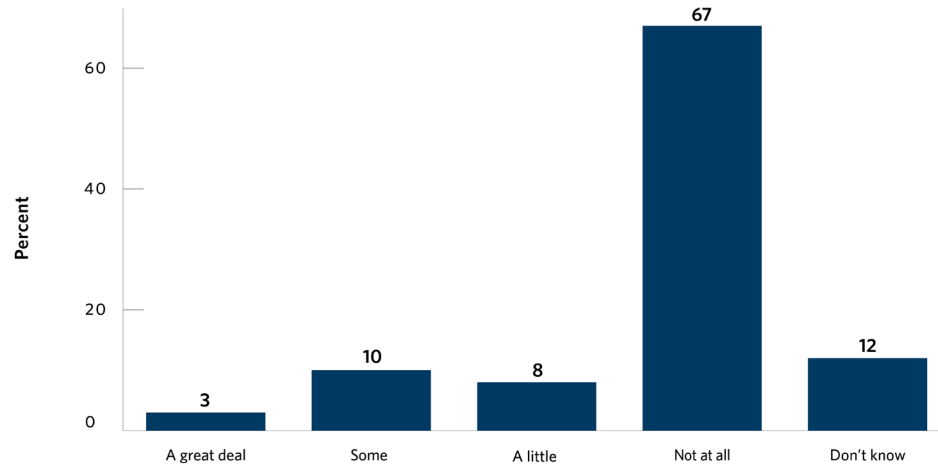
Beyond the two major parties, a small minority (8 percent) reported being contacted by a third party. Twelve percent of respondents experiencing some kind of campaign contact were not sure which party got in touch with them.

Finally, the survey asked respondents whether they were contacted by any Asian American organizations during the midterm campaign. (Several California-based Asian American organizations work, either in connection with parties or independently of them, to educate voters, conduct advocacy, or build political awareness.)

FIGURE 62

Campaign Contact by Asian American Organizations

Were you contacted by any Asian American organization(s) during the midterm campaign, either by phone, in person, or via social media?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

According to the survey, political parties had a stronger track record of engaging Asian Americans than diaspora organizations (see figure 62). Two-third of respondents (67 percent) reported that they had no contact at all with Asian American organizations during the 2022 campaign cycle. Eighteen percent reported either “some” or “a little” contact and only 3 percent reported a great deal of contact. An additional 12 percent were unsure of their contact with diaspora groups in the 2022 campaign.

Conclusion

In recent years, the profile of Asian Americans in state and national politics has steadily risen as their numbers have swelled and a greater share have exercised their right to vote. However, voting is but one form of how ordinary citizens engage in civic and political life. This essay looks at the broader picture of civic and political engagement among Asian Americans in the state of California, where they constitute a significant share of the population.

Using traditional measures of civic and political engagement, survey respondents’ participation appeared relatively muted across most activities. Performing community service emerged as the most popular mode of civic engagement while discussing politics with family and friends was the most popular manifestation of political participation. Across most measures, U.S.-born respondents tended to be more engaged than their foreign-born counterparts but the gaps were small in nearly all cases.

When it comes to voting, Asian Americans appeared energized but not all segments of the population were equally inclined to exercise their franchise. Two variables—education and income—helped to explain this variation. Respondents with lower household incomes and without a college degree were more likely than their peers to not be registered to vote. And, even among those who were registered, non-college educated and lower-income respondents were less likely to turnout on Election Day.

Beyond voting, some existing research suggests that Asian Americans have also begun flexing their muscles as campaign contributors. The survey data here suggested that around 15 percent of the respondent sample reported making a political donation in the 2022 election cycle, and most of these donations represented small-dollar contributions.

But despite their growing prominence, Asian Americans still experienced low levels of campaign outreach from the major parties, especially the Republican Party. And the data suggested that the reach of diaspora-linked organizations was also relatively shallow among the populations they work to advocate on behalf of.

CHAPTER 5

How Do California's Asian Americans View U.S. Foreign Policy?

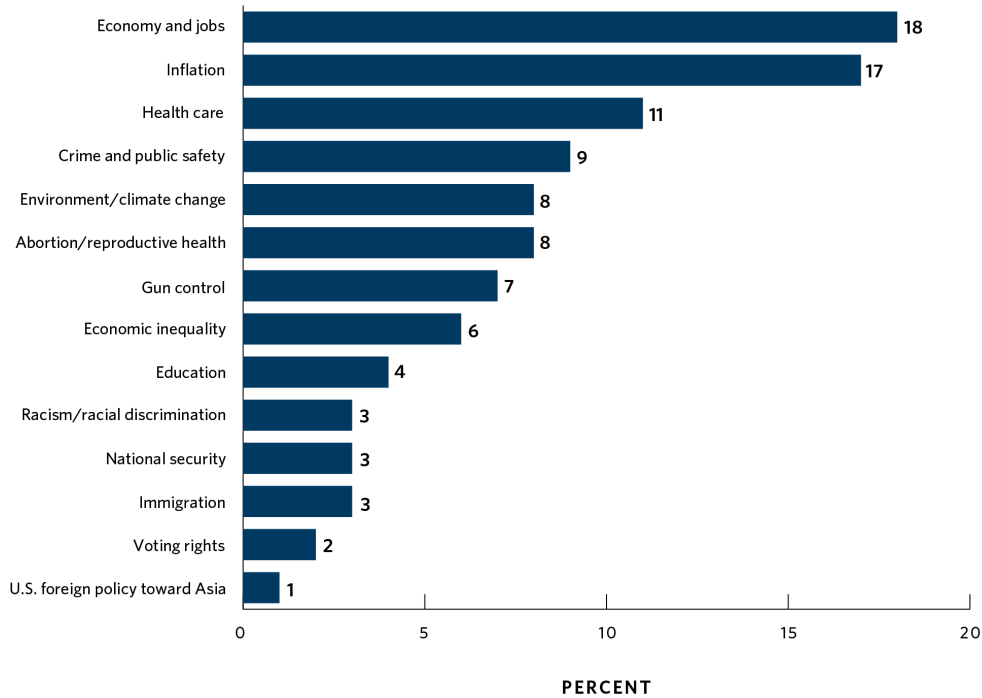
This final essay attempts to evaluate Asian Americans' foreign policy views in three ways. First, it investigates the salience of foreign policy as an electoral priority for Asian Americans. Second, it examines respondents' views on the management of U.S. foreign policy toward Asia, with a special focus on how the United States should approach China's rise. Third, it explores the impacts that foreign policy is having on the diaspora and the extent to which it is emerging as a divisive force.

Salience of Foreign Policy

The survey revealed that Asian American respondents in California had opinionated views on foreign policy but, by and large, issues of international affairs did not rate as priorities when it came to their voting decisions. As explored in the first essay, the survey provided respondents with a list of fourteen policy issues and asked them to rate which of these were the most important issue for them personally in the 2022 midterm elections. The survey was fielded in the weeks before election day in November 2022.

The data suggest that respondents were clearly motivated, above all, by “kitchen table” issues (see figure 63). Respondents' top two priorities related to their economic standing: 18 percent reported the economy and jobs were their topmost issue, while 17 percent chose inflation. Healthcare ranked third at 11 percent. The survey provided two responses related to foreign policy—national security and U.S. foreign policy to Asia—and both rated near the bottom of the priority list, at 3 and 1 percent respectively. Immigration, which arguably spans the divide between domestic and foreign policy, was also judged to be less of an election priority, with just 3 percent rating it as their top issue.

FIGURE 63

Top Issues in the 2022 Election*Which of the following is the most important issue for you personally?*

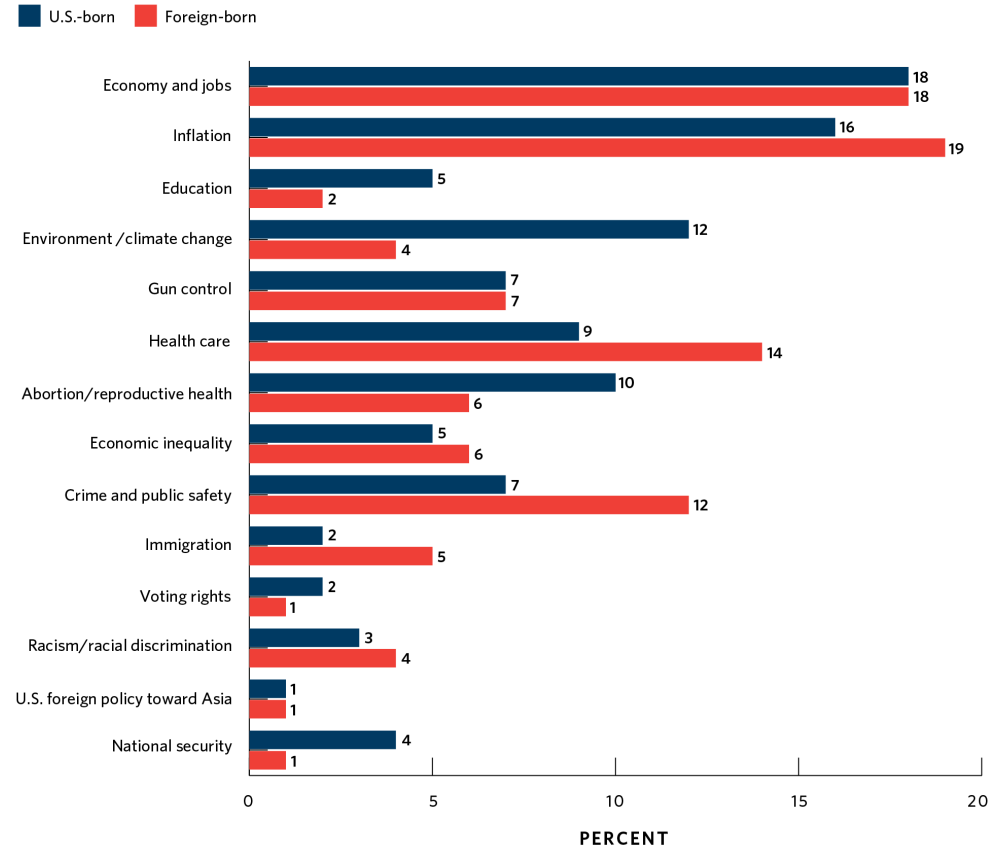
N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

There is good reason to suspect that issue salience might vary based on respondents' place of birth. For instance, foreign-born respondents might have different priorities than their U.S.-born counterparts, which in turn could be a function of immigration, culture, or age, among other factors.

There were some similarities regardless of birthplace (see figure 64). Economic factors loomed large for both groups. Eighteen percent of respondents of both types listed the economy and jobs as their most important issue. Foreign-born respondents placed slightly more emphasis on inflation (19 percent) than U.S.-born respondents (16 percent). But these two economic issues were topmost for both sets of respondents.

FIGURE 64

Top Issues in the 2022 Election, by Places of Birth*Which of the following is the most important issue for you personally?*

N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding.**SOURCE:** 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Nevertheless, there were also intriguing differences between U.S.-born and foreign-born respondents, the starkest being on climate change. Whereas 12 percent of U.S.-born respondents rated the environment and climate change as their top election issue, only 4 percent of their foreign-born counterparts did the same. Somewhat less striking, but still noteworthy, is the difference in emphasis placed on healthcare. This issue was more important to foreign-born respondents (14 percent) than those born in the United States (9 percent). Finally, the two groups differed on the issue of crime and public safety, a concern that [has spiked](#) in the Asian American community given the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes following the pandemic. Foreign-born respondents appeared to be more motivated by this issue, with 12 percent of them stating it was their top election issue compared to 7 percent of U.S.-born respondents.

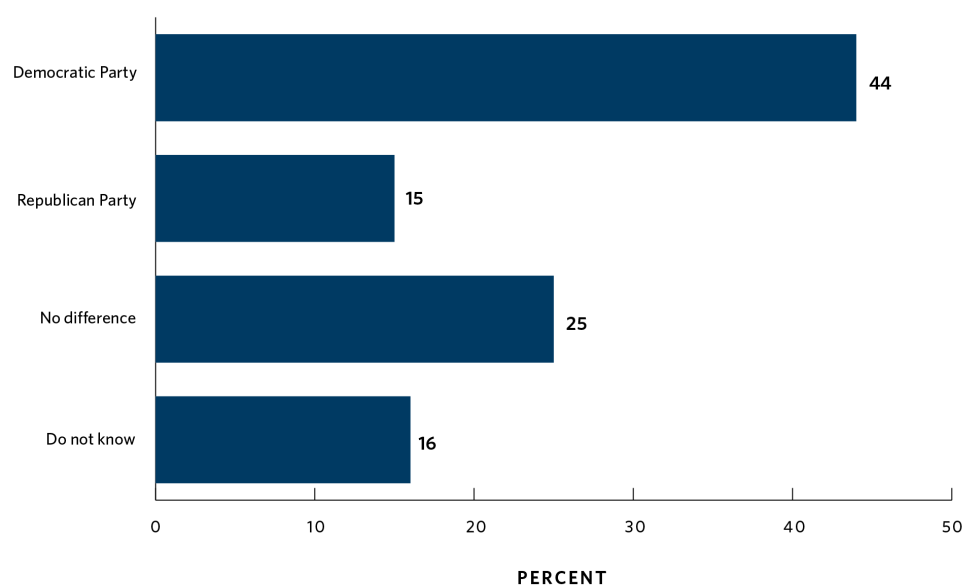
Management of U.S. Foreign Policy

The survey proceeded to ask respondents a range of questions about U.S. foreign policy toward Asia, including the issue of U.S.-China ties. To begin, the survey asked respondents about overall management of U.S. foreign relations toward Asia, specifically whether they believed one of the two major political parties did a better job steering U.S. relations. Forty-four percent of respondents affirmed that the Democratic Party did a better job of managing U.S. relations with Asian nations (see figure 65). This is nearly three times the share of respondents who reported that the Republican Party (15 percent) was a better steward of relations with this part of the world. Twenty-five percent of respondents perceived no difference between the parties while 16 percent did not have an opinion.

FIGURE 65

Partisan Handling of U.S. Foreign Policy with Asia

When it comes to managing U.S. relations with countries towards Asia, which party do you think does a better job?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

These figures are roughly in line with the overall breakdown of partisan identity in the sample. An [earlier essay](#) in this series pointed out that 48 percent of respondents identified as Democrats, 17 percent as Republicans, and 27 percent as independents.

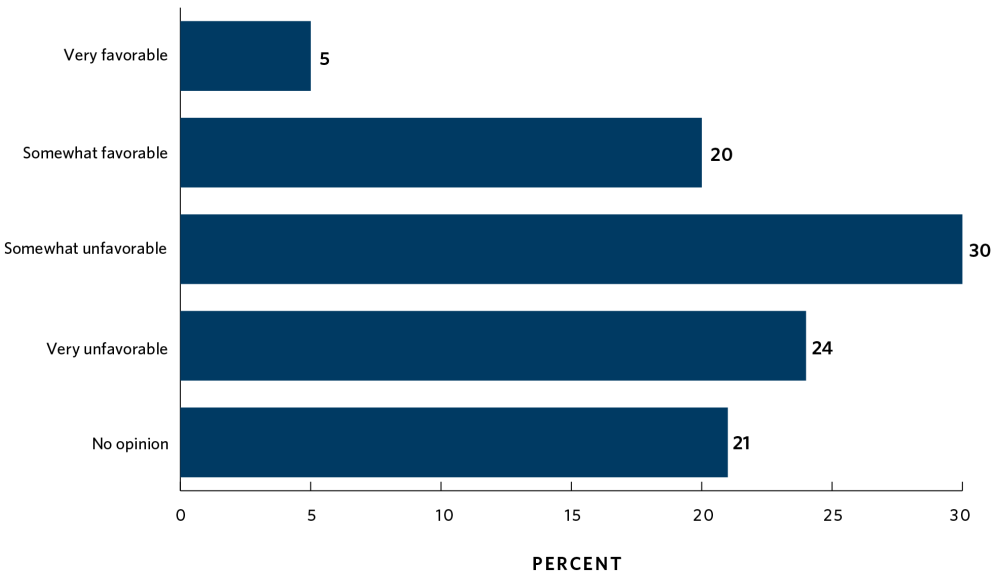
Views on China

Given how much U.S. foreign policy is increasingly oriented around China’s emergence, the survey probed respondents’ views on China and how the United States should engage with the rising power. The survey first asked respondents about their general views toward China by discerning whether they were favorably or unfavorably disposed toward the country (see figure 66).

Only 25 percent of Asian American respondents indicated that they held a favorable view of China, with 5 percent reporting they were very favorable and 20 percent reporting they were somewhat favorable. On the flip side, 30 percent of respondents stated they held somewhat unfavorable views on China and 24 percent reported they were very unfavorable. Taken together, 54 percent of survey respondents held unfavorable views of China. However, a significant share—21 percent—held no clear opinion on China, positive or negative.

FIGURE 66
China’s Favorability

Which of the following best describes your opinion of China?



N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

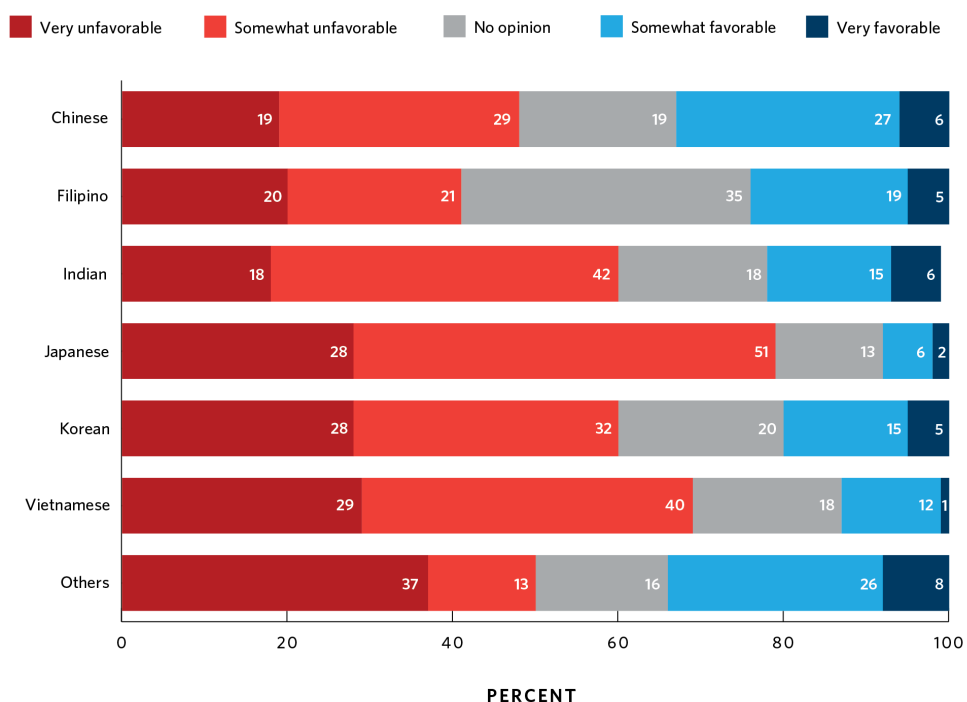
To probe one source of possible variation in respondents’ views on China, views on China were broken down by respondents’ ethnic group (see figure 67). Respondents from smaller ethnic/national origin groups—listed here under the “Other” label—were the most positively inclined, with 34 percent of them holding a favorable opinion of China. This is

just a hair above Chinese respondents' own views, 33 percent of whom reported a favorable opinion. These data are intriguing as they suggest a clear majority of Chinese Americans view their ancestral country poorly. As expected, there is sizable variation across ethnic categories. For instance, Japanese respondents held the least favorable views of China, with just 8 percent reporting a favorable opinion. This was followed by Vietnamese (13 percent), Korean (20 percent), Indian (21 percent), and Filipino (24 percent) respondents.

FIGURE 67

China's Favorability, by Ethnic Group

Which of the following best describes your opinion of China?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding. "Others" refers to small ethnic/national origin groups in the sample.

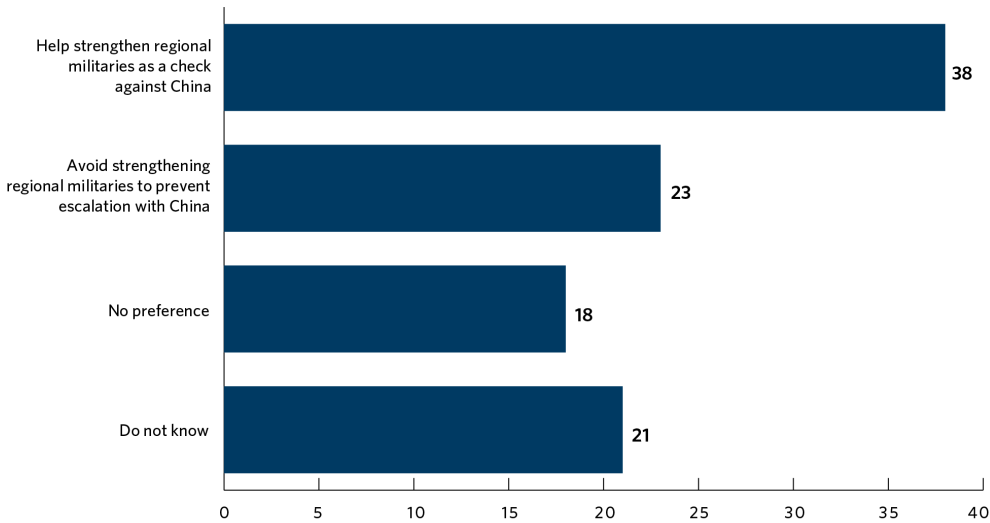
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Going beyond general views on China, the survey then explored respondents' views on U.S. foreign policy toward China. For starters, the survey asked about the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's growing influence. While American strategists and politicians are often reluctant to frame this strategy as an explicit attempt to contain and counter China's rise, this is very much the [subtext](#).

The survey asked respondents about their preferred U.S. posture toward Indo-Pacific nations. Specifically, it asked them whether the United States should help strengthen regional militaries as a check against China or whether it should refrain from strengthening regional military forces in order to prevent escalation with China (see figure 68). A plurality of respondents—38 percent—reported endorsing the more hawkish option, namely that the United States should strengthen regional militaries to contain China. Twenty-three percent, nearly one in four respondents, reported they would prefer America avoid bolstering regional militaries to prevent escalation with China. A large share of respondents did not have strong views on this question. Eighteen percent reported having no preference between these two opposing positions while 21 percent answered “do not know.”

FIGURE 68
Managing China’s Rise

In recent years, the United States has formulated an Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China’s growing influence. Do you think the United States should:



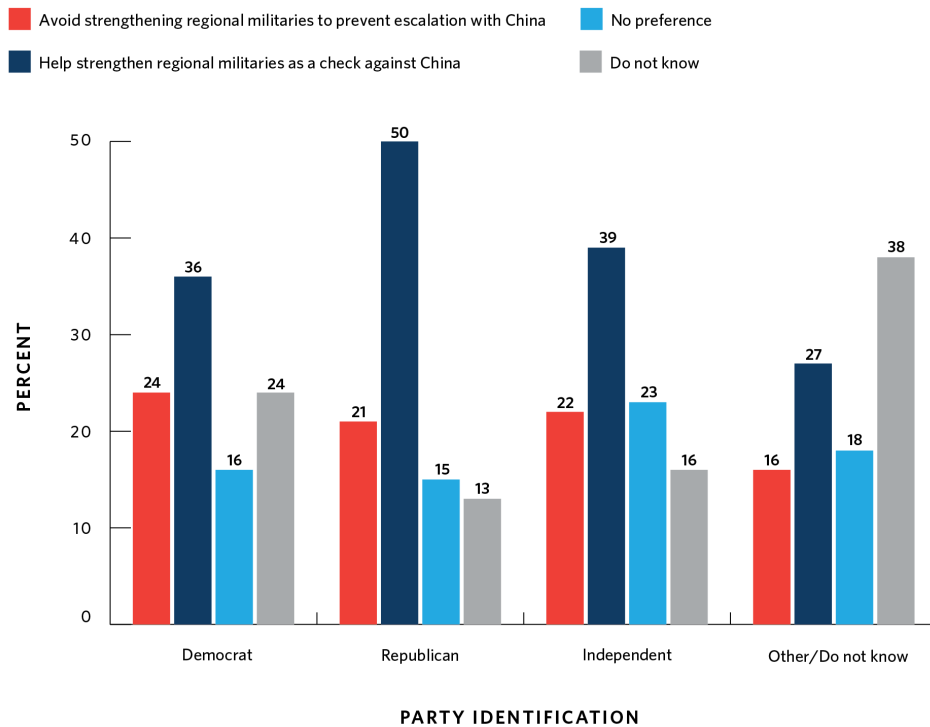
N= 1,000 California adult residents
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

There is a widely held [perception](#), perhaps changing, that Republicans hold more hawkish views on China when compared to Democrats or independent-minded Americans. Figure 69 explores this conjecture by disaggregating the sample by respondents’ self-reported partisan identity. The data support the stylized view about partisan differences on China—to a point. Thirty-six percent of Democrats supported strengthening regional militaries as a check on China compared to 50 percent of Republican respondents. Thirty-nine percent of independents shared this view.

FIGURE 69

Managing China's Rise, by Party Identity

In recent years, the United States has formulated an Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's growing influence. Do you think the United States should:



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

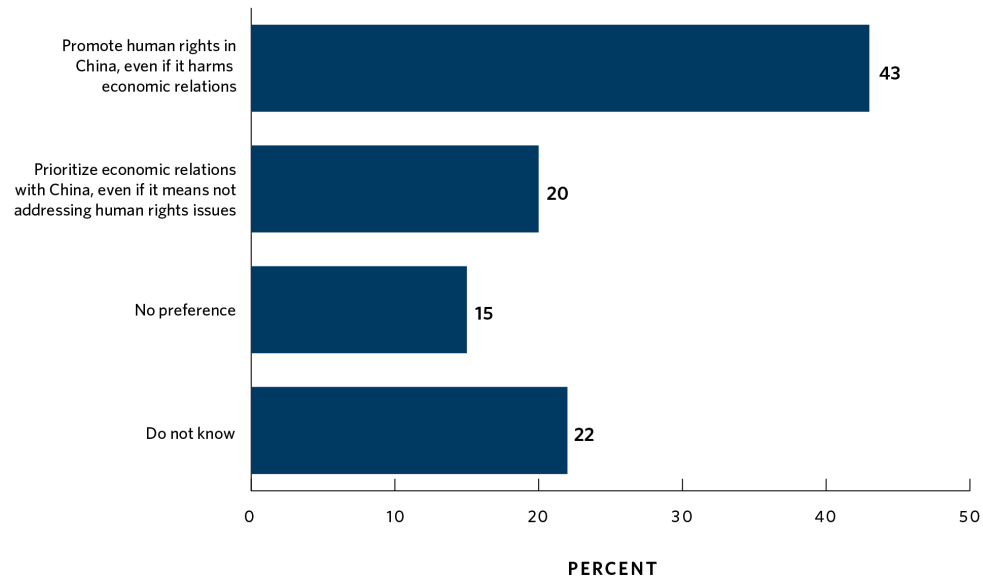
However, the data suggest that Democrats are not necessarily doves. Twenty-four percent of Democrats reported that the United States should avoid strengthening regional militaries to prevent escalation with China, which is just slightly higher than the share of Republicans (21 percent) and independents (22 percent) who reported the same. The big difference between Democrats and Republicans was the share of the former who expressed no opinion (24 percent versus 13 percent).

Finally, the survey asked respondents about the trade-off between economic engagement with China and the need for the United States to address human rights concerns in the country. Specifically, it asked whether the United States should promote human rights in China even if it hurts U.S.-China economic relations or whether it should prioritize economic ties with China even if it means foregoing human rights concerns (see figure 70). Forty-three percent of respondents, a plurality, reported that the United States should promote human rights in China even if doing so comes at the expense of enhancing economic ties. In contrast, one in five respondents supported the converse—prioritizing economic relations over human rights. Fifteen percent of respondents expressed no preference between the two propositions and 22 percent have no opinion.

FIGURE 70

U.S.-China Priorities

When it comes to managing U.S. foreign policy toward China, the United States should:



N= 999 California adult residents

NOTE: Calculation excludes respondents who skipped the question.

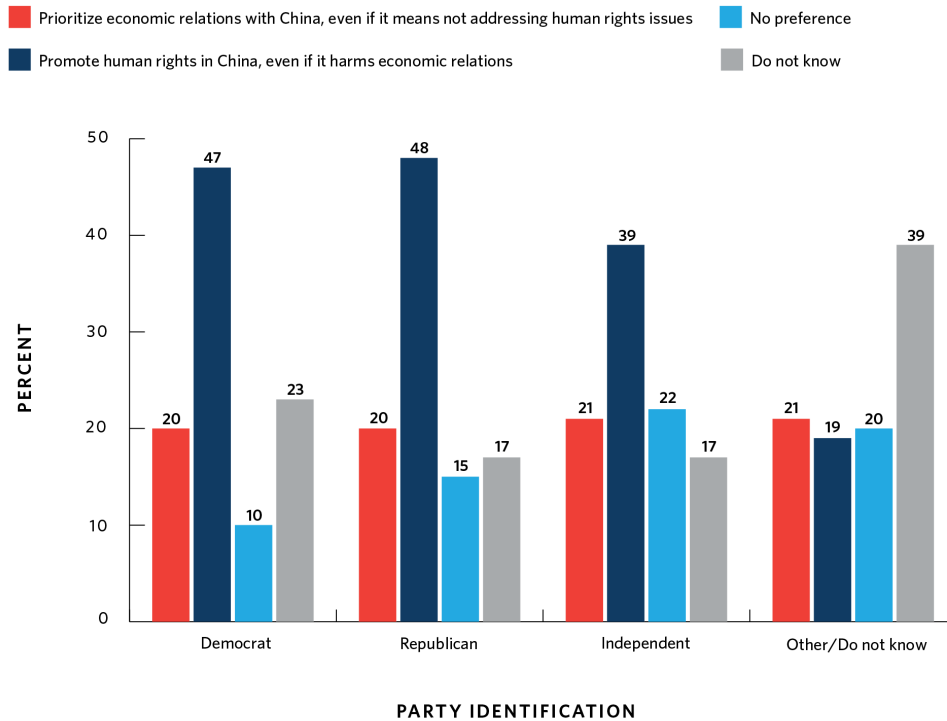
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Unlike the prior question on strengthening regional militaries, there is little evidence of a partisan divide on the issue of human rights (figure 71). Nearly half of Democrats (47 percent) and Republicans (48 percent) reported prioritizing human rights in China over economic relations. However, this share dropped to 39 percent for independents and dipped even lower for those who did not express a partisan affiliation (19 percent). Roughly one in five respondents across partisan categories supported the notion that the United States should prioritize economic relations over human rights.

FIGURE 71

U.S.-China Priorities, by Party Identity

In recent years, the United States has formulated an Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's growing influence. Do you think the United States should:



N= 1,000 California adult residents

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

U.S. Foreign Policy and the Diaspora

The survey also explored the impact that U.S. foreign policy has on the diaspora. This section focuses on two issues: the role of foreign policy as a dividing force in the diaspora and its role as a potential driver of anti-Asian discrimination.

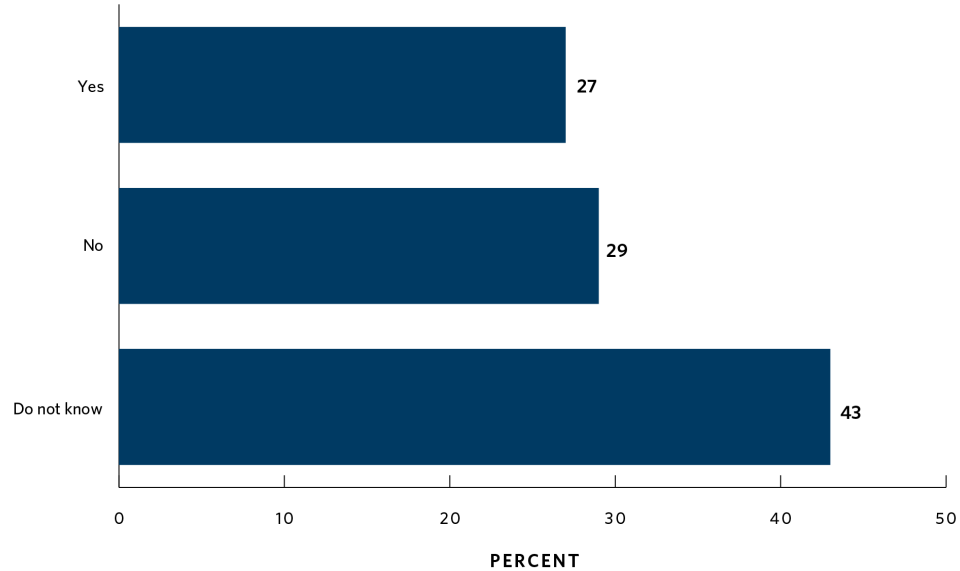
Impacts on Diaspora Solidarity

To assess the degree to which U.S. foreign policy is a polarizing force in the Asian American diaspora in California, the survey asked respondents whether they believed U.S. foreign policy was dividing the Asian American community (see figure 72). Interestingly, the modal response—offered by 43 percent of respondents—was that they did not know. Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported that U.S. foreign policy was dividing the diaspora while another 29 percent believed it is not divisive.

FIGURE 72

Impacts of U.S. Foreign Policy on the Asian American Community

Do you think that U.S. foreign policy is dividing the Asian American community in the United States?



N= 999 California adult residents

NOTE: Calculation excludes respondents who skipped the question.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

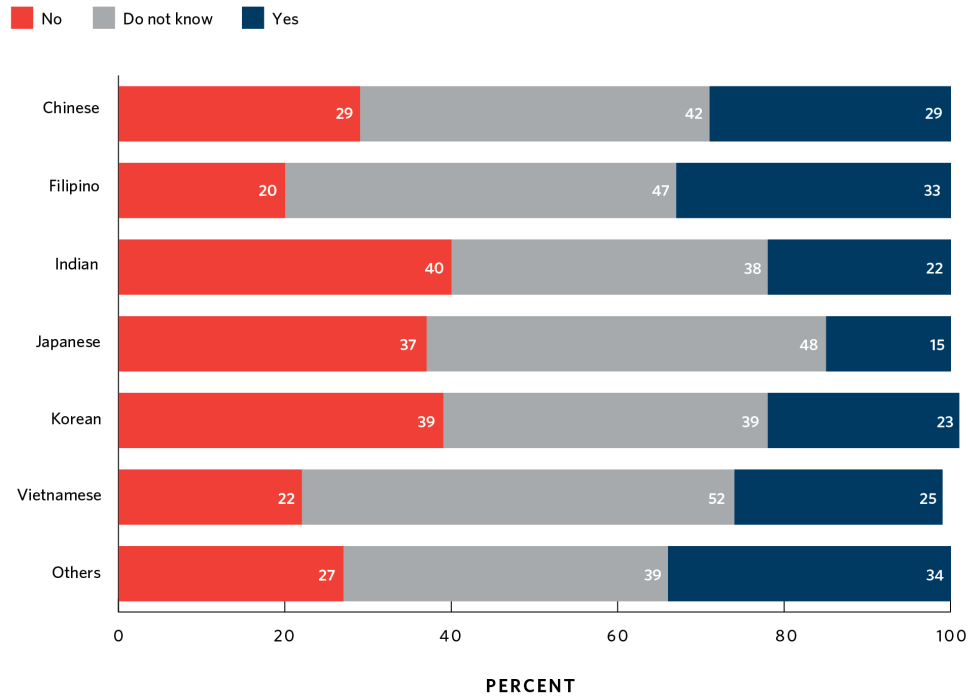
The responses on this question exhibited little variation based on place of birth. Nearly identical shares of foreign- and U.S.-born respondents did not have a clear view of the impacts of U.S. foreign policy. Twenty-nine percent of those born in the United States believed foreign policy was dividing the diaspora compared to 25 percent of foreign-born respondents. Twenty-eight percent and 31 percent of U.S.- and foreign-born respondents, respectively, answered in the negative.

When it came to responses by ethnic category, Filipinos (33 percent) and respondents from other, smaller Asian ethnic groups (34 percent) were the most pessimistic about the impacts of U.S. foreign policy on the diaspora (see figure 73). On the opposite extreme, Japanese respondents (15 percent) were the least pessimistic. Again, it is striking that large shares of respondents—between 38 and 52 percent—across categories expressed no clear view on this question.

FIGURE 73

Impacts of U.S. Foreign Policy on the Asian American Community, by Ethnic Group

Do you think that U.S. foreign policy is dividing the Asian American community in the United States?



N= 1,000 California adult residents

NOTE: Calculation excludes respondents who skipped the question. Numbers do not always equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

Drivers of Discrimination

As discussed in a [previous article](#) in this series, a clear majority—66 percent—of respondents believed that discrimination against Asian Americans had increased over the previous year. In contrast, only 8 percent believed it had decreased and 26 percent believed it had stayed about the same.

There has been a debate over the drivers of this increase, which is backed up by both [governmental](#) and [independent](#) data sources. Some have blamed the coronavirus [pandemic](#) for the spike while others have highlighted the divisive role of [politics](#). Other observers place the blame on U.S. foreign policy, arguing that the [hawkish rhetoric](#) against China has demonized Chinese Americans and other diaspora members who appear to have East Asian ancestry.

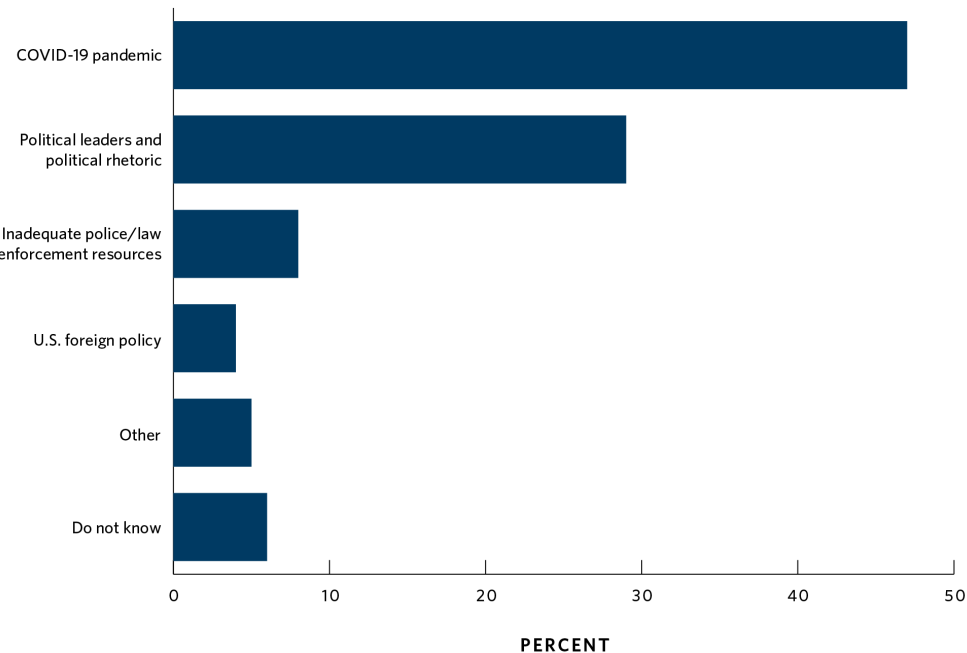
For those who reported that discrimination had increased, the survey asked respondents to identify the factor they believed was most responsible for increasing discrimination against

Asian Americans (see figure 74). Only 4 percent of respondents fingered U.S. foreign policy as the principal culprit. In fact, a near majority—47 percent—blamed the pandemic for the surge in discrimination. Another three in ten respondents (29 percent) believed that political leaders and political rhetoric were to blame, and 8 percent reported inadequate police resources as the main driver. Five percent highlighted another factor while 6 percent did not know.

Conclusion

FIGURE 74
Factors Increasing Discrimination Against Asian American

While there may be many factors at work, what factor do you think is most responsible for increasing discrimination against Asian Americans?



N= 676 California adult residents
NOTE: This question is restricted to respondents who report that discrimination has increased in the last twelve months.
SOURCE: 2022 Survey of Asian Americans in California

As U.S. foreign policy continues its reorientation toward Asia, its relationship with America’s burgeoning Asian diaspora will remain a topic worth scrutinizing. This article provides a first cut, using California’s large Asian American population as a case study. Several takeaways from this initial analysis are evident.

First, foreign policy has not cracked top-tier status as an election issue for Asian Americans. On this, the Asian diaspora looks no different than Americans of other ethnic/racial backgrounds. By and large, Americans are driven by “kitchen table” issues when they cast their ballots and select their leaders. As the data suggest here, Asian Americans—irrespective of place of birth—share a focus on issues like the economy and healthcare. However, there are points of divergence within the community. For instance, it is notable that U.S.-born respondents were three times more likely to identify the environment/climate change as a pressing election-time concern compared to their foreign-born counterparts.

Second, when it comes to the management of U.S. foreign policy toward Asia, respondents believed that Democrats were better stewards. This is perhaps not surprising given the overall partisan tilt toward Democrats in the sample.

Third, a majority of respondents held unfavorable views on China, mirroring the views of the American populace at large. Even among Chinese members of the diaspora, only a minority held favorable opinions of China today. When it comes to the U.S. approach to China, there was a consensus among respondents that the United States should strengthen regional militaries and promote human rights concerns in China even if doing so harms bilateral ties.

Finally, on the question of foreign policy impacts, the diaspora did not perceive foreign policy to be a divisive issue. However, more than four in ten respondents did not have a clear opinion on the subject, perhaps suggesting that they had not thought much about foreign policy’s relationship to diaspora dynamics. Furthermore, while a clear majority perceived that discrimination against diaspora members had surged in the past year, they did not place the blame on foreign policy, identifying instead the harmful impacts of the pandemic and rhetoric employed by politicians in the United States. One should treat this finding with caution, however, given the interrelationships between political rhetoric, the pandemic, and U.S. foreign policy.

Looking ahead, there are several areas worthy of further inquiry. For instance, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked a [new conversation](#) about the prospects of China forcibly occupying Taiwan. Do Asian Americans believe that the United States should get involved in such a conflict, and should it take steps to help Taiwan now even if they might increase the chances of conflict down the road?

Another line of inquiry worth pursuing relates to the tension between maintaining strong bilateral ties between the United States and countries in Asia and the reality of democratic backsliding in the region. To what extent is the diaspora in favor of prioritizing democracy and human rights issues if doing so might cast a pall on the United States’ bilateral relationships with key partners? For instance, a previous [Carnegie survey](#) found that younger

Indian Americans, especially those born in the United States, were wary of domestic changes underway in India, painting a stark contrast with an older generation consisting of immigrants born in India. To what extent is the Asian American diaspora willing to condition bilateral ties on domestic concerns in their countries of origin?

Finally, domestic politics in immigrants' countries of origin does not stop at the water's edge. In many diaspora communities, sources of polarization, division, and societal conflict that might have their origins at home eventually [make their way](#) to the diaspora community abroad. To what extent are these differences being replicated in the United States, spurring new sources of tension in immigrant communities?

The survey results reported here provide a high-level snapshot of the Asian American community in California, but many of the issues identified here will require a more sustained investigation over the long haul as Asia moves toward center stage in U.S. foreign policy.



About the Authors

Milan Vaishnav is a senior fellow and director of the South Asia Program and the host of the Grand Tamasha podcast at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His primary research focus is the political economy of India, and he examines issues such as corruption and governance, state capacity, distributive politics, and electoral behavior. He also conducts research on the Indian diaspora.

Nitya Labh is a nonresident research assistant for the South Asia Program and for the Tata Chair for Strategic Affairs at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She is also a research associate at Rice, Hadley, Gates, and Manuel LLC. She was previously a James C. Gaither Junior Fellow at Carnegie.

The views represented herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of RHGM, its staff, or principals.

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Notes

- 1 The included ethnic subgroups are as follows: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Mongolian, Nepali, Pakistani, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese.
- 2 This percentage was calculated from population numbers from the 2020 America Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- 3 A 2020 survey of Indian Americans conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Johns Hopkins-SAIS, and the University of Pennsylvania—in partnership with YouGov—demonstrates a similar distribution. In that study, 47 percent of respondents classified themselves on the liberal end of the spectrum, 23 percent identified as conservative, and 29 percent classified themselves as moderate.
- 4 A September 2022 Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) survey of 1,700 adult Californians found that jobs, inflation, and the economy were, taken together, respondents' number one concern.
- 5 This same PPIC survey reported that 55 percent of Asian Americans approved of Newsom's job with 19 percent disapproving and 25 percent not expressing an opinion.
- 6 Among PPIC respondents who identify as Asian American, 58 percent approve of Biden's performance, 37 percent disapprove, and 5 percent hold no opinion.
- 7 At the time the survey was conducted, Vivek Ramaswamy had not yet declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination so the survey cannot shed light on his popularity among Asian Americans in California.
- 8 In *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, the Supreme Court ruled that race-based affirmative action programs in higher education admissions processes violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This decision effectively overruled the court's precedent. The ruling was issued in June 2023, nearly one year after the survey was conducted.
- 9 These numbers do not add up to 100 since respondents could report receiving contact from multiple parties.



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