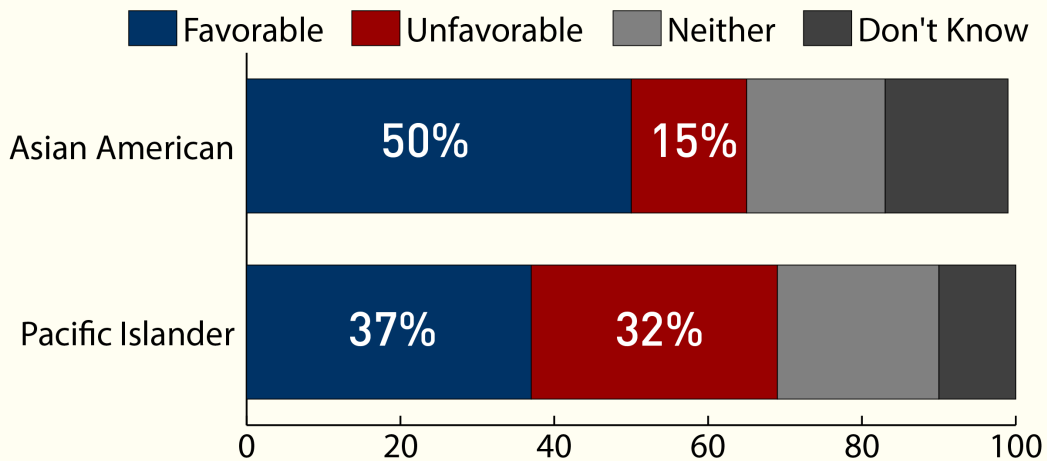


## OPINIONS OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS: THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

SUPPLEMENT TO *THE POLICY PRIORITIES AND ISSUE PREFERENCES  
OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS (SEP 25, 2012)*



### AAPI Opinion on the Affordable Care Act

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Asian American Survey (NAAS) conducted the first nationally representative survey of the policy priorities and issue preferences of Asian Americans in 2008. In 2012, we conducted a tracking survey of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, with even more ethnic groups than in 2008 (Hmong and Cambodian, in addition to Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese) and with the addition of Pacific Islander groups such as Native Hawaiians and Samoans. This report presents the results of 4,755 interviews conducted between July 30, 2012 and October 21, 2012.

The Affordable Care Act is particularly relevant to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as nearly 1 in 7 residents lacked health insurance prior to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.<sup>1</sup> These rates are comparable to uninsured rates among non-Hispanic whites (13%).<sup>2</sup> While there have been consistent surveys of opinion on the Affordable Care Act among blacks and Latinos—showing significant support for the law—the 2012 National Asian American Survey is the only recent effort to gauge support for the ACA among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The NAAS data on public opinion among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders about the Affordable Care Act reveal that:

- A majority of Asian Americans support the Affordable Care Act, nearly three times those who oppose the law (page 2).
- The net level of support for the Affordable Care Act among Asian Americans is comparable to those found among Latinos and African Americans in other surveys conducted at around the same time, between August and October 2012 (page 2).
- Among national origin groups, support for the Affordable Care Act is highest among Vietnamese Americans and Korean Americans. (page 3)
- For Asians in general, support does not diminish when the law is referred to as Obamacare instead of the Affordable Care Act (page 2). However, for Vietnamese in particular, support is lower when the law is referred to as Obamacare, while for Indians, support is significantly higher. These differences are in line with presidential approval ratings among these two groups. (pages 3-4)
- Support for the Affordable Care Act is decidedly more mixed for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. (page 2)

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<sup>1</sup> APIA Health Forum, “The Impact OF Health Care Reform ON Health Coverage For Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders,” featuring analysis of 2009 American Community Survey data. <http://www.apiahf.org/sites/default/files/PA-Factsheet0613-2012.pdf>

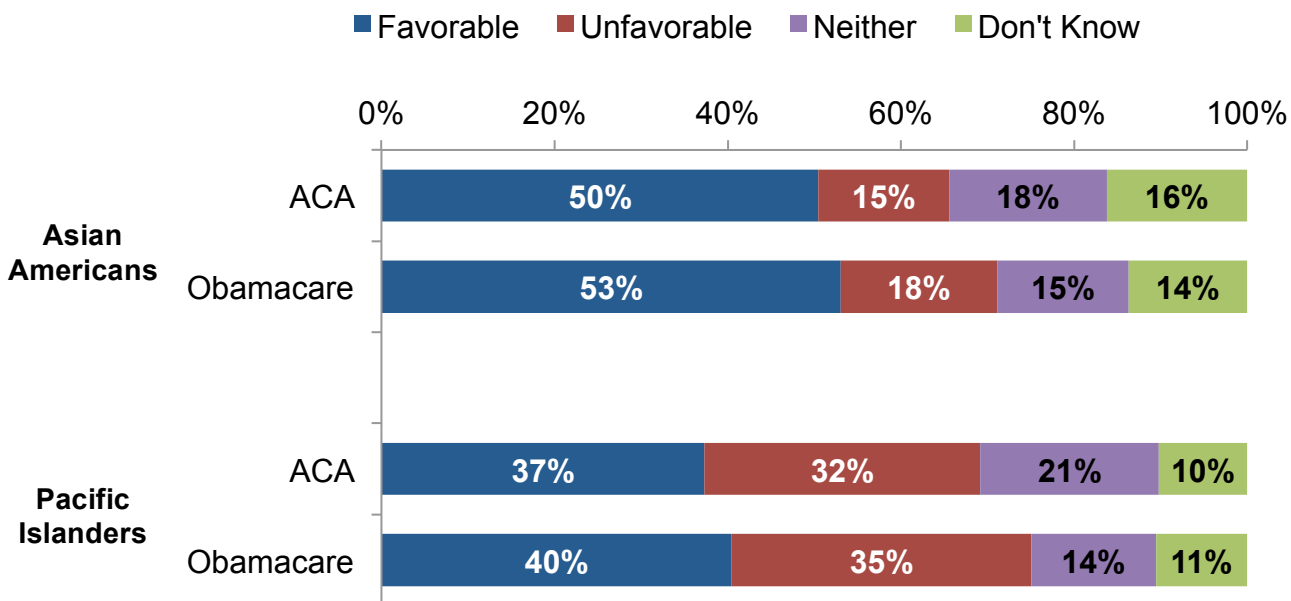
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## AAPI OPINION ON THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT / OBAMACARE

A key aspect to the issue of health care is public opinion on the Affordable Care Act (ACA), sometimes referred to as Obamacare. Surveys of the general population have shown that about 38% to 40% of Americans have a favorable impression of the law, and a greater proportion (43% to 44%) have an unfavorable impression.<sup>3</sup> Support has varied significantly across racial and ethnic groups, with significant opposition among non-Hispanic whites (with an average of 36% favorable and 50% unfavorable during the time of our 2012 survey), to majority support among Latinos (averaging 51% favorable and 29% unfavorable), to very strong support among African Americans (averaging 62% favorable, 17% unfavorable).<sup>4</sup> How do Asian Americans compare?

The 2012 NAAS asked “As you may know, Congress passed a sweeping health care law, [the Affordable Care Act / which some refer to as Obamacare], in 2010. It was then mostly upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Given what you know about the law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?”

**Figure 1. Asian American and Pacific Islander Opinion on Health Care Reform**



*Note: Figures may not total 100% due to rounding*

<sup>3</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll: <http://kff.org/interactive/health-tracking-poll-exploring-the-publics-views-on-the-affordable-care-act-aca/>

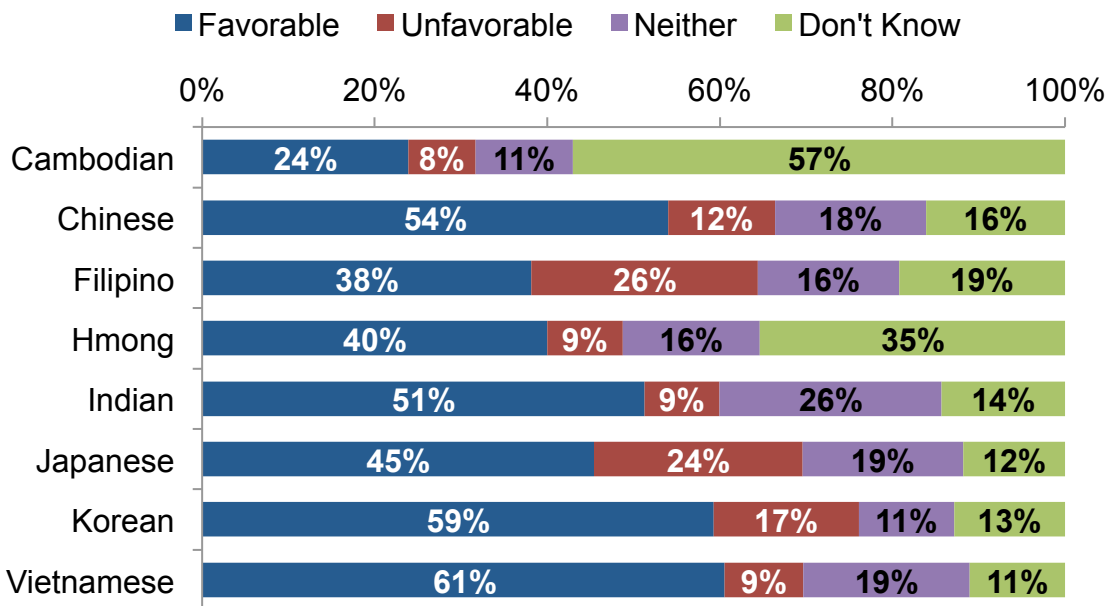
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

As the results indicate (Figure 1), Asian Americans are much more favorably inclined towards the law than opposed to it. About 50% had a favorable impression of the health care law, more than three times the proportion of those who had an unfavorable opinion of it. These indicate a level of support for the Affordable Care Act that are comparable to support among Latinos and African Americans, and in strong contrast to the net opposition to the Affordable Care Act among whites. Importantly, calling the law the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare did not significantly affect the level of support for health care reform.<sup>5</sup>

Pacific Islanders, by contrast, had lower support for the law, although more still had a favorable opinion of the law rather than unfavorable. In addition, calling the law Obamacare led both support and opposition, although these differences by question wording are still within the margin of error for NHPs in the survey.<sup>6</sup>

There are some important differences to note across ethnic groups (Figure 2). Support for the Affordable Care Act was highest among Vietnamese and Korean Americans (61% and 59%, respectively) and lowest among Filipinos and Cambodians (38% and 24%, respectively). This is in line with our findings from 2008, where support for universal health care was highest among Vietnamese Americans and Korean Americans. Among Hmong and Cambodian Americans, large portions of the population did not know what opinion to express with respect to the law (35% and 57%, respectively). For no group is there a net opposition to the Affordable Care Act.

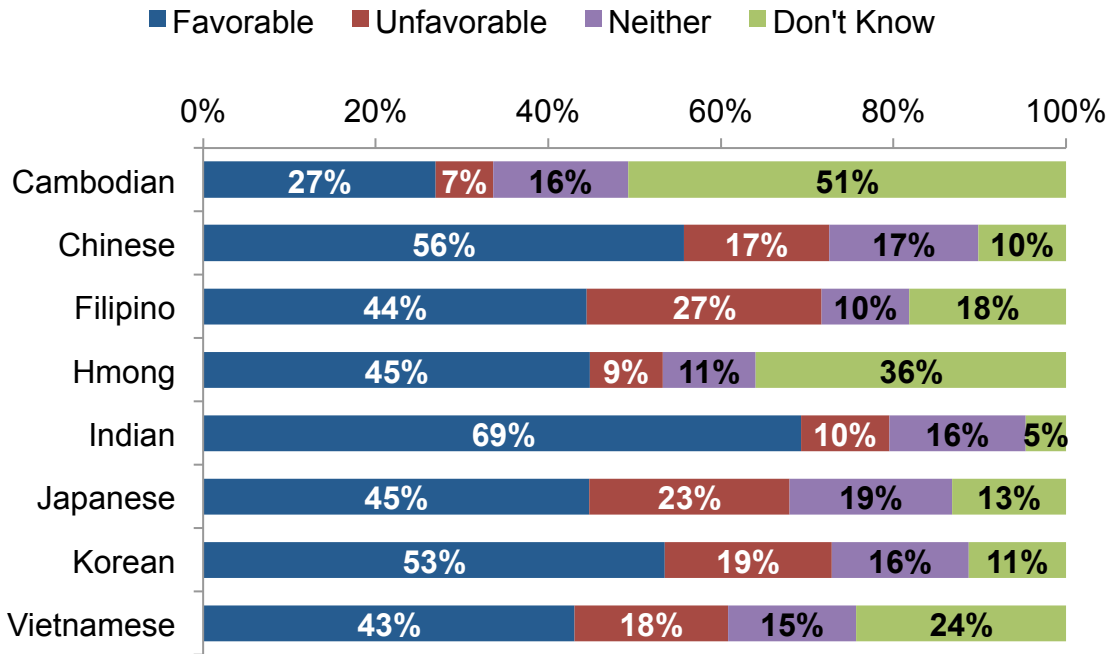
**Figure 2. Asian American on Health Care Reform, By Ethnic Group**  
**a. AFFORDABLE CARE ACT**



<sup>5</sup> With a split sample, the margin of error is +/- 2% for Asian Americans and +/- 6% for NHPs

<sup>6</sup> With a split sample, the margin of error is +/- 2% for Asian Americans and +/- 6% for NHPs

**Figure 2. Asian American on Health Care Reform, By Ethnic Group**  
**b. OBAMACARE**



Interestingly, when the law is referred to as Obamacare (Figure 2b), support drops significantly among Vietnamese (from 61% to 43%). However, support is higher among Indian Americans when the law is referred to as Obamacare (increasing from 51% to 69%). Differences in question wording for all other groups are within the survey's margin of error.

The differing patterns are most likely explained by the fact that Indians in our survey expressed the highest job approval of President Obama (79%) while Vietnamese expressed among the lowest levels of support (57%). It is important to note, however, that Filipinos expressed the lowest Presidential job approval of any group (49%), and we do not see a comparable difference in opinion based on whether the law is described as the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This report, and all other reports and data from the National Asian American Survey are available online at <http://www.naasurvey.com/>.

*Karthick Ramakrishnan* is associate professor of political science at the University of California, Riverside. His research focuses on civic participation, immigration policy, and the politics of race, ethnicity, and immigration in the United States. Ramakrishnan directs the National Asian American Survey, is the founder of [AAPIData.com](http://AAPIData.com), and is writing a book on the rise of state and local legislation on immigration over the past decade.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

National Asian American Survey (NAAS) is a scientific, independent, and nonpartisan effort to gauge the opinions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. In our 2012 survey effort, we benefited greatly from the help of the following individuals and institutions. We are solely responsible for any errors contained herein.

Project partners on the survey who provided significant assistance in funding and outreach included the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) and the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC).

Outreach partners on the survey include 18 Million Rising, Advocates for Youth, API Equality - LA, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, Asian Law Caucus, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Asian Pacific Islander American Vote, Asian Pacific Islander Health Forum, California Immigrant Policy Center, Chinese for Affirmative Action, Japanese American Citizens League, Movement Advancement Project, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Reproductive Health Technologies Project, South Asian Americans Leading Together, South Asian Network, and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

In designing this survey, we benefited from the input of our advisory committee, which included Terry Ao Minnis, Gregory Cendana, Christine Chen, Ben de Guzman, Mary Anne Foo, Gary Gates, Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Morna Ha, Lisa Hasegawa, Alice Hom, Daniel Ichinose, Deepa Iyer, Laura Jimenez, Jee Kim, Kathy Ko, Manju Kulkarni, Jenny Lam, Remy Lee, Sean Lund, Glenn Magpantay, Kirsten Moore, Ineke Mushovic, Priscilla Ouchida, Riamsalio Phetchareun, Christopher Punongbayan, Reshma Shamasunder, Doua Thor, Aimee Thorne-Thomsen, Tommy Tseng and Miriam Yeung.

The National Asian American Survey thanks the following funders for their support of the portion of the survey regarding policy priorities and issue preferences of the Asian and Pacific Islanders: the Ford Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, the Korean American Community Foundation, the Gill Foundation and Anonymous.