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Indian Americans Favor Obama over McCain: Poll

By RICHARD SPRINGER
indiawest.com

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A new poll shows that Indian Americans in the U.S. favor Senator Barack Obama over Senator John McCain by a 53 percent to 13 percent margin, with a large percentage, 33 percent, still undecided.

Among all Asian American groups included in the survey, Indian Americans gave Obama the largest margin of victory except Japanese Americans, who polled Obama over McCain by a 60 percent to 17 percent, with 23 undecided.



Vietnamese Americans are the only Asian American group supporting McCain over Obama - 51 percent to 24 percent, with 24 percent undecided.

In other communities, Obama leads McCain as follows: 41 percent to 12 percent with 43 percent undecided in the Chinese American community; 35 percent to 29 percent with 34 percent undecided in the Filipino community; and 36 percent to 27 percent with 38 percent undecided in the Korean community.

Overall, Asian American respondents preferred Obama by a 41 percent to 24 percent margin, with 34 percent undecided. In the battleground states, Obama also leads with 43 percent to 22 percent for McCain.

One of the authors of the study, Karthick Ramakrishnan, associate professor of political science at the University of California at Riverside, told India-West Oct. 7 that 918 Indian Americans in 41 states were polled among 4,000 Asian Americans in the "National Asian American Survey."

The largest numbers of Indian Americans were interviewed in California, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Texas and Virginia, he revealed.

When those surveyed were asked the question, "Do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, independent, some other party, or do you not think in these terms?," 39 percent of Indian American respondents identified themselves as Democrats, 21 percent as independents, 33 percent as "non-partisan" and just 7 percent as Republicans.

The 7 percent figure tied the Chinese American community as the lowest percent of GOP identification in any Asian American community, and only the Japanese American community had a higher percentage of Democrats at 42 percent.

The Vietnamese community was the only Asian American group with a larger percentage of Republicans (29 percent) than Democrats (22 percent).

The overall total of Asian American party identification was 32 percent Democrat, 19 percent

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Based on the survey's likely voter model, 45 percent of Indian American adults are likely to vote in the 2008 election. However, the likely voter percentages are higher when broken down into Indian American U.S. citizens (65 percent) and Indian American registered voters (74 percent).

Among all Asian American respondents, the most important problem facing the nation was overwhelmingly the economy, with 57 percent of all respondents and 61 percent of likely voters listing it as the top issue. The war in Iraq was a distant second at 9 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

When respondents were given the chance to list three issues, the economy made the top three 75 percent of the time for all respondents and 79 percent of the time for likely voters.

About 70 percent of Indian Americans surveyed said they discussed politics with family and friends, while four percent said they worked for a political campaign, and 13 percent said they contributed to a party, candidate or campaign organization. About 14 percent said they visited the Internet to discuss a candidate or issue.

Asked if any of the results of the survey were unexpected, Ramakrishnan told India-West he was moderately surprised by the size of the shift to the Democratic Party in the Indian American community.

But he cautioned that previous speculation that the Indian American community was fairly split down the middle between Democrats and Republicans before the 9/11 terrorist attacks has to be considered from the perspective that "we didn't have good data from previous years."

He pointed out that the community has "been changing in the 80s and 90s as newer immigrant populations" arrive in America.

Regarding the relatively high Indian American voter registration and participation totals for the Indian American community, compared to some other Asian American groups in the U.S., Ramakrishnan attributed this to higher income and educational levels and more fluent English-language ability.

He also said the survey refutes the idea that the South Asian community was so pro-Hillary Clinton that it would not shift to Obama. "There was speculation that (Asians) would not support Obama because of race, but (the survey) shows it was just a family dispute."

The other researchers of the study were Jane Junn of Rutgers University, Taeku Lee of U.C.-Berkeley and Janelle Wong of USC.

Ramakrishnan said the study, supported by four foundations, was expensive, but the researchers hope to continue with the poll in every presidential year.

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