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Home

News

Sports

Community

Features

Calendar

Columnists

About Us

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Survey: Many Asian Voters Undecided on Elections

Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008

The study shows over 40 percent favor Obama while 24 percent support McCain.

Among Asian American voters, many supporting presidential candidate Barack Obama, but another sizable portion remains undecided; a development that could set the stage for to Asian Americans play a pivotal role in the outcome of the election, according to a new national survey released Monday.

This groundbreaking study, released at a Washington, D.C., press conference Monday morning, was conducted by researchers from four leading universities: Rutgers, The State of University New Jersey; UC Berkeley; UC, Riverside; and USC.

The researchers' 2008 National American Survey (NAAS) shows that 41 percent of Asian Americans are likely to favor Obama, while 24 percent support John McCain. In battleground states, where either candidate could win on Election Day, Obama leads with 43 percent of Asian Americans supporting him and 22 percent favoring McCain.

Researchers point out that a key finding of the study is the high proportion of undecided Asian American voters: 34 percent.

Among the general population, national polls conducted since the major party conventions show that undecided voters are approximately 8 percent of the electorate.

Karthick Ramakrishnan, an associate professor of political science at UC Riverside, points out that "with such a high proportion of undecided voters, Asian Americans are a critical source of potential votes for either candidate in the final weeks of the campaign."

Even in battleground states and among those Asian Americans who were interviewed in the second half of September, more than 30 percent were undecided between Barack Obama and John McCain.

The multi-ethnic, multi-lingual survey of more than 4,000 Asian Americans likely to vote in the election was conducted from Aug. 18 to Sept. 26.

It is the most comprehensive survey to date of the political views of Asian Americans, with interviews conducted in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Janelle Wong, an associate professor of political science at USC, says that "most national polls cannot report the preferences of these likely voters because they do not interview in multiple languages, and the number of interviews they conduct among Asian Americans is very small."

By drawing on the knowledge of political scientists with expertise in survey research and ethnic politics, and with support from several foundations, the NAAS data provide insight about Asian Americans as a whole, the researchers say, as well as about their six largest ethnic subgroups: Asian Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese.



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