

**September 25, 2012**  
**(updated Oct 16, 2012)**

**THE POLICY PRIORITIES AND ISSUE PREFERENCES  
OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS**



*Karthick Ramakrishnan (UC-Riverside) and Taeku Lee, (UC-Berkeley)*

# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>BACKGROUND: THE ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER ELECTORATE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
DEMOGRAPHICS.....	4
<b>ISSUE PRIORITIES OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
POLICY PRIORITIES.....	6
THE ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY AGENDA.....	7
<b>POLICY OPINION ON KEY ISSUES.....</b>	<b>9</b>
PERSONAL FINANCIAL SITUATION AND EFFECTS OF GREAT RECESSION.....	9
HEALTH CARE.....	12
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.....	16
POLICIES ON UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS.....	18
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.....	19
DEFICIT REDUCTION.....	22
NEWS SOURCES AND ETHNIC MEDIA.....	25
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>26</b>
METHODOLOGY.....	26
GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS.....	28
REVISION NOTES.....	28
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population grew faster than any other racial group, at a rate of 46%. They are also an important and growing constituency, as 600,000 new Asian American voters entered the electorate in 2008 and a similar number is expected to do so in 2012.

The growing influence of AAPIs is already apparent in many states and metropolitan areas. As of 2010, AAPI residents exceeded the 5% threshold in nearly 600 cities. In 2012, there are also a record number of Asian Americans running for Congress in 2012, and AAPIs occupy key positions in Washington, D.C. and in various state capitols.

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 are conducting 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 3,376 interviews conducted through September 19, 2012,.

The data on public opinion among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders reveal that:

- The issue priorities of the Asian American and Pacific Islander populations are similar to those of the rest of the country. The economy and jobs are by far the most important issues, followed by health care and education.
- On the issue of health care reform, which has divided support among the general population, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are largely supportive, with about a 3-to-1 ratio in favor.
- Support for health care reform is high regardless of whether the law is referred to as the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare.
- On affirmative action, which is an issue that the Supreme Court will consider this term, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are largely supportive, with about three quarters of Asian American adults supporting “affirmative action programs designed to help blacks, women, and other minorities get better jobs and education.”

## BACKGROUND: THE ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER ELECTORATE

### Demographics

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. There are over 18 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States today. Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population grew faster than any other racial group, at a rate of 46%. They are also an important and growing constituency, as 600,000 new Asian American voters entered the electorate in 2008.

Their growing policy importance is already apparent in states such as California and New Jersey, and metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Houston, and Washington, D.C. At the same time, AAPI populations are also growing in “new destination” states like North Carolina, Nevada, and Virginia.

The Asian American population is also characterized by historic patterns of geographic concentration, emergent patterns of geographic dispersion, and a continuing pattern of striking demographic diversity.

- Asian Americans exhibit patterns of concentrated geographic settlement in particular states and regions. Five states (California, New York, Texas, Hawaii, and New Jersey) account for about 60% of the national Asian American population. California is by far the largest state for Asian Americans, accounting for one third of all Asian American adults.
- Within California, Asian Americans are 15% of the state's resident population. They constitute a majority of the population in Hawaii (57%), and are also a significant portion of the state populations New Jersey (9%), Washington (9%), New York (8%), and Virginia (7%).
- The Asian American population is also growing rapidly beyond the “traditional gateways.” Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population has grown by more than two-thirds in 15 states. In fact, Nevada, North Carolina, and Virginia are home to some of the fastest growing Asian American populations in the country (growth rates of 116%, 85%, and 71%, respectively, between 2000 and 2010).
- Asian Americans are remarkably diverse in terms of ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, cultural orientation, socioeconomic status, and immigration histories. Focusing on regions and countries of origin alone, Asian Americans have shifted from a population of primarily working-age men from China and Japan in 1900 to a population today that is composed of six groups whose populations account for 86 percent of the Asian American population in the United States (22% Chinese, 20% Indian, 18% Filipino, 11% Vietnamese, 10%

Korean, and 5% Japanese). The three next largest groups, Pakistanis, Hmong, and Cambodians together account for another 6% of the Asian American population.

- The Pacific Islander population is even more concentrated in particular groups: Native Hawaiians and Samoans account for a majority of the Pacific Islander population, accounting for 31% and 20%, respectively, of the national resident population. Tongans, Gauamanians, Fijians, and other Micronesian and Melanesian groups constitute the rest of the Pacific Islander population in the United States.
- On average, Asian Americans have high rates of educational attainment (86% have completed high school, and 49% have a Bachelor's degree or higher). However, these averages mask significant diversity within the population. Southeast Asian groups, in particular, have rates of high school completion well below the national average of 85% (61% for Hmong, 62% for Cambodians, and 72% for Vietnamese). And Pacific Islanders have high school completion rates on par with the national average, but college graduation rates that are significantly lower (17%, compared to the national average of 28%).
- Rates of health insurance also vary widely across these various groups. In general, lower-income Asian American and Pacific Islander groups have higher rates of uninsurance, although Korean Americans have among the highest rates of uninsurance (22%) despite earning incomes on par with the national average.<sup>1</sup>
- These various groups also have different rates of civic and political participation, and patterns of public opinion, as we outline in this report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States, 2011* (Los Angeles, CA, 2011).

## ISSUE PRIORITIES OF ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

What are the issue priorities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders? This section provides information about issue salience and the policy agenda of Asian Americans.

### Policy Priorities

Respondents were asked what they felt was “the most important problem facing the United States today.” The survey allowed people to name up to two issues.

**Figure 1: Most Important Problem in the United States (1<sup>st</sup> Mention)**

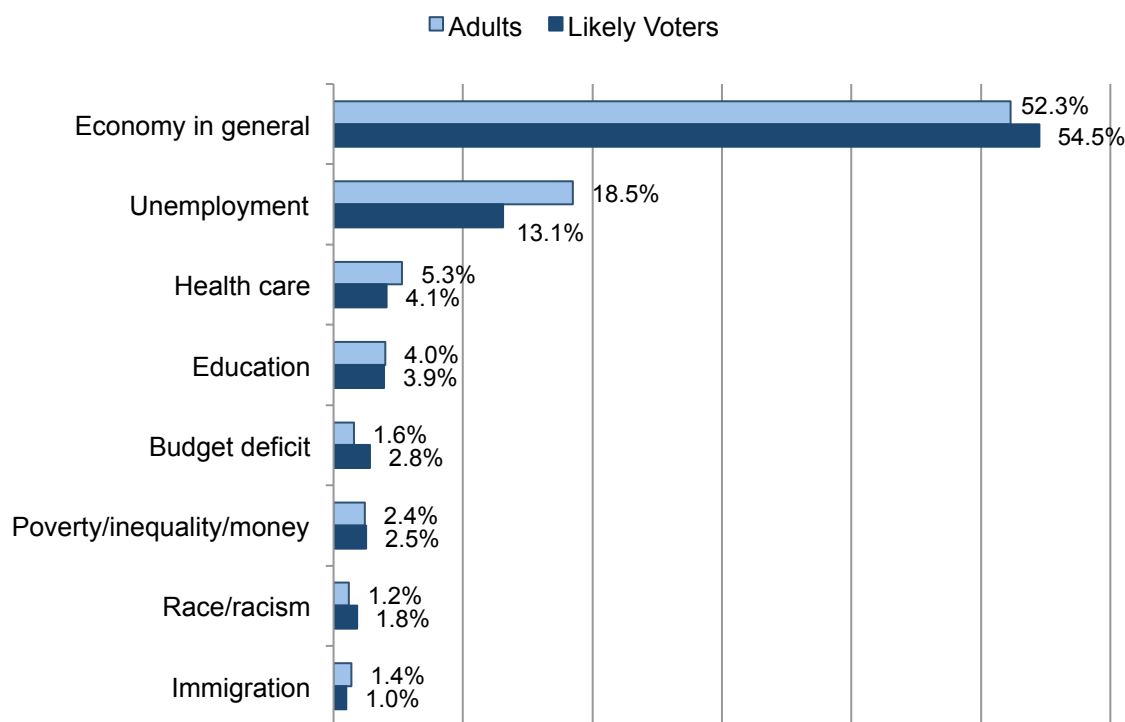


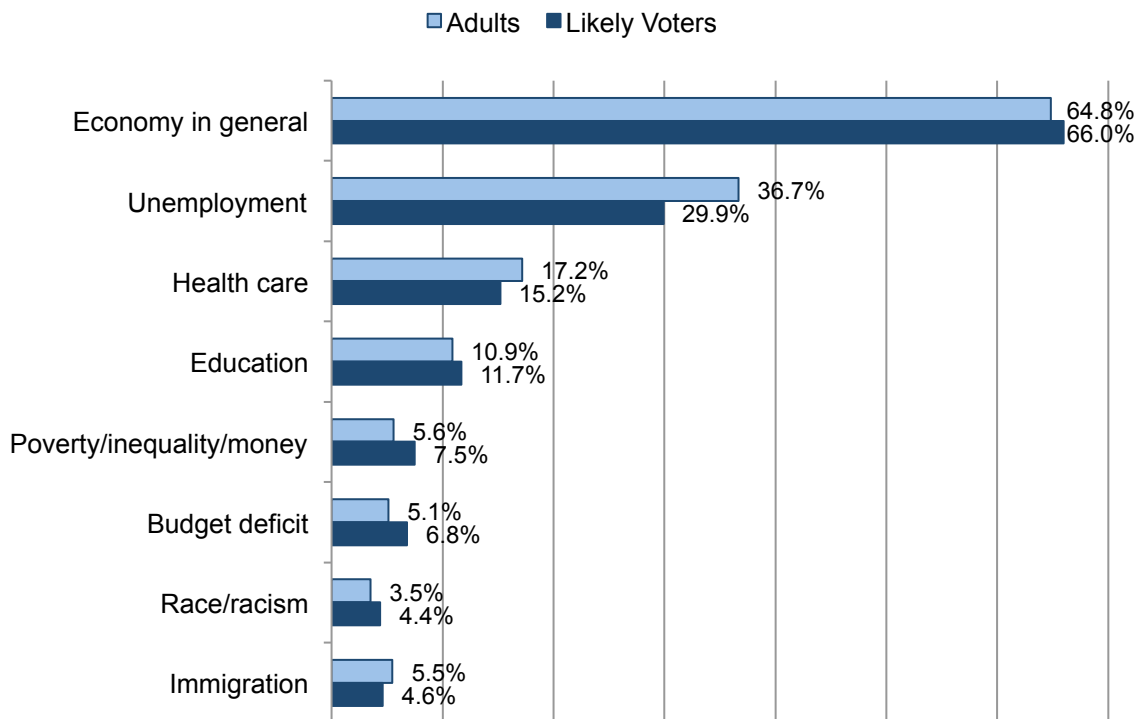
Figure 1 compares the proportion of Asian American likely voters and all respondents in the 2012 NAAS on this question.<sup>2</sup> The economy is, unsurprisingly, the most commonly

<sup>2</sup> We make this distinction because of the well-established academic scholarship on issue preferences and policy representation which: 1) indicates that the issue preferences of participants may indeed deviate from those of nonparticipants, and 2) indicates that the views of voters are more likely to be represented in policy decisions than the views of nonvoters. This is particularly important to understanding the AAPI community, to see if those who “speak” for AAPIs through participation have the same issue preferences as those who do not. (See Kim Quaile Hill and Jan E. Leighley. 1992. “The Policy Consequences of Class Bias in State Electorates.” *American Journal of Political Science* 36(2): 351-365; John D. Griffin and Brian Newman. 2005. “Are Voters Better Represented?” *The Journal of Politics* 67(4): 1206–1227; Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.)

cited national problem, named by a majority of both likely voters and all respondents. Following a distant second is the related issue of unemployment and jobs, with health care and education running third and fourth. Very few respondents mentioned issues like the budget deficit, poverty and inequality, race and racism, or immigration as a most important national problem. While there are few differences between the full 2012 NAAS sample and identified likely voters, likely voters are less likely to mention unemployment as a critical problem.

While most surveys of the “most important problem” only record the first mention made by respondents, the 2012 NAAS allowed respondents to name another issue that ranked very high in their minds. In our survey, 82 percent mentioned two issues as “most important.” The basic rank order of issue priorities remains mostly unchanged in this expanded measure of issue priorities, but the number of mentions of issues other than general economic concerns increased noticeably (Figure 2). Roughly one in three mention unemployment and jobs as a critical issue, although likely voters remain less concerned than non-voters. We also find that nearly one in six likely voters cite health care as a key issue, with education running closely behind.

**Figure 2: Most Important Problem in the United States (Any Mention)**



### The Asian American Policy Agenda

The 2012 NAAS also asked its respondents to name the *one* issue that was most important to them *personally* (that is, compared to “the most important problem facing

the United States”). As in 2008, we use this measure to gain some sense of what an Asian American agenda might be, through the process of aggregating the most important problems mentioned by Asian American adults.

By this personalized measure of issue priorities, general concerns about the economy were still prominent, but noticeably less so than when defined as a national problem (47 percent among likely voters). Unemployment and jobs remains unchanged in its position as the second most commonly identified personal priority. The discernible shifts in the policy agenda for Asian Americans is seen with a greater attention to health care (12% among likely voters and 10% among all adults for Asian Americans) and, to a very modest extent, education (6% among both groups).

**Table 3: Most Important Problem Facing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (All Adults)**

	<b>Asian Americans</b>	<b>Pacific Islanders</b>
<b>Economy in general</b>	36%	28%
<b>Unemployment/Jobs</b>	17%	11%
<b>Healthcare</b>	10%	8%
<b>Education</b>	6%	4%
<b>Federal budget/deficit/debt</b>	2%	3%
<b>Taxes</b>	2%	1%
<b>Dissatisfaction with government</b>	1%	2%
<b>Immigration</b>	1%	1%
<b>Lack of money</b>	1%	4%
<b>Race Relations/Racism</b>	1%	3%
<b>Fuel/Oil prices</b>	1.0%	1.8%
<b>Inequality/Gap between rich and poor</b>	1%	0%
<b>Environment/Pollution</b>	0.7%	0.2%
<b>Poverty/Hunger</b>	1%	2%
<b>Abortion</b>	0.5%	--
<b>Gay rights issues</b>	0.2%	0.4%
<b>Birth control/Contraception</b>	--	--
<b>Other</b>	11%	23%
<b>Don't Know</b>	7%	7%



## POLICY OPINION ON KEY ISSUES

### Personal Financial Situation And Effects Of Great Recession

As we noted earlier in this report, at the very top of the list of issue priorities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is the economy in general and unemployment and jobs more specifically. There are good reasons for concern about the differential effects of the Great Recession on minority populations. A recent study from the Economic Policy Institute, for instance, found higher rates of change in unemployment among Asian Americans with advanced degrees compared to their white counterparts.<sup>3</sup> The 2012 NAAS asked its respondents a standard way of gauging personal economic well-being in surveys: “We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you (and your family) are better off, worse off, or about the same as you were a year ago?”

**Table 4. Personal Financial Situation Compared to One Year Ago (All Adults)<sup>4</sup>**

	<b>Better</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>
<b>Asian Americans</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>59%</b>
Chinese	17%	25%	57%
Indian	15%	16%	68%
Filipino	24%	19%	57%
Vietnamese	20%	27%	51%
Korean	13%	28%	58%
Japanese	17%	17%	65%
Cambodian	17%	20%	56%
Hmong	17%	32%	48%
Native Hawaiian	22%	19%	59%
Samoan	21%	20%	56%

Table 4 shows that -- notwithstanding the differential effects of the Great Recession -- most Asian Americans held their ground financially between 2011 and this year. Of those who did not report getting along “about the same” as last year, a modestly higher proportion (22 percent) reported worse conditions than the number reporting better conditions (18 percent). There are some noticeable differences between ethnic groups

<sup>3</sup> Algernon Austin, “Hidden Disadvantage: Asian American Unemployment and the Great Recession,” Economic Policy Institute Issue Brief #277 (May 28, 2010). Accessed online in September 2012 at [http://www.epi.org/publication/hidden\\_disadvantage/](http://www.epi.org/publication/hidden_disadvantage/)

<sup>4</sup> Don’t Know and Refused responses excluded

in how well Asian Americans are surviving through the Great Recession: Hmong, Korean, and Vietnamese Americans are most likely to report worsening financial times, with 32, 28, and 27 percent, respectively, reporting that they were worse off than a year ago. The proportion of Native Hawaiians and Samoans reporting that they are worse off is about the same as for the Asian American population.

To delve more fully into the impact of the Great Recession on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the 2012 NAAS also asked respondents if they had experienced a home foreclosure or been laid off or lost a job “since the economic crash in 2008.” Table 5 shows that one out of every 20 Asian Americans in our survey reported a home foreclosure and one in seven reported a job loss or lay-off. When the two measures are combined, 17 percent of Asian Americans either lost their house or their job since 2008, with about 2 percent losing both.

Some groups here are clearly hit harder: more than 9 percent of Filipino Americans and 11 percent of Hmong and Cambodians reported home foreclosures since 2008; job losses weigh most heavily among Cambodians (24 percent) and the Hmong (20 percent). Hmong and Cambodians are also most likely to have been hit twice with setbacks: 4 percent of Hmong and 5 percent of Cambodians report having lost *both* their jobs and their homes since 2008. For Native Hawaiians and Samoans, the proportion reporting job loss is comparable to Asian Americans. For foreclosures, Samoans reported far higher rates than for Asian Americans (16%).

**Table 5. Experiences with Foreclosure and Job Loss since 2008**

	<b>Foreclosure</b>	<b>Job Loss</b>
<b>Asian American</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Chinese	4.6%	17%
Indian	3.9%	9%
Filipino	9.4%	15%
Vietnamese	2.2%	11%
Korean	3.6%	17%
Japanese	1.0%	8.4%
Cambodian	11%	24%
Hmong	11%	20%
Native Hawaiian	5%	14%
Samoan	16%	15%

The post-2008 effects are also keenly felt in specific financial challenges and risks faced by Asian Americans. 2012 NAAS respondents were given a list of issues “people have mentioned as challenges they face” and then asked to assess “how serious of a problem

each is for you and your family.” The list included the following sources of economic uncertainty -- the affordability of college, student loans or college debt, the cost of taking care of the elderly, medical bills, credit card debt, and the cost of rent or mortgage. Worries about these various sources of financial stress are widespread. Asian American adults were most likely to identify their ability to afford college as a “very serious” problem (38 percent), with concerns about the cost of elderly care (33 percent), payment of one's student loans (31 percent), and medical bills (29 percent) following closely behind, and relatively fewer Asian Americans identifying the affordability of rent or mortgage (26 percent) or credit card debt (18 percent) as “very serious” problems for them or their families.

**Table 6. Challenges Facing Self and Family (Asian Americans)**

	<b>Cost college</b>	<b>Cost elderly</b>	<b>Cost rent/mort</b>
<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>	5%	7%	6%
<b>Not at all serious</b>	19%	20%	24%
<b>Not very serious</b>	10%	12%	20%
<b>Fairly serious</b>	23%	21%	20%
<b>Very serious</b>	38%	33%	26%
<b>Don't Know</b>	4%	5%	3%
<b>Refused</b>	1%	1%	0%

	<b>College debt</b>	<b>Medical debt</b>	<b>Credit Card debt</b>
<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>	11%	8%	9%
<b>Not at all serious</b>	22%	29%	34%
<b>Not very serious</b>	14%	16%	20%
<b>Fairly serious</b>	17%	12%	14%
<b>Very serious</b>	31%	29%	18%
<b>Don't Know</b>	5%	6%	5%
<b>Refused</b>	0%	0%	0%

## Health Care

Respondents cited health care as one of the most important problems facing the nation. 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 show 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>5</sup>

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?”

As the results indicate (Table 9), 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. Importantly, calling the law the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare did not significantly affect the level of support for health care reform.

**Table 9. Opinion on Health Care Reform**

	ASIAN AMERICANS		PACIFIC ISLANDERS	
	Affordable Care Act	Obamacare	Affordable Care Act	Obamacare
<b>Favorable</b>	49%	51%	36%	41%
<b>Unfavorable</b>	15%	18%	28%	34%
<b>Neither</b>	20%	17%	21%	14%
<b>Don't Know</b>	15%	13%	12%	9%
<b>Refused</b>	1%	1%	3%	2%

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 drove both support and opposition to the law higher.

Among the various ethnic groups, support was highest among Vietnamese and Korean Americans for the Affordable Care Act (61% and 60%, respectively) and lowest among Filipinos (35%). This is in line with our findings in 2008, support for universal health care was highest among Vietnamese Americans and Korean Americans. Among Hmong and Cambodian, large portions of the population did not know what opinion to express with respect to the law (37% and 58%, respectively). Interestingly, when the law is referred

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/8342-C.pdf>

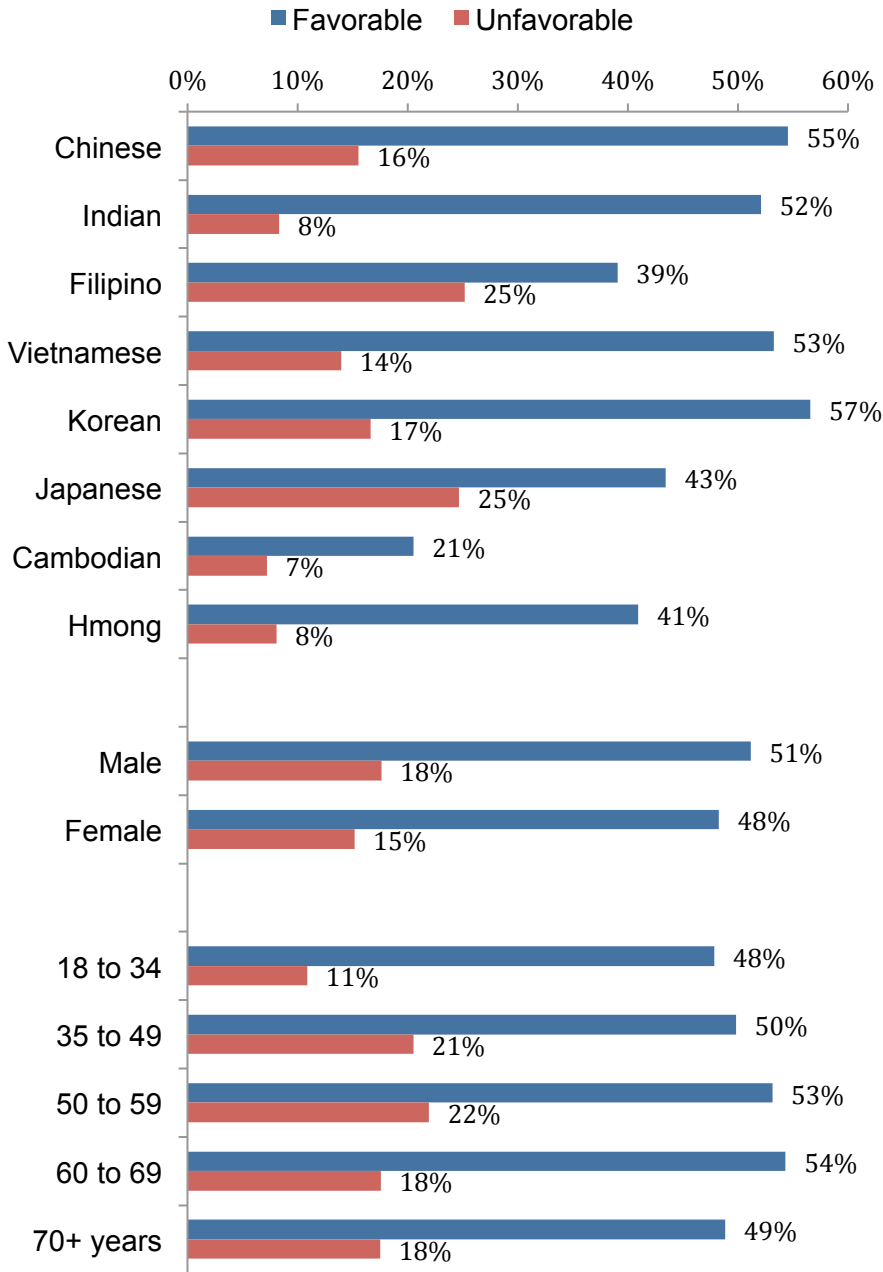
to as Obamacare, support drops considerably among Vietnamese (from 61% to 45%), but rises among Indian Americans (whose level of support increases from 44% to 61%).

In Figure 6, we present overall support for the health care law (using either version) for various subgroups in the population. Support is high for most groups, except for Filipinos where many express opposition to the law, and among Hmong and Cambodian where many have not yet formed their opinion. There are no significant differences in support for the law by gender, although interestingly, young adults were less supportive of the law than those in higher age groups.

In addition to asking our respondents how favorably they viewed the law, we also asked if they believed that they and their family would be better off, or worse off, under law. We also asked the same question about whether they believed that the United States would be better off or worse off under the law (See Figure 7 and 8).

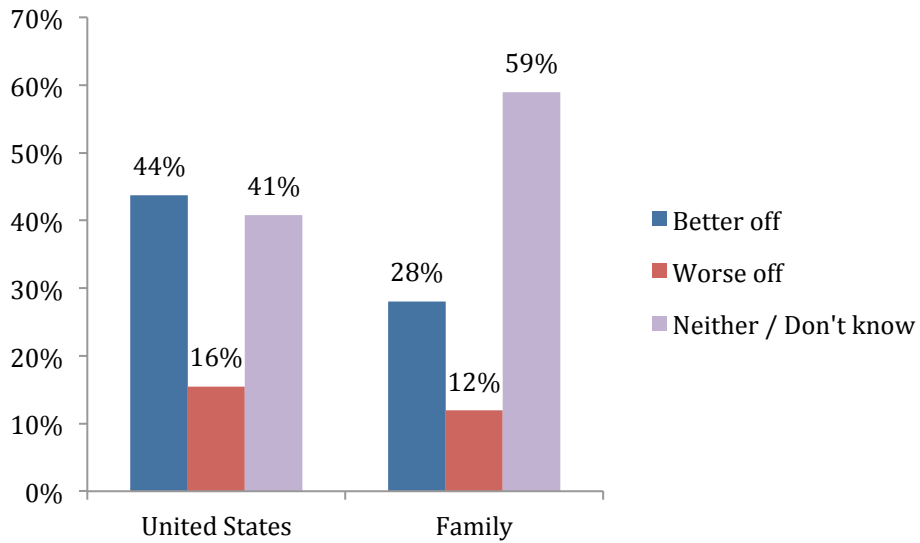
Among Asian Americans, more respondents saw their family as better off than worse off, and many more respondents saw the country as being better off than worse off because of the law. Among Pacific Islanders, opinion was decidedly more mixed when it came to one's own family (an almost-even split between better off and worse off), and a net positive when thinking about the country more generally.

**Figure 6. Opinion on Health Care Reform,<sup>6</sup> by Subgroup (Asian Americans)**

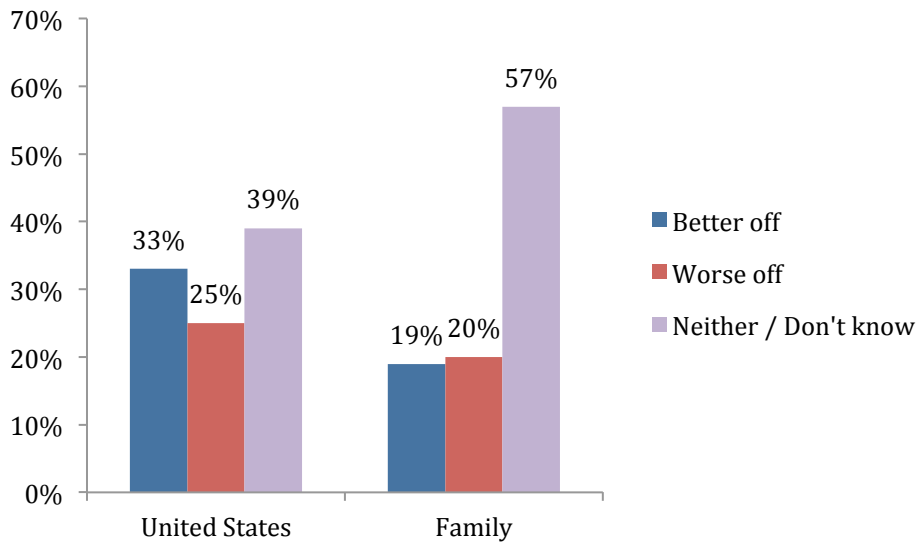


<sup>6</sup> Results total 100% if “neither,” “don't know” and refusals are added.

**Figure 7. Evaluations of Effects of Health Care Reform (Asian Americans)**



**Figure 8. Evaluations of Effects of Health Care Reform (Pacific Islanders)**



## Affirmative Action

In anticipation of the *Fisher v. Texas* Supreme Court ruling, NAAS offers us a comprehensive, updated and definitive view of Asian American and Pacific Islander public opinion on affirmative action. While a handful of groups in the Asian American community have claimed that there is little support for affirmative action, our findings show the opposite.

We model our question on one asked by the Pew Research Center in July 2002, which asked “In order to overcome past discrimination, do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs designed to help blacks, women, and other minorities get better jobs and education?”<sup>7</sup>

Most rationales for upholding affirmative action today do not refer to legacies of past discrimination, but rather to promote the goal of diversity in institutions. Accordingly, we offer a different rationale in our 2012 survey “In order to promote diversity...,” but also offer a version of the question that does not provide any such rationale. We provide results for both versions of the question below (See Figure 9).

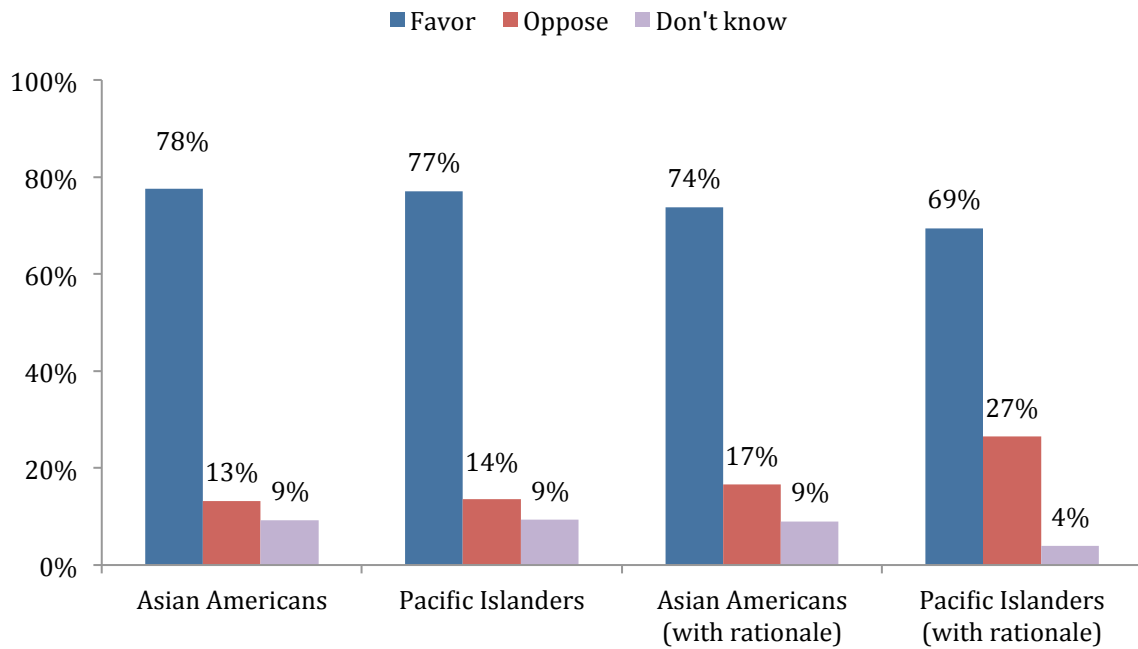
As the results indicate, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders both overwhelmingly support affirmative action programs (by a margin of 78-13 and 77-14, respectively). And these high levels of support are not dependent on the introduction of rationales for improving diversity. Indeed, our results indicate a slight decline in support for affirmative action when the rationale of diversity is mentioned.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Conflicted Views of Affirmative Action,” *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, n.d., <http://www.people-press.org/2003/05/14/conflicted-views-of-affirmative-action/>.



**Figure 9: Opinion on Affirmative Action<sup>8</sup>**



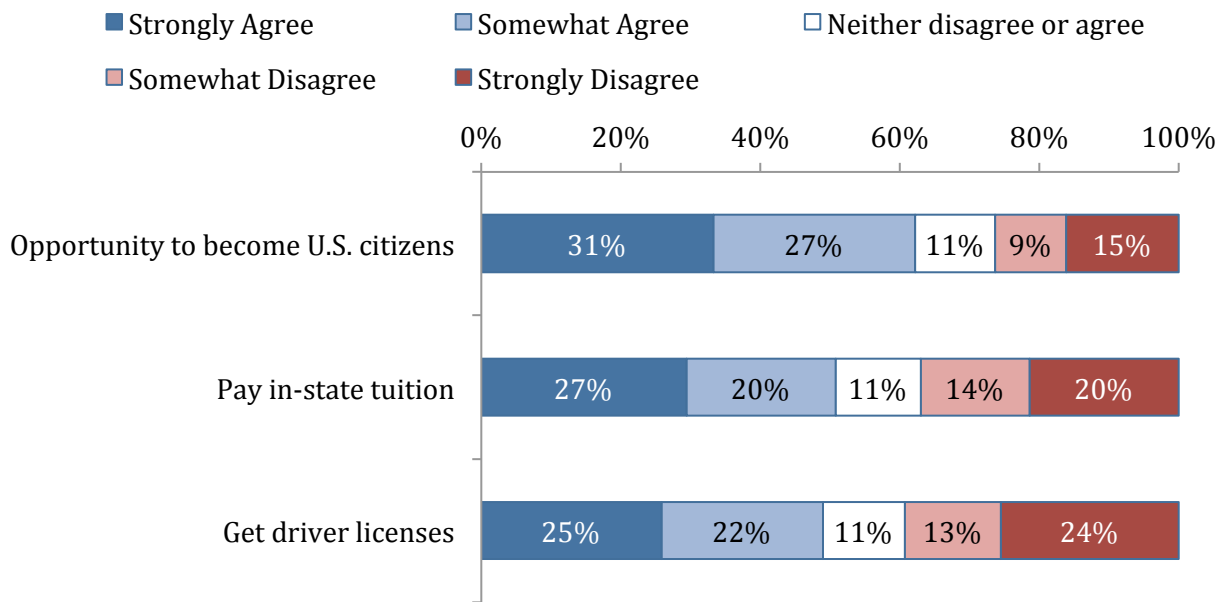
<sup>8</sup> Question wording: [In order to promote diversity,] do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs designed to help blacks, women, and other minorities get better jobs and education?

## Policies On Undocumented Immigrants

While political discussions about undocumented immigrants often centers on Latinos, it is estimated that 1 million undocumented Asian American immigrants are currently living in the US.

As Figure 10 indicates, a majority of Asian Americans support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants (31 percent strongly agree and 27 percent somewhat agree). Fewer Asian Americans support the opportunity for undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition at public universities (47 percent) or to obtain state driver licenses (47 percent).

**Figure 10: Opinion on Policies Towards Undocumented Immigrants<sup>9</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Question wording: there has been a lot of recent attention on illegal or undocumented immigrants. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Undocumented or illegal immigrants should be allowed to: 1) Get driver's licenses, 2) Pay in-state tuition at public universities, 3) Have the opportunity to eventually become U.S. citizens.

## Environmental Protection

Starting in 1989, the Gallup polling organization asked Americans the following simple question with respect to their identification with the goals of the environmentalist movement: “Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?” In the early 1990s, over 70% of Americans said they did, but this proportion declined throughout the decade and, by 2000, fewer than one-half of Americans (47%) considered themselves environmentalists.<sup>10</sup> In July 2008, the ABC News organization repeated this question and, by then, only about two in five indicated that they identify as environmentalist (41%).

Another way to ascertain the public commitment to environmentalism has been to ask about its priority in relation to economic growth. Gallup has phrased the tradeoff in priorities in the following manner:

*Which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree:*

*Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth, OR*

*Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent*

Even by this measure, the proportion of Americans giving priority to the environment has declined over the past 10 years, from 47% in 2003 to just 41% in 2012.<sup>11</sup>

We replicated both questions in our survey, and find that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders rank much higher on their commitment and identification with environmentalism than the rest of the U.S. population. As Figure 11 indicates, 71% of Asian Americans consider themselves environmentalist, more than about 30 points higher than the national average. Among some groups, including Chinese and Vietnamese, the proportions are even higher. Pacific Islanders are also more likely to self-identify as environmentalists than the national average, though the difference is smaller than for Asian Americans. Interestingly, young Asian American adults are not the ones most likely to self-identify as environmentalist.

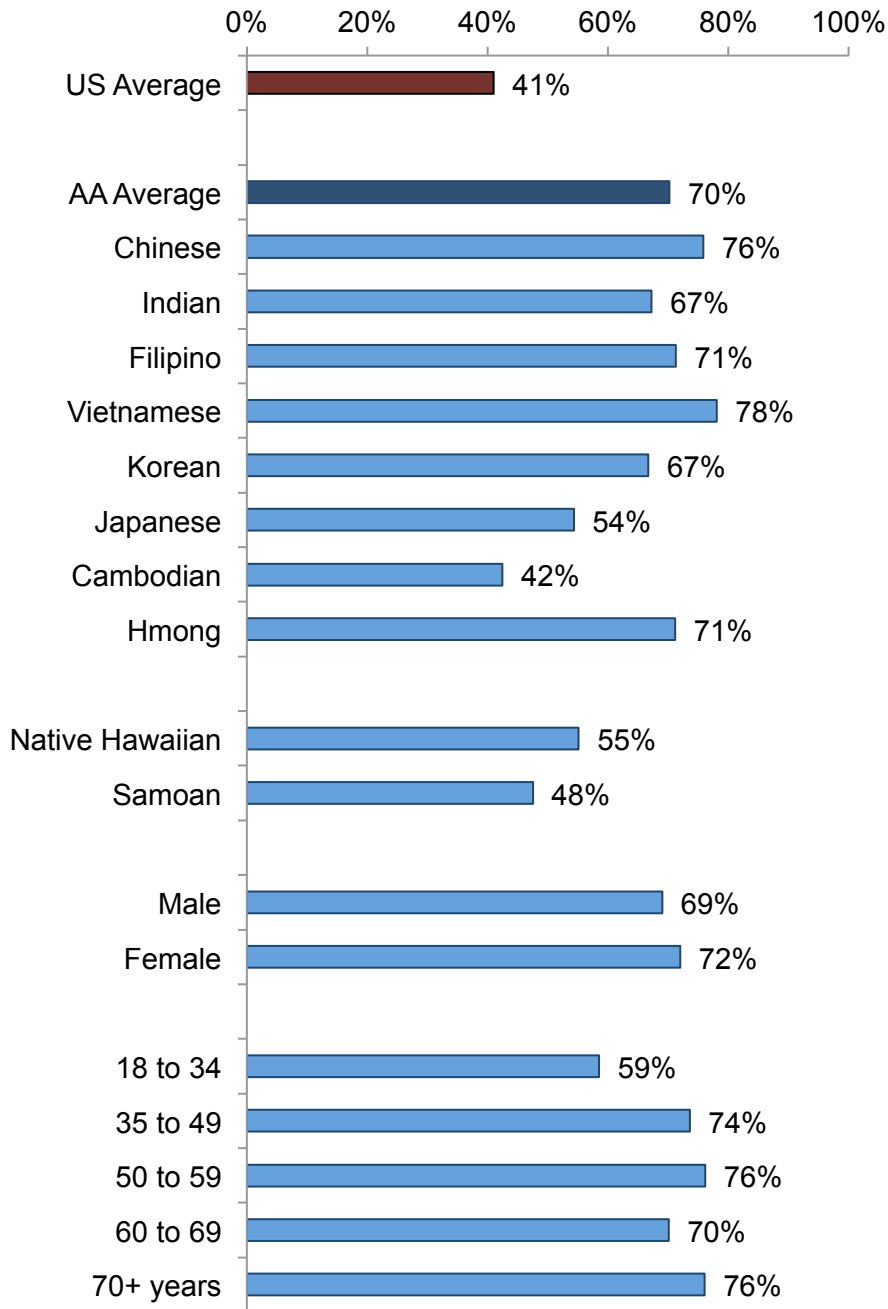
Finally, as Figure 12 indicates, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are significantly more likely than the national average to prioritize environmental protection over economic growth. This sentiment is especially strong among young adults, and among Indian Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans.

---

<sup>10</sup> Karlyn Bowman and Andrew Rugg, *Polls on the Environment, Energy, Global Warming, and Nuclear Power*, AEI Public Opinion Studies (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, April 2012).

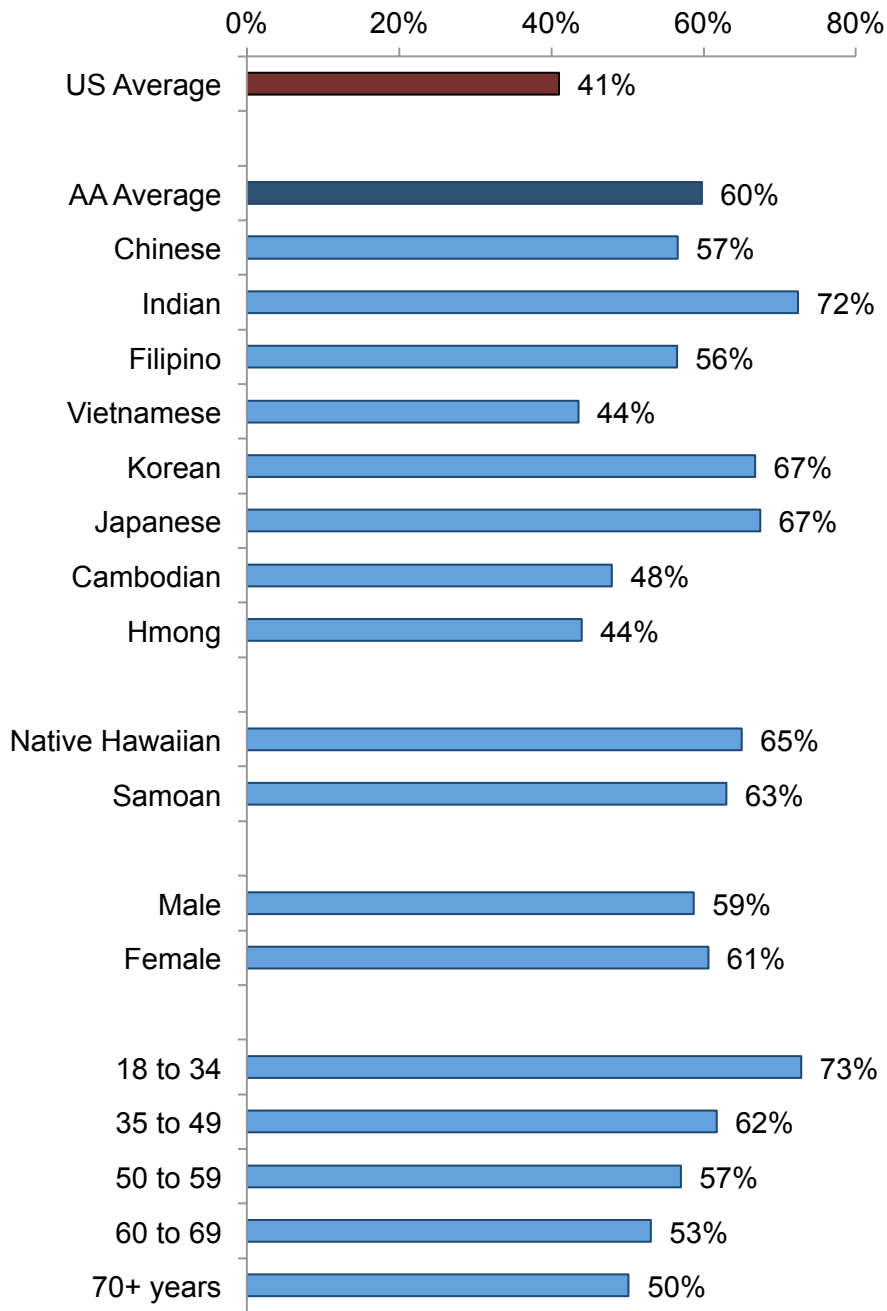
<sup>11</sup> Dennis Jacobs, *Americans Still Prioritize Economic Growth Over Environment* (Princeton, NJ: Gallup, March 29, 2012).

**Figure 11: Proportion Who Consider Themselves Environmentalist<sup>12</sup>**



<sup>12</sup> Question wording: Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

**Figure 12: Priorities on Environmental Protection over Economic Growth**



## Deficit Reduction

Earlier sections of this report noted that only a small proportion of 2012 NAAS respondents mentioned the U.S. federal budget deficit as a “most important problem” facing the country (roughly 7 percent of likely voters), but that nearly 70 percent checked this issue as a key in deciding how they would vote.

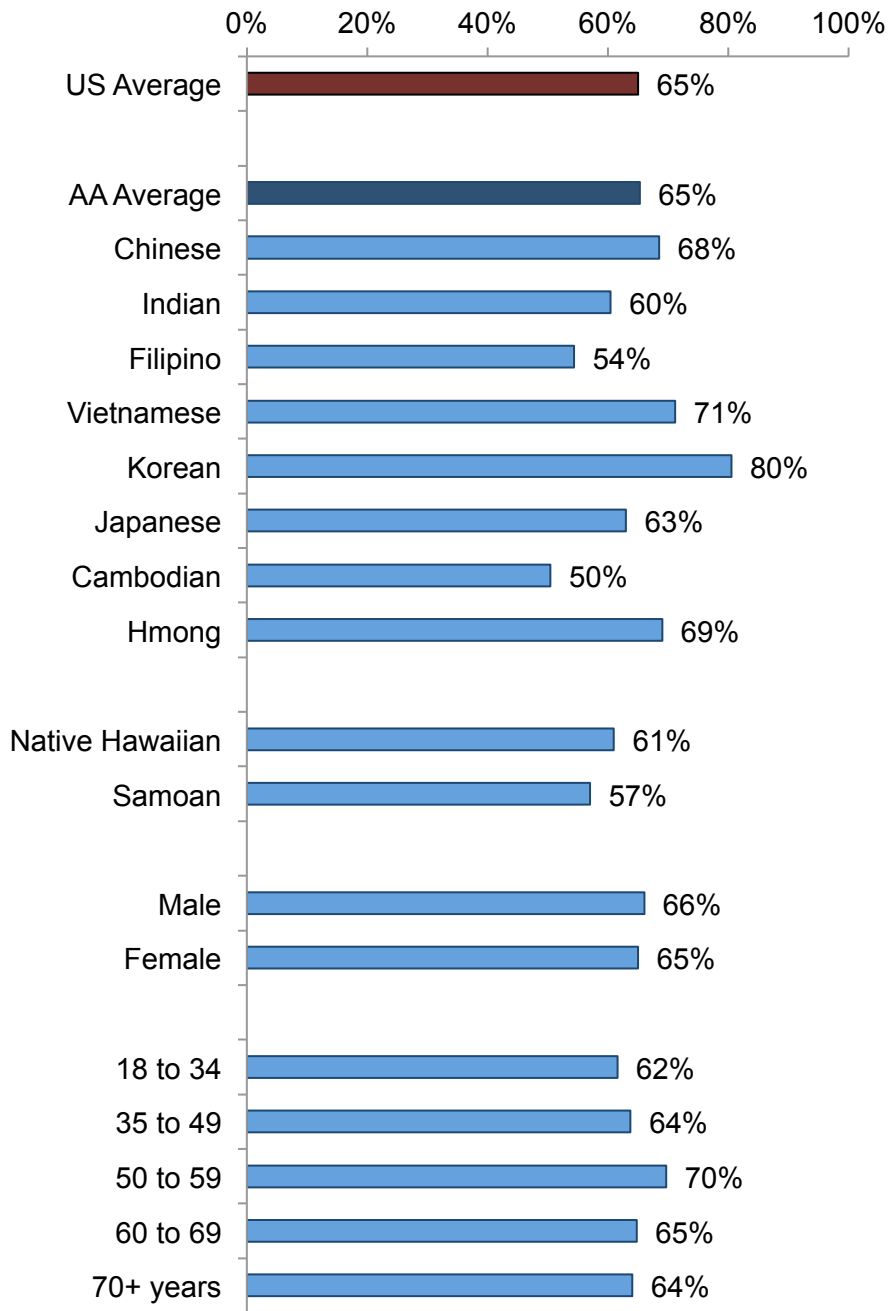
This is an issue that is central to non-partisan protest movements, whether by Tea Party Movement activists from the right or Occupy Wall Street activists from the left, and much of the partisan debate is defined by a clash of views over whether deficit reduction ought to be achieved through revenue-generating policies, through cuts in existing programs, or some combination of both. What are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' views on this issue? The 2012 NAAS asked two questions relevant to this debate. Respondents were asked, “In order to reduce the national deficit” whether the federal government should “raise taxes on those earning more than \$250,000 a year” or whether it should “rely only on cutting existing programs.” Mirroring a general national sentiment, two-thirds of NAAS respondents (65 percent) “somewhat” or “strongly” agreed with raising taxes on the rich (See Figure 13).<sup>13</sup> By contrast, only about one-third (35 percent) “somewhat” or “strongly” favored an approach that relied only on cutting programs (See Figure 14).

The support for deficit reduction by levying taxes on the wealthy is widespread across ethnic groups, gender, and age groups. Notably, even a solid majority of NAAS respondents who reported earning a household income of more than \$250,000 in the last year supported this option, with 45 percent strongly supporting it and 15 percent somewhat supporting it. The “all-cuts” approach is broadly unpopular across income groups, gender, and ethnic origin. The one discernible pattern here is elderly (70 years or older) Asian Americans are twice as likely to support cutting programs (44 percent) than are their 18 to 34 year old counterparts (22 percent support).

---

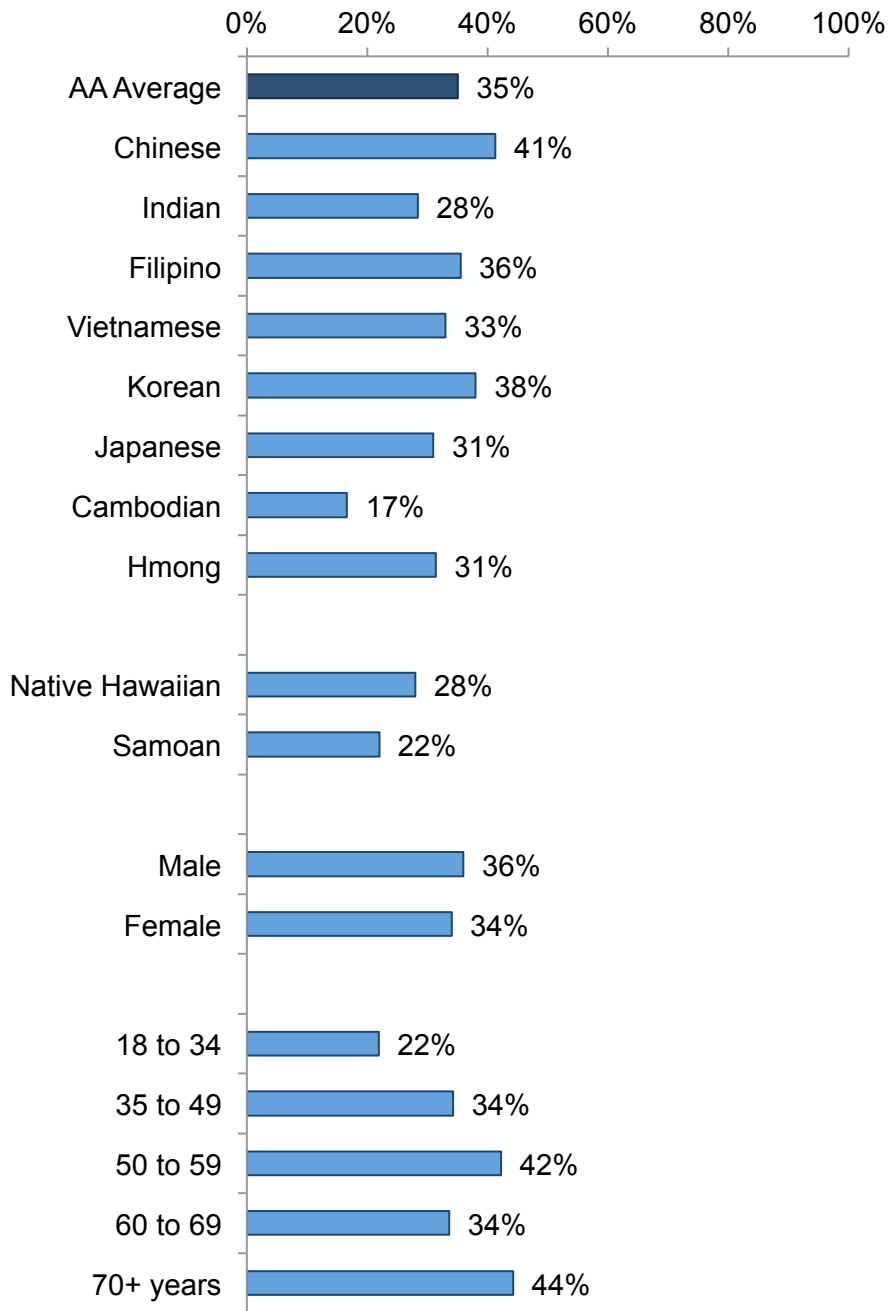
<sup>13</sup> In August 2012, a Washington Post/Kaiser Family survey indicated that 63 percent of Americans supported raising taxes to increase for households with incomes of \$250,000 or more. *The Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation Dimensions of Partisanship Survey*, August 2012. Accessed online September 2012 at <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8341.cfm>.

**Figure 13: Support for Raising Taxes on High Earners In Order to Reduce Budget Deficit<sup>14</sup>**



<sup>14</sup> *The Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation Dimensions of Partisanship Survey*, August 2012, <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8341.cfm>.

**Figure 14: Support for Reducing Deficit With Spending Cuts Only**





## News Sources and Ethnic Media

With citizen and likely voter populations that are still mostly composed of first-generation immigrants, the Asian American electorate is notable for the importance of ethnic language media and ballot language access. The 2012 NAAS asked questions about whether respondents received most of their information about "national and international issues" from radio, television, newspapers, magazines and Internet use, limiting respondents to identify up to two primary sources. For each identified primary media source, respondents were asked if it is an Asian or ethnic media source.

**Table 10. Sources of Information Among Adults and Likely Voters<sup>15</sup>  
(Asian Americans)**

	<b>Any Source</b>	<b>Ethnic Source</b>	<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>Ethnic Source (Likely Voters)</b>
<b>Television</b>	67%	45%	70%	35%
<b>Internet</b>	42	43	40	27
<b>Newspaper</b>	26	53	34	35
<b>Radio</b>	11	45	12	22
<b>Magazine</b>	3	29	3	17

As Table 10 shows, television is easily the most commonly cited source of information about politics and other national and international affairs (67%), followed by the Internet (42%). Traditional media sources of the 20th Century, like print newspapers and magazine or radio lag quite far behind in their usage as a primary source of information. Likely voters are somewhat more likely, however, to report reliance on newspapers for their political information. Table 10 also shows that, to a significant extent, Asian Americans continue to rely on ethnic or Asian media outlets for this information, rather than English-language mainstream sources. For the most commonly cited media sources (television, the Internet, and newspapers), the reliance on ethnic media among all Asian Americans in the 2012 NAAS sample ranges between 43 percent and 53 percent. This reliance on ethnic media diminishes significantly among likely voters down to a range of 27 percent to 35 percent.

<sup>15</sup> Question: "How do you get most of your news about national and international issues? From ... television ... the Internet ... newspapers ... radio ... magazines?" For each identified source, respondents were then asked if that source if that was an ethnic or Asian media source.

## APPENDIX

### Methodology

This report is based on data collected from 3,034 telephone interviews of adults in the United States who identify themselves as Asian American, which in the broadest sense includes people with any family background from countries in Asia. We also conducted 342 interviews with Pacific Islanders. Interviews were conducted by telephone from July 31, 2012 through September 19, 2012. Additional interviews are ongoing through October 2008, and a total of roughly 5,000 interviews will complete the data collection.

The breakdown of the sample by ethnic background is as follows:

Chinese	529
Indian	386
Filipino	396
Vietnamese	425
Korean	463
Japanese	407
Cambodian	197
Hmong	231
Native Hawaiian	272
Samoan	70

Respondents were offered a choice of language to be interviewed in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Thai, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. 44% of the sample was interviewed in a language other than English.

The randomly drawn list sample was obtained from TargetSmart with ethnicity coded by Ethnic Technologies (and Catalist for the Hmong sample, for which TargetSmart does not have an ethnic classification). The listed samples include those not registered as well as those who are registered. Registered voter lists are obtained from state registrars, matched to consumer information data, and updated for address changes. The party registration characteristics of our survey sample are in line with estimates from previous studies of Asian Americans in particular states. The survey was conducted by Interviewing Services of America, Inc. (ISA) of Van Nuys, California, under the supervision of Francine Cafarchia, John Roses, and Frank Weimer. Mobile phones were included in the dialing procedure. Interview translations were conducted by Accent on Languages of Berkeley, California, and audited by a team of bilingual staff in partner organizations.

Sampling error of the groups reported in this survey are as follows:

Overall sample of Asian Americans: +/- 2%

Overall sample of Pacific Islanders: +/- 6%

Asian Americans:

Chinese +/- 5%

Indian +/- 5%

Filipino +/- 5%

Vietnamese +/- 5%

Korean +/- 5%

Japanese +/- 5%

Cambodian +/- 7%

Hmong +/- 7%

Native Hawaiians +/- 6%

Samoans +/- 12%

Sampling error from the size of our sample is only one type of error possible in surveys like the 2012 NAAS. Findings may also be subject to variation from question wording, question order, and the time and date when the survey was conducted.

The sampling frame was drawn primarily from commercial vendor lists of “very likely” and “likely” Asians. We used Census data from the 2010 decennial census and the 2010 American Community Survey to set sample targets for ethnic sub-groups. Ethnic sub-group targets were set to provide adequate representation for the largest Asian American groups, but also to provide as much statistical power to as many groups as possible.

The findings in this report are weighted statistically to account for any demographic differences of interest between the sample and population parameters for analyses of the national Asian American population, as well as for subgroups of the population, on the following dimensions: size of group within a state, educational attainment, gender and nativity. Nativity was not included in the post-stratification weight calculations for Pacific Islanders, given the rarity of foreign-born NHPs in the population, and in our survey.

The National Asian American Survey is the collaborative effort of Karthick Ramakrishnan at University of California-Riverside and Taeku Lee at University of California-Berkeley. Questions about sample design should be directed to Karthick Ramakrishnan at [karthick@ucr.edu](mailto:karthick@ucr.edu).

## Glossary of Terms and Concepts

### Ethnic subgroups

Respondents in our survey were asked: “What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?” Those that specified an ancestry or ethnic origin to a prior question on racial identification were assigned that ancestry or ethnic origin. For response choices, we used the U.S. Census classification system of Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other national origins such as Bangladeshi, Cambodian, etc. Based on the distribution of responses in our survey, we report data on Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, and Hmong.

For Pacific Islanders, we report data on the two largest groups for whom we have adequate sample sizes: Native Hawaiians and Samoans. We also targeted Tongans for interviewing, but do not have sample sizes large enough to report the data reliably.

### Revision Notes

Oct 16, 2012: Section on News Sources and Ethnic Media added.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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 Korean American Community Foundation, the Gill Foundation and Anonymous.

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, the authors (Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee) 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.

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.

We benefited from the invaluable research assistance of Chris Haynes (UC-Riverside) and Sun Kim (UC-Berkeley), assistance on communications from Rohan Mascarenhas, and help with graphic design from Abigail Grimshaw. We also thank our various press officers for their assistance with publicity, including Bettye Miller (UC-Riverside),

Kathleen Maclay (UC-Berkeley), Drew Sample (Wilson Center), Kimberly Goulard (VENG group), and Elizabeth Toledo (Camino PR). We also greatly appreciate the work of staff volunteers who helped to audit the various translations of the survey: Florence Chien, Yuk-Ching Chien, Lang Fang, Kathy Huynh, Jessica Lee, Hiroko Otani, Amit Sharma, Aimee Thorne-Thomsen, Crystal Yah.

We also thank staff at Interviewing Service of America, including Francine Cafarchia, John Roses, Frank Weimer, and Ed Coscoluella, for helping to shepherd this project in its fielding stage, and to the dozens of interviewers who interviewed the thousands of Asian American and Pacific Islander voices featured in our survey and summarized in this report.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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 and is writing a book on the rise of state and local legislation on immigration over the past decade.

Ramakrishnan received his Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University, and has held fellowships at the Russell Sage Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the Public Policy Institute of California. He has received several grants from sources such as the James Irvine Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation, and has provided consultation to public officials at the federal and local levels. His articles and books on immigration and politics can be found at [www.karthick.com](http://www.karthick.com).

*Taeku Lee* is Professor and Chair of Political Science and Professor of Law at UC-Berkeley. He has authored and edited numerous books on race and ethnic politics, immigration, political parties, and public opinion. Lee serves on the American National Election Studies Board of Overseers and on the Council of the American Political Science Association.

Lee studies political partisanship among Asian Americans as they compare to partisanship for whites, Latinos, and African Americans. He also specializes on the role that identity and civic engagement play in bringing Asian Americans into the political arena. Lee's work has earned him three book awards and several fellowships.

Together, Ramakrishnan and Lee have had extensive experience in survey design and analysis and expertise on public opinion and racial politics. They have collectively written 7 books and dozens of articles on racial/ethnic politics, and have conducted 17 surveys, eight of which have included multiple language support for Asian Americans. They have also overseen several successful research projects and their dissemination to policy-relevant audiences.