


THE DECIDING MARGIN: How AAPI Voters Will Shape the Future of Texas





PHOTO CREDIT: SIDNEY HOLLINGSWORTH

SEPTEMBER 2022

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ABOUT



We envision a future where all people feel **bold in their belonging.**

Asian Texans for Justice (ATJ) was founded to be a voice for our state's diverse Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community — to claim our space and inspire Texas to invest in our stories. We envision a future where all people feel bold in their belonging. We connect Asian and Pacific Islander Texans with civic action to build personal and political power.

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Introduction

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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in Texas have been sidelined on the margins of Texas policy and politics for far too long. AAPI voters have often been misunderstood and misrepresented as uninterested in politics and unmotivated to vote in elections. These myths persist, in part, because of a lack of information about the AAPI community in Texas. Who are AAPI Texans? What policy issues matter to them? How engaged are they in politics?

While many organizations have shed light on AAPI voters on the national level or in other states, these questions went unanswered in Texas until now. Recognizing the potential power of AAPI voters – the fastest-growing electorate in the country – Asian Texans for Justice (ATJ) commissioned a polling project, the first of its kind from a Texas-based AAPI organization, designed to better understand AAPI voters' political views and policy preferences. Given the size of the Texas AAPI population as the third highest nationally, this project is also an opportunity to elevate the profile of AAPI voters across the United States.

In summer 2022, 2700 likely Texas voters, of which 660 were AAPI voters, in the November 2022 midterm election were surveyed by Change Research, an organization with the mission to provide polling and strategy to organizations and campaigns that share our vision for a more humane, scientific, and just world.¹ Unless otherwise noted, the findings in this report are based on the polling data from Change Research.

The purpose of this report is to provide insights from that poll to better inform political candidates, policymakers, organizers, media sources, and the general public about AAPI voters and the importance they play in Texas policy and politics. The data are clear: AAPI voters in Texas are diverse, younger than the general population, dissatisfied with their current representation, and motivated to vote.

AAPI voters are not a silent minority on the margins of Texas politics. They have the potential to be the deciding margin for the future of Texas.

¹ More information about the polling methodology can be found in the Technical Note at the end of the report.





KEY FINDINGS

1.

The majority (64%) of AAPIs in Texas are highly motivated to vote in the November 2022 midterm elections.

2.

Only 20% of AAPI Texans believe AAPIs' interests are well represented in government now. Almost two-thirds (64%) of AAPI Texans say it's important to have elected officials who look like you and share the same background.

3.

The most important policy issues to AAPI voters in Texas are economic recovery, inflation and cost of living, education, and voting rights.

4.

The overwhelming majority of AAPI Texans are in favor of legalizing abortion (77%), gun safety legislation (83%), and making voting more convenient (85%).

5.

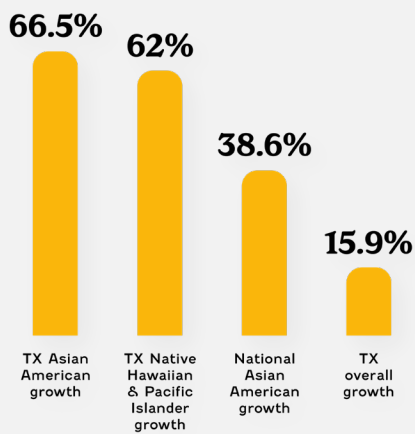
AAPI Texans have more in common with other communities of color (Black and Hispanic) than white Texans when it comes to policy issues. For example, the majority of Texans of color (AAPI, Black, and Hispanic) support expanding Medicare and oppose the banning of Critical Race Theory while the opposite is true for white Texans.

Demographics & Identity

Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are the fastest growing ethnic group in Texas — and nationwide.

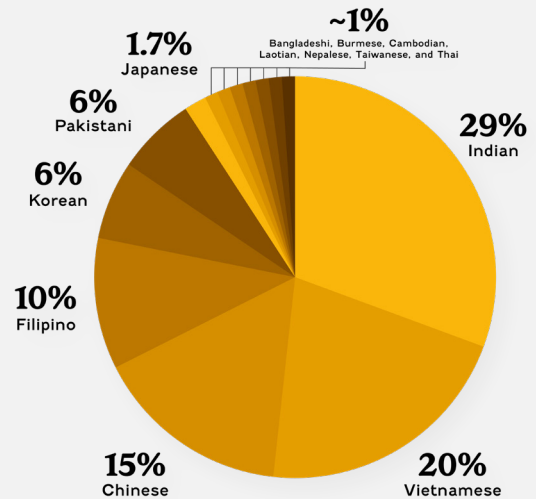
While the white population of Texas declined by 17.5%, a decrease of 3 million people, between 2010 and 2020, the Asian American population grew by 66.5%, from 1.1 to 1.85 million.² The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population grew by 62%, from 48,000 to over 77,000. Texas has the third highest AAPI population, and the Asian American community is growing faster in Texas than nationwide; nationally, the Asian American population increase was just 38.6%.

% of Population Growth between 2010 - 2020

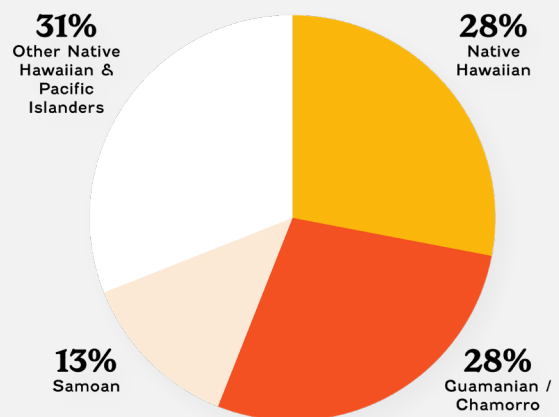


Much of the growth that Texas has experienced over the past 10 years can be attributed to the growth in the AAPI community. Asian Americans accounted for 18% of the overall population growth in Texas, and now make up 6.3% of the Texas population. The extraordinary growth of the AAPI community indicates that AAPI voters are an increasingly formidable portion of the electorate, and Texas AAPI voters may shape politics in the state in a bigger way than they have ever before.

Ethnic Diversity Among Asian Americans in Texas



Ethnic Diversity Among Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islanders in Texas



² Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 and 2020 Census. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

Demographics & Identity

How do Texas AAPI demographics compare to the general population?

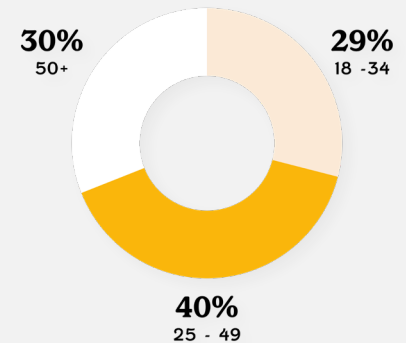
There is incredible ethnic diversity among AAPIs in Texas, but in general, they tend to be young and educated, have higher income levels, and are more likely to be immigrants themselves (1st generation) or have parents who immigrated to the US before they were born (2nd generation).

- AAPIs in Texas are younger than the general population and any other racial or ethnic group in the state.** Twenty-nine percent of AAPIs in Texas are between 18 and 34, while 40% are between 35 and 49. In comparison, 21% of the general population are between 18 and 34, and 24% are between 35 and 49. Furthermore, Texas AAPIs are younger than the population of any other ethnic group in the state (see Table 1).
- AAPIs in Texas have high educational attainment and household incomes.** Eighty-two percent of AAPIs in Texas have a college degree (associate's, bachelors, or graduate) compared to only 60% of the population overall. AAPIs are significantly more likely to have a graduate degree (37%) compared to only 17% of Texans overall.
- The majority (57%) of AAPI Texans have annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more, and 69% earn \$75,000 or more.** This corresponds with the higher levels of educational attainment among AAPIs in Texas. In comparison, 29% of the broader population have annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more, and 44% have incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- It is important to note, though, that while AAPI incomes are higher than that of Texans overall, there are still many AAPIs who are not in these higher income brackets.** Eight percent of AAPIs in Texas do make less than \$50,000, and 9% make between \$50,000 - \$75,000.
- AAPIs in Texas are significantly more likely to be immigrants than other Texans.** Finally, AAPI Texans are significantly more likely to have immigrated to the US (44%) compared to Texans overall (6%). In addition, 43% of AAPIs have parents who immigrated to the US before they were born compared to only 9% of the broader population.

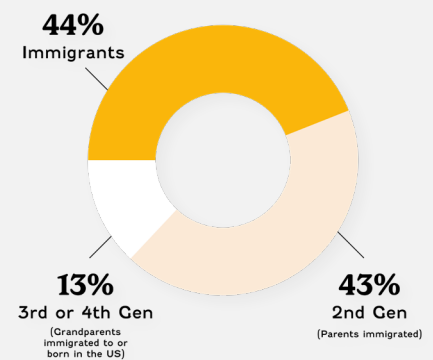
Table 1.
Percentage of Texas population under 50 years old, by ethnic group

AAPI	69%
Hispanic	59%
Black	48%
White	37%
Overall Population	44%

Ages of AAPIs in Texas



Immigrant AAPI Population in Texas



Demographics & Identity

Where do AAPIs in Texas live?

AAPIs are significantly more likely to be located in large metro areas than other ethnic groups in Texas.

Among AAPI poll respondents, 35% live in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metro area, 25% live in the Houston area, and 27% live in the San Antonio-Austin area. And just 1% of Asian Texans live in non-metro areas, significantly lower than the 14% of all Texans who live in non-metro areas.

Fort Bend County in the Houston metro area has the highest density of AAPIs in the state, with 194,000 Asian Americans (either fully Asian or in combination with other races) who constitute 23.6% of the county (see Table 2). Collin County in the DFW Metroplex is the second most dense at 19.4% Asian American; followed by Denton County in the DFW area, Williamson and Travis in the Austin area, and Harris in the Houston area.

Texas Counties with High Density AAPIs

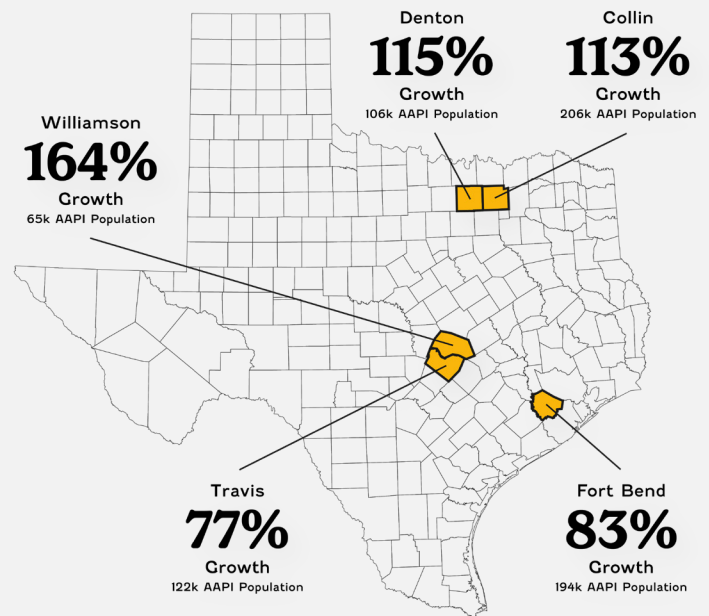


Table 2. Top 5 Texas counties with high-density Asian American population in 2020

County	AAPI Population	AAPI % of County Pop.	% Growth, 2010-2020
Fort Bend	194,000	23.6%	83%
Collin	206,000	19.4%	113%
Denton	106,000	11.7%	115%
Williamson	65,000	10.6%	164%
Travis	122,000	9.5%	77%

Source: Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 and 2020 Census.

Demographics & Identity

How important is representation in government to Texas AAPIs?

Four out of five Texas AAPIs say Asian American interests are not well represented in government now.

Overall, younger, college educated, and second-generation AAPIs are more likely to feel their interests are not well-represented in government. Eighty-six percent of AAPIs between 18 and 34 do not feel well represented compared to 65% of AAPI Texans ages 65 and older. Eighty percent of college educated AAPIs believe their interests are not well-represented in government compared to 62% of AAPIs without a college education. Second-generation AAPIs (87%) also strongly believe they are not represented compared to 69% of AAPI immigrants.

There are similar generational trends when it comes to how important it is to have ethnic or racial representation in politics. Overall, 64% say it's important to have elected officials who look like you and share the same background. That number spikes to 75% for 18 to 34 year olds and lowers to 57% for those 65 and older. There is also a significant gender divide, with 72% of Texas AAPI women agreeing ethnic or racial representation is important compared to only 56% of men.

That said, 71% say that when things get worse for AAPI people around the country, they get worse for themselves too.

AAPIs in Texas...

4 out of 5



Texas AAPIs say Asian American interests are not well represented in government now.

64%

Think it's important to have elected officials who look like you.

20%

Say AAPIs' interests are well represented now.

45%

believe that there are adequate language access resources for Asian Americans in Texas provided by the government and policymakers.

Political Participation & Identification

Understanding how AAPIs in Texas identify by political party and their level of motivation to vote can be powerful information for those seeking to organize AAPI voters, develop policies that represent the views of AAPIs, or distribute policy information to AAPI voters.

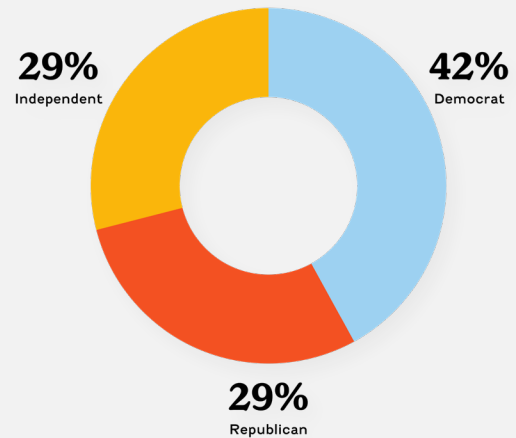
With which political parties do Texas AAPIs identify?

Compared to Texans overall, AAPIs are more likely to identify as Democrats (42% of AAPIs vs 31% of the general population). Forty-two percent of AAPIs in Texas identify as Democrats while 29% identify as Republicans and 29% consider themselves Independents.

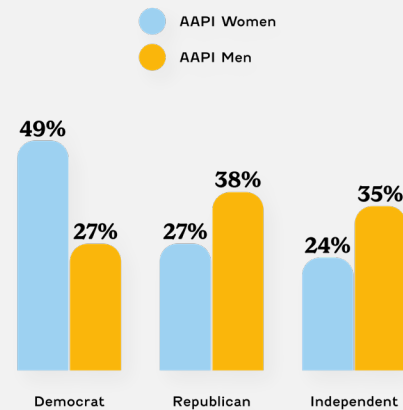
AAPI party identification is more similar to that of other people of color (Black and Hispanic) with 67% of Black Texans and 47% of Hispanic Texans identifying as Democrats. Only 20% of white Texans identify as Democrat, and almost half (48%) consider themselves Republicans. AAPIs are twice as likely to be Democrats as are white Texans and are nearly half as likely to consider themselves Republicans as white Texans.

Party identification differs among AAPI women and AAPI men. Almost half (49%) of AAPI women in Texas identify as Democrats compared to 27% of AAPI men, indicating that AAPI women are nearly twice as likely to identify as Democrats as are AAPI men. AAPI men are more likely to be Republicans (38%) or Independents (35%).

AAPI Political Identity in Texas



Texas AAPI Political Identity Between Men & Women



Political Participation & Identification

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How motivated are AAPIs to vote?

Overall, the majority of AAPI Texans believe that things are on the wrong track. However, they are slightly less likely to believe this than the broader Texas population. Almost three-fourths of all Texans (74%) are dissatisfied with the direction of their area versus 66% of AAPIs.

This dissatisfaction is likely to translate into high motivation to vote in the November 2022 midterm elections. Sixty-four percent of AAPI Texans indicated high motivation to vote in the midterm elections. Only 14% have low to no motivation to vote. Similar to their views on the direction of their area, AAPIs indicate less motivation to vote than the general population where 84% of all Texans are highly motivated to vote.

64%

Of Texas AAPIs are highly motivated to vote in the November 2022 midterms.

66%

Of Texas AAPIs are dissatisfied with the direction of their area.

84%

Of all Texans are highly motivated to vote.

74%

Of all Texans are dissatisfied with the direction of their area.



Political Participation & Identification

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Where do Texas AAPIs get their news and political information?

Finally, AAPIs in Texas have mixed views on trusted news sources. The top five sources with the highest percentage of AAPIs showing some or a great deal of trust were the following:

TRUST	57%	NPR
	53%	National News Sources (CBS, ABC, NBC, PBS)
	49%	Local News
	46%	CNN
	44%	Local Newspapers

The news sources with the greatest amount of distrust from AAPIs were Fox News (57% do not trust at all) and WhatsApp (44% do not trust at all).

DISTRUST	57%	Fox News
	44%	WhatsApp

There were also several information sources of which the majority of AAPIs were unsure, including Signal (68% unsure), WeChat (52%), Newsmax (48%), and One American News Network (46%).

UNSURE	68%	Signal
	52%	WeChat
	48%	Newsmax
	46%	One American News Network



Policy Preferences

Voters are motivated to show up to the ballot box by a variety of policy issues.

The significance of different policy topics to AAPI voters in Texas will likely determine if and how they engage in the November 2022 midterm elections and 88th Texas Legislative session in 2023. Political candidates, organizers, and policymakers can utilize information about policy preferences to inform how they engage the AAPI electorate in Texas.

What policy issues are important to Texas AAPIs?

AAPIs in Texas believe a variety of issues are important to whether or not they will vote in upcoming elections. The top ranking policy priorities of AAPIs in Texas are to the right (determined by percentage of respondents indicating an issue is “somewhat important” or “very important”). These rankings are similar to those of the general population.

However, there are some differences in policy priorities by political party identification. Democratic-leaning AAPI voters consider voting rights, education, gun reform, and abortion to be all-important issues. Other issues, including the economy, inflation, and Medicaid expansion are important to many AAPI Democratic-leaning voters, but they are not as universally important. Among AAPI voters, inflation and economic recovery appear near the top, largely because they’re top issues for AAPI Republicans.

Policy Issues Important to TX AAPIs

98% ECONOMIC RECOVERY

97% INFLATION & COST OF LIVING

96% EDUCATION

91% VOTING RIGHTS

66% ABORTION ACCESS

66% GUN REFORM

Relevant Policy Issues for 2022 Midterms and 88th Texas Legislature

54% Oppose banning the teaching of critical race theory

77% Support expanding Medicare to all Texans

77% Believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases

83% Support gun safety reform

85% Support laws that make it more convenient for people to vote

Policy Preferences

How do policy preferences of Texas AAPIs relate to those of other communities?

There are several issues where AAPI respondents shared views similar to those of other people of color (Black and Hispanic) and differed from those of white respondents. Communities of color have significantly different views from those of white respondents when it comes to the teaching of critical race theory in Texas public schools and expanding Medicare for all.

- The majority of Texans from communities of color (85% of Black and 77% of AAPI and Hispanic respondents) support expanding Medicare to all Texans; however, 51% of white respondents oppose extending Medicare to all.
- While only 48% of the general population supports legislation banning the teaching of critical race theory, the majority of respondents from communities of color opposed such legislation. 54% of AAPIs oppose such laws at similar rates to Black (61%) and Hispanic (58%) respondents while 37% of white respondents oppose a ban.

% of Support For Expanding Medicare

85%

Black Texans

77%

Hispanic Texans

77%

AAPI Texans

51%

White Texans



PHOTO CREDIT: SIDNEY HOLLINGSWORTH

Policy Preferences

There are also a number of issues where people of color share the same policy preferences as white respondents, but the strength of support for these issues are significantly greater among Black, Hispanic, and AAPI Texans.

- 77% of AAPIs believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases. Similarly, Black (85%) and Hispanic (77%) respondents show strong support for the legality of abortion. White respondents are notably more divided with a 50/50 split between those who support abortion in most or all cases and those who oppose it.
- Over 80% of people of color support new gun safety laws, such as background checks, 'red flag' laws, and stronger regulations for safe gun storage in homes, compared to 49% of white respondents. 83% of AAPIs support gun reform legislation similar to 90% of Black respondents and 80% of Hispanic respondents.
- 56% of white respondents support expanding the teaching of ethnic studies, including Asian American studies, in Texas public schools compared to 87% of Black respondents, 84% of AAPI respondents, and 78% of Hispanic respondents.
- The majority (74%) of all Texans support laws that would make it more convenient for people to vote such as having more voting locations and expanding early voting. These measures are more strongly supported by Black (88%), Hispanic (87%), and AAPI (85%) respondents compared to white respondents (67%).

% of Support For Voting Rights Laws

74%

Of all Texans

88%

Black Texans

87%

Hispanic Texans

85%

AAPI Texans

67%

White Texans



PHOTO CREDIT: SIDNEY HOLLINGSWORTH

Policy Preferences

How do policy preferences differ for AAPI Texans by political party identification?

There are some differences in policy preferences among AAPI voters by age, educational attainment, and generational status. However, the strongest differences among AAPI voters are correlated with their political party identification. Many of these differences are captured in Table 3.

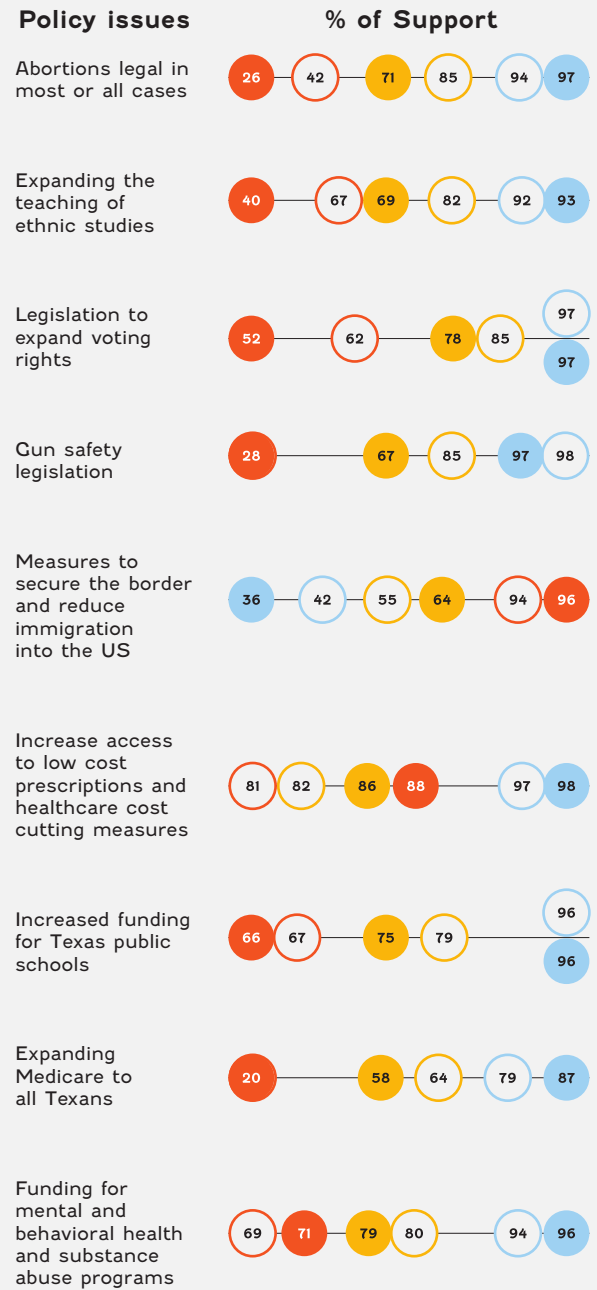
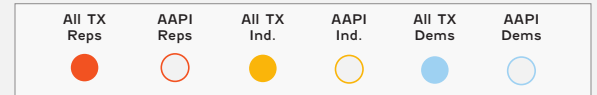
While differences in policy views based on political party identity are to be expected across all groups, what is notable are the distinctions between AAPI Democrats' and Republicans' views and that of their counterparts across ethnic groups. While AAPI Democrats' views largely align with those of Democrats broadly, AAPI Republicans' views differ from that of Republicans broadly across a number of policy areas.

AAPI Republicans, for example, are significantly more in support of abortions being legal in most or all cases (42%) compared to Texas Republicans broadly (26%).

Similarly, while support for the expansion of ethnic studies, including Asian American studies, is similar among AAPI Democrats and Democrats broadly, 67% of AAPI Republicans share this view compared to just 40% of Republicans in Texas. AAPI Republicans also support new gun safety laws twice as much as Republicans broadly - 57% to 28%.

As expected, the policy preferences of AAPI Independents fall between those of AAPI Democrats and AAPI Republicans. However, AAPI Independents in Texas tend to be more progressive and less conservative than other Independents in Texas. For example, 85% of AAPI Independents support the legality of abortions in most or all cases compared to only 71% of all Independent Texans. Issues where AAPI Independents differed in their support from Independents more broadly include abortions, expansion of ethnic studies courses, voting rights, gun safety legislation, and Medicare for all Texans.

Table 3. Differences in support of policy issues by party identification



Conclusion

PHOTO CREDIT: CHAD W. ADAMS

The intention of this report is to empower a broad group of stakeholders, including political candidates, policy makers, organizers, and media outlets, to shift their narratives of AAPI voters in Texas. It is a baseline analysis and conversation starter about the policy preferences and political views of AAPI voters in Texas, but thoughtful engagement is still necessary to mobilizing AAPI Texans as a powerful voting bloc. Further research and disaggregation is also recommended for a more in-depth understanding of the complexities of Texas' diverse AAPI population.

According to AAPI Data, Asian Americans had record-high turnout in the 2020 election, outpacing that of the general population. In Texas, there was a 71% increase in Asian American votes in 2020 compared to 2016 — an increase of 101,000 votes statewide.³

Despite the vast increase in AAPI voting, AAPIs in Texas are still underrepresented in voting turnout. In 2020, 282,000 registered AAPIs did not vote that year. And with young AAPIs turning 18 every day, these groups — and unregistered AAPIs — present opportunities to expand the electorate.

AAPI voters can move from being sidelined on the margins to being the deciding margin for the future of Texas politics and policy.

The rapid growth and demographic diversity of the AAPI population in Texas will only translate into political power through intentional efforts to mobilize and engage AAPI Texans on civic and political issues.

³ Data from AAPI Data and TargetSmart. <http://aapidata.com/blog/2020-vote-media-guide-march25/>



Acknowledgements

This report was produced in collaboration with Change Research. We want to extend a special thanks to the following authors and contributors:

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Data and Research Consultant
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Wallace H. Coulter Foundation
AAPI Civic Engagement Fund
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PHOTO CREDIT: GEOFF CARLISLE

Technical Note

Change Research surveyed 2700 likely November 2022 voters in Texas from July 12-25, 2022. The sample included oversamples of Asian American & Pacific Islander voters in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex (204 respondents), non-AAPI voters in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex (825 respondents), and AAPI voters in the remainder of the state (456 respondents). AAPI-identifying respondents reported that their families came from Vietnam (22%), India (21%), China (19%), Japan (12%), Korea (7%), Philippines (3%), Pakistan (1%), Thailand (1%), and Other (15%).

Respondents were recruited via the following methods:

- Targeted advertisements on Facebook and Instagram, as well as across the web via Facebook’s ad platform (1705 respondents)
- Text messages sent, via the Switchboard platform, to cell phone numbers listed on the voter file for individuals who qualified for the survey’s sample universe, based on their voter file data (995 respondents)

Those who clicked the link in the ad or text message were directed to a survey hosted on SurveyMonkey’s website. Those who indicated that they were not registered to vote in Texas were terminated. The survey was conducted in English.

The AAPI Civic Engagement Fund commissioned Change Research to conduct this survey online to support the activities of Asian Texans for Justice. SWEL was contracted to oversee the project. Post-stratification was performed on age, gender, region of the state, and 2020 presidential vote.

Weighting parameters are based on the demographic composition of 2022 general election voters, based on probabilistic turnout scores provided by Deck. These scores incorporate past vote history and demographic factors, as well as environmental factors including media coverage, fundraising numbers, and candidate demographics.


The modeled margin of error ⁴ for this survey is 2.5%, which uses effective sample sizes ⁵ that adjust for the design effect of weighting.


⁴ We adopt The Pew Research Center’s convention for the term “modeled margin of error” (mMOE) to indicate that our surveys are not simple random samples in the pure sense, similar to any survey that has either non-response bias or for which the general population was not invited at random. A common, if imperfect, convention for reporting survey results is to use a single, survey-level mMOE based on a normal approximation. This is a poor approximation for proportion estimates close to 0 or 1. However, it is a useful communication tool in many settings and is reasonable in places where the proportion of interest is close to 50%. We report this normal approximation for our surveys assuming a proportion estimate of 50%.

⁵ Kish, Leslie. Survey Sampling, 1965. The effective sample size adjusts for the weighting applied to respondents, and is calculated using Kish’s approximation. If imperfect, convention for reporting survey results is to use a single, survey-level mMOE based on a normal approximation. This is a poor approximation for proportion estimates close to 0 or 1. However, it is a useful communication tool in many settings and is reasonable in places where the proportion of interest is close to 50%. We report this normal approximation for our surveys assuming a proportion estimate of 50%.



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