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## Issue Brief: Asian Americans and Party Affiliation

### Key Words (4-6)

Asian Americans, Party Affiliation, Political Behavior, Identity Politics, Partisan/Non-Partisan, Electoral Politics

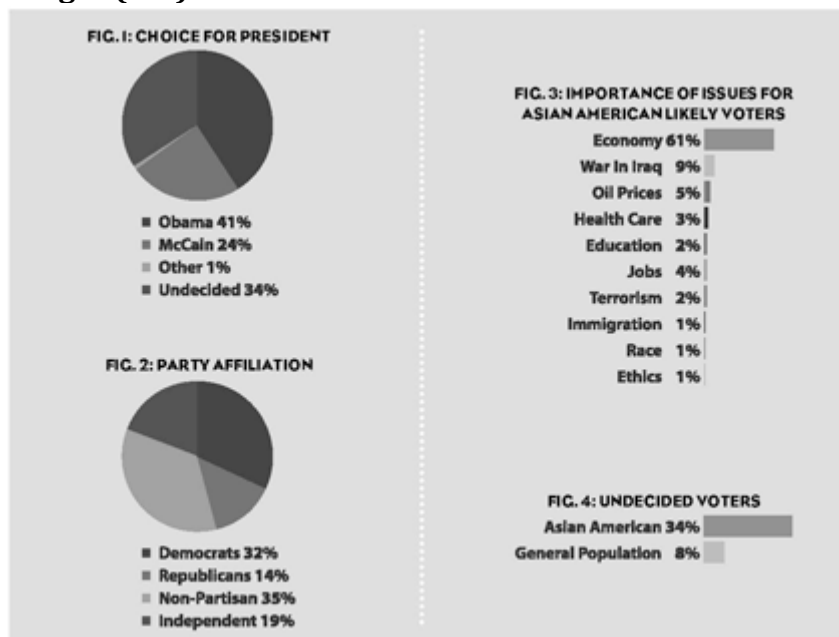
### Description (2 sentences)

This issue brief explores Asian Americans and Party Affiliation in the United States. It discusses whether or not Asian Americans identify with a particular political party and the significance of the Asian American vote in elections.

### Key Points (4-6)

- It is difficult to pinpoint one major party identification for Asian Americans because unlike African Americans, this group is comprised of a wider array of ethnicities with diverse interests in the United States, positioning them on various parts of the political spectrum
- There are more Asian Americans that are non-partisan than those who identify as Democrat, Republican, or Independent respectively
- Collectively as a racial group, Asian Americans generally vote for the Democratic party
- It is difficult to determine the future for Asian Americans in their party affiliations but it is clear that they are ideal campaign targets, and future elections will exhibit an increasing appeal to Asian American interests to sway the vote

### Images (2-4)

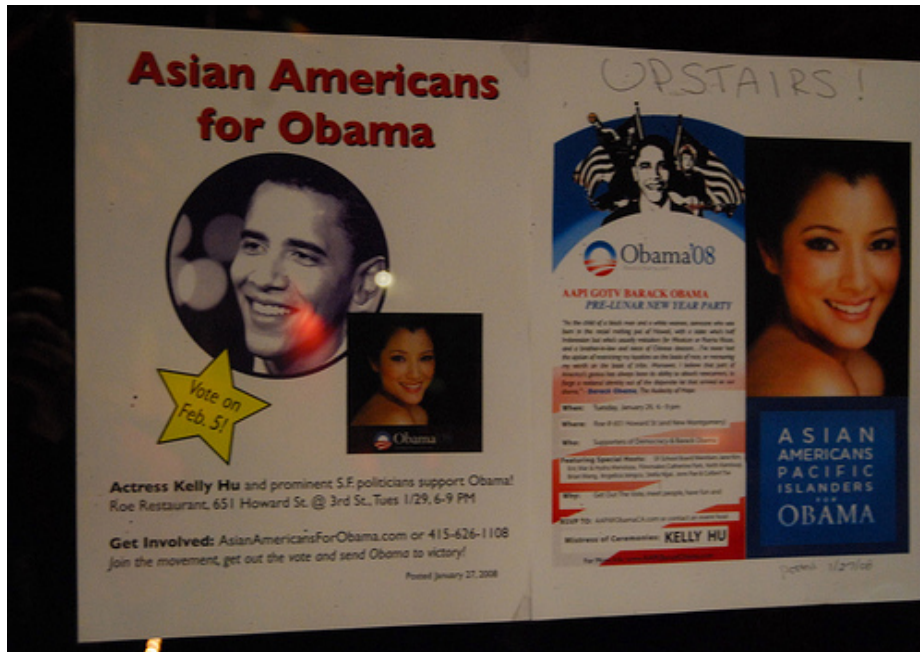


**Fig. 1 Asian American voter preference in the 2008 election,**

**Fig. 2 Asian American party affiliation**

**Fig. 3 Issues that Asian Americans are most concerned about when voting**

**Fig. 4 Asian American undecided voters in comparison to other racial groups**



**A poster for Obama’s campaign during the primaries in California by the Asian Americans Pacific Islanders who started the “Asians for Obama” campaign**

### **Brief (500-700 words)**

The Asian American ethnorracial group has experienced discrimination in the United States since their arrival. The Chinese, the first to arrive, were exploited under harsh labor conditions and subsequently systematically oppressed through federal legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act. Other ethnicities within the Asian American population such as the Japanese, also suffered institutional racism. This institutional racism included the denial of voting rights, laws prohibiting intermarriage with white Americans, a failure to recognize Asian Americans as citizens, etc. While Asian Americans as a whole experienced discrimination in various ways in the United States as their basic civil rights were outright denied, it is evident that the subgroups have been affected distinct ways which may lead to their particular party identification. These conflicting interests are what makes Asian

Americans distinct from other minority ethnoracial groups, such as African Americans and Latinos which are largely Democrat.

Generally, Vietnamese Americans affiliate with the Republican Party while some Asian American groups such as Chinese Americans, Indian Americans, Korean Americans, and Filipino Americans affiliate with the Democrat Party. Other groups do not have a definitive party identification and are non-partisan. As a whole Asian Americans tend to have a high number of undecided voters in comparison to other ethnoracial groups. These two factors make it especially important for incumbents to try to appeal to their interests in their reelection campaigns and for new candidates to express concern for issues that directly affect Asian Americans, framing it in a more personal way.

Another general political trend for Asian Americans is that like other Americans, the older generation tends to be more conservative. The young, college educated Asian Americans, from ages 18 to 24, usually second generation and beyond, tend to be more radical and vote Democrat. Issues that perhaps this group may be more aware of include immigration, health care, the economy, education, jobs, and racial discrimination particularly towards Asian Americans seem to be the driving factor for this strong Democrat allegiance.

The 2008 election campaigns demonstrated a significant support for the Democratic Party that only increased as the elections neared. In terms of identity politics a seemingly insignificant factor, Obama's Hawaiian upbringing, was definitely a strong component of his cosmopolitan character, appealing to Pacific Islanders. Obama was able to grasp a significant amount of the Asian American vote, across their respective party affiliations. While Asian Americans had been experiencing a Democratic shift, the 2008 elections with

its massive support for Obama depicts that this was more than just a trend—it was the appeal of this candidate in terms of Asian American issues.

While there still exist many intra-group conflicting interests within the Asian American ethnoracial group, it would be interesting to see future election results and whether this trend continues or falls flat. Obama's ability to address issues such as the economy, immigration, and language rights, appealed to this racial group as a whole, and was a strategic move that enabled him to get the Asian American vote. Similar to swing states, the Asian American group is an important target for candidates to win over as they are a very large minority group in the United States that can have a significant weight on elections.

### **General References (3-5)**

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