VOICES OF LA
A Pat Brown Institute Polling Program Brief

PAT BROWN INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Unleashing the Power of Participation

Racial Discrimination, Hate, and the Politics of AAPIs in Los Angeles

Nathan Kar Ming Chan
Research Associate
Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA

Sara Sadhwani, PhD
Assistant Professor of Politics
Pomona College

About the PBI *Voices of LA* Surveys

In late 2021, The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA in partnership with The California Community Foundation enhanced a groundbreaking polling program that PBI began in 2016 to explore the social and political orientations of the four major racial/ethnic groups in Los Angeles County: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Jews. The findings from these surveys are intended to generate and inform community and scholarly conversations. More information about the program is available at

www.calstatela.patbrowninstitute.org



With more than two decades of steady population growth, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are the fastest growing immigrant group in the nation. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, more than fifteen percent of Los Angeles County residents identify as Asian American, or about 1.5 million people.[1] AAPIs also comprise 14 percent of likely voters across the state, making them a pivotal community in California's political landscape.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic AAPIs faced, and continue to face, a wave of anti-Asian hate. In this brief report, we focus on the racial discrimination and hate experienced by AAPI Angelenos. We further consider how these experiences have shaped Asian American and Pacific Islanders' politics in terms of their views on public policies and participation in political activities.

This survey is part of the continuing *Voices of LA* program of the Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA (PBI). PBI's AAPI survey reached a total of 1,500 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders over the phone and online. Surveys were conducted in respondents' preferred language with options including English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, and Korean. The survey was in the field between November 8–December 24, 2021, and had a margin of error of +/- 2.5%. This survey was supported by a grant from the California Community Foundation.

1 *https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescountycalifornia/RHI425220#RHI425220*

KEY FINDINGS

- Large proportions of AAPIs living in Los Angeles report being victims of a hate incident. Reporting of hate incidents was especially prevalent among native-born and younger AAPIs.
- Many AAPIs are worried about experiencing a hate crime and are concerned about racism. These concerns are shared across AAPIs' national origin groups.
- A majority of AAPIs have experienced racial discrimination here in the United States.
- Experiences with racial discrimination influence AAPIs to hold more liberal preferences on public policy issues and lead them to support Democrats.
- Racial discrimination has galvanized political activity among AAPIs, with 64% of AAPI registered voters reporting that they are very likely to vote in 2022.

I.

Nearly a quarter of AAPIs reported being a victim of a hate crime during the pandemic

In 1999, Filipino American postal worker Joseph Illeto was gunned down by a white supremacist while on his mail route in Chatsworth. The murder rocked the Los Angeles community and brought attention to the kind of racial discrimination and violence faced by Asian Americans. Sadly, more than 20 years later, we see a new wave of violence and hate against Asian Americans both across the nation and here in Greater Los Angeles.

Our survey asked: "*Have you been a victim of a hate crime since the pandemic began? That is, have you had someone verbally or physically abuse you or damage your property because of your race or ethnicity?*" We found that a significant proportion of AAPIs have experienced incidents of hate (Figure 1). Nearly a quarter of AAPIs reported being a victim of a hate incident during the pandemic. While this experience with hate is shared across national origin, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese Americans were most likely to report having been a victim of a hate incident.

Figure 1.

A significant proportion of AAPIs across national origins report having been verbally or physically abused, or had property damaged because of their race or ethnicity since the pandemic began.

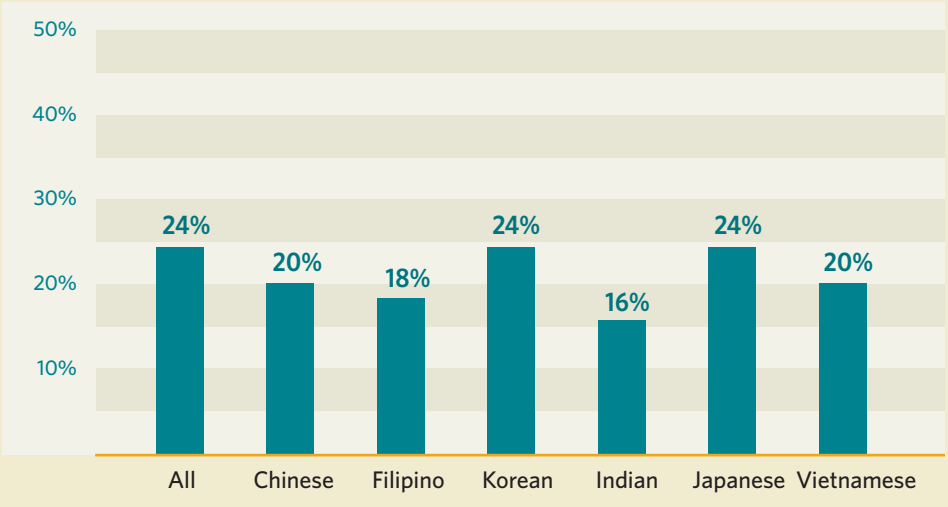
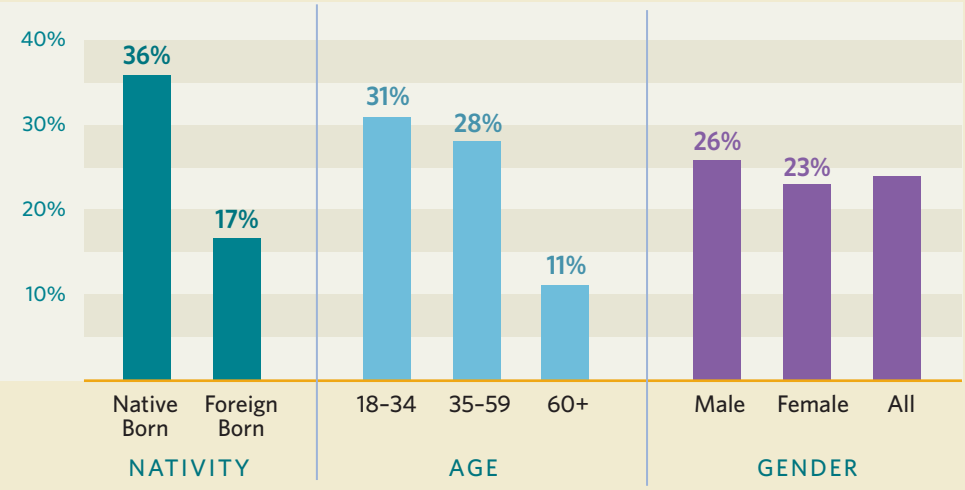


Figure 2.

Native-born and younger AAPIs are more likely to report having been a victim of hate incidents, while women and men are about equally likely to report being a victim.



When digging deeper into who within the AAPI community in Los Angeles has experienced hate incidents, we found differences across nativity and age (Figure 2). While 36% of native-born AAPIs reported being a victim of a hate incident, 17% of foreign-born AAPIs reported the same. Younger AAPIs between the ages of 18-34 (31%) were the most likely to report personal experiences with hate incidents. In addition, we found that across gender, men and women share experiences with hate crimes. In our survey, 26% of men reported having been a victim of a hate incident, while among AAPI women, a marginally lower proportion of 23% reported the same.

II.

AAPIs' Concerns About Hate Crimes and Racism Are Extremely High

Since the pandemic began, about two-thirds of AAPIs have worried about becoming a victim of a hate crime (Figure 3). A plurality of AAPIs in Los Angeles are somewhat worried (44%) and 22% are very worried. This fear

Figure 3.

Approximately two-thirds of AAPIs across Los Angeles report being very or somewhat worried about becoming a victim of a hate crime.

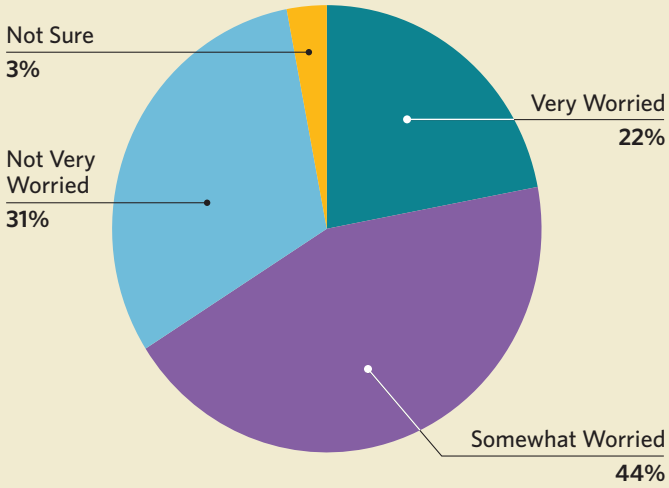
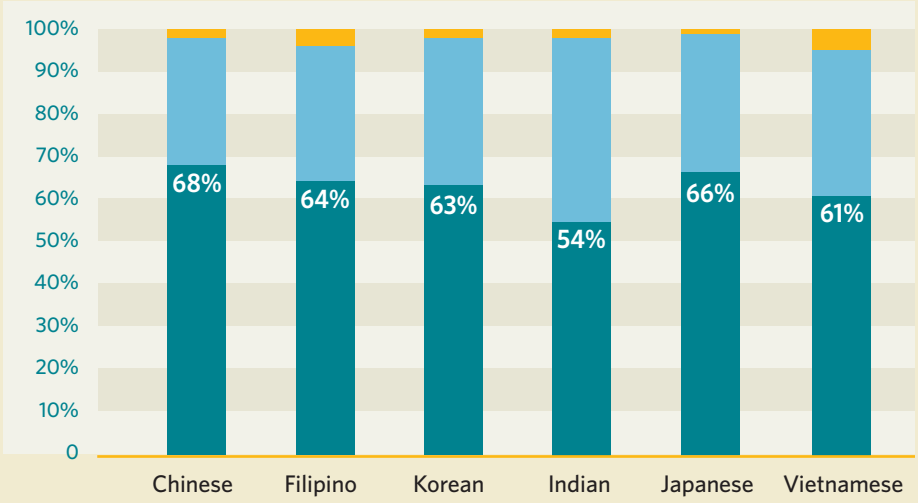


Figure 4.

Worry about becoming a victim of a hate crime is shared roughly equally by AAPIs across all nationalities.



of becoming a victim of a hate crime is shared across AAPI national origin (Figure 4). Our survey results indicate that worry about anti-Asian racism and hate crimes is prevalent in the AAPI community in Los Angeles during COVID-19.

Building on this evidence, our survey found that 80% of AAPIs said that anti-Asian racism has been serious during the pandemic (Figure 5). More than one-third (36%) said anti-Asian racism has been extremely serious, and 44% said it has been somewhat serious. This concern about anti-Asian racism is strongly shared across AAPIs of different national origin groups. However, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese respondents were most likely to say that anti-Asian racism is serious (Figure 6).

Figure 5.

Eighty percent of AAPIs across Los Angeles say that anti-Asian racism has been an extremely serious or somewhat serious problem during the pandemic.

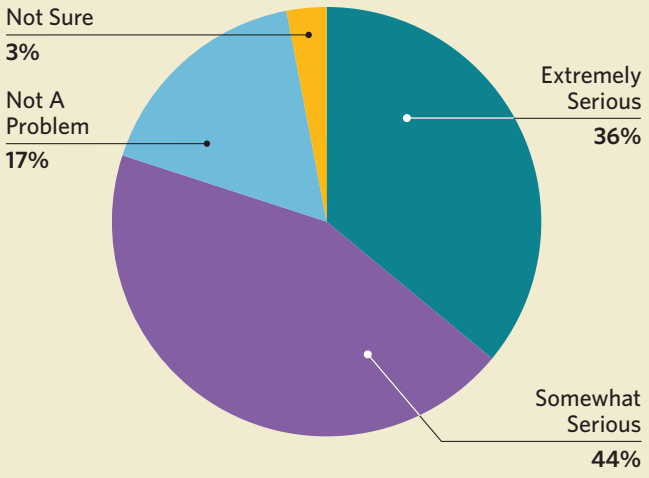
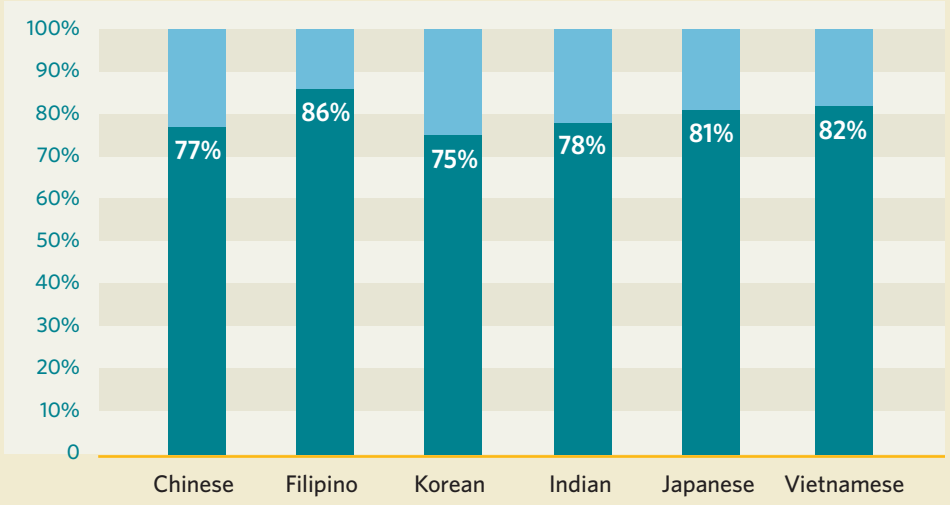


Figure 6.

Concern about anti-Asian racism is strongly shared across AAPI nationalities.

- Anti-Asian Racism is Extremely or Somewhat Serious
- Not Very Serious or Not Sure



III.

Experience with Racial Discrimination is Prevalent Among AAPIs in LA

When asked whether respondents had been treated unfairly or personally experienced discrimination because their race or ethnicity, a little more than half of AAPIs in our survey reported experiencing racial discrimination. This experience of racial discrimination is shared across national origin groups, with Japanese Americans being the most likely to say that have experienced racial discrimination (Figure 7). This may be because of the Japanese American community's deep-rooted history with internment.

Respondents reported that racial discrimination has become a part of daily life (Figure 8). AAPIs in Los Angeles were most likely to say that they faced racial discrimination in the workplace (45%), while 41% of AAPIs who faced racial discrimination said this happened at school.

Figure 7.

Approximately half of the respondents reported having been treated unfairly or having personally experienced racial discrimination because of race or ethnicity, across all AAPI nationalities.

- Have been treated unfairly or experienced discrimination based on race or ethnicity.
- Have not been so treated.

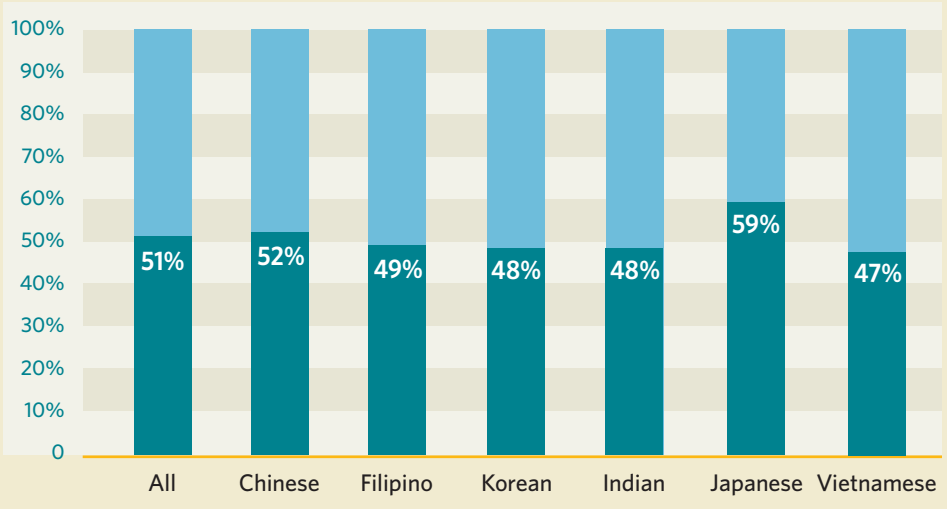
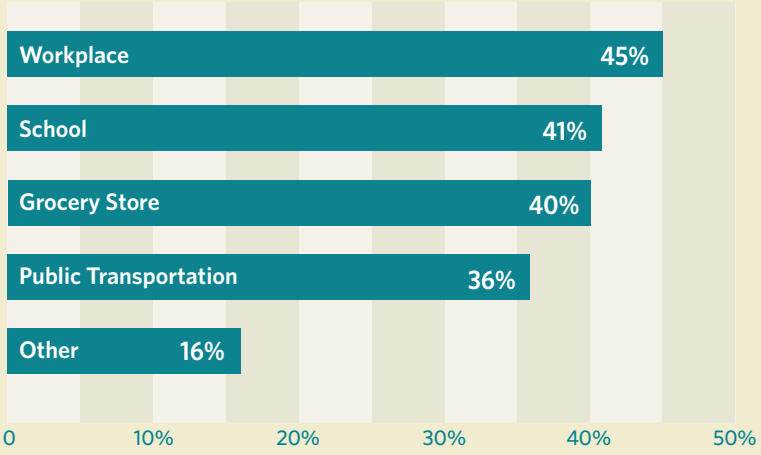


Figure 8.

Nearly half of respondents reported experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace, with significant proportions also reporting discrimination at school, in grocery stores, and on public transportation.



Roughly two-fifths (41%) said they experienced racial discrimination in grocery stores, and 36% said this occurred when taking public transportation. These data suggest that, sadly, racial discrimination has become a normal feature of living in Los Angeles for AAPIs.

IV

Political Consequences of Racial Discrimination: AAPI Views on Public Policy Issues

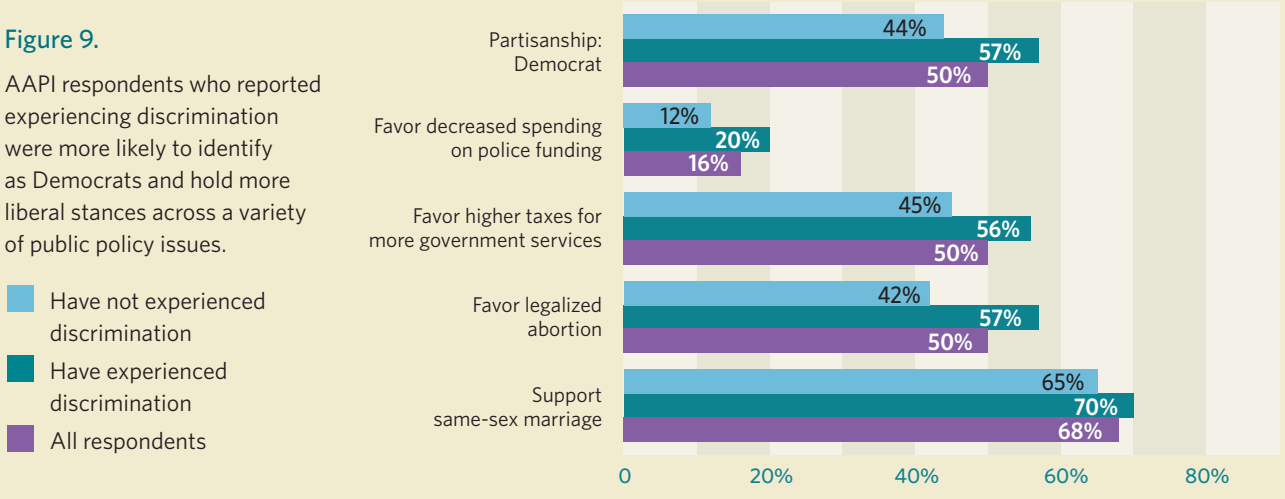
In the rest of this report, we explore the political consequences of racial discrimination against AAPIs. Recent research has found that Asian Americans who have experienced racial discrimination or have felt a sense of social exclusion are more likely to get involved in politics and to identify with Democrats.[2] These findings were reflected in the results of our survey (Figure 9).

We asked about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' political affiliation. We found that as a whole, 50% identified with the Democratic Party. However, the rate of

2 See: Kim, 1999. *https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/003232929902700100?casa_token=1iTa30L7aYAAAAAA:N1tWuY0JQ-8j5OsEg5k-N9nWE5oSvlowVKd7RTkNjiJm6fkNjDoaZsfvyOaN2E6ApF-bqfhX57y_bY*; and Mo, et al. 2017. *https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/687570.*

Figure 9.

AAPI respondents who reported experiencing discrimination were more likely to identify as Democrats and hold more liberal stances across a variety of public policy issues.



affiliation as a Democrat is about seven points higher among AAPIs who had experienced racial discrimination compared to AAPIs who had not experienced racial discrimination.

We also found that AAPIs who experienced racial discrimination were more likely to hold liberal stances across a wide variety of public policy issues. On same-sex marriage, immigration, and police funding, AAPIs who have faced racial discrimination were slightly more likely to hold more liberal views on these issues (+5, +5, and +7 points respectively). Additionally, those who experienced discrimination were eleven percentage points more likely to favor paying higher taxes for more government services than AAPIs who had not personally experienced discrimination.[3]

AAPIs who experienced discrimination were fifteen points more likely to say abortion should be legal all of the time or most of the time relative to those who had not experienced discrimination. These findings comport with recent scholarship, which notes that Asian Americans are perceived as perpetually foreign and that social exclusion of Asian Americans push this community toward more liberal and Democratic political preferences.[4]

Our findings suggest that experiences with racial discrimination among AAPIs are prevalent and experienced in everyday life. Further, experiences with racial discrimination are shaping the political views of this community. We find that, not only is racial discrimination associated with more AAPIs identifying with the Democratic Party, but also that this experience with discrimination liberalizes AAPIs on a broad range of policy issues.

V.

Racial Discrimination and Civic Engagement

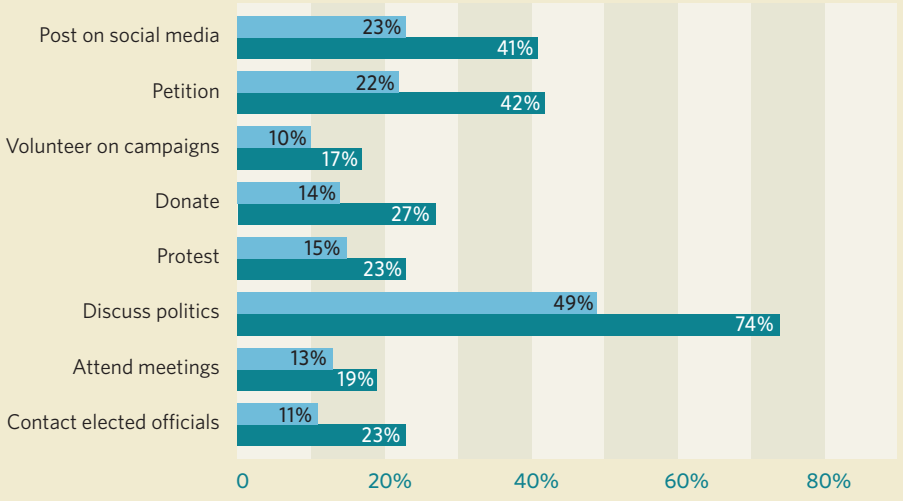
Over the last twenty years, Asian Americans have become increasingly politically active across the state and here in Los Angeles. Racial discrimination not only shapes public opinion among AAPIs, but also affects levels of political participation. As Angelenos prepare to cast their ballots in the upcoming 2022 elections, we can anticipate even more AAPI participation. We analyzed a broad range of political activities such as posting on social media, discussing politics, and donating (Figure 10).

3 Future research might consider if Asian Americans who hold more liberal views on policy issues are more aware of their personal experiences with discrimination and what constitutes racial discrimination against Asian Americans.

4 Chan, Leung, and Kim, 2021. *https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/covid19-and-asian-americans-how-elite-messaging-and-social-exclusion-shape-partisan-attitudes/CEC59253B-8C36744BDD6DDC66284098C.*

Figure 10.

AAPI respondents who reported experiencing discrimination were more likely to report being more active politically than those who say they have not experienced such discrimination.



Across all modes of political participation, we found convincing evidence that in the face of racial discrimination, Asian Americans have not withdrawn from politics. Rather, AAPIs have become more active. Discrimination motivates action. We find that AAPIs who have experienced racial discrimination were more likely to be active in politics compared to AAPIs who have not experienced racial discrimination. This is consistent across all of the different ways to engage in politics that we asked on the *Voices of LA* Survey.

For example, we find that 23% of AAPIs who experienced racial discrimination contacted an elected official, while only 11% of AAPIs who had not experienced racial discrimination completed that same action. We observed a similar pattern for donating to political organizations. AAPIs who experienced racial discrimination were nearly twice as likely to donate compared to those who had not experienced discrimination. AAPIs in Los Angeles have responded to racial discrimination with even more involvement in politics, making their voices heard.

VI.

AAPIs at the Ballot Box

Looking ahead to future elections, we also find widespread enthusiasm for voting in the upcoming 2022 midterms, with 64% of AAPIs reporting that they are very likely to vote, and an additional 28% saying they would be somewhat likely to vote in 2022 (Figure 11). Only 9% reported being unlikely voters. This is important as the city votes for a new mayor and city attorney as well as a host of contests in newly redrawn state assembly, senate, and congressional districts.

Much like other Angelenos, a majority of AAPIs placed homelessness at the top of their list of the most pressing issues facing the city, followed by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Crime—a concern that has emerged as a main topic of campaign conversation—appears further down the list, with less than a third of AAPIs raising crime in the city as a concern. While crime is important to AAPI voters, jobs and the economy rank as a higher concern with 42% of respondents identifying this issue as the most pressing in Los Angeles.

Figure 11.

More than 90% of AAPIs in Los Angeles say they are Very Likely or Somewhat Likely to vote in the 2022 midterm elections.

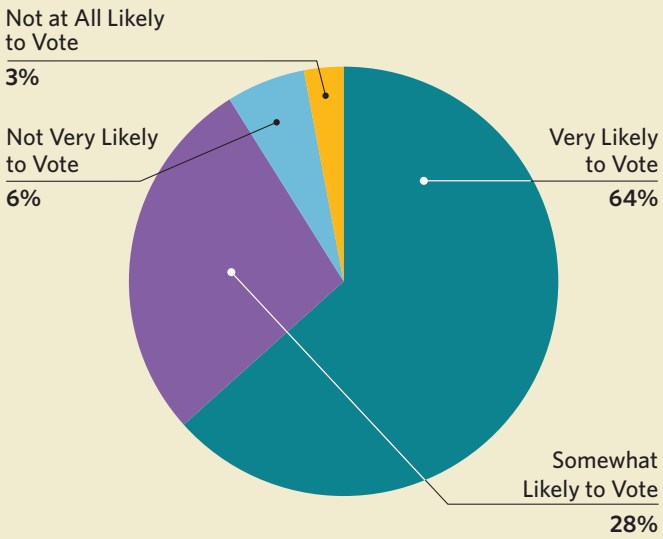
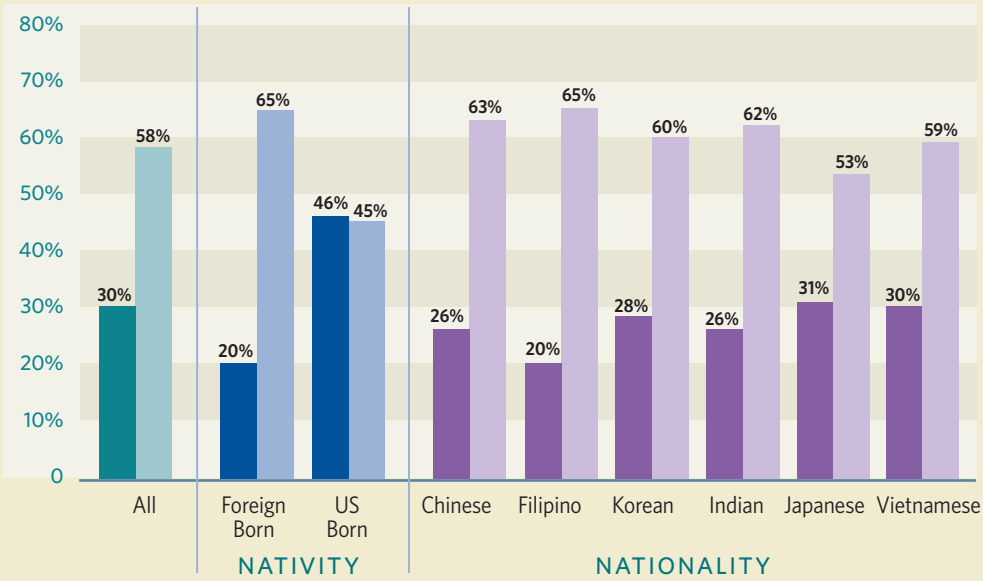


Figure 12.

AAPIs on voter and voter registration outreach efforts.

Have been asked by a campaign, political party, or community member to vote or register to vote.

Have *not* been asked by a campaign, political party, or community member to vote or register to vote.



Unfortunately, despite their growing interest in participating in politics this year, most AAPIs report minimal outreach from candidates and parties (Figure 12). Fifty-eight percent of respondents said that over the past two years, they were not asked to register or vote by an election candidate campaign, a representative of a political party, or someone from an organization working in their community. Foreign-born AAPIs were less likely than native-born AAPIs to report that they had received outreach about voting. This problem of recruiting AAPI voters is widespread across national origin, particularly among Filipino, Chinese, Indian, and Korean Americans. It seems that organizations have instead focused on reaching out to higher propensity voters, or those with a track record of voting regularly, and are more likely to neglect AAPI communities that may need outreach in languages other than English.

Effective communication is at the core of engaging any voting community to share a candidate's vision or vital information about when and where to vote. For AAPIs, communication is most impactful when materials are translated into the languages many voters speak and when campaigns meaningfully visit and listen to communities in the places where their communities gather. Unfortunately, research has regularly found that parties fail to include AAPIs in their outreach efforts.[5] But the findings of this survey suggest that campaigns ignore AAPIs at their peril because the community has faced significant trauma from increased racial discrimination and acts of hate that are galvanizing political activity and driving AAPIs to the polls this election year.

VII.
Conclusions

The AAPI experience in the United States has been marked by instances of race-based discrimination and exclusion: from the denial of naturalization and citizenship rights in Supreme Court cases such as *Ozawa v. U.S.* (1922) and *Thind v. U.S.* (1923), to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin, to the anti-Asian rhetoric and violence that have become commonplace during the coronavirus pandemic.

5 See for example Ramakrishnan and Ahman, 2014. *https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AAPIReport-comp.pdf*

This survey found that large proportions of AAPIs living in Los Angeles report being victims of a hate crime or racial discrimination. Reporting of hate crimes was especially prevalent among native-born and younger AAPIs and many AAPIs are worried about experiencing a hate crime and are concerned about racism. These concerns are shared across AAPIs' national origins.

Scholars have long argued that the context of the immigrant experience shapes the political preferences and participation of immigrant communities.[6] Direct and indirect experiences with racial discrimination make AAPIs more likely to hold liberal preferences on public policy issues and spurring them to get more involved in politics. As we look ahead to future elections, campaigns, candidates and parties would be wise to strategically invest their outreach activities toward the AAPI community, which is growing in size, significance, and political power throughout the Southland.

6 See for example Ramakrishnan, 2005.

About the *Voices of LA* AAPI Surveys

The *Voices of LA* Surveys are conducted by BSP Research, which specializes in the surveying the attitudes and daily lives of communities of color. This was the second survey of AAPIs completed by The Pat Brown Institute, the first being done in 2016. Future reports on the 2022 survey will dive more into other questions that were asked of AAPIs with regard to the importance of representation of elected officials.

About the Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA

The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA is a nonpartisan, presidentially chartered institute dedicated to the quest for social justice and equity, enlightened civic engagement, and an enhanced quality of life for all Californians. Former California Governor Pat Brown brought the Institute to Cal State LA in 1987. Today the Institute seeks to sustain his vision and legacy through its current programs, including the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Initiative, Civic U©, polling, candidate debates, and community-based research.

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Contact us at PBI@calstatela.edu
www.calstatela.patbrowninstitute.org

@patbrowninstitute
@PBI
@pat_brown_institute