

Ballot Initiative Strategy Center

Attitudes on Ballot Initiatives among the Asian American and Pacific Islander California Electorate

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Methodology

- Focus Groups

- Lake Research Partners conducted and moderated nine focus groups over the course of one month in California of Asian American and Pacific Islander registered voters.
- Voters were segmented by country of origin, and in some cases age, in order to promote open conversations among respondents.
- This qualitative research is used to gain insight on how AAPI voters engage and think about ballot measures.

- Survey

- GBA Strategies conducted a California statewide phone and online survey of 1800 likely General Election voters.
- Respondents included 450 Chinese American, 450 Korean American, 450 Vietnamese American, and 450 Filipino American voters.
- Margin of error for each group is +/- 4.6 percentage points per nationality at the 95 percent confidence level.

Key Common Findings

- AAPI voters in California lean Democratic and engage on progressive issues.
- Issue concerns include education, water conservation, and affordability concerns.
- Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Vietnamese voters identify more readily with their own communities than they do as Asian Americans. Likewise there aren't many statewide Asian leaders that voters look to for voting information.
- AAPI voters like ballot initiatives, and some think voting on ballot initiatives is in fact more important than voting for candidates, but at the same time many find ballot initiatives confusing.
- AAPI voters rely on a range of sources of information about voting, including in-language sources and close family members.
- On the 2016 California ballot, the English proficiency, education tax extension, and cigarette tax initiatives get strong support among AAPI voters.

Focus Group Methodology

- Lake Research Partners conducted and moderated nine focus groups in April and May 2016 in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Los Angeles area, and Fresno of Asian American registered voters. They were organized as follows.

Date	Location	Group
April 6, 2016	Orange County	Vietnamese in language
		Korean in English
April 8, 2016	Los Angeles	Korean in language
April 18, 2016	San Francisco	Filipino in English (younger)
		Chinese in language
April 19, 2016	San Jose (Sunnyvale)	Vietnamese in language
April 20, 2016	SGV (Pasadena)	Chinese in English
April 28, 2016	Fresno	Hmong in language
May 3, 2016	Long Beach	Filipino in English (older)

Focus Group Summary: Contextual Findings

- AAPI voters in California are interested in ballot measures but their level of engagement is low. They crave information and want clear explanations of what initiatives will do and how the measures will impact their families and communities. The impact of voter guides that are clear and informative, in English and other languages, could be substantial across multiple AAPI communities.
- Despite differences in language and identity, we heard many common threads across all AAPI groups.
 - They have a singular focus on education and its importance to economic success.
 - While they mention jobs, it's less about finding a job and more about how much they pay and being able to afford the high cost of living, especially housing.
 - Health care - the cost and complexity of it - also comes up frequently.
 - Initiatives that address education, affordable housing, and health care attract more interest than others as they are seen as directly affecting their lives.
 - Crime, environment, immigration and transportation also come up but are not as central.
- AAPI voters are progressive on most economic issues and want to see an active role for government in promoting public good, whether it's excellent schools and universities, a better health care system, retirement security, or infrastructure. Most are fairly liberal on social issues too, but these are less motivating across the board, with some exceptions among millennials.

Focus Group Summary: Elections and Voting

- AAPI voters see voting as a right and responsibility. They believe it's important to make their voice heard – mostly as individuals and families, but also as a community.
- While they are aware of ballot initiatives and understand how they work, they hear and talk much more about candidates than initiatives.
- They hear a lot about candidates for president or governor, but information about candidates and issues down the ballot is harder to find. Many are concerned about making an ill-informed decision and don't want to make a mistake.
- Most, but not all, talk about voting decisions with their spouses, adult children, or parents. A few discuss with close friends but are less likely to do so with colleagues or acquaintances for fear of conflict. In the end, they see voting as an individual, not collective decision, though family and friends may be useful for information.

Focus Group Summary: Ballot Initiatives

- AAPI voters simultaneously see ballot initiatives as very important – more so than candidates in many cases because the initiative has a more direct impact – yet paradoxically pay less attention to them. The information to make a good decision is just not available or harder to find.
- They remember little about past initiatives even though they know they have voted on many. Prop 8 (same-sex marriage) is the clearest recent memory, but most don't even come up with that example. They know there have been initiatives on taxes, education, health, and environment, but the details are forgotten.
- The typical response when confronted with an initiative they know little about is to skip it, though some also vote “No” when uncertain.

Focus Group Summary: Sources of Information

- AAPI voters do not feel they have much reliable information on initiatives. Some turn to particular family members or friends whom they feel are well-informed. Those with limited English sometimes get help from English-speaking family members.
- A common response to an unfamiliar initiative is to “Google it.” They believe Google search results can point them to sources of information from multiple points of view that will help inform them. It is unclear how often they actually do this type of research.
- The official ballot pamphlet is seen as an objective, if dense and confusing, source of information. Many set aside time, alone or with family, to go through the ballot pamphlet in advance of voting and make decisions. However, many find the pamphlet overwhelming.
- AAPI voters consume a wide range of broadcast, print, and online media sources and look to those sources for political information when available. English speakers prefer mainstream media such as CNN, major local newspapers, or local TV news for information about elections. Non-English speakers consume more ethnic media including heavy usage of in-language TV and radio stations. They like getting the perspective of their own community from these outlets, but in most cases they rarely see information about ballot measures there.

Focus Group Summary: Leaders and Candidates

- Just as these voters do not identify strongly as an “Asian community,” there are hardly any “Asian leaders” that have a statewide presence. Certain groups know and pay attention to leaders that are seen as directly from their community – such as Mayor Ed Lee among Chinese in San Francisco – but Asian leaders from other parts of the state or of other ethnicities are generally viewed with no special affinity.
- While voters are interested in what elected officials have to say about initiatives, they do not take guidance from them. If anything, they use the stated positions to evaluate the officials on whether they have the right priorities, rather than the other way around.
- Despite not expressing strong partisan views, many voters take cues from the Democratic Party, and to a lesser extent the Republican Party – wanting to get “both sides” on an issue. Political parties are seen as knowledgeable and connected, and therefore worth paying attention to, even if the voter doesn’t always agree.

Focus Group Summary: Ballot Measures

- In the focus groups, AAPI voters were most interested in the measures seen as directly affecting their families and their future, with education and health leading the list.
- The extension of Prop 30 upper-income taxes to fund education and health care was also a winner in the focus groups.
- Voters were mostly supportive of the tobacco tax, seeing it as a good way to raise revenue for a very important purpose – cancer treatment research. Smokers are less enthused.

- **California statewide survey conducted June 13th – July 17th, 2016 of 1,800 likely voters in the 2016 general election**
 - 450 Chinese American likely voters
 - 450 Korean American likely voters
 - 450 Vietnamese American likely voters
 - 450 Filipino American likely voters
- **1,000 interviews conducted by cell phone (45%) and landline (55%), 800 interviews online**
- **Margin of error for each group is +/- 4.6 percentage points per nationality at the 95 percent confidence level**

Survey Findings – The Political Environment

- AAPI voters in California tilt strong Democratic, but with a moderate streak.
- They give very positive ratings to President Obama, fairly positive to Hillary Clinton, while Donald Trump receives incredibly negative ratings.
- Clinton dominates Trump among AAPI voters in CA; a large chunk of Republicans are looking for an alternative to Trump.

- AAPI voters in California point to a number of issue concerns, including water conservation, crime, and affordability concerns.
- Across the board, AAPI voters see education as central to opportunity and our democracy.
- AAPI voters consider themselves environmentalists at very high levels.

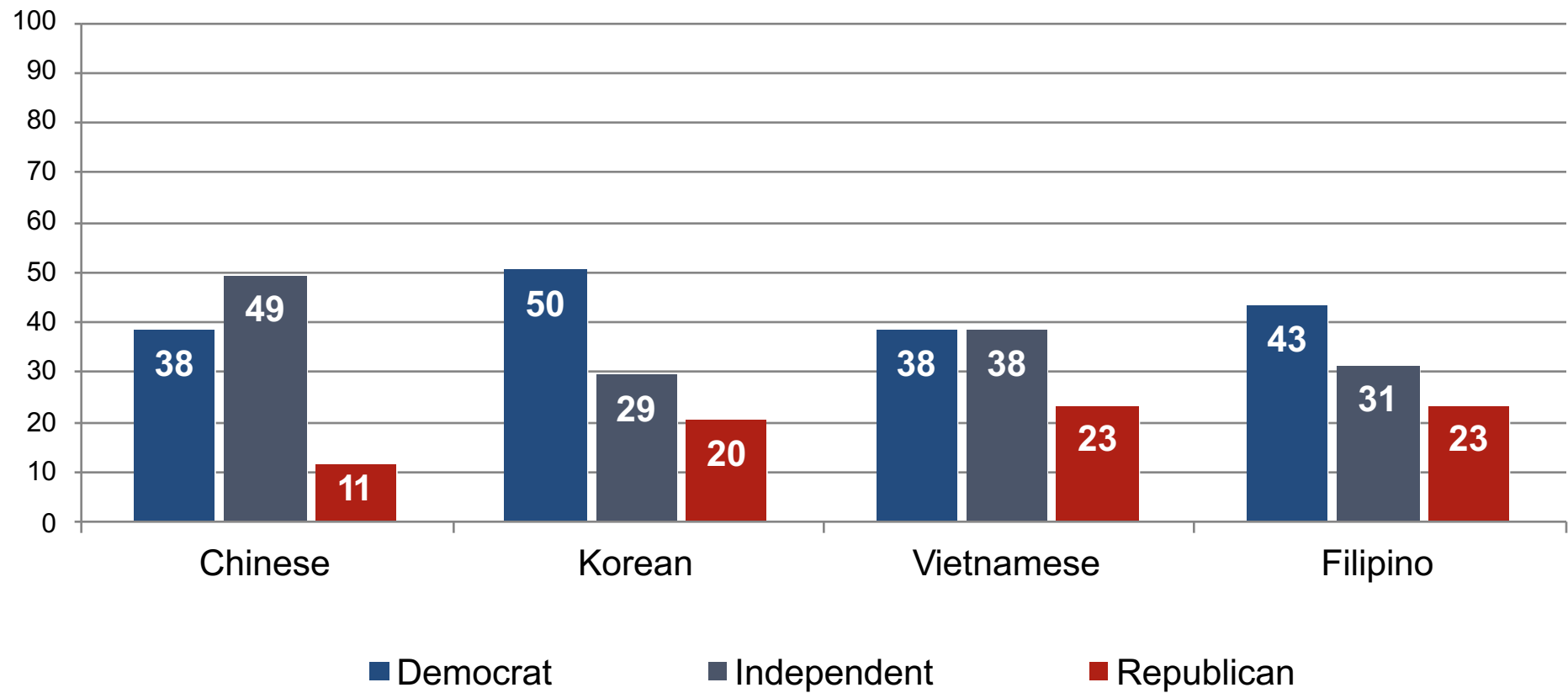
Survey Findings – Ballot Initiatives

- AAPI voters in California like ballot initiatives, but often find them confusing. AAPI voters appear susceptible to ballot roll-off, especially Korean and Vietnamese voters.
- AAPI voters rely on a range of sources of information about initiatives with differences driven by age.
- Most AAPI voters have not seen language as a barrier to voting participation, yet they value multi-lingual ballots.
- The English proficiency, education tax extension, and cigarette tax initiatives enjoy strong support among AAPI voters.

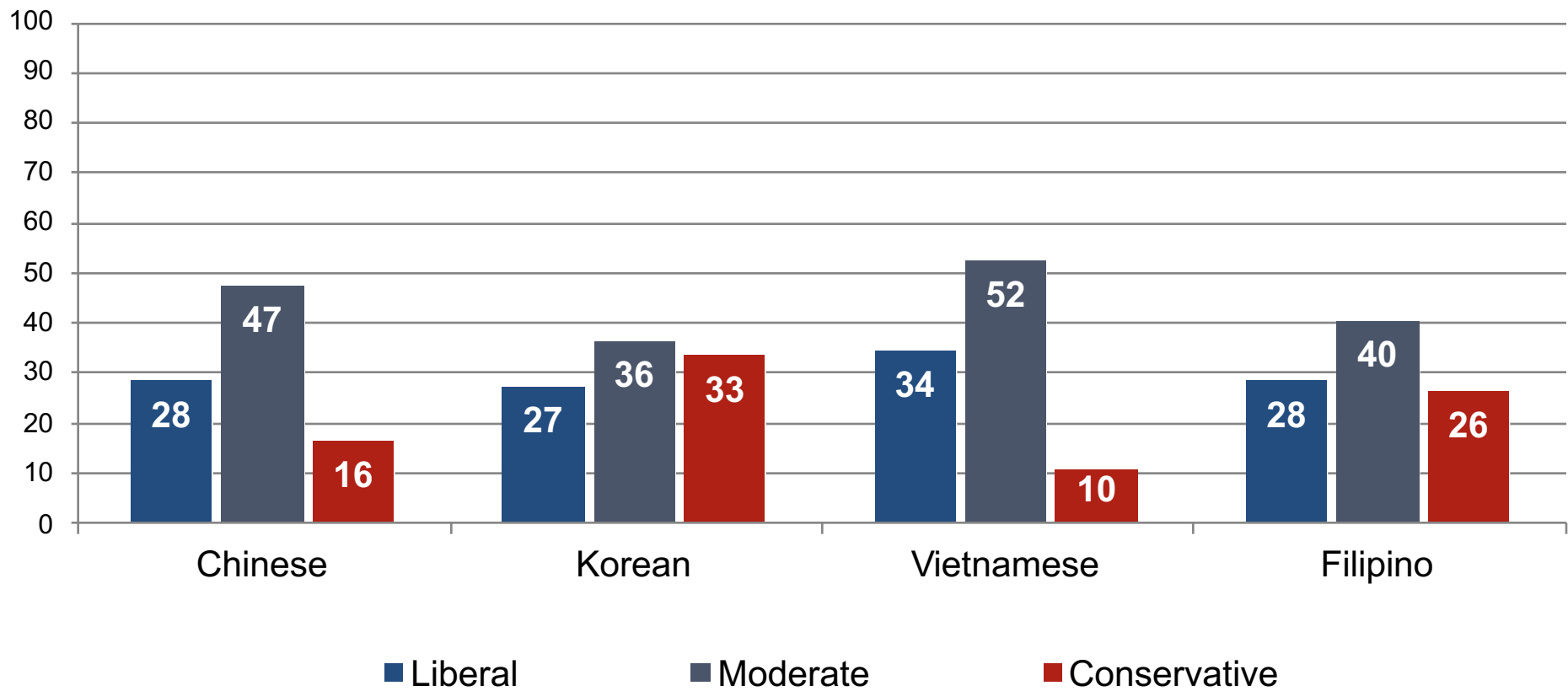


The Political Landscape

CA AAPI Communities Tilt Democratic, But With Many Independents



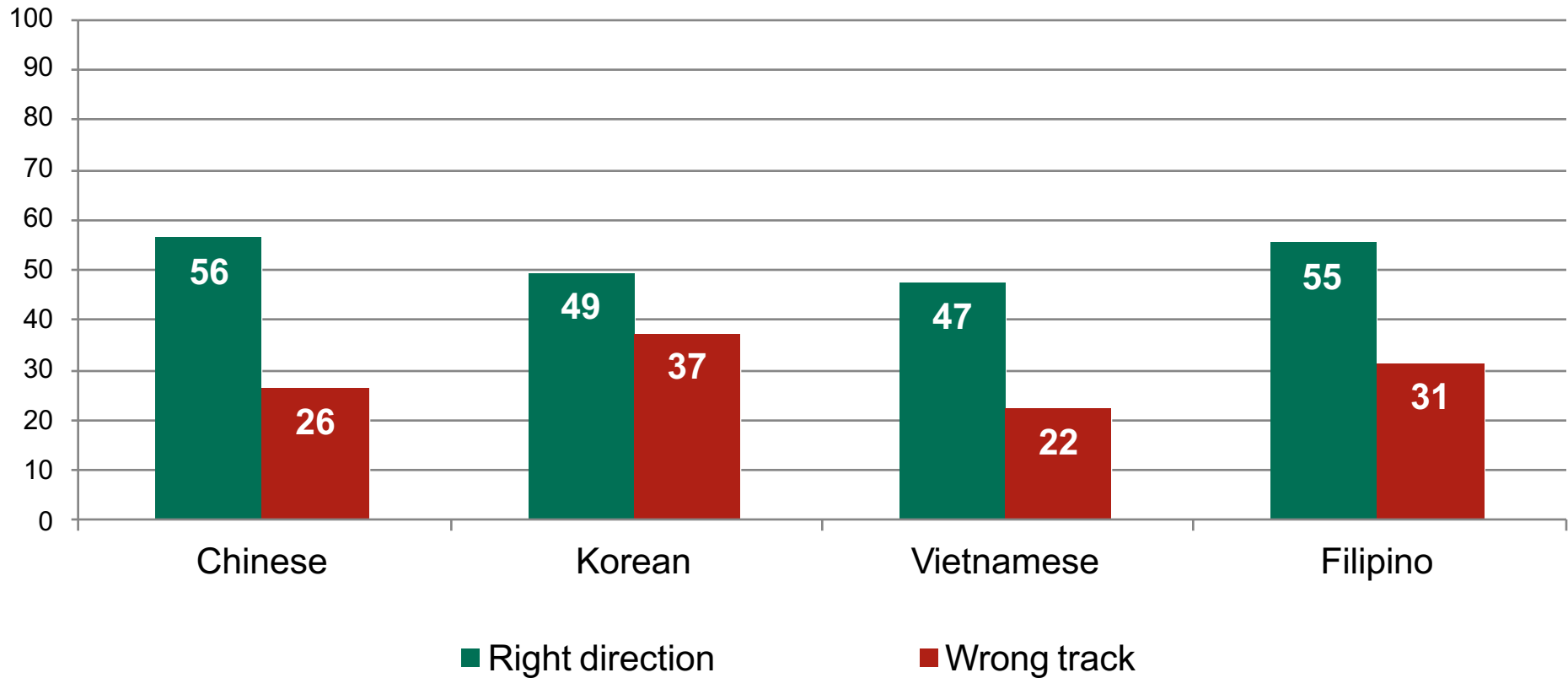
High Share Of Moderates In AAPI Community



AAPI Voters Lean Towards Positive Outlook On California



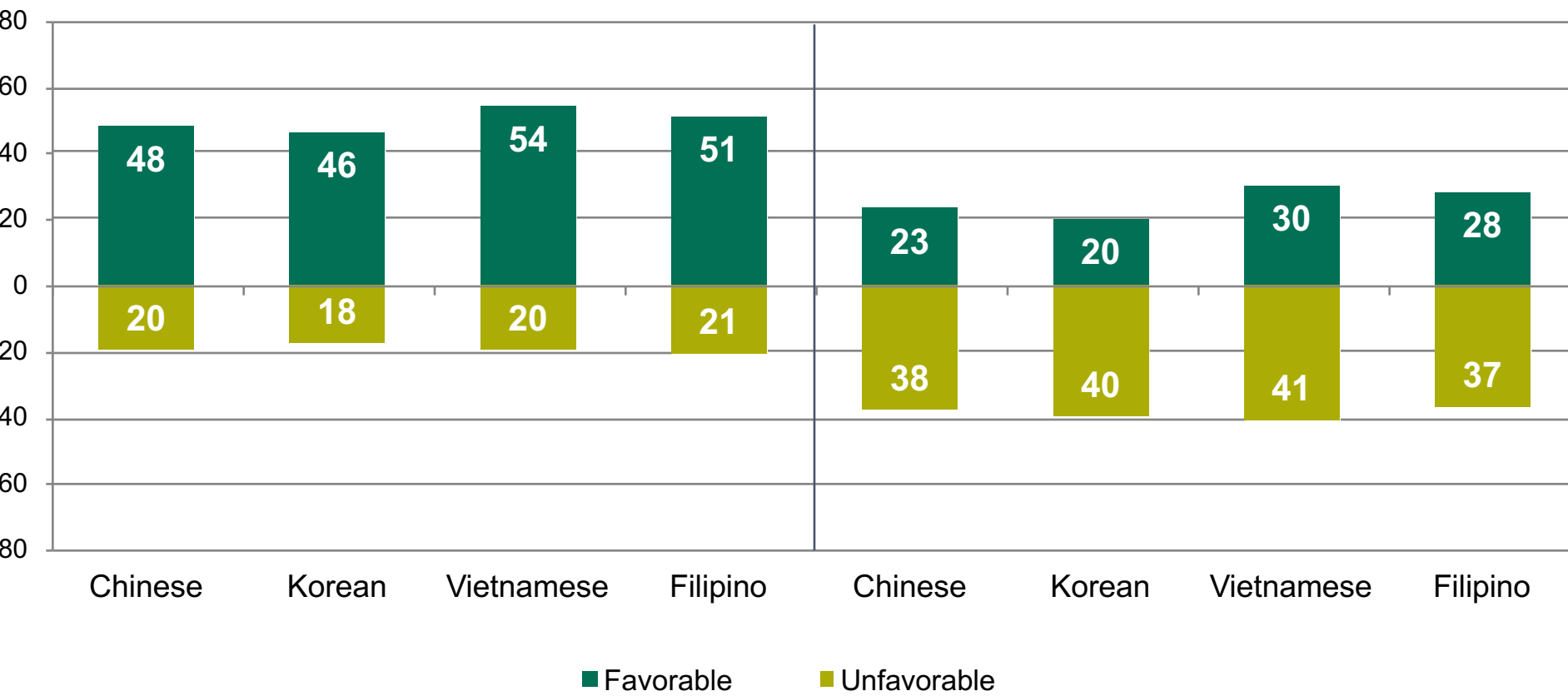
Generally speaking, do you think that things in California are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



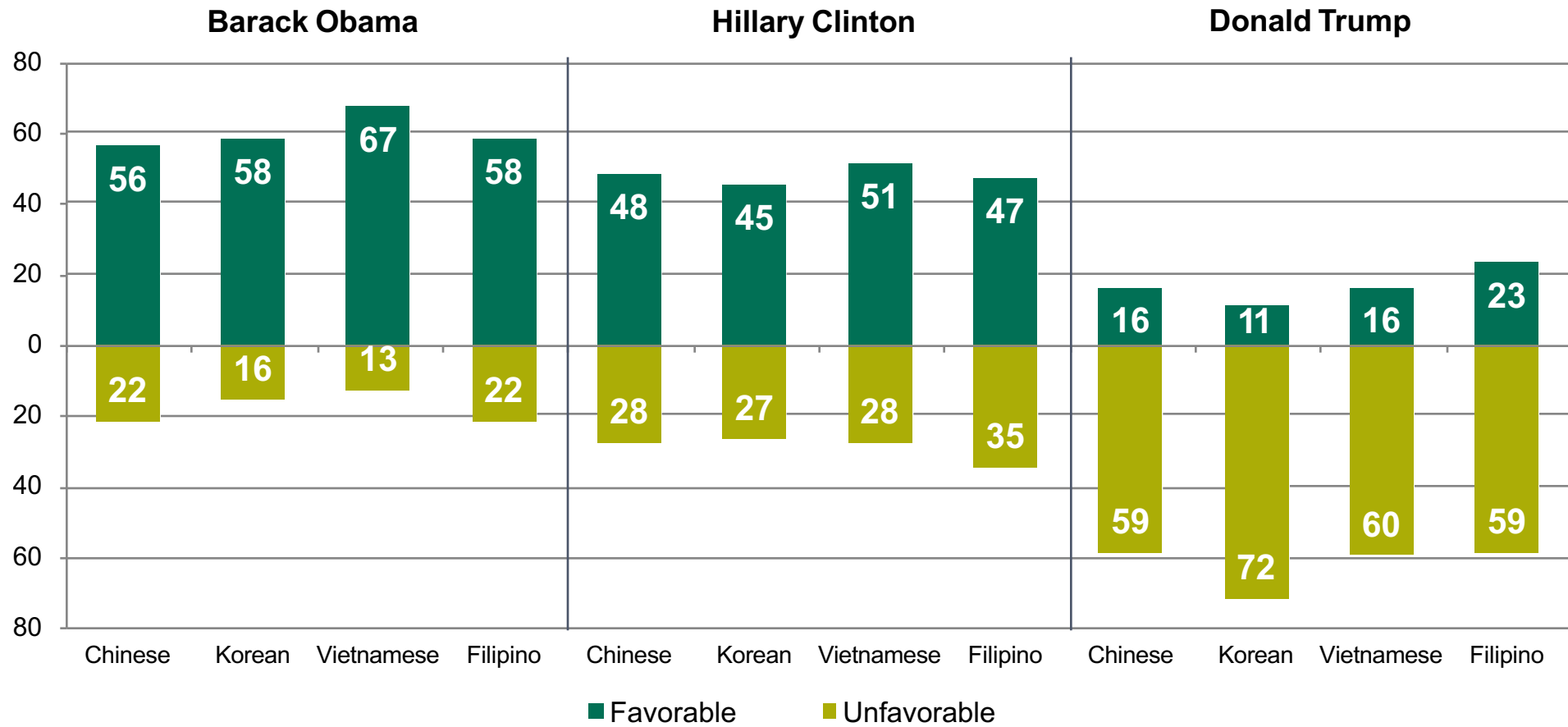
Positive Views Of Democratic Party; Negative Views Of Republican Party

The Democratic Party

The Republican Party



Trump Wildly Unpopular, Hillary Mostly Positive, Obama Very Strong



AAPI voters take voting very seriously as a right and a responsibility. They believe it's important to make their voice heard – mostly as individuals and families, but also as a community.

Voting as a Civic Responsibility

*"Participating in voting is very important, especially because thinking about having more influence. **As Korean-Americans I think we have to participate in voting to voice our opinions.**"* –

LA Korean woman

*"Before I didn't really think much of voting and stuff like that because I was so busy to make money for my family, but **after this long period of a bad economy I am beginning to have an interest in voting to change something** because I didn't like this at all."* –OC Korean man

*"I think it is hugely important being that we're Millennial-ish that it is up to us. It is our responsibility to take care of what has already been built and then put forth to create this new infrastructure that maybe something that works better for all of us. **Though in the grand scheme of things, we are small voices, but together -- it is very corny but together we all make a bigger voice.**"* – SF Filipina woman

*"I think a little differently. I think just one vote can make a big difference and sometimes because of one single vote it could be selected or not. **Because of my one vote it could make a difference,** so I think it is very important for everybody to participate."* – LA Korean man

*"We say everything by voting so to say. **For Korean community to develop and improve there should be more voters** and the politicians will look at that and try to invest more into our community, so I personally think voting is very important."* –LA Korean Man



Ballot Initiatives

Significant Potential For Roll-Off Among AAPI Voters, Especially Korean And Vietnamese Californians



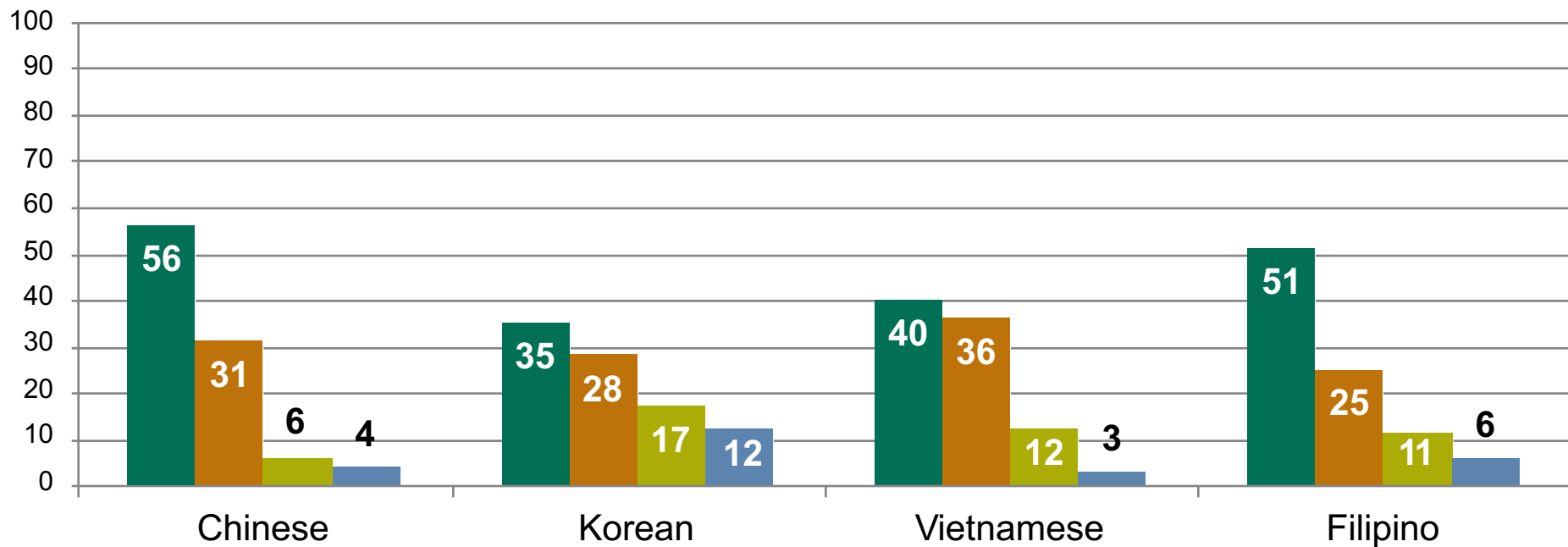
When it comes to voting on ballot measures, do you vote...

■ On ALL ballot measures

■ On MOST ballot measures

■ On ABOUT HALF of ballot measures

■ On LESS THAN HALF of ballot measures



Voters are aware of ballot initiatives and understand how they work, but information about races and issues down the ballot is harder to find, and the information they do receive does not clearly explain the issues and outcomes. Many are concerned about making an ill-informed decision when it comes to ballot measures and don't want to make a mistake.

Understanding Ballot Measures

*"[ballot measures] are kind of confusing especially if we are not fluent or born here. We can vote but if you've seen the ballot, it is really confusing. **You get confused if you are for it or opposing.**"* –Pasadena Chinese woman

*"I don't know if you have ever tried all of you guys, but it takes a long time to read through and make sure that I know and am correctly informed. **In a lot of cases I didn't know what it was about.**"* –OC Korean woman

*"I also receive these booklets, but there is too much information in there and sometimes it is not clear to explain in a way that it can help me and help me understand. **There is a lot of language in there that we don't understand** and it would take time to just read through that whole booklet." –OC Vietnamese woman*

*"I don't think there is enough information because who supports some of the propositions, it is their opinion and then the opposing side they are [approaching] their opinion. **They are not really clarifying what the real effect is.** Sometimes it is a good side of this party but some other party says some other stuff. It is confusing." –OC Korean woman*

AAPI Voters Like Ballot Initiatives, But Often Find Them Confusing



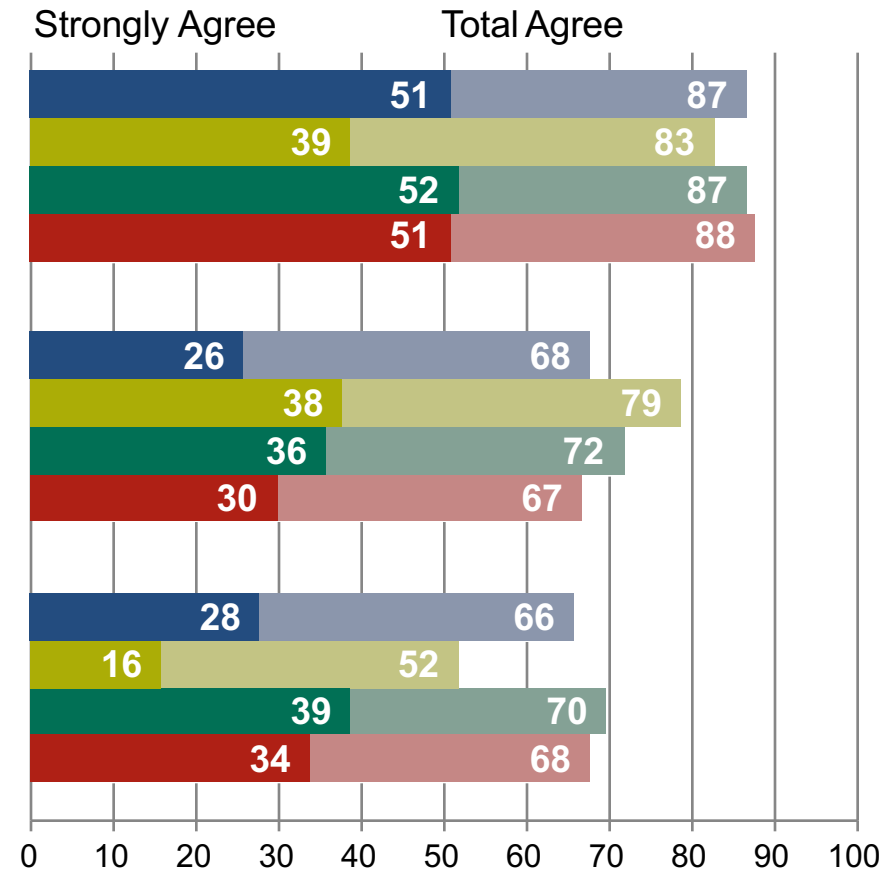
Now I am going to read some statements about ballot initiatives in California. For each statement, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with it.

I like ballot initiatives because they give me a chance to vote directly on issues I care about.

Ballot initiatives are often written in confusing ways that makes it difficult for me to know which way to vote.

I find it easy to learn about ballot initiatives and to decide how to vote.

■ Chinese ■ Korean ■ Vietnamese ■ Filipino



Older AAPI Voters Tend To Favor Ballot Initiatives More Than Younger

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	18-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-64 years old	65+ years old
Chinese American	Chance to vote directly on issues	36	48	52	52	64
	Confusing/difficult	20	21	28	28	30
	Easy to learn about/decide vote	20	21	33	31	33
Korean American	Chance to vote directly on issues	38	28	36	48	40
	Confusing/difficult	23	32	32	46	48
	Easy to learn about/decide vote	19	18	17	17	12
Vietnamese American	Chance to vote directly on issues	35	34	58	64	61
	Confusing/difficult	22	50	42	34	34
	Easy to learn about/decide vote	24	30	40	48	50
Filipino American	Chance to vote directly on issues	39	53	44	67	46
	Confusing/difficult	17	25	31	40	31
	Easy to learn about/decide vote	22	38	19	41	44

Many voters talk about ballot measures with their spouses, adult children, parents, and in some cases close friends, but most see voting as a personal decision that they would rather not share with their entire circle. Close family and friends are sometimes used as a way to gather more information about an issue.

Talking About Ballot Measures

"I don't always talk about candidates or voting. When the subject comes up, we talk about it; I don't just talk about it." –OC Korean man

*"At our church we don't encourage people to talk about it but **we talk when we come home with very close ones.**"* –Pasadena Chinese woman

*"I will talk up to uh my uh children because they have a high education than me and they born here, they talk Mandarin at me, so they can talk Mandarin so they can give me their opinion about what they want. **So I will listen and then I will research with them and I will discuss with them about this or that.**"* –SJ Vietnamese Woman

*"I don't really talk to people about it, especially politics. **I talk to my friends about politics and we've come to so many arguments,** so we try to avoid that issue."* –LA Korean Man

*"We don't talk about details because everyone has their own opinion. We do not purposely explain how you want to vote for this person. For example **in a Chinese family, you would mostly listen to your mother's opinion or your father's opinion.**"* –SF Chinese Man

*"We'll talk about it over lunch, or dinner, but it's very difficult. Like you talk about coworkers too, but I think it depends on the topic of who you can discuss it with, 'cause **it just might end up hurting your feelings or something,** yeah."* –SJ Vietnamese Woman

AAPI voters do not feel that they have much reliable information on initiatives. Some turn to friends or family, especially those who are non-English speakers.

AAPI Voters Need More Info

"I don't think there is enough information because who supports some of the propositions, it is their opinion and then the opposing side they are [approaching] their opinion.

They are not really clarifying what the real effect is.

Sometimes it is a good side of this party but some other party says some other stuff. It is confusing." –OC Korean Woman

"I will try to figure it out from friends. Even if those people don't know, then I think I will just skip it." –OC Vietnamese Woman

"They are kind of confusing especially if we are not fluent or born here. We can vote but if you've seen the ballot, it is really confusing. **You get confused if you are for it or opposing.**" –Pasadena Chinese Woman

"I feel I know some of the issues but not in-depth enough to really make a critical decision. **I feel like I need to know more, but again there are so many different ballots to go over.** If it could be more directed, maybe 1 or 2 or 3 at the most. After awhile I just can't keep track of that." –OC Korean Man

"They are always in English. I could kind of get a general idea about it but you couldn't really know the details." –LA Korean Woman

When AAPI voters don't know enough about an initiative to vote on it the typical response is to skip it. Some vote "No" when in doubt.

Not Enough Info on Measures

*"If it is an initiative that I do not know about and it is my first encounter, I would not just vote for or against it. **I would just not vote on that issue.**"* –SF Chinese Woman

*"**It depends on how important the initiative is.** If it is not pertinent to me, I'm not going to waste my time trying to figure things out but if it is important I will look at it and search in depth." –OC Korean Man*

*"At the last minute if I don't have enough information, then I would just not vote on it. **Either way it wouldn't be right.**"* –SF Chinese man

*"I will skip it because if I don't have a good understanding of it and then I voted yes on it and later I realize **oh my God what did I do?**"* –SF Filipino Woman

*"I have two rules on voting on initiatives. If it's --- or **they're asking for they're going to build this, they're going to plant this, the more money will be coming from us and our children. So I always vote no,** except for veterans. (laughter) And then the other rule that I have is, um, when I don't know anything about the issue, I just leave it blank for somebody who really knows how to vote for. So I just leave it blank because somebody who really started it probably will give the right answer." –LB Filipino Man*

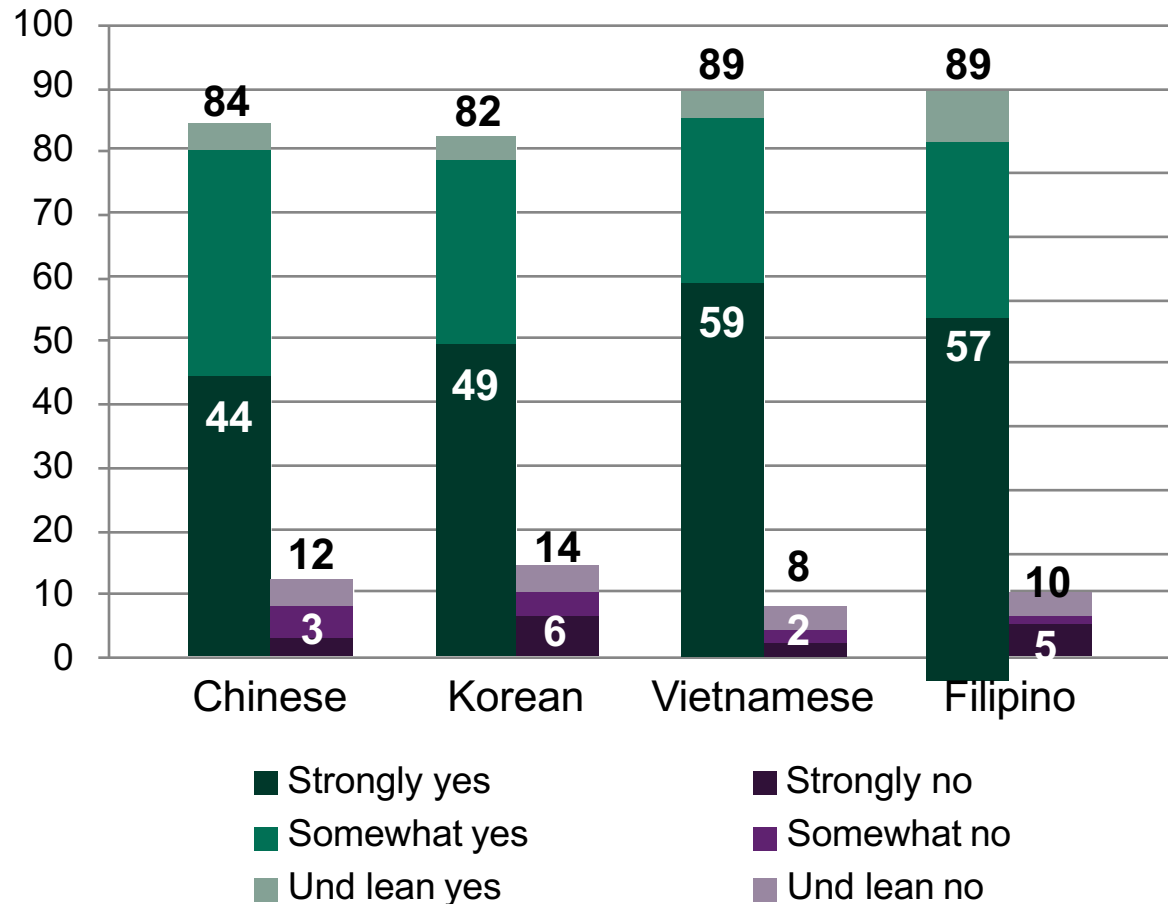


2016 Ballot Initiatives

Strong Support For English Proficiency Ballot Initiative

English Proficiency Language Education in Public Schools.

This measure requires school districts to solicit parent and community input, through the local school control and accountability planning process, to ensure all children access to language instruction programs that result in English acquisition as rapidly as possible and additional opportunities to learn a second language. Maintains structured immersion programs for English learners to achieve proficiency in English.



Big Gaps In English Proficiency Vote Between Respondents More Comfortable In Another Language vs. English			
	Interview Language	English	Chinese/Korean/ Vietnamese/Tagalog
Chinese American	Yes-No	+58	+85
	Yes	78	90
	No	20	5
Korean American	Yes-No	+56	+79
	Yes	77	87
	No	21	8
Vietnamese American	Yes-No	+76	+86
	Yes	88	90
	No	12	4
Filipino American	Yes-No	+81	+67
	Yes	90	82
	No	9	15

The tobacco tax is supported by most voters because it is seen as a good way to raise revenue for cancer research. Of course, this proposal has wider support among non-smokers than smokers.

Tobacco Tax

*"It decreases the smoking rate, which we need to do anyway. Number 2, **it geometrically increases revenue to the government**. I feel it is a positive in both cases."* –OC Korean Man

*"You think about it if they are addicted to it and they don't have money for it, **they are going to steal it**."* –Fresno Hmong Man

"Even though I'm a smoker, I will think about the \$2 per pack tax to stop smoking. I always think about cancer and [inaudible] disease like that. I worry I have bad habit of smoking." –OC Korean Man

*"**I don't smoke so it is okay with me**. For those who smoke, we should tax it because that should prevent them from buying. You think about it, when these people get sick, it is my tax money that is going to be used for them. I think it should be an awareness about smoking."* –Fresno Hmong Man

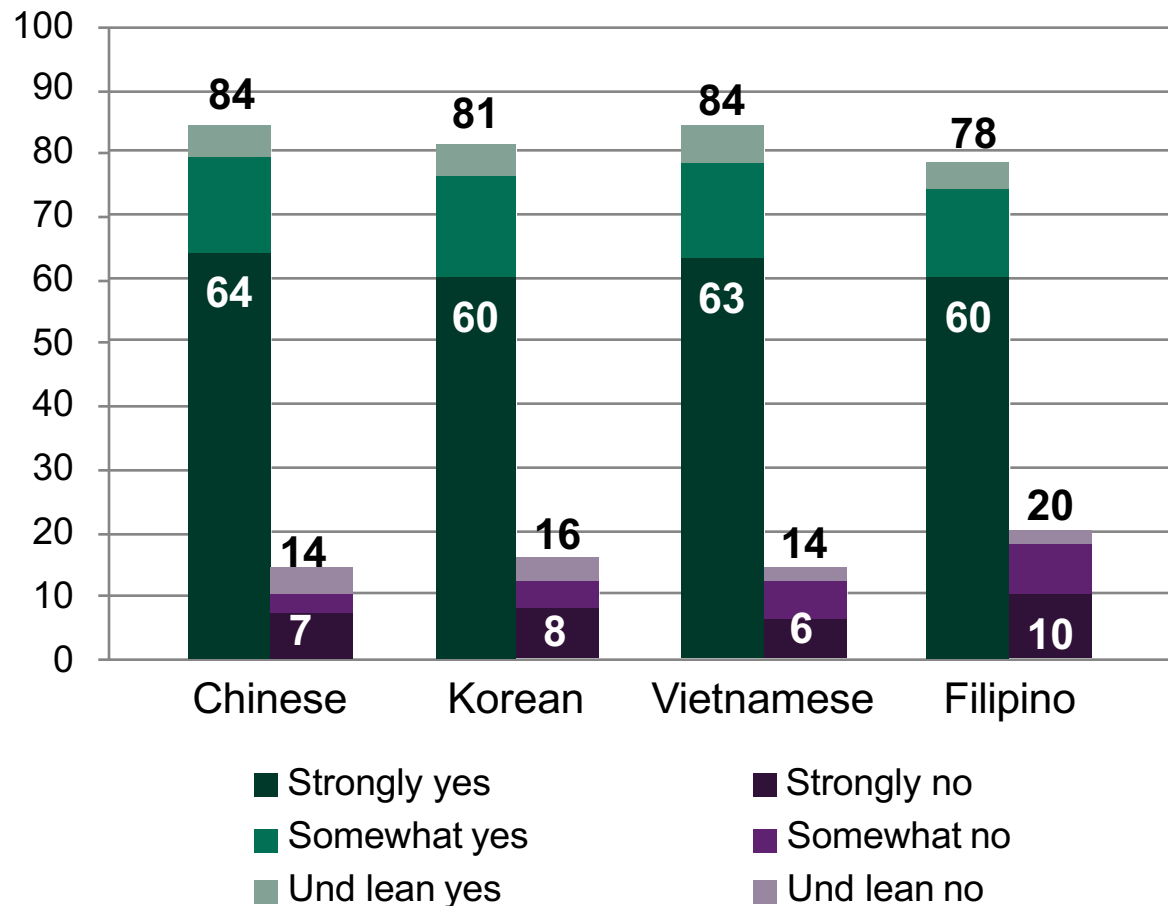
*"What do you make of that? **You are going to raise the cigarette tax and then you are going to put the cigarette manufacturers out of business**, so where do you get the money to do the research?"* –OC Vietnamese Woman

*"Everybody knows it is a health hazard and it causes a lot of cancer. They need a lot of research money for cancer, so **of course you have to tax the smokers**. **You can't tax non-smokers** for research funds."* –SF Chinese Woman

Overwhelming Support For Cigarette Tax Initiative

Cigarette Tax to Fund Healthcare, Tobacco Use Prevention, Research and Law Enforcement.

This measure increases the cigarette tax to two dollars per pack, with equivalent increases on other tobacco products and electronic cigarettes. The money raised would help fund the treatment, research and prevention of cancer and tobacco-related diseases.



Prop 30 touches on two issues that are important to many AAPI voters – healthcare and education – and so has wide support. They are mostly comfortable with higher taxes on the wealthy.

Proposition 30 Extension

*“Also, education is important and I also find it how ridiculous it is to **pay so much for something that basically seems a necessity nowadays.**” –SF Filipino Woman*

*“It is about the same reason. You think about this number \$250K annual income they probably belong to at least the top 3 percent, **so 3 percent versus 97 percent.** There are issues like education and healthcare funding that is the most major, major issues that America should consider.” –OC Korean Man*

*“I feel that even if you are a high income bracket it is your hard-earned money. **Being taxed so heavily that is tough. We can use other means to help people.** Just because you have a higher income, because you hold a more responsible job so high income people have a lot of stress too. They deserve to be paid that income.” –SF Chinese Woman*

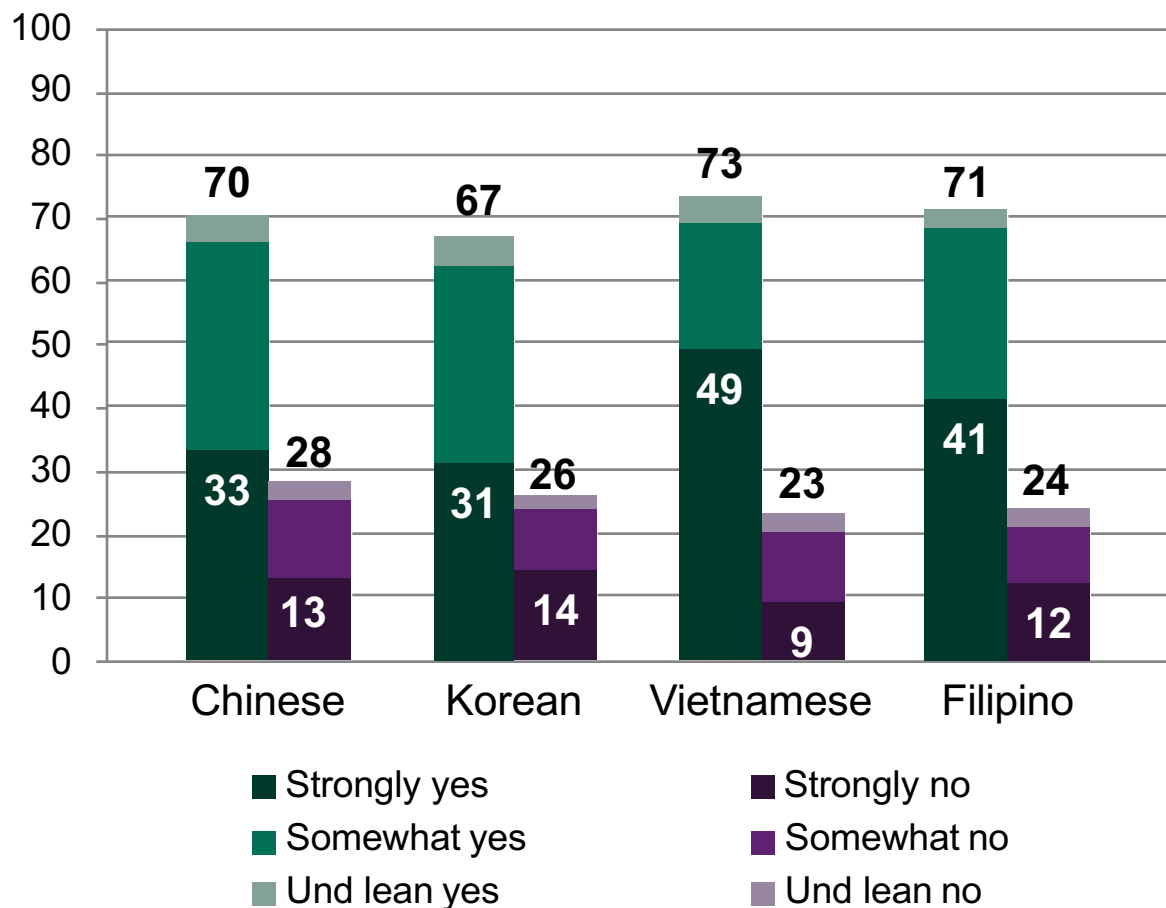
“Just the whole being used for education and healthcare because I think it is ridiculous how we are paying for healthcare like how calling an ambulance is a lot more expensive than calling the Uber... I think healthcare is a huge issue for us. We should have cheaper universal healthcare like other countries have like Canada and Europe.” –SF Filipino Man

*“This is the tax the rich people over \$250K; it would motivate me. **They don't mind paying more taxes.** I really care about the education and healthcare funding because right now I know we start a budget of school, classes and hours.” –Pasadena Chinese Woman*

Strong Support For Education Tax Extension

Tax Extension to Fund Education and Healthcare.

This measure extends the temporary personal income tax increases approved in 2012 on incomes over two hundred fifty thousand dollars for twelve years to be used for K-12 education, community colleges and healthcare.



Support For Tax Extension Highest Among AAPI Voters Under 30 In Nearly Every Case But Vietnamese						Figure 37
		18-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-64 years old	65+ years old
Chinese American	Yes-No	+54	+45	+26	+42	+48
	Yes	78	72	61	69	73
	No	22	27	35	27	25
Korean American	Yes-No	+61	+47	+18	+49	+32
	Yes	80	73	58	72	55
	No	19	26	40	23	23
Vietnamese American	Yes-No	+36	+38	+34	+64	+68
	Yes	66	68	64	80	80
	No	30	30	30	16	12
Filipino American	Yes-No	+68	+29	+45	+62	+32
	Yes	84	64	69	79	64
	No	16	35	24	17	32



News Sources & Media

AAPI voters consume news information from a variety of sources. English speakers tend to prefer mainstream media, like CNN, local newspapers, or local TV and radio stations. Non-English speakers consume more ethnic media including in-language TV and radio stations.

News Sources

"When I leave home at 6 o'clock in the morning, I listen to Korean news. 1540 and 1650, Radio Korea and 1650 is maybe Radio Seoul." –LA Korean Man

"Articles on something like from the SF Chronicle or the LA Times -- what articles I am able to find. People have their opinions on it." –SF Filipino Woman

"When I drive I listen to the public radio a lot and I like that it is not affiliated with any political party. The news, what they talk about they don't pick a side. They talk very neutral. They don't pick a side. That's why I listen." –Fresno Hmong Man

"I listen to KMPH Fox 26. They keep asking people for opinions and asking people what do you think about this issue or that issue? They are more into public people, about what people think. It teaches me that what are these laws, what is right and what is wrong." –Fresno Hmong Woman

"Uh, they have few channel, I don't remember, you know. And I like it because I understand better. Then I go to ABC in English, so both language give me more ---, you know, more understand Mandarin that one language because sometimes, I miss it normally, sometimes I miss English, so I combine both, so I can understand Mandarin." –SJ Vietnamese Woman

"The news. At dinner time the TV is always on Channel 26." –SF Chinese Woman

When AAPI voters are presented with initiatives that they are not familiar with, a very common response is to “Google it”. They see it as a tool to find out information from multiple viewpoints that will help clarify the initiatives.

“Google it”

“Sometimes I search on Google. **I also look for the source of the information where I can get more accurate information and be more informed.** Then also I pay attention to the ads on TV and I see what groups are in support of the initiative or what groups that are in opposition.” –OC Vietnamese Man

“Yeah, I was more like Google it and go to the forum, or sit and talk with them or talk about it.”
–SJ Vietnamese Man

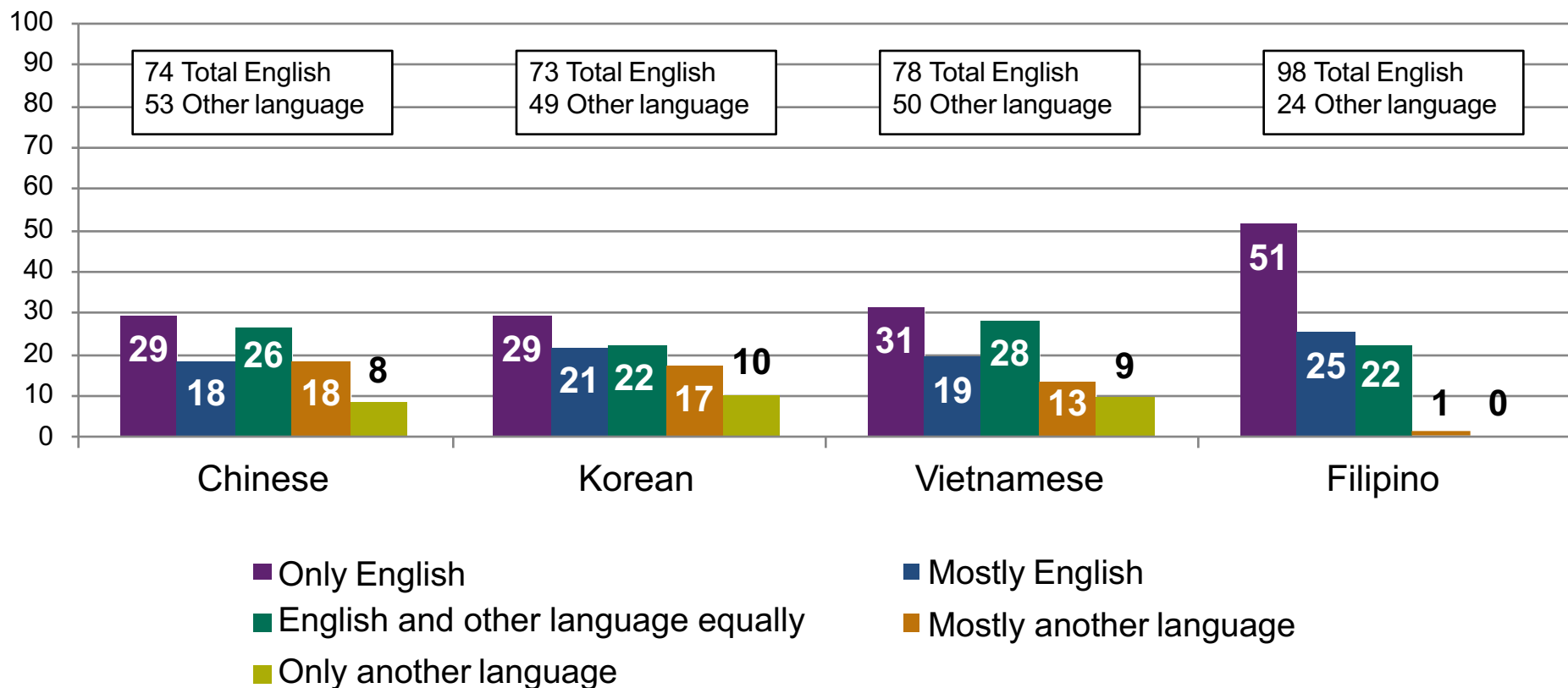
“If that impacts me personally or the community, then I will try to Google it to find out.” –OC Vietnamese Woman

“I will probably Google what the ballot is and see what other people think, like a review. **Like when you go to a restaurant, before you go you look at the review and see how many stars it is. Just like that.** I would try to understand it; see how many people understand this and what benefits us.”
–OC Korean Woman

“I feel with the power of our resources I mean you have Google and social media. **We have to use them to our advantage.**” –SF Filipino Man



When you watch TV, listen to the radio, or read the newspaper, do you do it in only English, mostly English, mostly another language, only another language, or English and another language about equally?

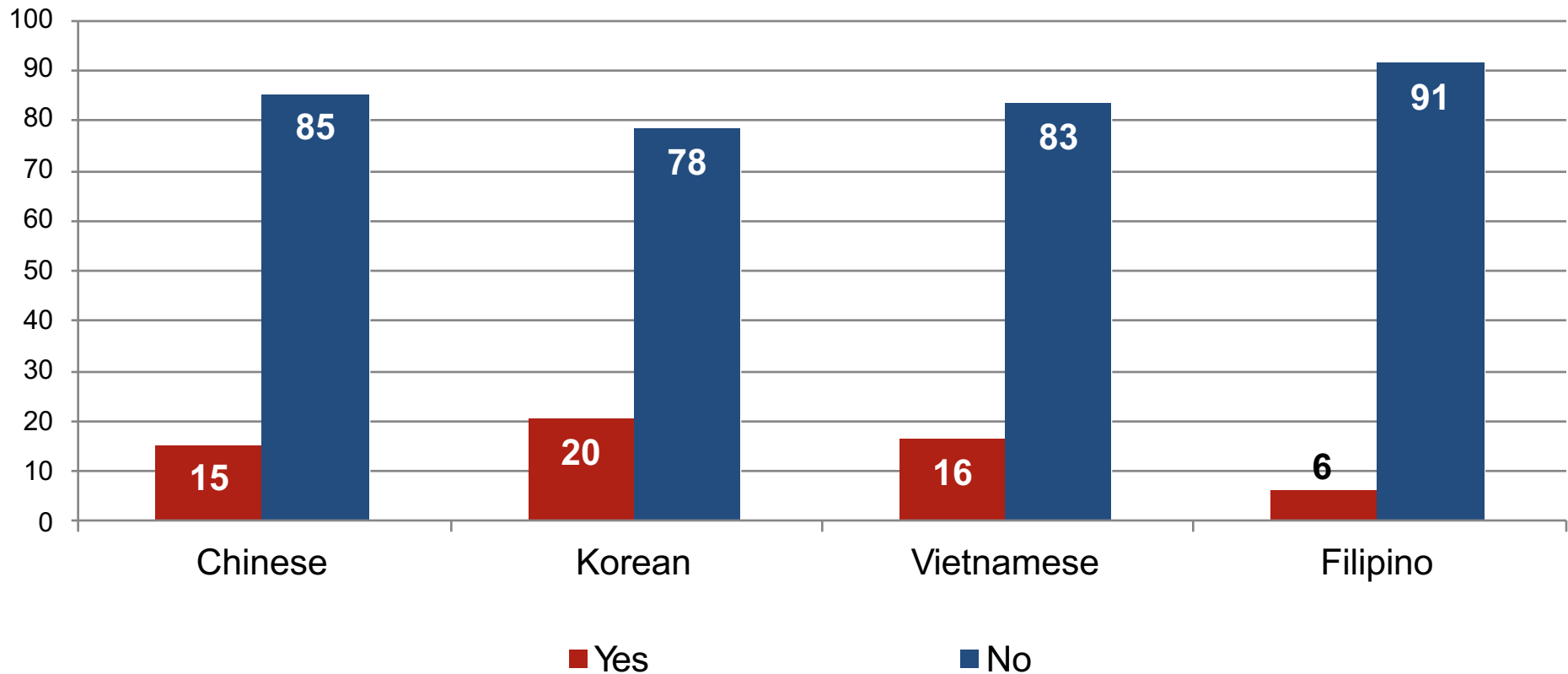


Language

Language Not A Barrier To Voting For Most Likely Voters...

Figure 43

Q Has language ever been a barrier for you in voting in previous elections?



...But Many Still Prefer Multilingual Voting Materials

Figure 44



How important to you is it for voting materials to be written in multiple languages - very important, somewhat important, or not important?

