

Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

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OBAMA LEADS IN NEW JERSEY AND NEW YORK AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN VOTERS BY ROUGHLY 2-TO-1, BUT MANY REMAIN UNDECIDED

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – Among Asian American likely voters in New Jersey and New York Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama holds a sizable lead over Republican John McCain. Obama leads 37 to 18 percent in New Jersey and is ahead 42 to 20 percent in New York. Yet, many Asian American likely voters in the region remain undecided according to the new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll announced today by the poll's faculty director, Jane Junn.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll for New Jersey-New York is a supplement to the 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS), the most comprehensive survey ever conducted of Asian American political views. The 2008 NAAS is a multiethnic, multilingual study that surveyed more than 4,000 Asian Americans with an oversampling in the New Jersey-New York metropolitan region. The survey was conducted from Aug. 18 to Sept. 26.

Junn, an associate professor of political science at Rutgers and a co-director of the National Study, noted that 45 percent of the Asian American likely voters in New Jersey, and 37 percent of those in New York, have not yet made up their minds. She noted that these figures are similar to the trend among Asian Americans nationally where 34 percent of likely voters remain undecided – as reported by the 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS). Among the general population, national polls conducted since the major party conventions show that undecided voters are approximately 8 percent of the electorate.

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A key finding in the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is that Asian American undecided voters are disproportionately those who are not affiliated with either of the two major parties. Nearly half of all Asian Americans in New Jersey and New York do not consider themselves either a Democrat or a Republican. Although Asian Americans in both states lean toward the Democratic Party, there remains a large proportion of nonpartisans and independents. “The large number of undecided voters and their low levels of party identification signal a big opportunity for parties and candidates looking for electoral support,” Junn noted.

Further illustrating Junn’s point of the potential power of the Asian American electorate is the finding that 44 percent of Asian Americans in New Jersey, and 42 percent of those in New York can be described as “likely voters.” Perhaps most striking are the proportions of Asian American *citizens* in the two states that are “likely voters,” 69 percent in New Jersey and 62 percent in New York.

Reflecting on the Democratic primary, the survey shows that voters in both states supported Hillary Clinton over Barack Obama by a 3-to-1 margin. However, roughly half of former Clinton supporters, 46 percent in New Jersey and 50 percent in New York, plan to vote for Obama in November; only 10 percent of former Clinton supporters from New Jersey support McCain and 17 percent from New York. Again, an important finding from the survey is the large portion of the Asian American electorate in New Jersey and New York that remains undecided. Nearly half, 44 percent, of Clinton primary voters remain undecided and approximately a third, 33 percent, are undecided in New York.

“The economy” was cited as the “most important problem facing the United States today” by 74 percent of Asian American likely voters in New Jersey and 62 percent in New York. Although the economy received the most mentions, more than one-third of likely voters cited concern about the Iraq war, 33 percent in New Jersey and 38 percent in New York.

In response to questions of state politics, a third of Asian Americans in New Jersey approve of the job Governor Jon S. Corzine is doing, while 20 percent disapprove, and nearly half (48 percent) responded that they had no opinion. In New York, a similar pattern emerged with reference to Governor David Paterson. Two-thirds of Asian Americans surveyed in New

York reported no opinion about the Governor Paterson's job performance, while 28 percent approve and 7 percent disapprove.

In the 2008 race for the U.S. Senate in New Jersey, half of Asian Americans were undecided, while a third say they will vote for incumbent Democrat Frank Lautenberg. Republican challenger Dick Zimmer received support from 11 percent.

For this groundbreaking study, interviews were conducted in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. The survey was designed and conducted by Junn and researchers at the University of Southern California, and the University of California at Berkeley and at Riverside.

The full report of the 2008 National Asian American Survey, the New Jersey-New York Supplement, and information on the survey methodology used can be found online at: <http://www.naasurvey.com/>. Further information about the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, established in 1971, can be found at eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu.

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