

State of Chinese Americans Survey 2024: Full Report

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State of Chinese Americans Survey 2024

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About Committee of 100

Committee of 100 is a non-profit U.S. leadership organization of prominent Chinese Americans in business, government, academia, healthcare, and the arts focused on public policy engagement, civic engagement, and philanthropy. For over 30 years, Committee of 100 has served as a preeminent organization committed to the dual missions of promoting the full participation of Chinese Americans in all aspects of American life and constructive relations between the United States and Greater China. Visit <https://www.committee100.org>.

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Introduction

Background

Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing racial groups in the United States, increasing in their share of the total population by nearly 30% between 2012 and 2022 to be 24.2 million people and 7.3% of the U.S. population (Bureau 2013, 2023). The same trend is observed in the civic arena, where Asian Americans experienced a 20% increase in their share of the electorate between the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, the highest rate of change among all racial groups (Fabina and Scherer 2022). Despite these facts, which imply that the Asian American population is growing quickly in both size and influence in electing the nation's leaders, Asian Americans continue to face systemic discrimination from hateful acts committed by members of the public, derogatory and racist rhetoric espoused by politicians, and state and federal policies that disproportionately harm Asian Americans.

In particular, Chinese Americans, who constitute about 5.8 million people and the largest share (24%) of the Asian American population (Bureau 2023),¹ have been targeted in a surge of both popular and policy-driven racism over the last decade. The origin of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a wave of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese hate across the country that endures at an elevated level, causing lasting and severe financial, social, health, and emotional harm across the Asian American community (Huang et al. 2023; S. Lee and Waters 2021; Ruiz, Im, and Tian 2023; Wu, Qian, and Wilkes 2021).

In addition to facing discriminatory acts by members of the public, Chinese Americans face discrimination from federal and state policies. Since 2018, many Americans of Chinese descent have been falsely accused of espionage under the auspices of the China Initiative, further perpetuating racist stereotypes of Chinese Americans as perpetual foreigners loyal to Chinese national interests; out of 77 cases and over 150 defendants, only one conviction was made in a court of law (Guo, Aloe, and Hao 2021). While the codified racism of the China Initiative formally ended in 2022, many states have taken up the intolerance mantle through legislation targeting Chinese nationals, prohibiting U.S. residents with Chinese citizenship from owning property (Collitt 2024).

Lastly, despite a fast-growing electorate, little is still known about the policy preferences and political behaviors of Chinese Americans, allowing stereotypes to persist, such as that Chinese Americans are a monolithic voting bloc that only cares about educational issues. While there are increased research efforts documenting Asian American political opinions, which find that Asian Americans care no more about education than the rest of the public (AAPI Data, Associated Press, and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research 2024a), there is still much to be learned about the political opinions of Chinese Americans specifically, who face unique policy and political concerns stemming from tense U.S.-China relations as well as historical and contemporary racism.

¹ These Asian American and Chinese American population estimates are based on individuals that identify as a given race alone or in any combination with one or more other races.

Objectives

These four factors drive Committee of 100's continued survey research of Chinese Americans: 1) Chinese Americans represent a broad and diverse community, carrying different identities, connections, and feelings toward belonging in American society that vary across groups within the community; 2) Chinese Americans are aware of, and continue to face, systemic discrimination from the public, politicians, and policies; 3) there is desperate need for greater understanding of the perceived downstream effects of the poor state of U.S.-China relations on the treatment of Chinese Americans, and; 4) there is little data on the political behaviors, partisan identities, and policy preferences of Chinese Americans.

In addressing these topics, this project aims to answer four sets of research questions:

First, what are the demographics of Chinese Americans in regard to nativity and identity? How do Chinese Americans conceptualize their racial identity and what identities do they view as most important? How connected do Chinese Americans feel with other Chinese Americans? Do Chinese Americans feel accepted in American society?

Second, to what extent do Chinese Americans experience racial discrimination, even four years since the onset of the pandemic? What are the most common forms of discrimination that Chinese Americans face? What kinds of struggles with mental health have ensued among and within the Chinese American community? In response to encounters with racial discrimination, how satisfied are Chinese Americans with how elected officials are handling these crucial issues?

Third, what are Chinese Americans' feelings toward the current relationship between the U.S. and China? What do they think are the most important conflicts between the countries, and where is there room for cooperation? Do Chinese Americans think the state of U.S.-China relations affects their lives? What are the effects of the language and rhetoric used by U.S. news media and politicians when they talk about China and U.S.-China relations, as well as domestic policies stemming from tense bilateral relations?

Fourth, what are the political and policy preferences of Chinese Americans? How do Chinese Americans identify politically? How did Chinese Americans vote in the 2020 presidential election and what do they think about then-candidate Joe Biden and Donald Trump in the lead-up to the 2024 election? How do they feel about the direction the country is headed? What policy issues are salient and who holds which positions on those issues?

Methodology

We surveyed 504 adults in the U.S. that racially identify only as Chinese² in March 2024 on 49 questions about: cultural identity and acceptance in the U.S., experiences with discrimination, opinions about how violence against Chinese Americans is being addressed, political engagement, views toward presidential candidates, positions on a wide array of pertinent policy issues, and opinions on U.S.-China relations and the downstream effects of the countries' relations. Participants were given the option to take the survey over the phone in English, Mandarin, or Cantonese, or online in English, simplified Chinese, or traditional Chinese.

Committee of 100 partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to reach a sample of 504 Chinese American adults using NORC's Amplify AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) survey panel.³ There were about 2,500 active panelists in the Amplify AAPI panel at the time the survey was fielded in March, 2024.

Statistical weights were developed and applied in analyses, including a probability weight that is calibrated to population benchmarks through raking ratio adjustments. The population benchmark estimates are sourced from the American Community Survey's 2022 5-year data of adults that racially identify only as Chinese, and includes the following benchmarks: age, gender, age-by-gender, census region, education, and nativity.⁴

This study is part of a research project in progress; ongoing efforts are made to increase the quality of the sampling methodology to improve the accuracy, precision, and reliability of estimates and to ultimately yield a more accurate and complete understanding of the Chinese American population.

2 The 2024 SOCA survey covers respondents who self-reported only as Chinese and thus omits individuals that identify as Taiwanese as well as individuals that identify as Chinese and one or more other races. It is not the position of Committee of 100 or the authors that "Chinese Americans" are limited to individuals that identify only as Chinese. Instead, a variety of theoretical and practical factors led to the operationalization of "Chinese American" in this report. Future studies will aim to expand on this operationalization in order to more fully and accurately represent the opinions, experiences, and behaviors of the Chinese American population.

3 For more information, email AmplifyAAPI-BD@norc.org or visit AmplifyAAPI.NORC.org.

4 Several statistical weights were developed by NORC and used to produce composite weights, which were applied in the analyses used to produce the findings described in this report. These weights include an Amplify AAPI panel weight that accounts for probability of selection into the recruitment samples, nonresponse adjustments, and calibration adjustments to match population benchmarks; a probability base weight, which adjusts the panel weight to account for sample selection probability from the panel under the study sample design; a nonresponse adjusted probability weight, which adjusts the base weights for participants to compensate for non-participants within several nonresponse weighting classes defined by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education; and a probability weight, which calibrates the nonresponse adjusted weight to population benchmark estimates through raking ratio adjustments.

Chapter 1: Identity, connectedness, and feelings of acceptance

In this chapter, we look at the backgrounds and identities of Chinese Americans. First, we look at the internal diversity of Chinese America through the lens of birthplace, nativity, and English language proficiency. Then, we examine how Chinese Americans view their identity, sense of cultural acceptance in the United States, and sense of community with other Chinese Americans.

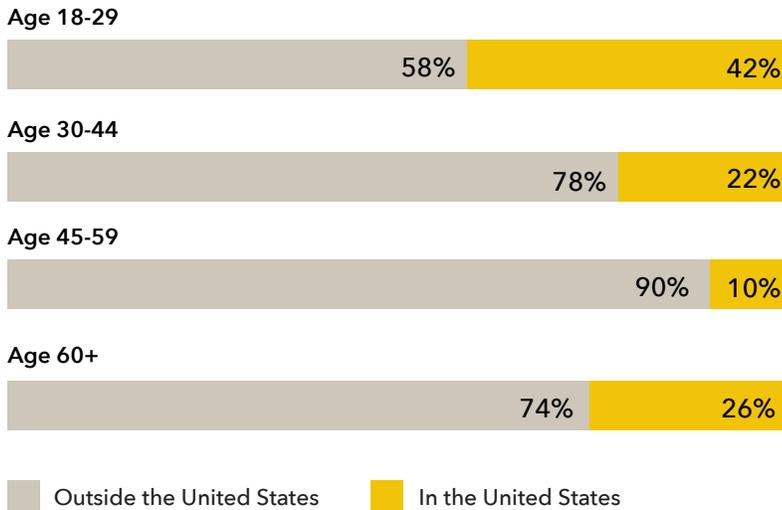
Key findings

- Roughly three in four Chinese Americans (76%) are born outside of the United States, with distinct generational divides; 42% of 18-29 year-olds are born in the U.S. compared to 26% of people 60 years or older.
- Although many Chinese Americans are born abroad, the vast majority (83%) are citizens, including 78% of those born outside of the U.S. that are naturalized citizens.
- Majorities of Chinese Americans say that being Chinese (57%) and American (56%) are very important to their identity.
- Most Chinese Americans feel connected to other people of Chinese descent in the U.S.: 70% state that the well-being of other Chinese Americans affects their individual lives.
- Only a third of Chinese Americans (33%) are optimistic that their values and cultures are becoming more widespread and accepted in the United States. The majority (59%) feel either that American society has not shifted in either direction when it comes to cultural acceptance (41%) or that American society is becoming less accepting (18%).

Birthplace and citizenship status among Chinese Americans

There is a great deal of internal diversity among Chinese Americans. Roughly three fourths of Chinese Americans (76%) are born abroad. Fewer younger Chinese Americans (ages 18 to 29) are born abroad (58%) compared to 81% of those older than 29. Among Chinese Americans born abroad, 78% are naturalized citizens, roughly on par with the 77% of all eligible immigrants in the United States who are naturalized (American Immigration Council 2024).

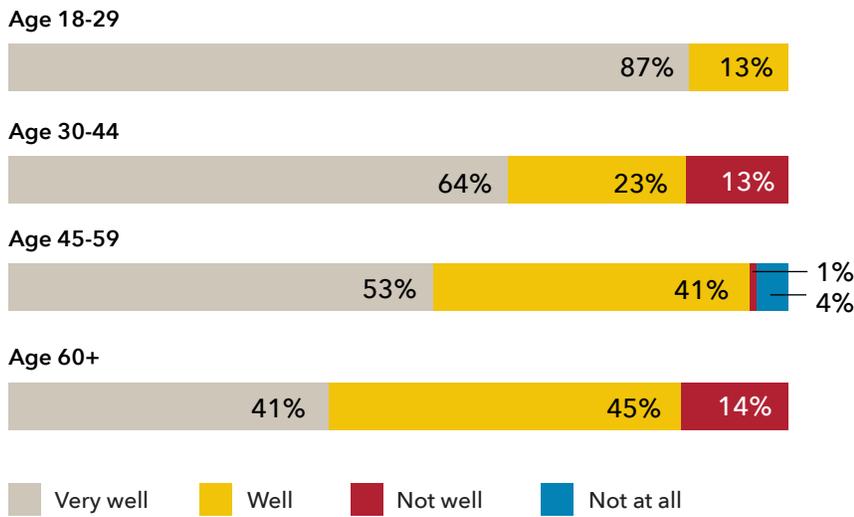
Figure 1.1: Birthplace by age



Chinese Americans speak a diversity of languages

This internal diversity extends to language, and is further highlighted in the number of Chinese Americans who speak a language other than English at home. Seventy-five percent report speaking a language other than English at home. The most common non-English language spoken at home is Chinese, including Cantonese, Mandarin, and Min Nan. Of those that speak a language other than English, 41% say they speak English very well. There is significant variation in English speaking proficiency across age groups; among those that speak a language other than English, 87% of 19-29 year-olds say they speak English very well, compared to less than half of the proportion of those older than 59 years (41%).

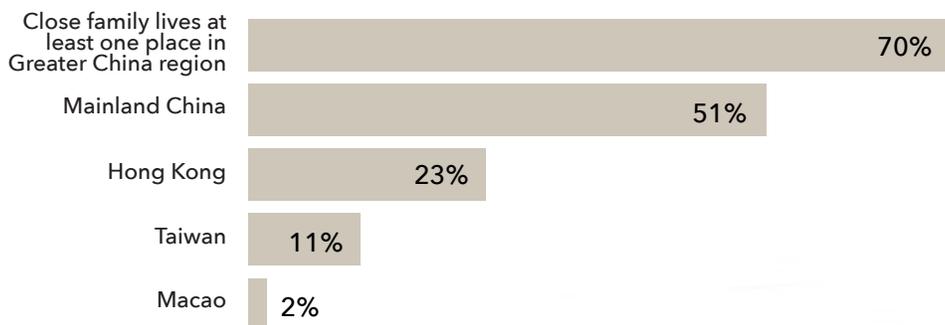
Figure 1.2: English speaking proficiency by age



High rates of family abroad

Chinese Americans also maintain close ties with family members in the Greater China region; seventy percent of Chinese Americans have close family members residing in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Macao. Figure 1.3 shows the dispersion of family members abroad, with just over half of our respondents having close family residing in mainland China.

Figure 1.3: Close family members living in Greater China region

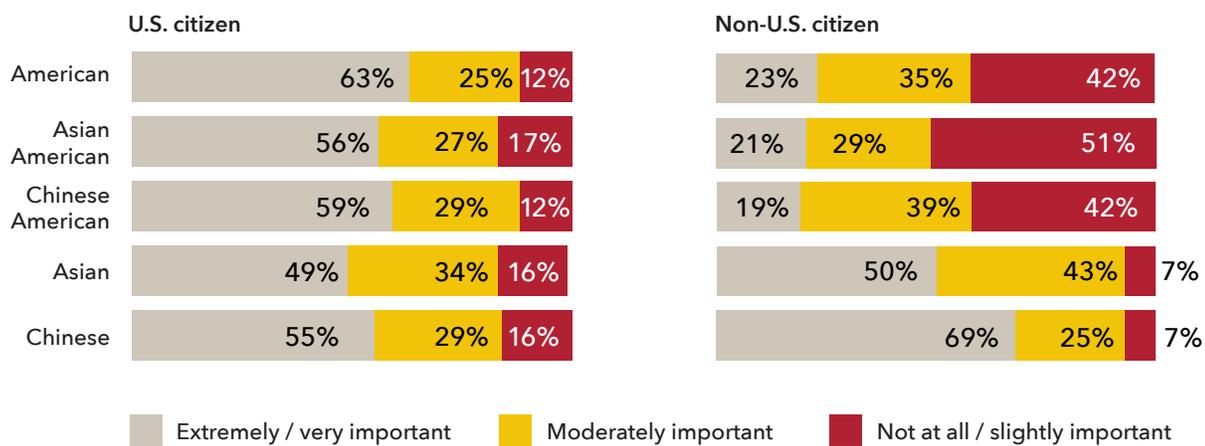


The importance of various identities among Chinese Americans

We asked respondents to indicate how important being the following is to their identity: Chinese, Asian, Chinese American, Asian American, and American, providing a range of possible responses from “not at all important” to “extremely important.” We find little variation overall in how important these different identities are to Chinese Americans. At the high end, 57% see being Chinese as either very or extremely important to their identity, and at the low end, 49% view being Asian as at least very important.

While we do not observe much variation in our overall sample, we find that older Chinese Americans view being American as more important to their identity than younger Chinese Americans; 52% of 18-29 year-olds see being American as very or extremely important, compared to 76% of those 60 or older who feel the same. We also find that those born in the United States view all identities as more important than those born outside of the United States. Last, we find that 69% of non-U.S. citizens see being Chinese as at least very important to their identity, compared to 55% of U.S. citizens. Conversely, U.S. citizens view being Chinese American, Asian American, and American as significantly more important to their identity than non-citizens.

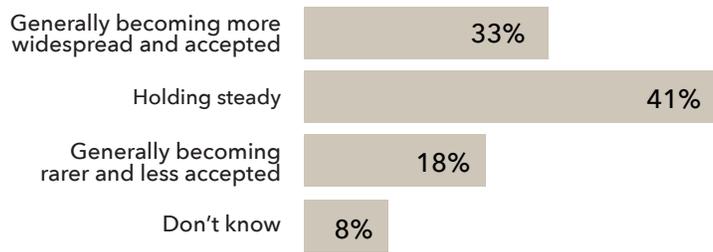
Figure 1.4: Identity importance by U.S. citizenship status



Large variation in perceived acceptance of culture and values across groups

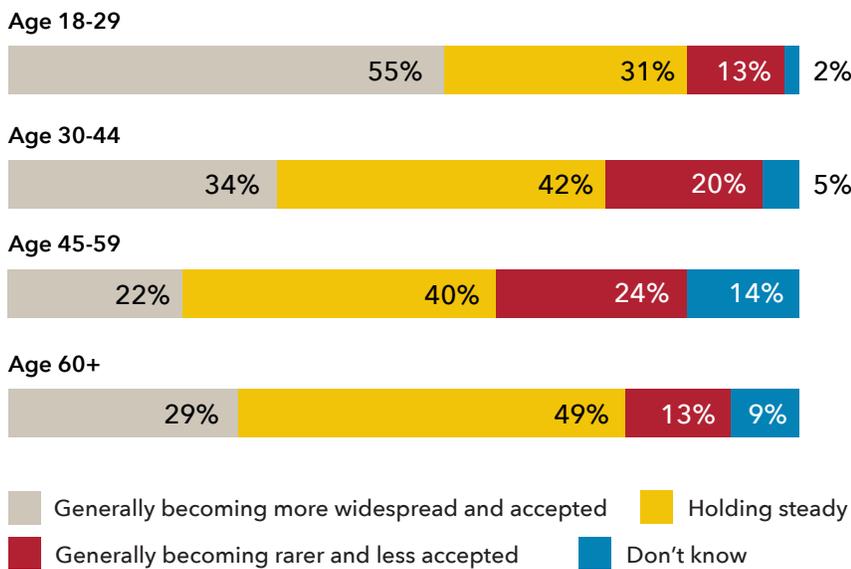
How do Chinese Americans view their position in the United States? The onset of the pandemic brought with it a wave of xenophobia and violence that was further exacerbated by prominent politicians and news media outlets laying the blame for COVID-19 on the Asian American and Chinese American community (N. K. M. Chan, Kim, and Leung 2022). This is reflected in our survey, with only a third of Chinese Americans believing that their values and cultures are becoming more accepted.

Figure 1.5: Perceived acceptance of culture and values



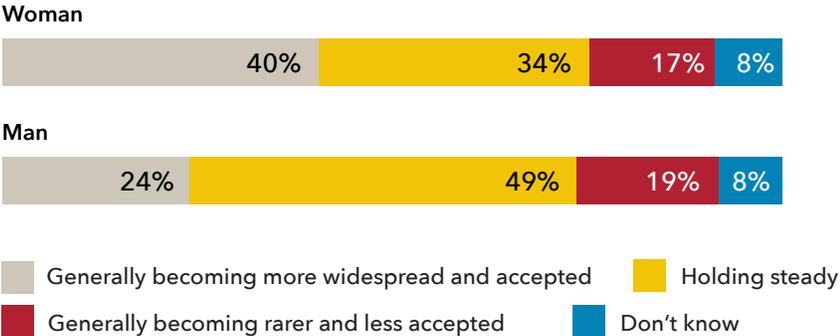
Younger Chinese Americans (18-29) are somewhat more optimistic about acceptance of their culture, with a little over half (55%) believing that Americans are becoming more accepting. Older demographics, particularly those aged 45 and up, tend to be more skeptical, either reporting no change or less acceptance.

Figure 1.6: Perceived acceptance of culture and values by age



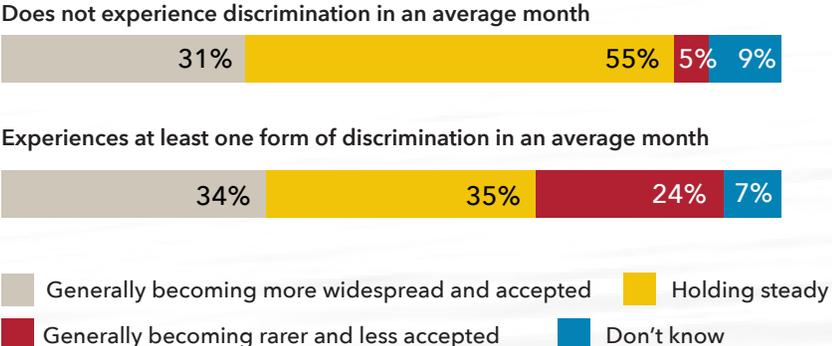
Forty percent of Chinese American women say Americans are becoming more accepting of their culture and values compared to only 24% of men. More men believe that acceptance is either holding steady (49%) or getting worse (19%). This could potentially be due to differences in which men and women are socialized in American society. For example, Asian American women are more likely to intermarry with white Americans compared to Asian American men. White Americans are also more likely to say they are comfortable with a family member marrying an Asian woman, but less likely to say they are comfortable with an Asian man (J. C. Lee and Kye 2016). Acceptance, in short, is not just racial but gendered as well.

Figure 1.7: Perceived acceptance of culture and values by gender



Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of anti-Asian activity throughout the United States, we also examine cultural acceptance by personal experiences with discrimination. We find that Chinese Americans that report personally experiencing discrimination on a regular basis express that acceptance of their cultures and values is becoming rarer at a notably higher rate than those who don't report experiencing discrimination regularly (24% and 5%, respectively). Surprisingly, the rates at which these groups report that their culture and values are becoming widespread and accepted are fairly similar (34% and 31%, respectively); instead, individuals that regularly experience discrimination report that acceptance of their culture and values are "holding steady" at a far lower rate than those who do not report experiencing such discrimination (35% and 55%, respectively).

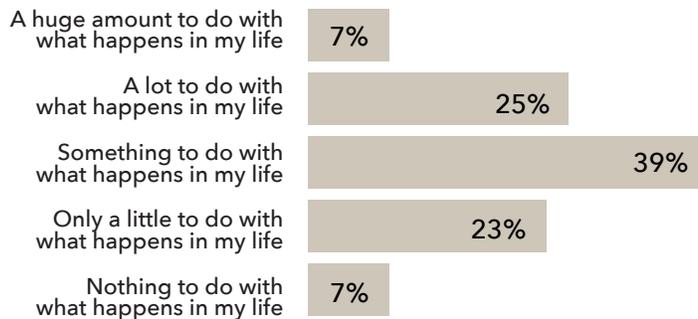
Figure 1.8: Perceived acceptance of culture and values by regular experience with discrimination



Experience with discrimination is associated with a strong sense of community

Amidst the rising tide of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese hate in U.S. society, Chinese Americans looked to each other, deepening their sense of community with one another. In general, Chinese Americans feel very connected to other Chinese Americans. Seven out of ten Chinese Americans perceive some degree of “linked fate,” that what happens in the Chinese American community has at least something to do with what happens in their lives.

Figure 1.9: Perceptions of linked fate with other Chinese Americans



We also find that individuals who face discrimination on a regular basis feel a stronger sense of connection with other Chinese Americans. Chinese Americans who report regularly experiencing discrimination say that what happens to other Chinese Americans “has a huge amount” to do with their life at a significantly higher rate than those that do not report experiencing discrimination (9% and 1%, respectively). It seems that experiencing discrimination might lead individuals to rely more heavily on their community. Scholarly work in Black and Latino politics has found that experience with discrimination is strongly associated with a sense of linked fate among one’s racial group (Dawson 1994; G. Sanchez, Masuoka, and Abrams 2019; Smith, Lopez Bunyasi, and Smith 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to dramatic increases in harassment and discrimination against Chinese Americans, likely galvanizing the Chinese American community, leading individuals to express a greater sense of community and solidarity with one another (Nicholson Jr and Mei 2023).

Conclusion

Chinese Americans are not a monolith. Chinese Americans exhibit significant internal diversity, particularly regarding nativity; citizenship; and perspectives on their identities, levels of acceptance in American society, and sense of connection to other Chinese Americans. Foreign-born individuals make up the majority of Chinese Americans and are more likely to be older. In contrast, native-born Chinese Americans tend to skew younger. Our study reveals differences among age cohorts; older Chinese Americans say that being American is important to their identity at higher rates compared to younger Chinese Americans. This could be the result of older generations having to acculturate or assimilate into U.S. society compared to younger generations. Younger Chinese Americans are also more optimistic than older generations when it comes to feelings of societal acceptance of

culture and values. As the share of Asian Americans and people of color has increased over time, younger Chinese Americans have become socialized amid strides in Asian American representation in mainstream media and political representation, which may give rise to increased perceptions of societal acceptance (Asians and Pacific Islanders in Hollywood 2024; Jensen et al. 2021; Schaeffer 2019, 2023).

The racialization of the COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted Chinese Americans' lives. Experiences with discrimination are found to have two important effects. Individuals who report experiencing discrimination on a regular basis are more pessimistic about the acceptance of Chinese Americans in the U.S. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the explicit scapegoating of the COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese Americans and Asian Americans.

What is surprising is that women and younger Chinese Americans both report experiencing higher rates of discrimination than their counterparts and are also more optimistic about acceptance of their culture and values. Intuitively, it follows that more experiences with discrimination would lead one to feel that one's culture and values are less accepted by society. Indeed, we find that, among Chinese American men, women, younger people, and older people, regularly experiencing discrimination is related to lower levels of perceived cultural acceptance. It may be then that women and younger Chinese Americans exhibit higher base levels of perceived acceptance of their culture and values than their counterparts due to other factors; existing research on non-white populations find that stronger racial identities and stronger in-group community ties are associated with greater resilience to discrimination and increased perceptions of societal acceptance (Harrell 2000; Utsey et al. 2002; Yip and Fuligni 2002). While the sample used in this study is not of sufficient size to test these mechanisms directly, we find that Chinese and Asian identities are more salient among Chinese American women, and we also find that women and younger Chinese Americans have suggestively stronger feelings of connectedness with other Chinese Americans.

Related to these observations, we also find that regular exposure to discrimination is associated with an increased sense of linked fate with other Chinese Americans. Perhaps as a response to the societal scapegoating for COVID-19, Chinese Americans who report experiencing discrimination are more likely to express a high degree of connection with other Chinese Americans. This finding is consistent with research on Black and Latino Americans, in which perceptions of linked fate and in-group solidarity are often strengthened by experiences with discrimination (G. R. Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; Simien 2005).

Chapter 2:

Discrimination: experiences, effects, and evaluation of government response to racism

This chapter assesses the current levels and types of discrimination that Chinese Americans face even years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We additionally analyze how well Chinese Americans think policymakers are doing at preventing violence against their community and how Chinese Americans feel this violence should be addressed. Lastly, we illuminate more about the status of Chinese Americans' mental health and well-being, uncovering how experiences with racial discrimination shape feelings of depression, hopelessness, and worthlessness.

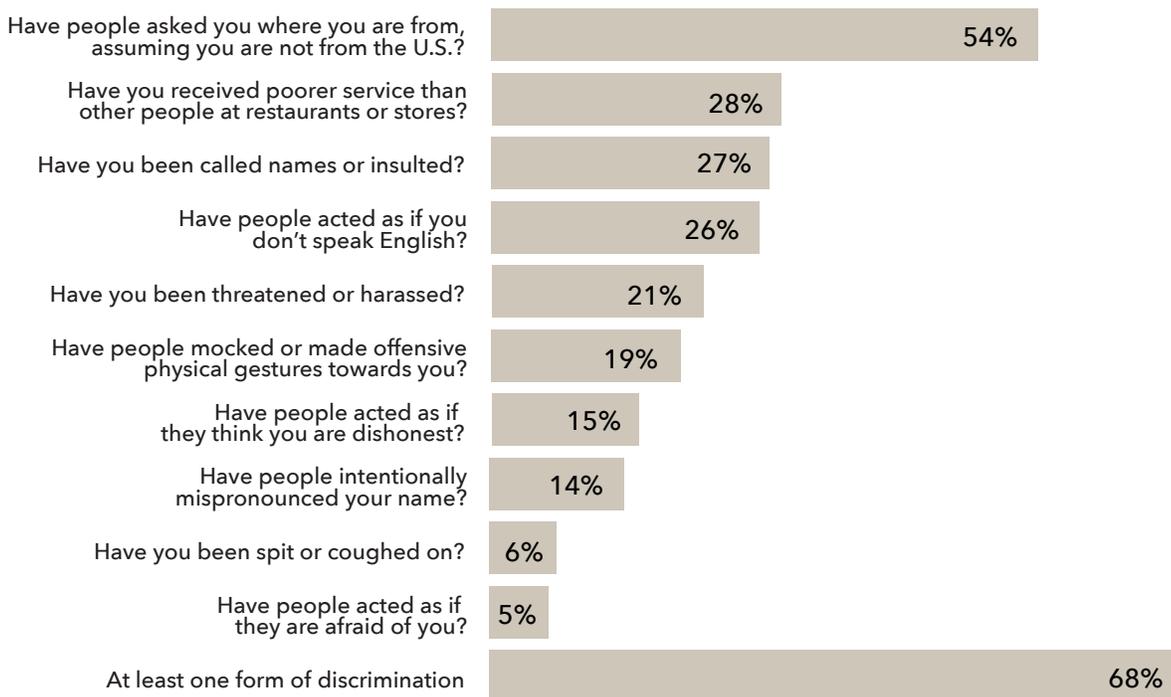
Key findings

- About two thirds of Chinese Americans (68%) say that they face some kind of discrimination in an average month, with younger, non-citizen, and women most likely to report these experiences. Eighty-five percent perceive this discrimination to be because of their race, ethnicity, accent, or name.
- More than half of Chinese Americans (54%) regularly experience microaggressions, such as people assuming they are not from the U.S., but many also are verbally insulted (27%) or physically threatened or harassed (21%) in an average month.
- Chinese Americans are dissatisfied with the handling of violence against their communities, with more than half (51%) saying federal elected officials are doing a poor job of handling this situation.
- In order to prevent violence against Chinese Americans from continuing, nearly one half (46%) believe that we should prioritize making laws against hate crimes stronger and about one-fourth (23%) say that the primary solution needs to be electing more Chinese Americans to elected office. Older Chinese Americans prefer the former solution, while younger people favor the latter.
- A large proportion of the Chinese American community continue to struggle with mental health; 50% report having felt hopeless in the 30 days before taking the survey, 43% say they felt depressed, and 39% report having felt worthless. This struggle with mental wellness is particularly pronounced among those who are younger, women, and Chinese Americans who regularly experience racial discrimination.

Chinese Americans continue to face vicious amounts of day-to-day discrimination

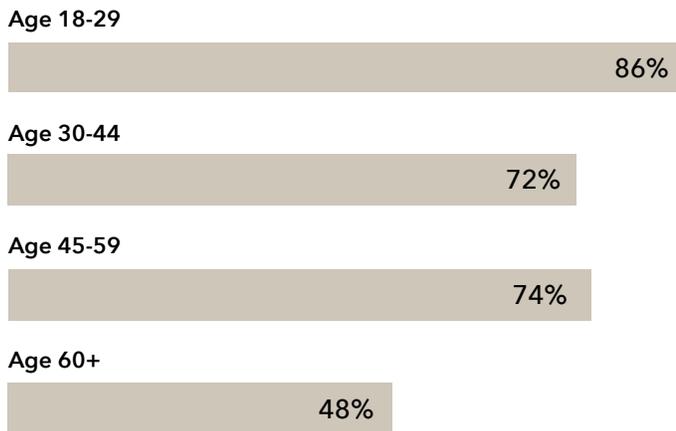
Chinese Americans frequently face discrimination in everyday life. Two in three Chinese Americans (68%) say that they face at least one form of discrimination in an average month, 85% of whom perceive this to be because of their race, ethnicity, accent, or name. As noted in Figure 2.1, Chinese Americans experience many kinds of discrimination in an average month. A majority of Chinese Americans face microaggressions on a regular basis; a majority (54%) have to deal with assumptions from others that they are not from the U.S., a quarter (26%) report that people act as if they do not speak English, and 28% of Chinese Americans say they receive poorer service than others at restaurants and stores. In regard to more explicit forms of discrimination, about one quarter of Chinese Americans (27%) report being called names or are insulted in an average month, and roughly one fifth (19%) are mocked or are subject to offensive physical gestures, and another fifth (21%) report regularly being threatened or harassed.

Figure 2.1: Regular experience with discrimination
(% that experience discrimination in an average month)



A notably higher proportion of younger Chinese Americans report experiencing at least one form of discrimination in an average month compared to older Chinese Americans; while 48% of Chinese Americans over the age of 60 report regularly facing discrimination, over 70% of Chinese Americans between the ages of 30 and 59, and 86% of Chinese Americans between 18 and 29, report the same. Further, we find that younger Chinese Americans report experiencing all of the forms of discrimination offered in our survey at higher rates than older individuals. Our report echoes research that finds that younger Asian Americans are more likely to report anti-Asian hate from 2020 onwards (Ma et al. 2021; Ruiz, Im, and Tian 2023; J. Wong 2021).

Figure 2.2: Regular experience with discrimination by age



Chinese American Women report experiencing discrimination more than men do; 75% of women indicate they face some kind of discrimination in an average month, compared to 60% of men. This finding is consistent with other research that identifies a uniquely troubling discrimination intersection of race and gender among Asian American women (Forbes, Yang, and Lim 2023; Keum et al. 2018; Mulkamala and Suyemoto 2018).

Figure 2.3: Regular experience with discrimination by gender



The rate of discrimination regularly experienced by Chinese Americans also varies by citizenship status. We find that 85% of Chinese Americans who are not citizens of the U.S. report experiencing at least one form of discrimination in an average month compared to 65% of U.S. citizens.⁵

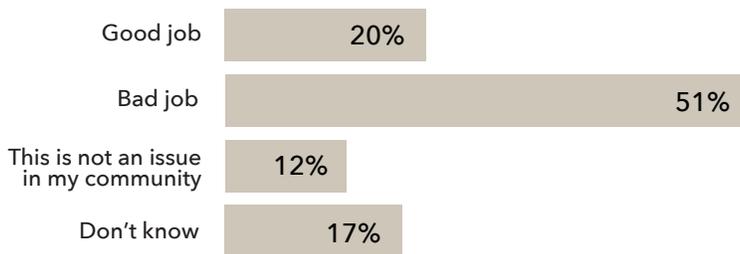
Taken together, while Figures 2.2 and 2.3 highlight different rates of discrimination experienced among various groups within the Chinese American community, we also confirm that regardless of how the data breaks down, discrimination is widespread among Chinese Americans. This aligns with Asian Americans' continued reporting of experiences with racism and hate even years after the beginning of the pandemic (Ruiz, Im, and Tian 2023).

⁵ Importantly, our survey finds no significant partisan differences in reporting of discrimination. Seventy-one percent of Republicans say that they experience at least one form of discrimination in an average month, while a similar number (73%) of Democrats report the same.

Chinese Americans are frustrated by government’s response to discrimination and violence

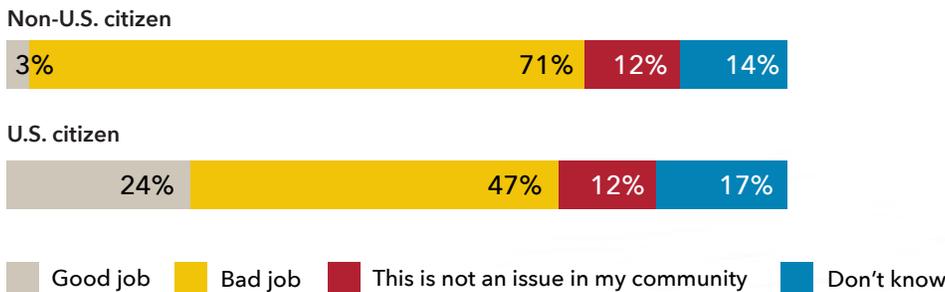
In incurring high rates of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese hate, a majority of Chinese Americans (51%) feel that federally elected officials are doing a bad job dealing with violence against their community, while only one in five (20%) say that officials are doing a good job. This data suggests that elected officials and government representatives need to demonstrate better commitment to handling the issue of racial discrimination and hate that Chinese Americans are facing on a daily basis.

Figure 2.4: Job performance rating of federally elected officials’ response to violence against Chinese Americans



Chinese Americans who regularly experience discrimination have a notably poorer impression of the job that officials are doing to address violence against Chinese Americans (79% say that officials are doing a bad job), though a majority of those that don't report experiencing discrimination (51%) say the same. It follows that groups that also report experiencing discrimination at higher rates also say that officials are doing a bad job at higher rates, including younger Chinese Americans, women, and non-citizens.

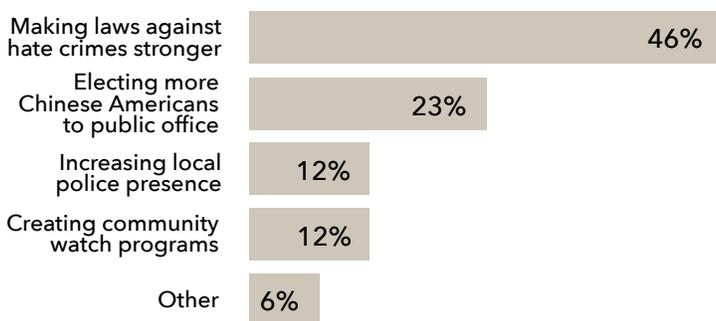
Figure 2.5: Job performance rating of federally elected officials’ response to violence against Chinese Americans by U.S. citizenship status



Given concerns about the lack of sufficient government response to violence against the community, we followed up by asking Chinese Americans what they think would be the most effective action to prevent this violence from happening. We find that Chinese Americans believe that political and policy actions are the most effective solutions.

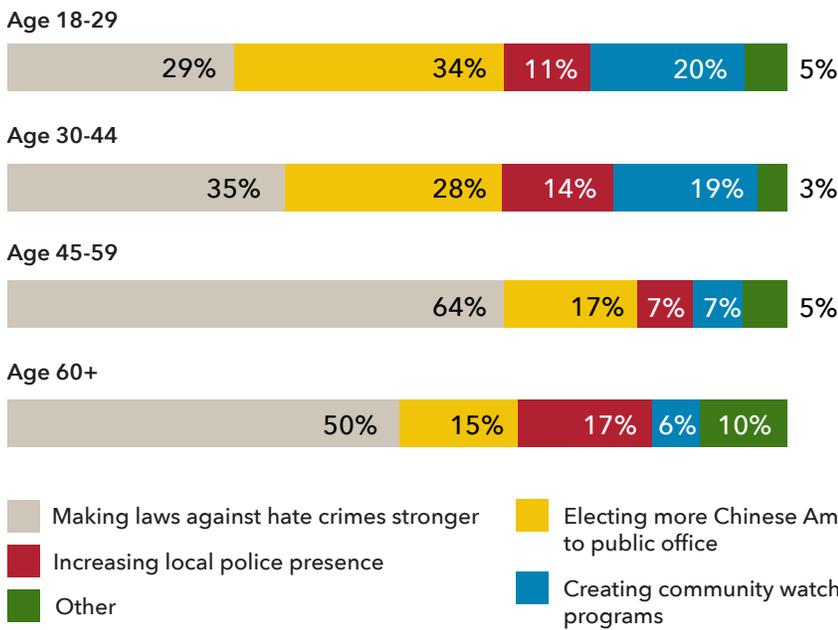
Almost a majority of Chinese Americans (46%) believe that making laws against hate crimes stronger is the most effective way to deter hateful acts against the community. About half as many (23%) prefer increased election of more Chinese Americans, suggesting that Chinese Americans want to see elected representatives in government that can relate to, understand, and be more likely to take action on the particular needs of this community. Considerably smaller portions of Chinese Americans favor increasing police presence (12%) and creating community watch programs (12%).

Figure 2.6: Preferred solutions to addressing violence against Chinese Americans



Younger and older Chinese Americans differ on their preferred solutions to violence; a notably higher proportion of 18-44 year-olds think that electing more Chinese Americans is the most effective solution relative to those older than 44 years. Younger Chinese Americans also prefer creating community watch programs than older Chinese Americans at a greater rate. On the other hand, older Chinese Americans are relatively unified in their preference for making laws against hate crimes stronger.

Figure 2.7: Preferred solutions to addressing violence against Chinese Americans by age



Respondents that selected “Other” to this question were offered the opportunity to express their support for other solutions to prevent violence against Chinese Americans communities. Many such respondents express support for more education about Chinese Americans.

- “Educating people against ‘othering’ people different from them, exposing people to the history of Chinese in America so they don’t seem like perpetual foreigners.”

Other respondents said politicians need to be more careful about how they talk about China and U.S.-China relations, implying that careless and inflammatory rhetoric gives rise to anti-Chinese and anti-Asian hate among the public.

- “Less rhetoric that equates Chinese Americans with Mainland China and its government.”
- “Pushing back on hateful anti-Chinese and anti-Asian misinformation and rhetoric coming from American politics. Supporting education and critical thinking”

This sentiment corroborates with our findings that a majority of Chinese Americans are concerned about the rhetoric and language used by presidential candidates when they talk about China and U.S.-China relations.⁶

⁶ We explore these concerns in depth in the following chapter.

Chinese Americans continue to struggle with their mental health amidst rising discrimination

Racial discrimination and experiences of violence toward Chinese Americans, coupled with the disappointment that they feel toward the government response, are taking a toll on the community, including mental health issues that many Chinese Americans struggle with.

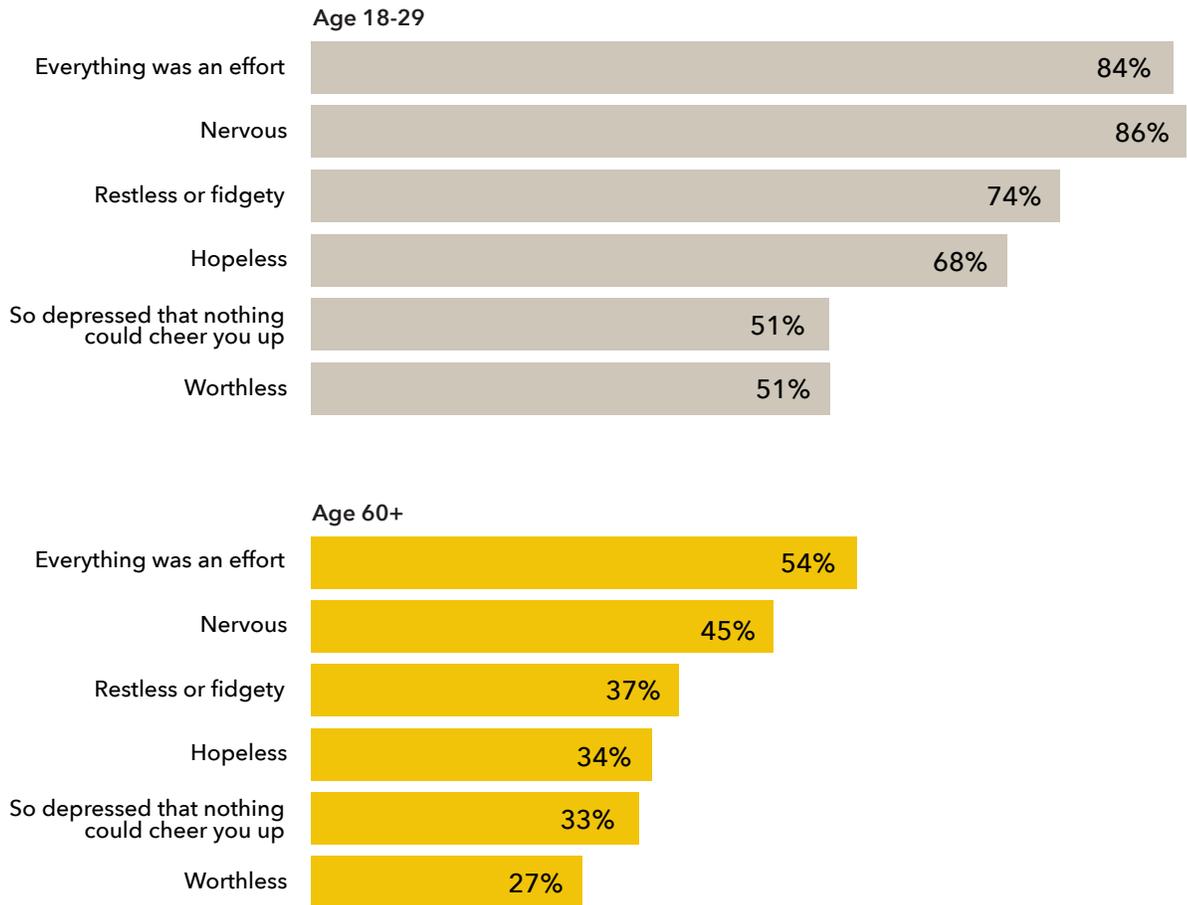
We asked respondents to report the frequency with which they felt nervous, hopeless, restless or fidgety, depressed, that everything was an effort, and worthless over the last 30 days. We find that large portions of the sample report experiencing these mental health issues. Two thirds say they felt that everything was an effort, nearly two thirds felt nervous, 55% felt restless, half felt hopeless, 43% felt depressed, and 39% felt worthless at least a little of the time during the past 30 days.

Figure 2.8: Recent mental health issues
(% Experienced at least 'a little of the time' in the last 30 days)



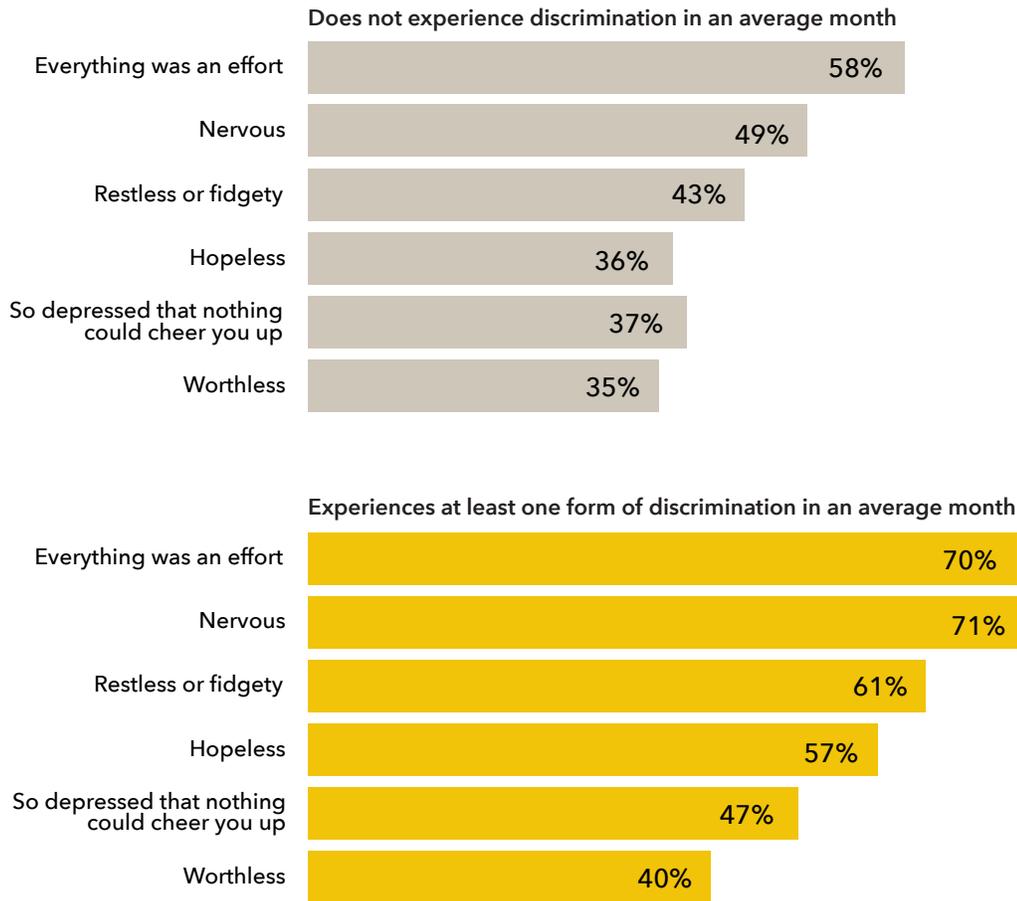
When looking at which segments of Chinese Americans report suffering more from mental health issues, we find that younger Chinese Americans report suffering from mental health issues in far greater numbers than older Chinese Americans across all indicators. While it's possible that younger Chinese Americans experience mental health issues at a higher rate, this finding may be a function of other factors related to differences in *reporting* on mental health issues, which we explore in the conclusion.

Figure 2.9: Recent mental health issues by age
 (% Experienced at least 'a little of the time' in the last 30 days)



As younger Chinese Americans report experiencing discrimination at greater rates, we looked to see whether those that experience discrimination on a regular basis have poorer mental health outcomes generally. Indeed, those that experience at least one form of discrimination in an average month suffer at least a little of the time at significantly higher rates concerning nervousness (22% more), hopelessness (21% more), and restlessness (18% more), and suggestively higher rates for the remaining indicators.

Figure 2.10: Recent mental health issues by regular experience with discrimination
 (% Experienced at least 'a little of the time' in the last 30 days)



Conclusion

The findings of this chapter demonstrate the continued struggle with racial discrimination among Chinese Americans and the downstream issues that stem from the rising levels of hate against this community. Four years after the onset of COVID-19, many Chinese Americans still face discrimination in many different forms and are not satisfied with elected officials' response to racial violence.

We highlighted differences across age, noting that young people are more likely to report experiencing discrimination. While we are unable to discern explanations for this observation with the data at hand, this pattern has been well-observed in recent years, and it's generally theorized that older Asian Americans experience discrimination at rates comparable to younger Asian Americans, but are less likely to report such experiences for a variety of reasons. Older Asian Americans are more likely to face language barriers and lower levels of access to, and awareness of, digital reporting platforms (Li et al. 2024; Ma et al. 2021; J. Wong 2021).⁷ It may also be that older Asian Americans are less comfortable in talking about their experiences with discrimination;

⁷ We also find that older Chinese Americans have lower levels of English speaking proficiency than younger Chinese Americans.

a recent study found that older Asian Americans are less likely to talk about the challenges they face due to their race or ethnicity (Ruiz, Im, and Tian 2023). Relatedly, we note that younger Chinese Americans report experiencing mental health issues at a higher rate than older Chinese Americans. Most scholarly work on the intersection of mental health and age finds that older Chinese Americans do not experience mental health issues at lower rates, but instead tend not to report such issues; mental health issues are more strongly stigmatized among older individuals, who tend to have less mental health literacy, contributing to lower levels of awareness and understanding, and higher rates of misattribution to physical ailments or life circumstances (Conner et al. 2010; Corey S. Mackenzie et al. 2008; C. S. Mackenzie, Gekoski, and Knox 2006).

Returning to the issue of discrimination, Chinese American women report experiencing discrimination at a higher rate than men. In contrast to theories regarding differences in reporting rates across age groups, most research finds that Asian American women experience more discrimination than men, due to the compounded effects of racism and sexism (Forbes, Yang, and Lim 2023), as well as stereotypes specific to Asian American women, such as being perceived as exotic, submissive, and passive (Forbes, Yang, and Lim 2023; Keum et al. 2018; Mukkamala and Suyemoto 2018). This finding also aligns with what we know about real world experiences with racial violence that has disproportionately impacted Asian women, including the shooting that took the lives of six Asian women in Atlanta, Georgia three years ago (Fausset, Bogel-Burroughs, and Fazio 2021). Our results here reflect the importance of recognizing the disproportionate amounts of racial discrimination felt by those who are marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender.

We also find notable differences across citizenship status. Chinese Americans who are not U.S. citizens are more likely to experience racial discrimination and say that elected officials are doing a poor job at addressing this issue. This demonstrates that racial discrimination targets those in the most precarious positions within the Chinese American community, especially as non-citizens may have spent less time in the U.S. to begin with, have less familiarity, or prefer to speak in native languages other than English. We urge future research to continue to gauge the status of discrimination among this particular group with the Chinese American community.

One of the downstream impacts of racial discrimination has been declining mental well-being among Chinese Americans. Consistent with existing research, we find that those who experience racial discrimination are more likely to report difficulties with mental health (Chen, Zhang, and Liu 2020; Zhang and Hong 2013). Thus while this finding is not novel, continued documentation of the detrimental effects of racial discrimination is paramount to the ongoing effort to reduce the prevalence of racial discrimination against Chinese Americans and other Americans of Asian descent.

Chapter 3:

U.S.-China relations and effects on the lives of Chinese Americans

This chapter explores Chinese Americans' perceptions of U.S.-China relations and how aspects of these relations affect their lives. First, we discuss opinions on the state of U.S.-China relations, including policy areas that Chinese Americans perceive as problematic, and where there are opportunities for improving relations. Following these topics, we cover the perceived downstream effects of U.S.-China relations on how Chinese Americans are treated by the American public (Butz and Yogeewaran 2011; He and Xie 2022), including concern about legislation that prohibits Chinese citizens from owning property, concern about the language and rhetoric used by politicians, and the effects of the rhetoric used by U.S. news media on how others treat Chinese Americans.

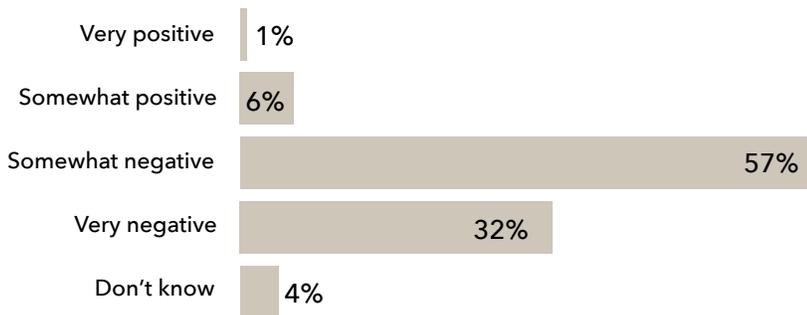
Key findings

- Close to nine in ten Chinese Americans (89%) describe the current relationship between the U.S. and China as negative, and almost two thirds (64%) say that current bilateral relations negatively affect how other Americans treat them and others of Chinese descent.
- About four in five Chinese Americans say that China's tense relations with Taiwan (82%) and friendly relations with Russia (80%) are seriously problematic for the U.S.
- 82% of Chinese Americans say student exchange programs are an area where the U.S. and China can cooperate and build relations, and majorities express that the countries can also likely work together on addressing climate change (64%), the spread of infectious diseases (61%), and trade (60%).
- The majority of Chinese Americans (58%) have heard about the legislative efforts by many states and Congress to limit the ability of individuals with Chinese citizenship to own various kinds of property in the U.S. Of those that have heard about these efforts, about two thirds (67%) think such legislation has a negative effect on how others treat them.
- About four in five Chinese Americans (81%) are at least a little concerned about the language and rhetoric used by the 2024 presidential candidates when they talk about China and U.S.-China relations, citing that discriminatory language used by political leaders gives rise to discrimination from their followers.
- 61% say that the language and rhetoric used by U.S. news media when reporting on China and U.S.-China relations negatively affect how strangers treat them and other people of Chinese descent. About one quarter of Chinese Americans also say that their relationships with acquaintances (26%) and coworkers (25%) have also been negatively impacted.

Most Chinese Americans think U.S.-China relations are in bad shape

First, we consider Chinese Americans' overall opinion on the state of the current relationship between the U.S. and China. Nearly nine in ten Chinese Americans (89%) describe the relationship as either somewhat negative (57%) or very negative (32%).

Figure 3.1: Perceptions of U.S.-China relations



When presented with a list of the most pertinent areas under China's discretion that may be problematic for the U.S., Figure 3.2 shows that the majority of Chinese Americans perceive all of the presented areas to be either somewhat or seriously problematic. China's tense relations with Taiwan and friendly relations with Russia top the list, with 82% and 83% of Chinese Americans seeing these areas as seriously problematic for the U.S., respectively. However, majorities of Chinese Americans think that all of the potential issues offered present serious problems for the U.S.

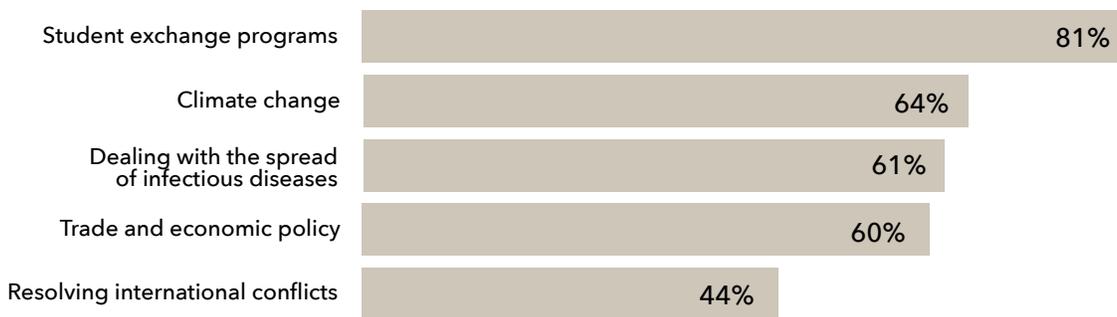
Figure 3.2: Potential problems for the U.S. presented by China
(% 'Moderately serious' or 'very serious' problem)



Chinese Americans are still optimistic about U.S.-China cooperation

We also offered a list of topical international policy areas and asked participants their opinion on the degree to which they think the U.S. and China can cooperate on each one. At the top of the list, about four in five (82%) Chinese Americans say that the U.S. and China can definitely cooperate (34%) or likely cooperate (48%) on student exchange programs, such as study abroad programs that offer students culturally immersive experiences. Majorities also expressed opinions that the two countries can cooperate on issues related to climate change, dealing with the spread of infectious diseases, and trade and economic policy. Only on issues related to resolving international conflicts did a minority of Chinese Americans (44%) believe that the U.S. and China can cooperate.

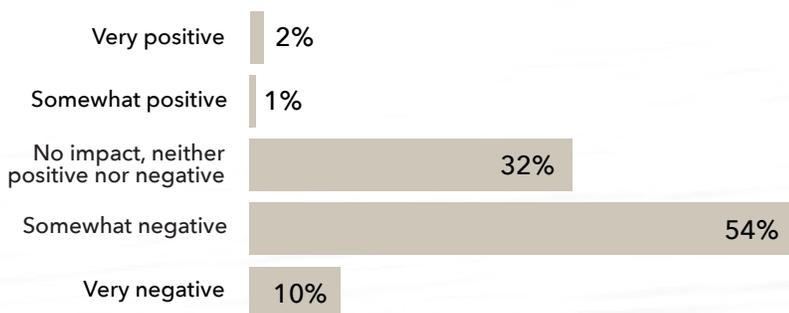
Figure 3.3: Potential areas of cooperation between the U.S. and China
(% 'Can likely cooperate' or 'can definitely cooperate')



Tense U.S.-China relations have impacted the treatment of Chinese Americans

Next, we discuss how the poor state of bilateral relations affects the lives of Chinese Americans. When asked what impact the current relationship between the U.S. and China has on how other Americans treat them and others of Chinese descent, 64% say that there is a very negative (10%) or somewhat negative (54%) impact. About half as many (32%) indicate that there is no net impact, and only 3% said that there is a very positive (2%) or somewhat positive (1%) impact.

Figure 3.4: Perceived impact of U.S.-China relations on treatment of Chinese Americans



Perceived harm of foreign property ownership legislation

We then asked about direct potential sources of these negative impacts, including domestic policies and the language and rhetoric used by news media and politicians when discussing China and U.S.-China relations. Among policies that are potentially harmful to Chinese Americans, we focused on legislation that limits property rights by citizens of China. Since 2023, 241 bills have been considered by 39 states and Congress that restrict or outright prohibit property ownership by foreign governments, businesses, and/or citizens. Of these bills, 194 (80%) would prohibit Chinese citizens from purchasing or owning property, and seven such bills have passed in six states (Collitt 2024).

Due to the prevalence of this legislation and the potential problems it poses for Chinese Americans, we asked Chinese Americans if they are aware of such efforts and what effects they may have on how they are treated by others. Sixteen percent of Chinese Americans say they have heard a lot about this legislation, while 42% say they have heard a little about it, and 43% say they have heard nothing at all. Of Chinese Americans that have heard something about this legislation (58%), more than two thirds (68%) say that legislation that limits or prohibits property ownership by citizens of China has a somewhat negative impact (46%) or very negative impact (22%) on the way that other Americans treat them and others of Chinese descent, while only 28% perceive no impact on treatment by others, and 4% say that such legislation has a positive impact.

Figure 3.5: Knowledge of foreign property ownership laws

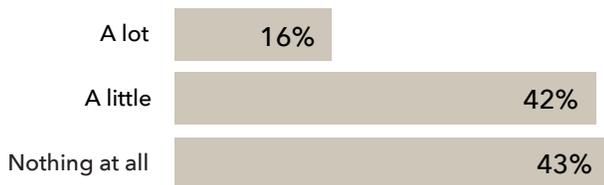
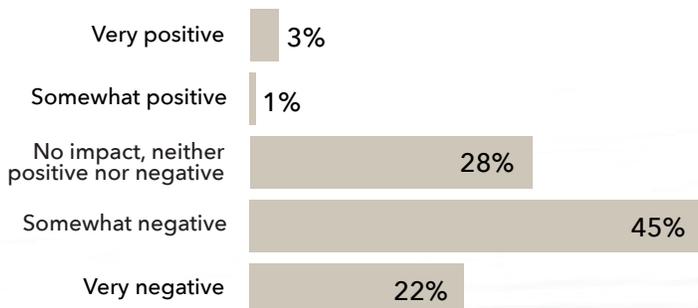


Figure 3.6: Perceived impact on foreign property ownership laws on treatment of Chinese Americans



Three themes emerge in the responses to this question. The first and dominant theme relates to concerns that discriminatory rhetoric and language espoused by political leaders are adopted by other politicians and members of the public, contributing to discrimination and violence against Chinese and Asian Americans:

- “The rhetoric used plays a major role in the way Americans talk about Asians and Asian Americans. If they see that elected officials can discriminate and talk down on Asian Americans, they will likely follow and think that it’s acceptable and okay.”
- “The weaponization of strong rhetoric that can encourage people to act violently.”

As is well-supported in political science research, the public tends to adopt the views and language of their political leaders, particularly among those of the same party (i.e. “copartisans”) (Blumenau and Lauderdale 2024; Cavari 2017; Lenz 2013). Therefore, when political leaders use xenophobic, racist, and inflammatory language directed at a group of people, such language and corresponding policy views are frequently embraced by large swaths of the public (N. K. M. Chan, Kim, and Leung 2022; Newman et al. 2021).

The second theme concerns the use of rhetoric in highlighting policy platforms and eventual administrative efforts that would result in domestic policies harmful to Chinese Americans:

- “Increased limits to civil rights.”
- “Creation of irrational policies due to exaggerated fears.”

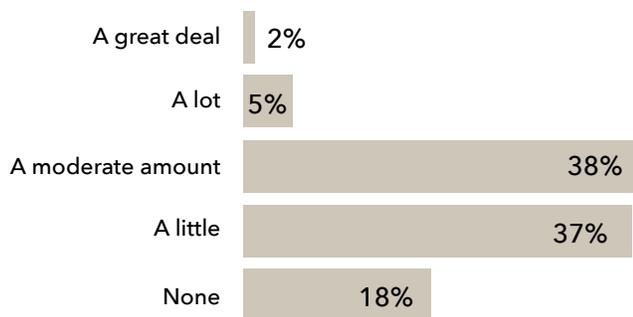
The third theme concerns fears that hostile and xenophobic rhetoric exacerbates tensions between the U.S. and China, contributing to a greater likelihood of armed conflict between the U.S. and China, which would in turn produce worse and discriminatory outcomes for Chinese Americans:

- “Confrontational tones used by candidates will cause U.S.-China relations to deteriorate.”
- “A bad relationship between the two countries might lead to war, which will be bad for Chinese Americans.”
- “A repeat of WWII with Japanese internment camps.”

Low trust in U.S. news media and detrimental effects of rhetoric

Chinese Americans are particularly concerned about the portrayal of China and U.S.-China relations in U.S. news media. When asked how much confidence Chinese Americans have in the U.S. news media to fairly and accurately report news about China and U.S.-China relations, a majority of Chinese Americans (51%) say they have no confidence (18%) or a little confidence (37%). Thirty-eight percent said they have a moderate amount of confidence, while only 5% said they have a lot, and 2% said they have a great deal of confidence. These findings largely match the views expressed by the general public regarding mass media in general; when polled in 2023, 68% of the public said they have either not very much (29%) or no confidence at all (39%) in mass media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly (Gallup Inc 2023).

Figure 3.9: Trust in media to report on China and U.S.-China relations fully, accurately, and fairly



We also asked whether Chinese Americans think the rhetoric and language used by U.S. news media when talking about China and U.S.-China relations affect how others treat them and others of Chinese descent in a wide range of relationships. Sixty-one percent of Chinese Americans say that such rhetoric either somewhat negatively (50%) or very negatively (11%) affects how strangers treat them and others of Chinese descent. About one quarter say that their relationships among acquaintances (26%) and coworkers (24%) are negatively affected. About one fifth (18%) say that their relationship with their boss or supervisor is negatively impacted. Fewer, but not insubstantial, numbers of Chinese Americans indicate that close relationships are negatively affected by media rhetoric related to China and U.S.-China relations, including 11% for friends, 8% for family, and 6% for partners and loved ones.

Conclusion

This chapter explored Chinese Americans' perceptions of U.S.-China relations, including which of China's actions pose serious problems for the U.S., as well as where the U.S. and China can work together. We also offered a novel set of questions that attempt to directly identify how poor relations between the U.S. and China produce harmful and potentially discriminatory effects for Chinese Americans, and invariably, Asian Americans more broadly (Butz and Yogeewaran 2011; He and Xie 2022). That is, we identified three potential direct sources of discriminatory or harmful outcomes and asked respondents how these sources affected their lives.

First, of the majority of Chinese Americans that are aware of legislation that prohibits property ownership by Chinese citizens, about two thirds say such legislation has a negative impact on how others treat them and other Chinese Americans. That is, even outside of the potential limiting effects such legislation has on one's ability to own property, many Chinese Americans likely perceive such legislation as a signal to policymakers and the American public that people of Chinese descent, regardless of citizenship status, are "perpetual foreigners" unwelcome to the same rights as other Americans. Indeed, while 91% of Chinese Americans that are not U.S. citizens perceive these legislative efforts to have a negative impact, almost two thirds of U.S. citizens (65%) feel the same.

Second, we asked Chinese Americans how concerned they are about the rhetoric and language used by this year's presidential candidates when they talk about China and U.S.-China relations during campaign season. A majority voiced such concern, explaining that discriminatory language and rhetoric is, first and foremost, endorsement to the public of discriminatory language and acts against Chinese Americans; a signal of potentially discriminatory policy efforts; and is detrimental to U.S.-China relations, which in turn produces harmful outcomes for Chinese Americans.

Third, a majority of Chinese Americans have little to no confidence in the U.S. news media to report about China and U.S.-China relations in a fair and accurate manner. What's more, 61% said that the rhetoric and language used when reporting on these topics negatively affects how strangers treat them and others of Chinese descent, and even the closest relationships are negatively affected among a non-negligible portion of Chinese Americans. Taken together, this evidence strongly suggests that Chinese Americans continue to suffer discrimination on multiple fronts, through several avenues of policy and politics.

Chapter 4:

Political identities, behaviors, and opinions

This chapter examines the political behaviors and identities of Chinese Americans; who Chinese Americans voted for in the 2020 presidential general election; opinions on Joe Biden and Donald Trump, the major party presidential candidates at the time the survey was conducted; intent to turn out in the 2024 presidential election; and positions on a wide array of domestic policy issues. Throughout the chapter, we draw comparisons between Chinese American Democrats, Republicans, and independents, as well as other groups where relevant.

Key findings

- About half of Chinese Americans identify as Democrats (46%), with the remainder largely split between Republicans (31%) and independents or those who don't identify with either party (24%).
- Chinese American Republicans' support for Donald Trump is considerably weaker than Democrats' support for then-candidate Joe Biden. Chinese American Republican support for Trump is also suggestively weaker than among Republicans in the general public.
- Two thirds of Chinese American citizens (67%) say they are absolutely certain to vote in the 2024 presidential general election, along with 77% of registered voters.
- About three quarters of Chinese Americans (76%) think the country is going in the wrong direction, including about two thirds of Democrats (68%).
- The economy ranks as one of the most important issues to Chinese Americans ahead of the 2024 election, and 43% say the economy is getting worse.
- On policy positions...
 - About two thirds of Chinese Americans (68%) support laws allowing women to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.
 - Most (40%) still favor affirmative action programs in higher education even after the Supreme Court struck such policies down in 2023.
 - Three fourths (74%) favor laws allowing same-sex marriage.

- 46% support legally allowing unauthorized immigrants to stay in the country and eventually qualify for citizenship (though only when a variety of requirements have been met).
- Three quarters (75%) favor making it legally harder to buy guns.
- About two thirds (65%) favor increased greenhouse gas regulations on businesses.
- 47% say it's the government's responsibility to address income inequality.
- Chinese Americans are ambivalent between raising the minimum wage (43%) and keeping it the same (43%).

Chinese Americans identify mostly as Democrats, followed by lower shares of Republicans and independents

To begin, we consider the partisan affiliations of Chinese Americans.⁸ Forty-six percent of Chinese Americans identify as Democrats, 31% identify as Republicans, and 24% don't identify with either party or call themselves independents.⁹ Considering the demographic factors correlated with partisanship, Chinese born outside of the U.S. identify as Republicans and independents at a higher rate than U.S.-born Chinese Americans, who tend to lean Democratic. Older Chinese Americans also tend to identify as Republicans at a greater rate and identify as Democrats at a lower rate. Those with more formal education identify as Democratic at a higher rate than Republicans.

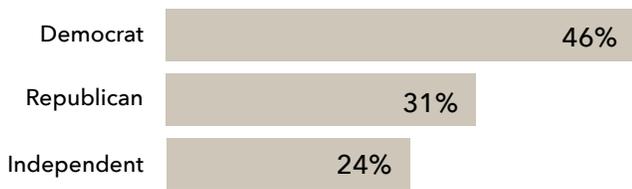
The overall rate of Chinese American Democratic partisanship is consistent with the national average (46% compared to 45%). However, a greater share of Chinese Americans report being independent or non-partisan (24%) compared to only 9% of the general public. There are also fewer Chinese American Republicans (31%) compared to 44% of the general public (Gallup Inc 2024). The distribution of Chinese Americans' partisan identities has stayed consistent over the last 12 years, with about half identifying as Democrats, and the remainder split between Republicans and independents.¹⁰

⁸ We start with party affiliation because it is typically strongly related to other behaviors and opinions in contemporary American politics, such as vote choices, policy positions, and a wealth of other social, emotional, and political factors (Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Bartels 2000; Margolis 2018; McConnell et al. 2018).

⁹ We classify independents as participants that identify as such or as affiliated with neither major party, and also do not lean toward the Democratic or Republican party. Although substantial attention has been paid to understanding the differences between the various kinds of independents, especially among Asian Americans (Nguyen and Garand 2009; Phan and Garcia 2009), this chapter is focused on comparing Democrats, Republicans, and the remainder of Chinese Americans, which we call "independents" for brevity's sake throughout the report. We group individuals that say they "lean" toward the Democratic or Republican party as partisans, consistent with the large majority of scholarly research that finds that these individuals typically express policy positions consistent with the party to which they lean (Atske 2019; Keith et al. 1992). Indeed, independent leaners in our sample vote similarly and hold policy positions similar to the party they lean toward.

¹⁰ In 2020, 45% of Chinese American registered voters identified as Democrats, 20% identified as Republicans, and 35% identified as independent or did not identify with either major party (AAPI Data, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and APIAVote 2020). In 2016, 51% of registered voters identified as Democrats, 18% identified as Republicans, and 30% identified as independents (S. K. Ramakrishnan et al. n.d.). In 2012, 46% of Chinese Americans identified as Democrats, 23% identified as Republicans, and 31% identified as independents (K. Ramakrishnan and Lee 2012). Note that for 2020 and 2016, data is only available for registered voters. However, at least among participants in our sample, partisan group proportions don't change substantially when only registered voters are considered; 48% identify as Democrats (+2% relative to all Chinese Americans), 29% identify as Republicans (-2%), and 23% identify as independents (-1%).

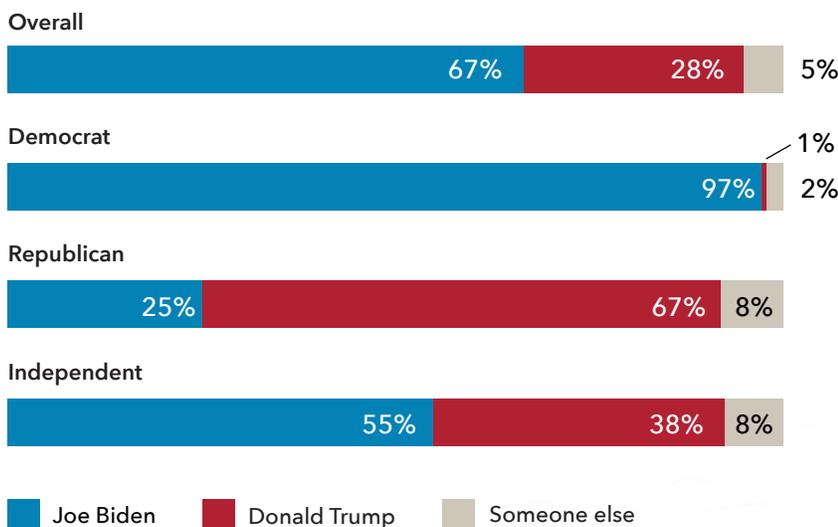
Figure 4.1: Self-reported partisanship



Chinese American Republicans are hesitant to support Trump

Among Chinese Americans registered to vote and who say they turned out in the 2020 presidential election, two thirds (67%) report voting for Joe Biden, a little over one fourth (28%) report voting for Donald Trump, and the remainder (5%) say they voted for someone else.¹¹ Ninety-seven percent of Democrats voted for Biden. In contrast, only 66% of Republicans voted for Trump and 25% voted for Biden. Independents leaned more toward Biden (55%) than Trump (38%). These proportions indicate considerably more electoral support for Biden among Democrats than support for Trump among Republicans, and consequently, considerably greater rates of copartisan defection among Republicans. In contrast, Democrats and Republicans in the general public report voting for their party’s presidential candidate at comparable rates in the 2020 election (Hartig 2021).

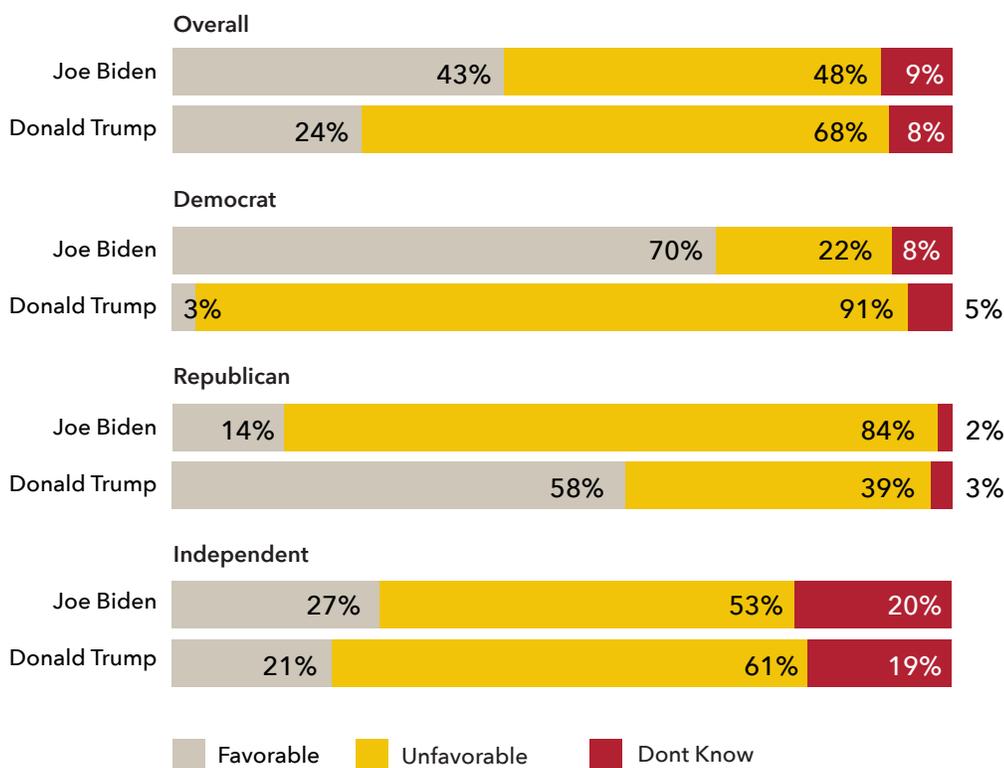
Figure 4.2: Vote choice in 2020 by partisanship



¹¹ These estimates align well with findings about Chinese American vote choice in 2020 (N. Chan, Nguy, and Masuoka 2024).

In the lead-up to the 2024 presidential general election,¹² 43% of Chinese Americans express a favorable opinion of then-Democratic-candidate Joe Biden and 24% view Donald Trump favorably. Considering favorability towards the candidate of one’s own party, a significantly higher proportion of Democrats view Biden favorably (70%) than the proportion of Republicans that hold a favorable opinion of Trump (58%),¹³ and independents express similar low rates of favorability toward both candidates.¹⁴ Aggregate polling of the general public performed during the same period as our survey reveals that Democrats and Republicans express similarly high rates of favorability toward their party’s candidate (The Economist and YouGov 2024). Taken together, these patterns suggest a relatively lower level of support for Donald Trump among Chinese American Republicans, both compared to Republicans’ support for Trump in the general public as well as Chinese American Democrats’ support for Biden.

Figure 4.3: Favorability toward 2024 presidential candidates by partisanship



12 This survey was fielded between February 29, 2024 and March 26, 2024.

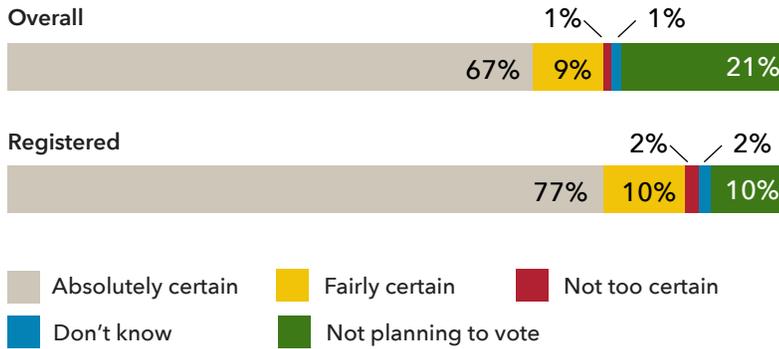
13 The difference in the proportion of Chinese American Democrats and Republicans that view their party’s candidate favorably is only statistically significant at $p = .17$. However, the difference in the proportion of Democrats and Republicans that view their candidate unfavorably is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

14 At the time the survey was conducted, Joe Biden was the leading Democratic presidential candidate and de facto nominee. Soon after his decision to withdraw his candidacy on July 21, 2024, Biden endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris, who has since become the de facto Democratic nominee. While the 2024 Asian American Voter Survey finds that, among Chinese Americans overall that are U.S. citizens and registered to vote, 35% have a favorable opinion of Harris compared to 49% that have a favorable opinion of Biden, the difference almost entirely due to the 17% of respondents that either don’t know enough about Harris (9%) or haven’t heard of Harris (8%). In contrast, the 2024 AAVS reports that only 2% of Chinese Americans say they don’t know enough about Biden (APIAVote et al. 2024). Reporting on the 2020 presidential election suggests that Asian Americans supported Harris at high rates (Bierman 2021). Further, Asian American members of Congress and influential AAPI political action committees moved quickly to endorse Harris as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee once her bid was announced (Randall 2024). Thus it is expected that Harris will reach favorability levels comparable to Biden among Chinese Americans as Harris becomes more known over the course of the general election campaign season. Therefore, the levels of favorability expressed toward Biden and Trump among Chinese American Democrats, Republicans, and independents reported here may serve as useful indicators of favorability expressed toward Harris.

Many Chinese Americans say they're certain to turn out in 2024

About three quarters (76%) of Chinese American citizens say that they are certain to vote in the 2024 presidential general election, and an even higher proportion (87%) of registered voters say the same. Democrats, Republicans, and independents say they are certain to turn out at comparable rates.

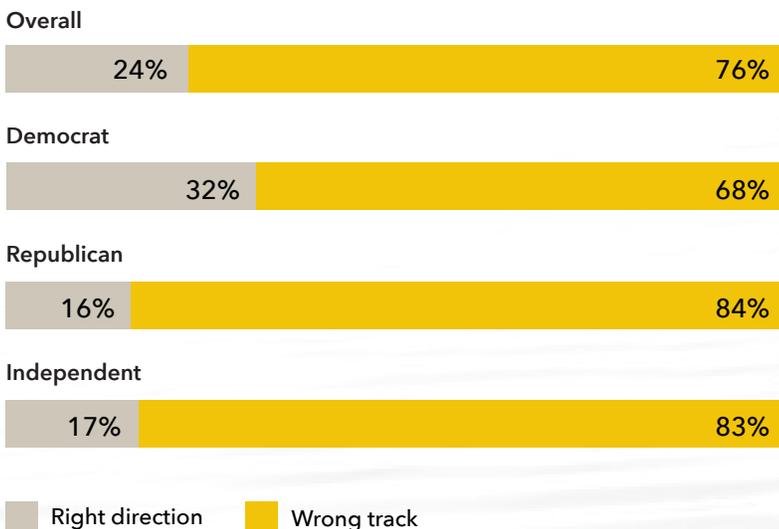
Figure 4.4: Intent to turn out in the 2024 presidential election by voter registration status



Most say country is headed in the wrong direction

Before moving to assess where Chinese Americans stand on a variety of issues, we look to see what Chinese Americans think about the overall direction of the country. Only one quarter (24%) of Chinese Americans feel that the country is going in the right direction, while roughly three quarters (76%) think the country has seriously gotten off on the wrong track. Even among Democrats with a Democratic presidential administration, only 32% feel the country is headed in the right direction, along with half the proportion of Republicans and independents (16% and 17%, respectively).

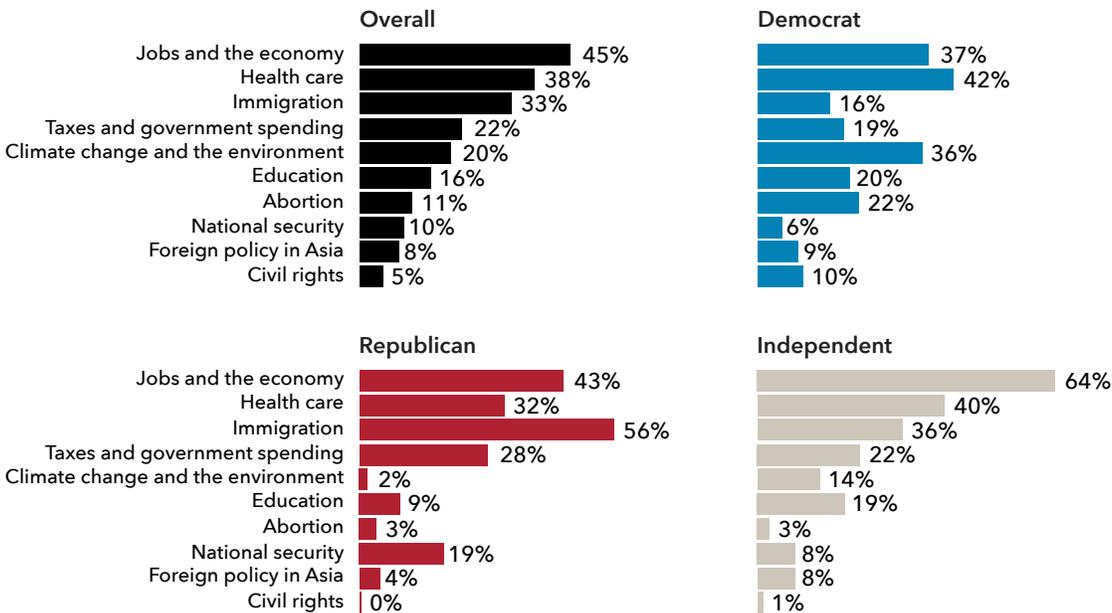
Figure 4.5: Perceived direction of the U.S. by partisanship



Jobs & economy top the list of issues most important to Chinese Americans

Next, we examine which issues are the most important to Chinese Americans, then move to assess the positions taken on a wide range of policy issues. Participants were asked to select up to three issue areas that are most important to them. Figure 4.6 provides the breakdown of the policy issues most important to Chinese Americans. Forty-five percent of Chinese Americans identified jobs and the economy among their top-three issues, followed by health care, and immigration. When split by party affiliation, Figure 4.6 shows that Democrats view health care, jobs and the economy, and climate change and the environment among the issues most important to them. Relatively higher concentrations of Republicans identify immigration and jobs and the economy as the issues most important to them, followed by health care. Almost two thirds of independents see jobs and the economy as a top issue, followed distantly by health care and immigration. In contrast to popular stereotypes that Chinese Americans singularly prioritize educational issues, and consistent with other research on Asian Americans’ policy priorities, we find that only about one in six Chinese Americans view education as a top priority (AAPI Data, Associated Press, and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research 2024a).

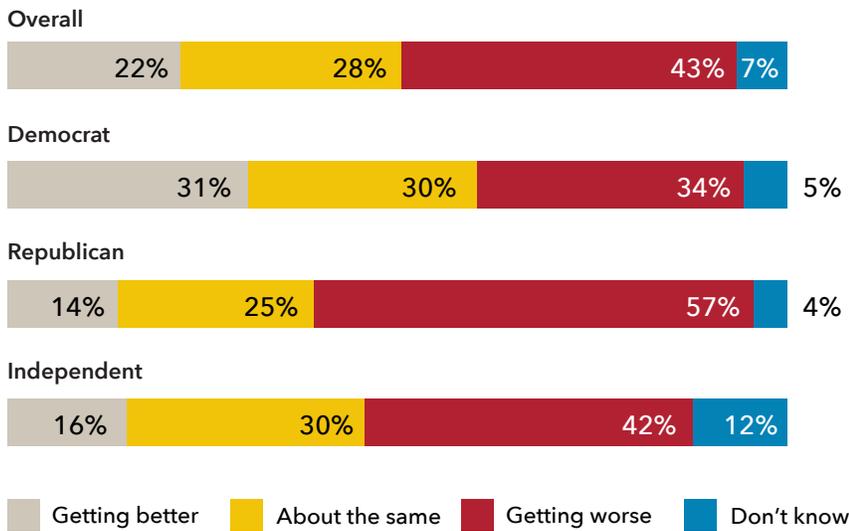
Figure 4.6: Most important issues by partisanship



Many think the economy is getting worse

As nearly a majority of Chinese Americans indicate that the economy is among the top three issues most important to them, it is unsurprising that, when asked whether the economy is getting better or worse, a plurality think that the economy is getting worse (43%), while 28% indicate that the economy is stable, and a minority think that the economy is getting better (22%). More Democrats than Republicans say the economy is getting better (31% and 14%, respectively), but roughly just as many Democrats think the economy is getting worse (34%).

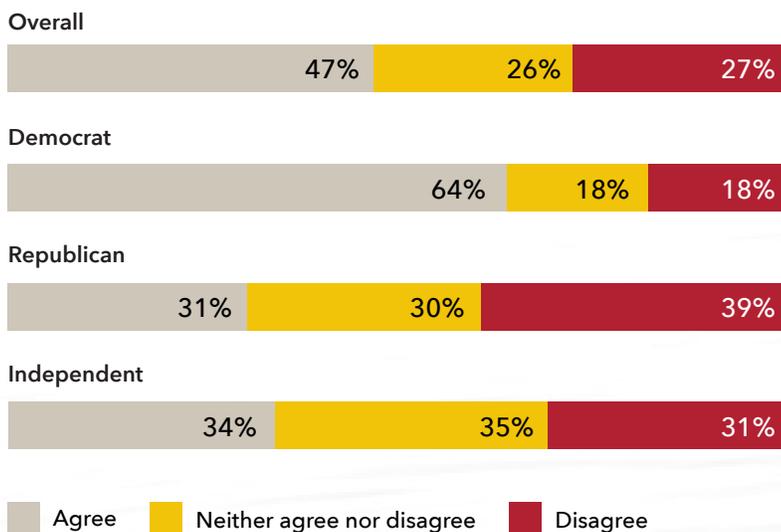
Figure 4.7: Perceived national economic trend by partisanship



Partisans split on the government’s role in addressing inequality

Nearly a majority (47%) of Chinese Americans agree that it is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes. The remainder are split between holding no position, and disagreeing with the statement. Significantly more Democrats indicate that it is the government’s role to address income inequality (64%) than Republicans (31%), and independents are mostly aligned with Republicans (34%).

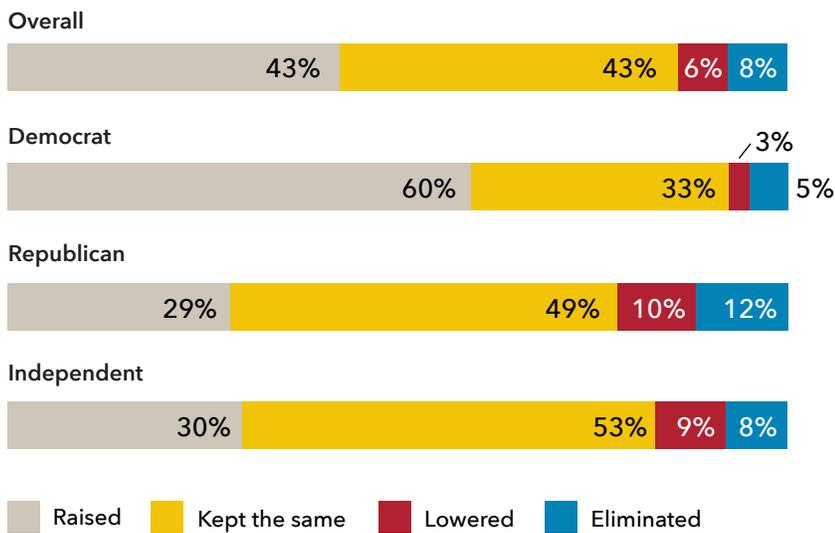
Figure 4.8: Position on government’s role in addressing inequality by partisanship



Chinese Americans are split between raising the minimum wage and keeping it the same

Forty-three percent of Chinese Americans say the minimum wage should be raised, another 43% say it should be kept the same, and 14% say it should be lowered or eliminated. Democrats support raising the minimum wage (60%) at a far greater rate than Republicans (29%) and independents (30%). Similar to the partisan patterns concerning support for government intervention in addressing inequality, independents and Republicans share similar opinions on the minimum wage that contrast with the views of Democrats.

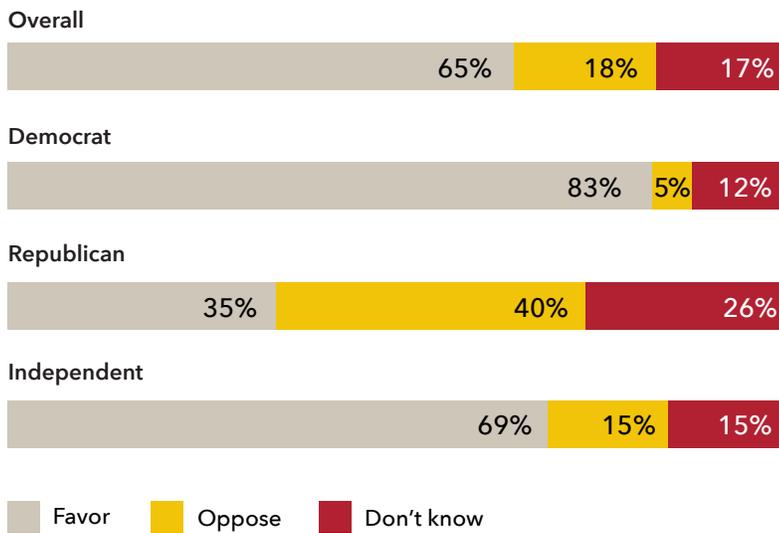
Figure 4.9: Position on the federal minimum wage by partisanship



Most want increased government regulation of greenhouse gas emissions

About two thirds (65%) of Chinese Americans favor increased government regulation on businesses that produce a great deal of greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change, and 18% oppose such efforts. Democrats favor increased regulation much more than Republicans (83% and 35%, respectively), and independents lean more toward the Democratic position, with 69% favoring increased regulation.

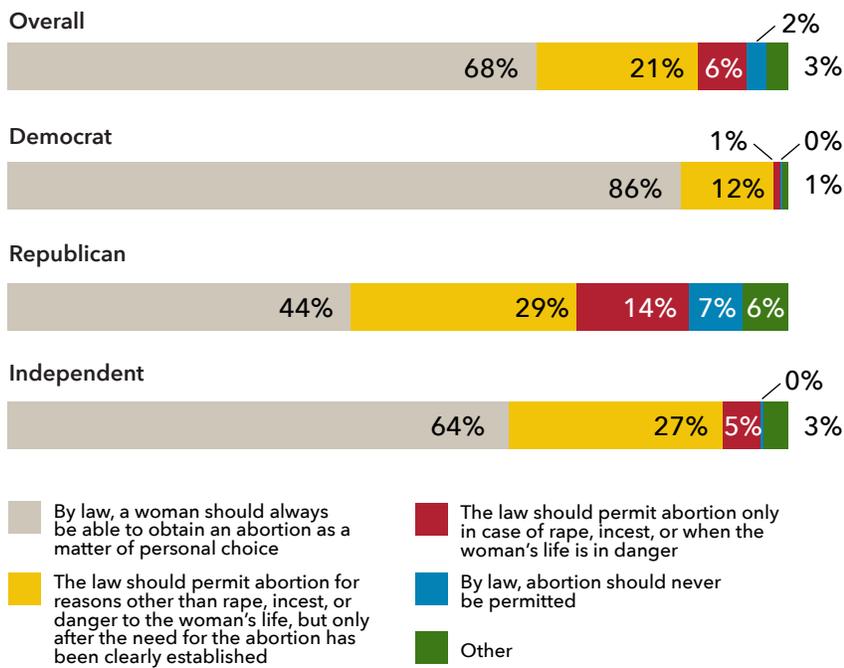
Figure 4.10: Position on greenhouse gas emissions regulation by partisanship



Two thirds favor abortion as a personal choice

When presented with a set of proposed abortion policies that vary in their level of restrictiveness, about two in three (68%) of Chinese Americans agree most closely with the least-restrictive position that, by law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice. Twenty-one percent agree most closely that the law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman’s life, but only after need has been clearly established. Only 6% most closely agree with the position that abortion should be permitted only in case of rape, incest, or danger to the woman’s life, and only 2% believe that abortion should never be permitted. Far more Democrats most closely agree with the least restrictive position than Republicans (86% and 44%, respectively), and half (50%) of Republicans favor some kind of legal restriction. Sixty-four percent of independents favor the least restrictive position, roughly in between Democrats’ and Republicans’ rates. More Chinese American women agree that a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice (75%) compared to men (60%).

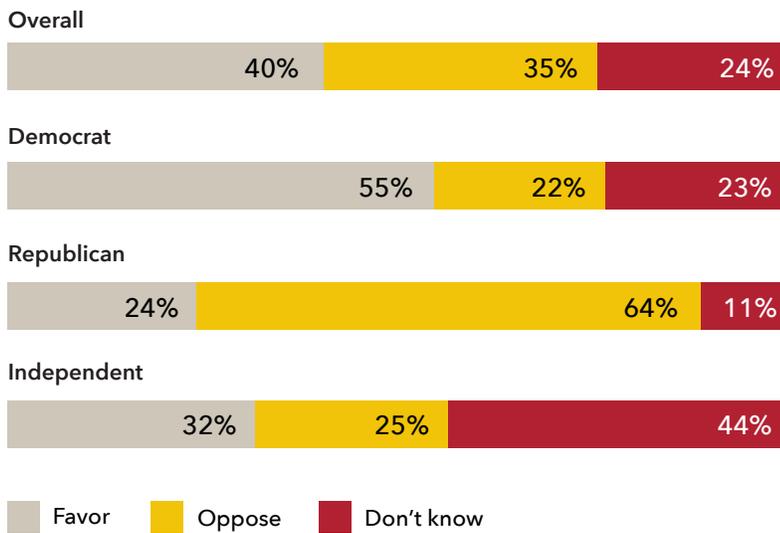
Figure 4.11: Position on abortion by partisanship



Many Chinese Americans still support affirmative action programs

On the issue of affirmative action in higher education, 40% of Chinese Americans favor “affirmative action programs designed to help Black people, women, and other minorities get better access to higher education,” 35% oppose such programs, and 24% indicate that they are undecided. We offered this question in this manner to help identify a trend on this position, using the language offered by the 2020 Asian American Voter Survey, in which 56% of Chinese Americans favored affirmative action programs, 25% opposed, and 19% said they didn’t know (AAPI Data, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and APIAVote 2020). Our findings suggest a decline among Chinese Americans in support of affirmative action policies since 2020. This decline may be, in part, a product of the Supreme Court’s decision on affirmative action in June, 2023, which ruled the consideration of race in admissions unconstitutional. Among partisans, a majority (55%) of Democrats favor affirmative action programs, compared with about one quarter (24%) of Republicans. Independents are largely undecided on the issue: 44% indicate they don’t know whether they support or oppose.

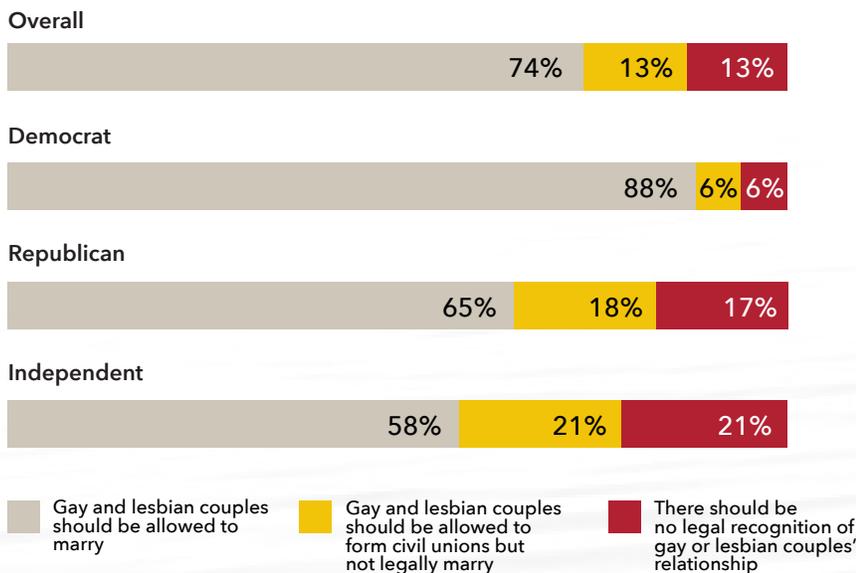
Figure 4.12: Position on affirmative action programs in higher education by partisanship



Three quarters say same-sex couples should be allowed to legally marry

Concerning the rights of LGBTQ+ Americans, we asked Chinese Americans which position on same-sex marriage they most closely agree with: about three fourths (74%) agree most closely with the position that gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry, 13% agree most closely with the position that gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry, and another 13% said that there should be no legal recognition of gay or lesbian couples' relationship. Considerably more Chinese American Democrats are in favor of legal marriage for same-sex couples (88%), fewer Republicans express such support (65%), and independents express support at roughly similar rates to Republicans (58%).

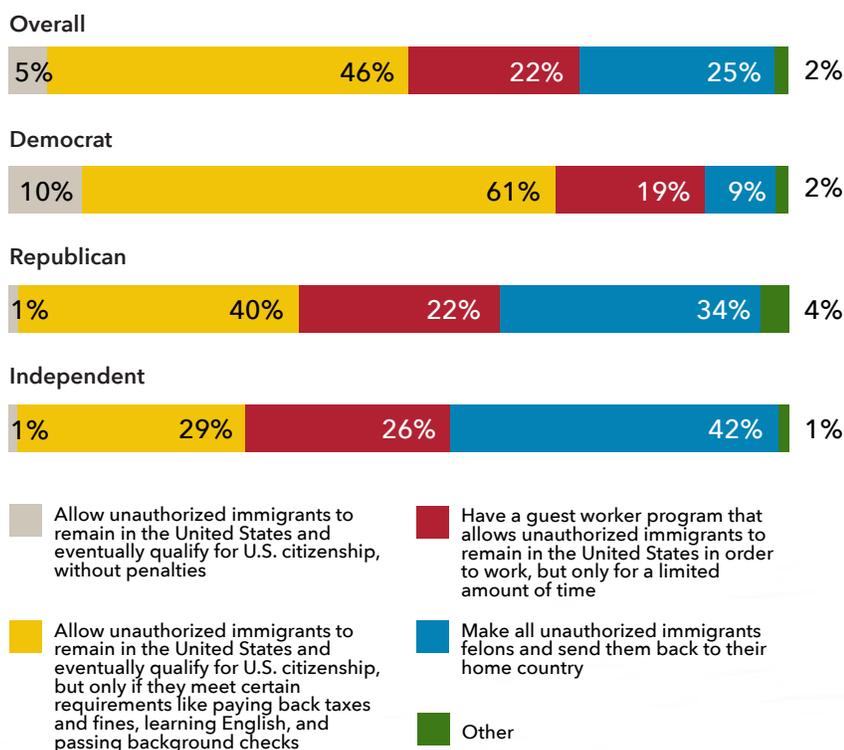
Figure 4.13: Position on same-sex marriage by partisanship



Plurality of Chinese Americans support path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants

On the question of what the government’s policy should be for unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S., we included four policy positions that vary in the level of openness to, or acceptance of, unauthorized immigrants, and asked participants to choose which position most closely fits their views. Only 5% of Chinese Americans agree most closely with the position to allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the U.S. and eventually qualify for citizenship without penalty. The plurality (46%) agrees most closely with the position that unauthorized immigrants should remain in the U.S. and eventually qualify for citizenship, but only after meeting requirements like paying fines, paying back taxes, learning English, and passing background checks. Twenty-two percent agree most closely with the position that there should be a guest worker program that allows unauthorized immigrants to work in the U.S., but only for a limited time. And one quarter (25%) of Chinese Americans agree most closely with the position to make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country. Democrats support a pathway to citizenship at a much higher rate than Republicans and independents: 71% of Democrats compared to 30% of Republicans and 41% of independents. Republicans and independents instead favor making unauthorized immigrants felons and deportation at considerably higher rates than Democrats.

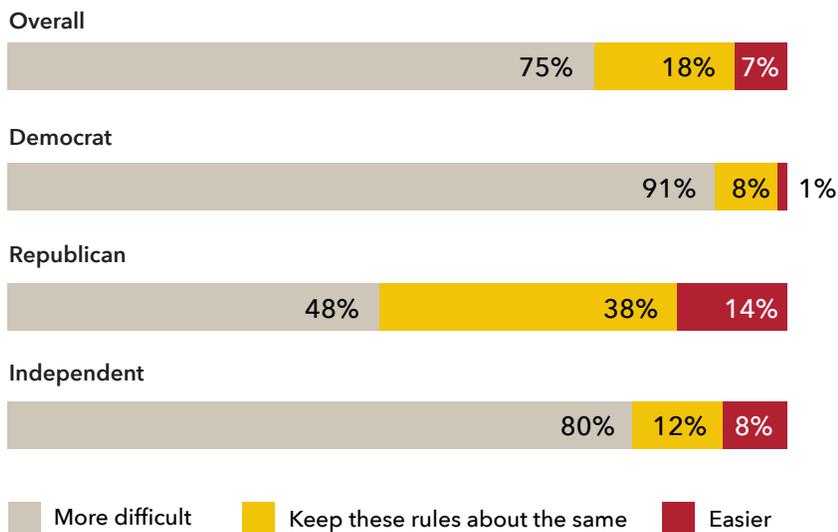
Figure 4.14: Position on unauthorized immigration by partisanship



Three quarters say buying a gun should be more difficult

Lastly, we asked whether the federal government should make it more difficult, easier, or not change how difficult the law makes it to buy a gun right now. Three quarters (75%) of Chinese Americans said that the government should make it more difficult to buy a gun, 7% said it should be easier, and 18% said the rules should be kept about the same. Ninety-one percent of Democrats said it should be more difficult, compared with 80% of independents and even almost a majority (48%) of Republicans.

Figure 4.15: Position on gun purchase restrictions by partisanship



Conclusion

This chapter covered Chinese Americans' political identities, voting behaviors, and positions on a wide array of pertinent domestic policy issues. In doing so, and in alignment with other research (J. S. Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023), we find that Chinese Americans are not at all a monolithic voting bloc in support of Democratic candidates and positions. To the contrary, Chinese Americans exhibit a wide distribution of political opinions, most of which fall in line with copartisan positions among the general public, with two notable differences.

The first difference is that, among Chinese American Republicans, there is suggestive evidence of lower levels of electoral support and favorability expressed toward Donald Trump than among Republicans in the general public; only 66% of Chinese American Republicans report voting for Trump in 2020, compared with 92% of Republicans in the general public (Hartig 2021). Although we do not have data at hand to fully assess the potential causes for these patterns, speculatively, lower levels of support for Trump may be due to several policies initiated under Trump's presidency, in combination with rhetoric Trump uses when talking about China, U.S.-China relations, and people

of Chinese descent. The China Initiative, initiated in 2018 under the Trump administration, was an effort by the Department of Justice to prosecute alleged Chinese spies. The effort resulted in 77 cases and more than 150 defendants, almost entirely of Chinese descent and included many American citizens. Only about one quarter of defendants prosecuted under the China Initiative were convicted, and usually for smaller charges (Guo, Aloe, and Hao 2021). The China initiative was formally ended under Biden's presidency in 2022, citing racial bias and the profiling of people of Chinese descent as significant reasons for shutting the program down (Gerstein 2022). Additionally, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, then-President Trump frequently publicly labeled the coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus," the "Kung Flu," and other derogatory and racist names (Rogers, Jakes, and Swanson 2020), giving rise to a surge in anti-Asian attitudes and hate crimes against Asian Americans (N. K. M. Chan, Kim, and Leung 2022; Reny and Barreto 2022). For some Chinese American Republicans then, perceptions that his policies and rhetoric negatively impact their lives and the lives of other Chinese and Asian Americans may override support for Trump as the former and current Republican presidential nominee.

The second notable political difference between Chinese Americans and the general public is a suggestively higher proportion of Chinese Americans that don't align themselves in their identity or policy positions with either the Democratic or Republican party, as well as a considerably lower proportion of self-identified Republicans. These phenomena are well-known and generally shared among Asian Americans (AAPI Data, Associated Press, and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research 2024b; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Kuo, Malhotra, and Mo 2017; J. S. Wong and Ramakrishnan 2023). Because "pure" independents (i.e. those that say they don't lean toward either major party) typically express a mix of views that do not align neatly with the Democratic or Republican party (LaLoggia 2019; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012), and because the share of Chinese American independents is considerably large, they have substantial influence over the overall distribution of positions taken on any given issue. On climate change regulation and gun restrictions, independents lean toward the majority opinion taken by Democrats. On the government's role in addressing inequality, the federal minimum wage, same-sex marriage, and unauthorized immigration, independents express views more similar to Republicans'. And on abortion and affirmative action, independents appear to be somewhere in the middle of the dominant positions taken by Democrats and Republicans. Due to the substantial proportion of Chinese Americans that are independents, and because Chinese Americans continue to become an increasingly large share of the U.S. population and electorate, further research efforts should be made into investigating other factors that may contribute to the political behaviors and opinions of Chinese American independents.

Conclusion:

Key takeaways and recommendations

To help fulfill Committee of 100's mission to promote the full participation of Chinese Americans in all aspects of American life, this report 1) highlights the broad and diverse range of important characteristics, identities, and feelings toward American society and Chinese Americans' place in it; 2) brings continued awareness of the discrimination and struggles that many Chinese Americans regularly face; 3) illuminates the connections between the poor state of U.S.-China relations and the effects that downstream policy and political discrimination have on the lives of Chinese Americans; and 4) furthers knowledge of the political behaviors and positions of a substantial and growing Chinese American populous. While these are all important facets of the present study, the discussion and recommendations provided in the conclusion focus on and synthesize the most pressing findings related to discrimination, as these observations present especially valuable implications for promoting greater equity and inclusion.

Experiences with discrimination

We find that Chinese Americans from all walks of life continue to regularly report experiencing many forms of discrimination. More than half of Chinese Americans (54%) regularly face assumptions that they are not from the U.S., and one in four Chinese Americans (26%) face assumptions that they don't speak English, exemplifying the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype that has persisted since the arrival of people of Chinese descent to the U.S. over 150 years ago. Chinese Americans also consistently encounter outright hostility and hate; 27% are insulted or called names, 21% are threatened or harassed, and 19% face mocking and offensive physical gestures in an average month. Overall, roughly two thirds of Chinese Americans (68%) consistently experience at least one form of discrimination, and the vast majority (85%) of which directly attribute such experiences to their race, ethnicity, accent, or name. Even many of those who say they do not experience discrimination themselves understand it to be pervasive; 82% of Chinese Americans think that some of or a lot of discrimination persists against the community. Alongside these findings, while many Chinese Americans feel connected to other members of their communities, most do not believe that their values and cultures are becoming more accepted in American society.

Recommendations: Greater policy and enforcement efforts need to be made to reduce discrimination against Chinese Americans and Asian Americans more broadly. Despite that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is four years behind us and that the China Initiative ended over two years ago, reverberations of hate from xenophobic and racist claims that people of Chinese descent are to blame for the virus and that there is rampant economic espionage perpetrated by Chinese Americans persist to the current day (Ruiz, Im, and Tian 2023).

Greater legislative and administrative efforts also need to be made to collect discrimination and hate crime incident data, especially in disaggregating across racial and ethnic groups. Asian Americans, and Chinese Americans specifically, are often lumped together in large-scale hate crime incident

data collection despite disparities in socioeconomic status, health, and education. Furthermore, policymakers and vested advocacy groups need to be cognizant of, and work to alleviate, the underreporting of acts of hate and discrimination experienced by older and less English proficient Chinese Americans. While we find that younger Chinese Americans are more likely to report experiencing discrimination than older Chinese Americans, nearly a majority (48%) of elderly Chinese Americans reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination in an average month, and we know from hate crime data and other research that older and less English proficient individuals are more likely to encounter discrimination (Takamura et al. 2022; Zhang et al. 2012).

Mental health

We also document high rates of mental health struggles among Chinese Americans; half report feeling hopeless in the month before they took the survey, 44% report feeling so depressed that nothing could cheer them up, and 39% say they felt worthless. We find strong correlations between experiencing discrimination and worse mental health outcomes; those who regularly encounter discrimination are more nervous, restless, and hopeless than those who do not report experiencing discrimination in an average month.

Recommendations: There needs to be greater investment into mental health services and disbursement of mental health resources to Chinese American communities. Particular attention should be paid to Chinese who are of limited English proficiency, as research has identified limited English-speaking individuals to be less likely to seek mental health resources and experience greater delays in reaching care (Bauer, Chen, and Alegría 2010). Further, it has been found that Asian Americans as a whole are 60% less likely to seek mental health services than other racial groups (Mental and Behavioral Health - Asian Americans 2021).

Avenues of discrimination

This study identifies several policy and political pathways by which discrimination may occur. Nearly two thirds of Chinese Americans (64%) say that the current relationship between the U.S. and China negatively affects how other Americans treat them and others of Chinese descent. In particular, another two thirds of Chinese Americans (68%) that have heard about foreign property ownership legislation that prohibit citizens of China from owning property say that such legislation negatively affects how others treat them. Such legislation is merely one example of the efforts that many states are making to limit the rights of Chinese Americans, including Florida's recent law that blocks Chinese students from working in academic labs (Mervis 2023).

Concerning the content and manner in which information about China and U.S.-China relations is provided to the public, about four in five Chinese Americans (81%) are concerned about the rhetoric and language used by presidential candidates when they talk about China and U.S.-China relations, including nearly 30% that are very or extremely concerned. Survey respondents point directly at the influence that these politicians have on their followers and the public at large, saying that hateful rhetoric toward Asian and Chinese Americans gives the public the green light to follow and discriminate in turn. Concerning U.S. news media's role, a majority of Chinese Americans (51%) have little to no confidence in the news media to report news about China and U.S.-China relations

fully, accurately, and fairly. Sixty-one percent say that the rhetoric and language that U.S. news outlets use when reporting on China and U.S.-China relations negatively affects how strangers treat them. About one quarter also say that their relationships with acquaintances and coworkers are negatively affected by the language and rhetoric used in reporting.

Recommendations: We advocate for increased sensitivity and bias training for politicians, members of the media, and stakeholders, especially when it comes to discussion of Chinese, Chinese Americans, and U.S.-China relations (Anti-hate glossary 2023). Such training would not only help reduce the discrimination that Chinese and Asian Americans experience at the hands of other Americans, but would also elicit more accurate and nuanced information provided to the public on these topics.

Political and policy action against discrimination

We find that a majority of Chinese Americans (51%) say that federal elected officials are doing a bad job of dealing with the high rate of violence against Chinese Americans, especially among those that report experiencing discrimination on a consistent basis. Nearly a majority say that making laws against hate crimes stronger is the most effective way to prevent this violence and 23% say that the best way to prevent violence is by electing more Chinese Americans to public office. Alongside these findings, Chinese Americans represent significant and fast-growing electorate, and 76% of U.S. citizens state that they are certain to vote in the upcoming presidential election.

Recommendations: Political candidates and parties need to invest more resources in reaching to and listening to the concerns and needs of Chinese American communities. Chinese Americans are diverse in their policy positions and partisan identities, but are relatively unified in their dissatisfaction with the status quo regarding the treatment of Chinese Americans by federal and state legislation, politicians, U.S. news media, and other Americans. Despite their substantial and rising role in the political arena, there has been a recurring and systematic lack of outreach and investment to reach out to eligible Asian American voters by both parties (Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante 2021).

We also advocate for the creation of a pipeline to identify, recruit, and train Chinese American candidates for office, as our findings show support for more descriptive and substantive representation to address anti-Asian hate and other needs of Chinese Americans. Additionally, increased representation from the Chinese American community may help fight against discriminatory legislation seeking to prohibit property ownership by Chinese citizens, as well as other insidious forms of encoded racism. This pipeline is especially crucial as research has shown that politicians of color are just as likely to win election as white politicians, even though candidates of color receive very little funding or support from local party apparatuses (Ocampo and Ray 2020).

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