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Asian Americans Still Overlooked by U.S. Political System

New Book Examines Patterns of Asian Political Behavior and Why Political Clout Has Been Elusive; Finds Growing Impact, Visibility Likely in the Coming Years

New York—The Russell Sage Foundation announces the release of a new book, *Asian American Political Participation: Emerging Constituents and Their Political Identities*, the most comprehensive study to date of Asian American political behavior. Written by Janelle Wong, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, Taeku Lee, and Jane Junn, the book is based on data from their groundbreaking, multilingual 2008 National Asian American Survey of more than 5,000 Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Filipino, and Japanese Americans.

Asian Americans currently number more than 15 million, and this diverse population achieves higher levels of education and income than any other U.S. racial group. Yet the U.S. political system continues to overlook them as a growing political constituency.

Asian American Political Participation provides an in-depth analysis of key measures of Asian political behavior, including voting, political donations, community organizing, and political protests. The book also examines why some groups participate while others do not, why certain civic activities are deemed preferable to others, and why Asian American socioeconomic advantage has so far not led to increased political clout.

“This book is outstanding for explaining participation rates across Asian American individuals and groups,” says Dennis Chong, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Northwestern University. “Although much is known about the general causes of political activity, the valuable lesson of *Asian American Political Participation* is that theory depends critically on group contexts that are rooted in politics, geography, history, and race.”

SNAPSHOT: WHO PARTICIPATES AND WHAT FACTORS MOTIVATE THEM?

- Native-born Asians have higher rates of voting, making political contributions, contacting government officials, and working with others to solve a community problem than immigrant Asians, particularly recent adult arrivals who were socialized outside the United States
- The exception is protest activity—which is higher among immigrants who maintain connections abroad
- Chinese Americans have significantly higher levels of educational attainment than Japanese Americans, but Japanese Americans are far more likely to vote and make political contributions
- Vietnamese Americans, with the lowest levels of education and income, vote and engage in protest politics more than any other group
- Long-term residence in the United States is a reliable predictor of political participation
- Involvement increases with each generation—but protest activity decreases
- Political activity is strongly related to party identification. But most Asian Americans have not yet made up their mind on the parties, making them ripe for political outreach.
- Among those who have made up their minds, Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than a 2-to-1 margin.

- There is a small but growing group of “super-participants,” those who engage in many political activities, but political parties have yet to woo them.

Read more about *Asian American Political Participation* at <https://www.russellsage.org/publications/asian-american-political-participation>

“Because the Asian American community as a whole is growing at a rapid pace,” the authors assert, “we expect that Asian American political participation will increase as it becomes more established over time and generations.”

Citizenship rates, length of time in the United States, and stronger party identification are also reliable signs pointing toward growing political engagement.

The authors add, “We believe that these factors are important catalysts in moving Asian Americans from being emerging constituents to more active players in American politics in the years and decades to come.”

Janelle Wong is associate professor of political science and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California and director of the institute of public services at Seattle University. **S. Karthick Ramakrishnan** is associate professor of political science at the University of California, Riverside. **Taeku Lee** is professor of political science and law at the University of California, Berkeley. **Jane Junn** is professor of political science at the University of Southern California.

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For further information on this or any other Russell Sage Foundation publications, or to schedule an interview with the authors, please contact **David Haproff** at **212-750-6037**.

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