

Demographic Differences in Asian American Views of Affirmative Action

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Introduction

- The Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard decision resulted in the dismantling of affirmative action policies at Harvard and UNC. Although Asian plaintiffs supported “colorblind” framing, Asian American perspectives on affirmative action are more heterogeneous than this suggests (Park & Liu, 2014).
- Prior research indicates that attitudes toward affirmative action among Asian Americans vary by demographic factors, including gender and income, with men, particularly those born in Asia, and higher-income individuals expressing lower levels of support (Poon et al., 2019; Park et al., 2024).
- Asian American attitudes tend to fall between those of other racial groups and are often more favorable than commonly perceived, both by outsiders and within the community itself (Parker et al., 1997; Alt & Goh, 2024).
- Despite this, few studies examine how multiple demographic variables interact within the Asian American attitudes.

Methods

Sample

- Data were drawn from the 2024 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey. Data collection consisted of both in-person and virtual interviews with participants sampled from 60 units across 48 U.S. states. The sample included 197 Asian respondents.

Measures

- The dataset was restricted to respondents who identified as Asian.
- Favorability was recoded into a binary variable: 0 (favors) and 1 (does not favor), with neutral responses (4) coded as 1.
- Several variables were measured on ordinal scales, including income (collapsed into <\$60k, \$60–100k, and \$100k+), Party ID (1 = strong Democrat to 7 = strong Republican), and education (collapsed to 5 levels from less than high school to grad school). Citizenship status and gender were coded as categorical variables.
- Exploratory analyses examined the association between favorability and Party ID, MAGA identification among Republicans, gender, education level, annual household income, and country of origin.

Research Question

Which demographic factors (e.g., party identification, gender, income, education, and country of origin) are associated with unfavorable attitudes toward affirmative action among Asian and Asian American respondents? Which is the most significant predictor?

Results

Univariate

- 65.03% of Asian individuals surveyed were found not to be in favor of affirmative action.

Bivariate

- Chi-square analysis showed that favorability varied significantly by PartyID, $\chi^2(6) = 26.06, p < .001$, with respondents who leaned more Republican (higher PartyID) significantly more likely to express disfavor (74.1% at PartyID = 7) than those who leaned Democrat (32.3% at ID = 1).
- Among Republicans, MAGA affiliation was initially associated with lack of favor ($p = .008$); however, this relationship was no longer statistically significant after post hoc adjustment for multiple comparisons.
- Country of origin was significantly associated with favorability ($p = .05$).

Multivariate

- Across multivariate logistic regression models, PartyID was positively associated with favor, whereas gender, income, and MAGA identification were not significant predictors, and education level and COO showed only marginal associations after adjustment.

Multivariate (cont.)

- PartyID remained statistically significant across models ($b \approx 0.30-0.38$), indicating association, with each one-unit increase corresponding to a 35–46% increase in odds of opposition.

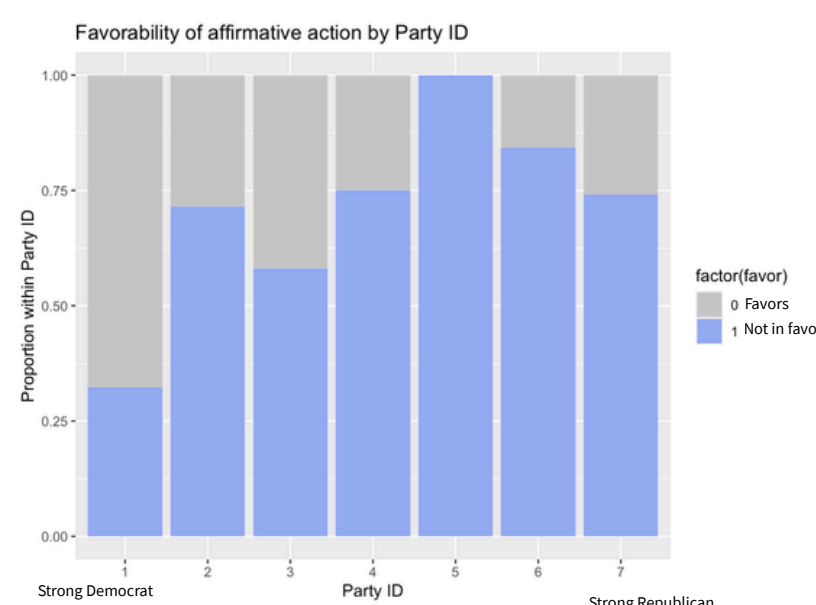


Figure 1. Proportion Not In Favor of Affirmative Action by Party Affiliation Among Asians

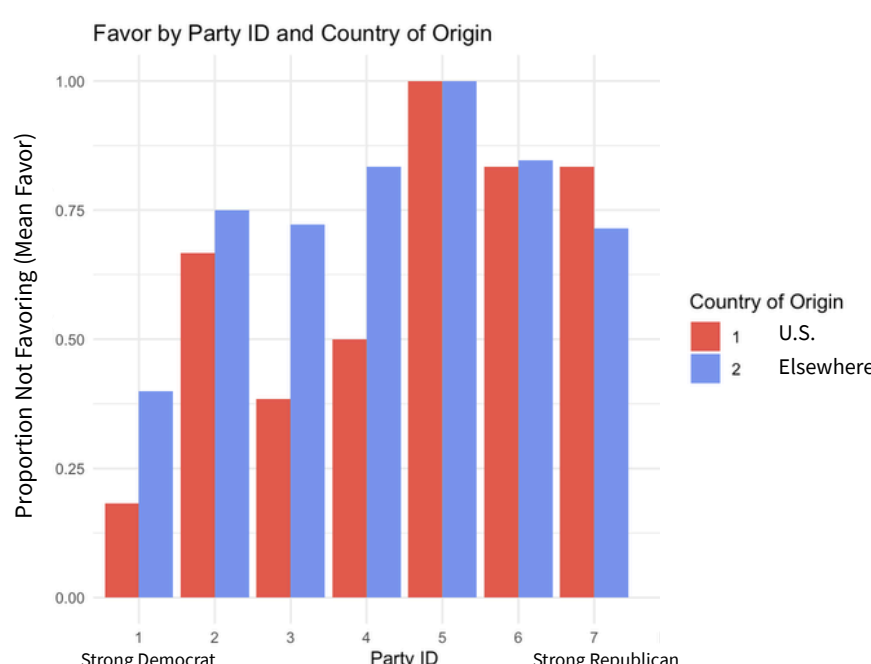


Figure 2. Proportion of Asians in Favor of Affirmative Action by Party Affiliation and Country of Origin

Discussion

- Findings suggest Party ID is the strongest predictor of unfavorable attitudes toward affirmative action within the Asian community.
- Contrary to prior research, no significant associations were observed between gender or income and views on affirmative action.
- Country of origin showed a marginal association with degree favored but did not meaningfully alter the effect of Party ID.
- Findings suggest affirmative action opinion is drawn along primarily partisan lines. It indicates the need to re-examine how educational equity could be reframed as a non-partisan issue, highlighting how internal perceptions of these policies may influence voting behavior and college preferences.
- Further studies should consider the following:
 - Larger sample size
 - More carefully examining the role of within-group heterogeneity (e.g., national origin—East vs South vs Southeast Asia)

Alt, N. P., & Goh, J. X. (2024). *Pervasive and pernicious underestimation of Asian Americans' support for affirmative action*. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 24(3), 757–776. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12398>

Park, E., Orum Hernández, G., & Lee, S. J. (2024). *Asian Americans and the battle against affirmative action: Opposition to race-based admissions as neoliberal racial subjectivity performance*. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 27(4), 474–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2022.2154331>

Poon, O., Squire, D., Kodama, C., Byrd, A., Chan, J., Manzano, L., Furr, S., & Bishundat, D. (2016). *A critical review of the model minority myth in selected literature on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education*. *Harvard Educational Review*, 89(2), 201–226. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.2.201>