

State of Chinese Americans Survey 2024: Executive Summary

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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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Background and Objectives

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.¹ 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.² Asian Americans represent a significant and growing constituency in the political landscape, yet the population continues to face systemic racism, and much remains to be learned of the policy preferences and political behaviors of the current Asian American electorate.

In particular, Chinese Americans, who constitute about 5.8 million people and the largest share (24%) of the Asian American population³ 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 population.⁴⁻⁷

In addition to facing discrimination in everyday life, Chinese Americans face discrimination from federal and state policies. Many Americans of Chinese descent were falsely accused of espionage under the auspices of the China Initiative, further perpetuating racist stereotypes of the population as perpetual foreigners loyal to Chinese national interests.⁸ While the codified racism of the China Initiative formally ended in 2022, many states have recently passed legislation prohibiting U.S. residents with Chinese citizenship from owning property, signaling continued fear and exclusion of this community.⁹

Lastly, despite a fast-growing electorate, little is still known about the policy preferences and political behaviors of Chinese Americans. This information gap allows for stereotypes to persist, such as that Chinese Americans are a monolithic voting bloc that only cares about educational issues.¹⁰ There is much to be learned about the political opinions of Chinese Americans, who face unique policy and political concerns stemming from tense U.S.-China relations as well as historical and contemporary racism. That Chinese Americans continue to endure discrimination in daily life and through policy efforts across the country, and that there is little existing data on the policy preferences, political identities, and political behaviors of the population, provide the impetus for Committee of 100's continued survey research on the Chinese American population.

In particular, 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? What's the partisan breakdown of the population? How did Chinese Americans vote in the 2020 presidential election and how many are planning to turn out in 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

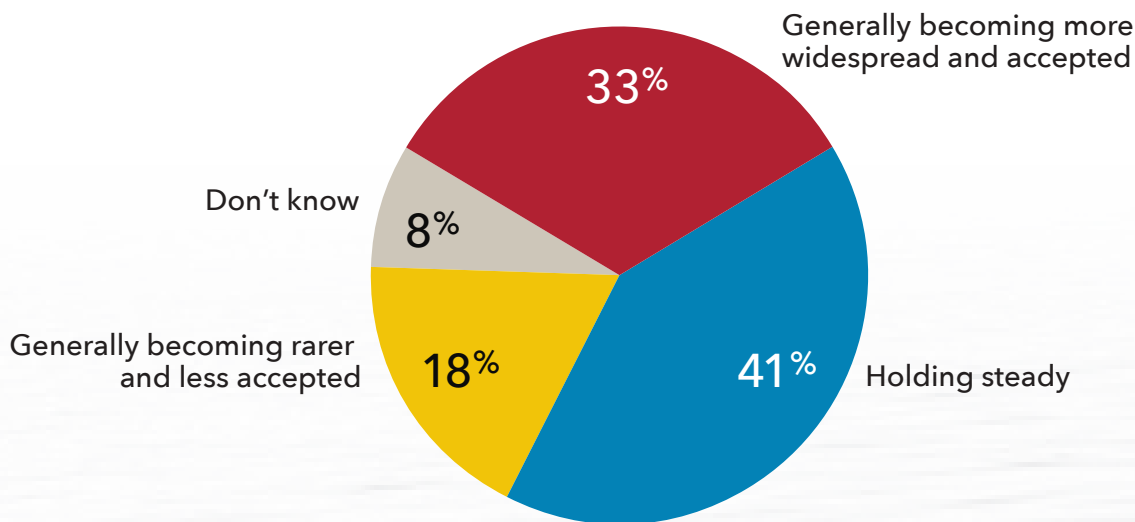
Committee of 100 partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to reach a sample of 504 Chinese American adults using NORC's probability-based Amplify AAPI survey panel. Participants were asked 49 questions about: cultural identity and acceptance in the U.S., experiences with discrimination, opinions 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. The data were weighted across age, gender, age-by-gender, census region, education, and nativity, benchmarked by the American Community Survey's 2022 5-year data.

Key Findings

First, Chinese Americans are diverse when it comes to nativity and birthplace. Most Chinese Americans are born outside of the United States, maintain close ties with family members abroad, and feel that being Chinese is an important part of their identity. While a majority are born outside of the U.S., most are U.S. citizens through naturalization. Most Chinese Americans have a strong sense of connection with other members of their community, but only a third feel that their values and culture are becoming more accepted by other Americans.

- Only a third of Chinese Americans are optimistic that their values and cultures are becoming more widespread and accepted in the United States. The majority feel that American society has not shifted in either direction when it comes to cultural acceptance (41%) or that acceptance is becoming rarer (18%).
- 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.
- Majorities of Chinese Americans say that being Chinese (57%) and American (56%) are very important to their identity, though these percentages vary widely by age, birthplace, and citizenship status.
- Roughly three in four Chinese Americans are born outside of the United States, but younger people are born in the U.S. at significantly higher rates; 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.

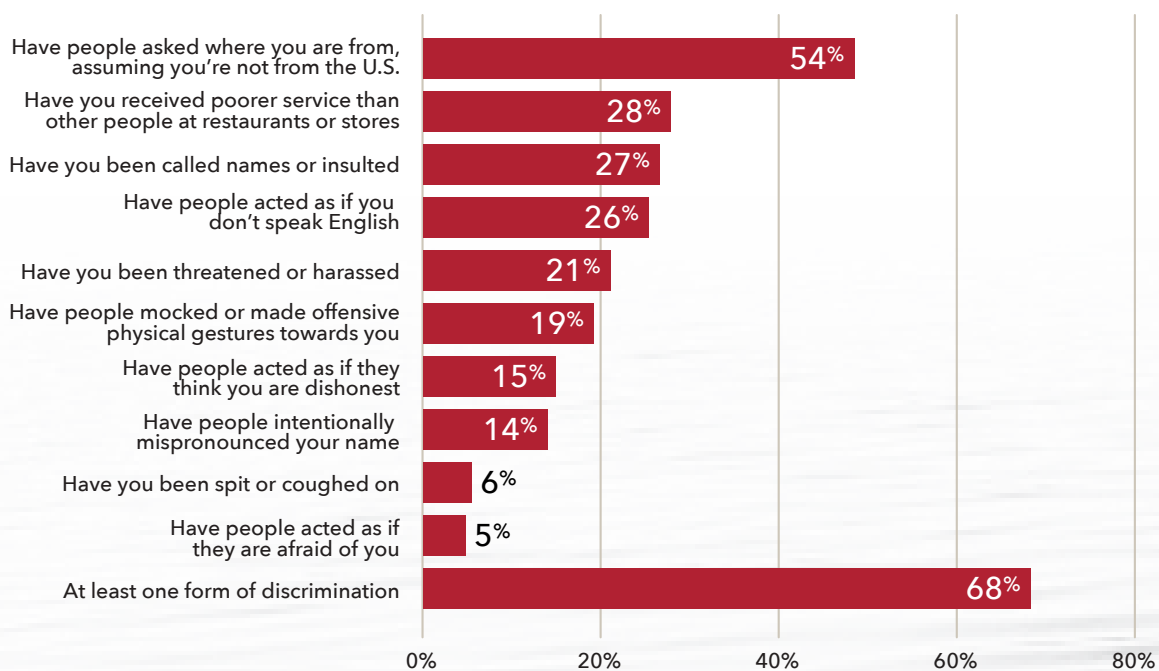
In America today, do you feel the values and culture of people like you are...



Second, Chinese Americans frequently face discrimination in everyday life, even four years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This discrimination ranges from facing insults, threats, harassment, offensive physical gestures, and poorer service in restaurants or stores, and assumptions that Chinese Americans don't speak English or that they are not from the U.S. Chinese Americans that regularly experience some kind of discrimination report feeling restless, nervous, and hopeless at higher rates. Alongside these struggles, more than half of Chinese Americans feel that federally elected officials are doing a bad job dealing with violence against their community.

- About two thirds of Chinese Americans (68%) face at least one form of discrimination in an average month, and 85% 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.
- 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.

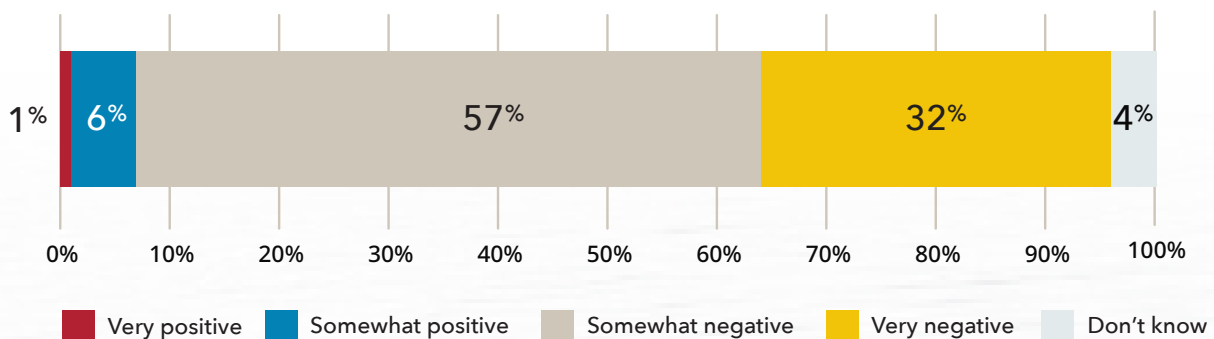
In an average month, do any of the following things happen to you? (% 'Yes')



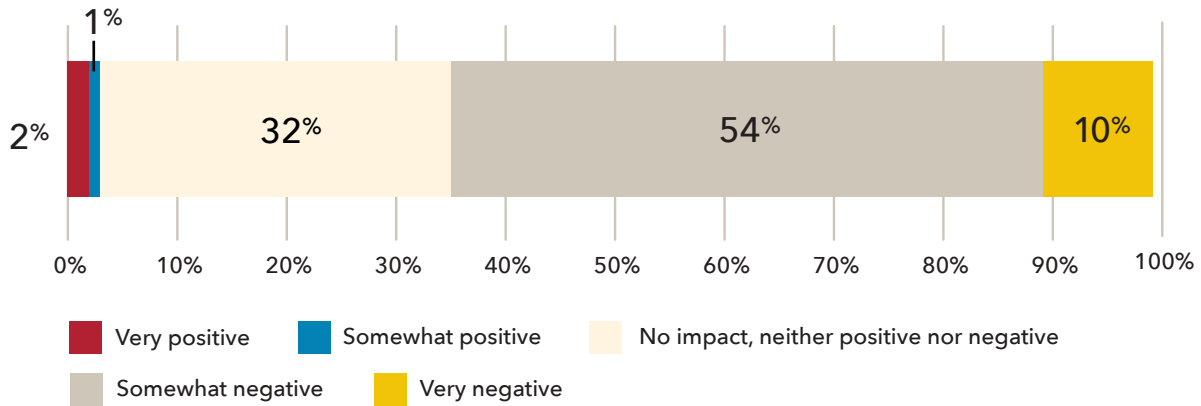
Third, Chinese Americans express high levels of concern about the state of U.S.-China relations, the likely sources of poor bilateral relations, and the downstream effects of domestic policy discrimination and discriminatory political rhetoric. Despite this, many Chinese Americans are cautiously optimistic about the ability of the U.S. and China to cooperate on a number of issues.

- About 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 (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, saying that discriminatory language used by political leaders gives rise to discrimination from their followers.
- A majority (61%) say that the language and rhetoric used by U.S. news media when reporting on China and U.S.-China relations negatively affects 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.
- 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.
- Despite the observation that large majorities of Chinese Americans think that China presents many serious problems for the U.S., including tense relations with Taiwan, friendly relations with Russia, and economic competition, about four in five Chinese Americans (81%) still think that the two countries can cooperate on student exchange programs, and majorities feel that the U.S. and China can cooperate on addressing climate change, dealing with the spread of infectious diseases, and trade.

In general, how would you describe the current relationship between the U.S. and China?



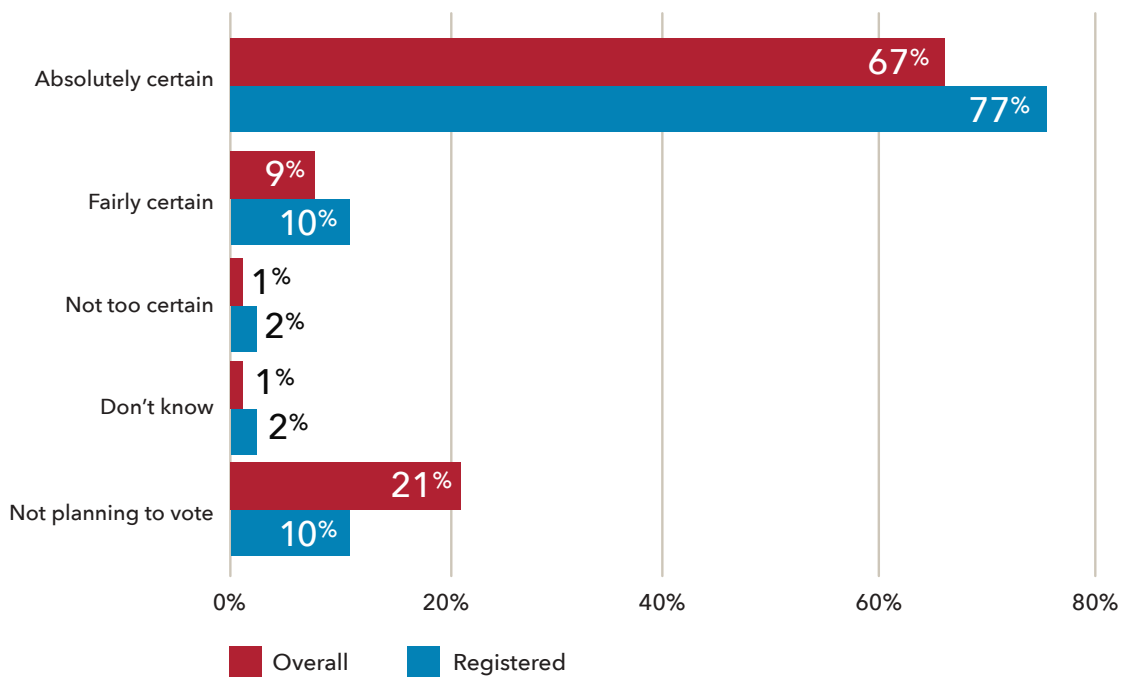
What impact, if any, do you think that the current relationship between the U.S. and China has on how other Americans treat you and other people of Chinese descent?



Fourth, Chinese Americans are a diverse and excited electorate, uncaptured by either major party. Large majorities of Chinese Americans feel that the country is headed in the wrong direction and that the economy is getting worse. Democrats and Republicans agree that the economy is a top priority, but partisans are divided on abortion, affirmative action, gay rights, the size and responsibilities of government, minimum wage, gun control, and climate change.

- About three quarters of Chinese American citizens (76%) are certain they'll turn out to vote in November's presidential election, including 87% of registered voters that say the same.
- A little less than half of Chinese Americans (46%) identify as Democrats, 31% identify as Republicans, and 24% identify as independents or don't lean toward either party.
- 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.
- 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 the plurality (43%) say the economy is getting worse.
- Chinese American Democrats and Republicans express significantly different policy preferences related to issues of income inequality, the minimum wage, climate change, abortion, affirmative action, same-sex marriage, unauthorized immigration, and gun ownership. Independents, a large share of the population, don't align their views neatly with either party.

How certain are you that you will vote in the upcoming election in November 2024?



Recommendations

- Greater legislative and administrative efforts need to be made to collect discrimination and hate crime incident data, especially in disaggregating across racial and ethnic groups. We find that four years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and three years after the end of the China Initiative, 82% of Chinese Americans think that some or a lot of discrimination persists against the population. 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.
- 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.^{11,12}
- There needs to be greater investment into mental health services and disbursement of mental health resources to Chinese American communities, as we find that 44% of Chinese Americans report feeling so depressed in the past month that nothing could cheer them up. Further, it has been found that Asian Americans as a whole are 60% less likely to seek mental health services than other racial groups.¹³

- We advocate for the creation of a pipeline to identify, recruit, and train Chinese American candidates for office because many Chinese Americans suggested that more descriptive representation in office would help address anti-Asian hate. Additionally, increased representation from the Chinese American community may help fight against discriminatory legislation seeking to prohibit property ownership by Chinese citizens. 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.^{14,15}
- Political candidates and parties need to invest more resources in reaching Chinese American communities. Chinese Americans are excited to vote, with 76% of Chinese Americans planning to turn out in the 2024 general election, yet there has been a recurring and systematic lack of outreach and investment to reach out to eligible Asian American voters by both parties.¹⁶
- 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.¹⁷ We find that a majority of Chinese Americans are concerned about how politicians' rhetoric about U.S.-China relations, and another majority say that the manner in which most U.S. news outlets report on China and U.S.-China relations negatively impacts how they're treated by strangers.

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