

AAPI VOTERS AND ELECTION DISINFORMATION

Asian American
DISINFORMATION
TABLE

The AAPI community is the fastest growing racial demographic in the country, and is a very powerful voting bloc.

Understanding how information travels in AAPI communities can be a powerful tool in combating false information.

With the midterm elections fast approaching, it's more important than ever to ensure that AAPI communities are receiving **accurate and accessible** information. This will encourage voter turnout and help inoculate communities against racialized disinformation and false narratives.

What are the top issues AAPIs are concerned about?

Economic Security

Healthcare Access

Safety

- **86% of AAPI adults** view jobs & the economy as issues that are “extremely” or “very” important for deciding how they vote
- **Half of AAPI adults** say that the cost of living is a major source of stress
- **Housing affordability (78%)** and **Social Security & Medicare (79%)** are also considered very important issues
- **85%** view healthcare as an issue that is “extremely” or “very” important

Source: AAPI Data AP-NORC Survey
February-March 2026

REACHING AAPI VOTERS

In 2024, 42% of AAPI voters reported not being contacted by any political party.

Source: AAPI Data 2024 AA Voter Survey.

RACIALIZED DISINFORMATION IN ELECTIONS

What is racialized disinformation?

Racialized disinformation is false or intentionally misleading information spread with an underlying political or profit-driven agenda. Creators of racialized disinformation target communities of color with the goal of dividing communities to limit their collective power to fight back against oppression and build political agency.

In past elections, bad actors have used racialized disinformation to influence election outcomes and suppress voter turnout. This can look like spreading fear among communities of color to discourage them from voting, creating false narratives to erode trust in the electoral process, or blaming marginalized groups for election outcomes.

What common themes do we see in disinformation targeting the Asian American community?

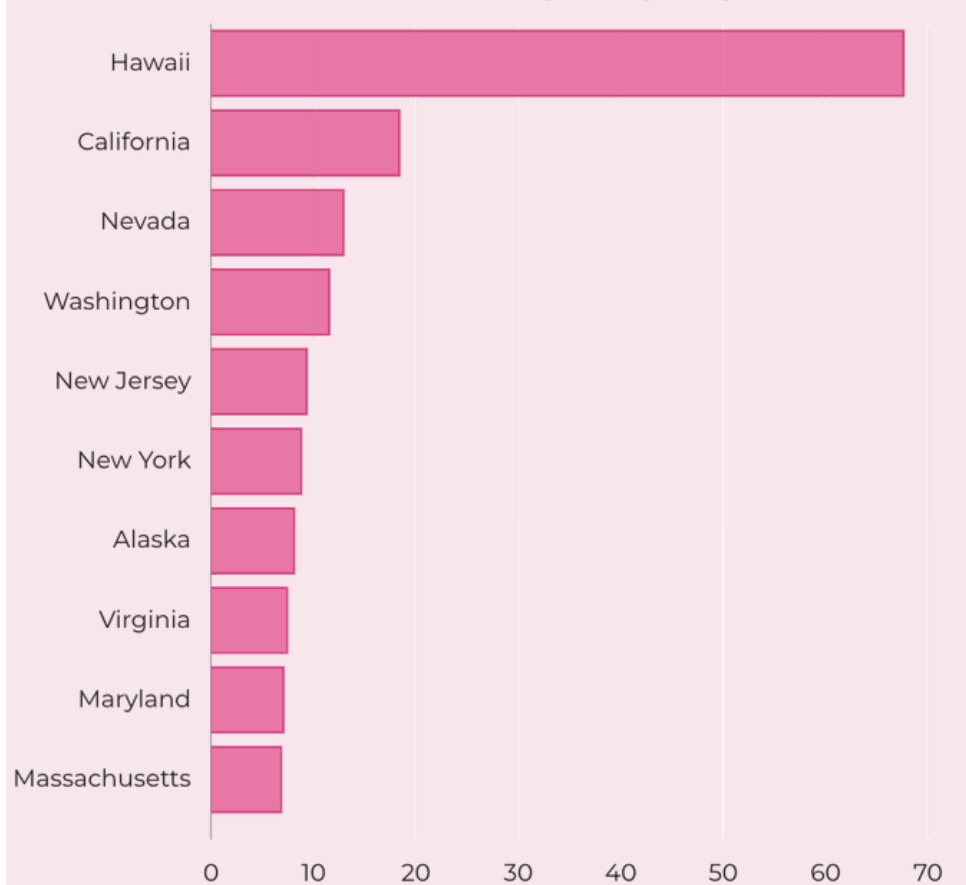
- 1** Using Asian Americans as a 'wedge' against other communities of color
- 2** Exploiting internal divides and hierarchies
- 3** Weaponizing historical or current trauma

Source: Power, Platforms, and Politics: Asian Americans & Disinformation, Asian American Disinformation Table, [2022](#)

The AAPI community is a powerful voting bloc:

there are a significant number of states where AAPI voters compose more than 5% of the electorate.

AAPI % Share of Electorate (2024), Top 10 States



Source: APIAVote [AAPI Voter Demographics Data by State](#)

HOW CAN DISINFORMATION AFFECT AAPI VOTERS?

False Information Can Discourage Turnout

False narratives, such as spreading inaccurate information about the election date, polling locations, times, and what identification is needed in order to vote, can create fear or confusion in communities of color and discourage them from voting.

Attempts to Influence How People Vote

Creating false information about candidate's positions or backgrounds such as through "redbaiting" (see page 5) or using anti-trans rhetoric.

Eroding Trust in the Electoral Process

Disinformation erodes voter trust in the electoral system, election outcomes, and elected officials.

AAPI COMMUNITIES ARE DIVERSE, WHICH SHAPES HOW DISINFORMATION CAN SPREAD

Languages: There are over 100 different languages spoken among the AAPI diaspora.

Platforms: Asian Americans use a wider variety of social media platforms, often in-language. Some examples are KakaoTalk, WhatsApp, Line, WeChat, and Weibo.

Intergenerational differences: Many elder AAPIs are immigrants and hold values and the culture of their homelands, which may clash with younger generations who have grown up in America. Different generations may have different trusted messengers, different communication norms, and differing ideas of what civic engagement should look like. Language barriers also often persist cross-generationally, as many AAPI elders are limited English proficient (LEP), and many younger AAPIs lack proficiency in their elder relatives' native tongues.

Cultural Legacies: Migration histories and lived experiences look different for each community, which in turn shape their political beliefs and interpretations of democracy and government. Factors like war, displacement, economic conditions, and exposure to different political systems influence how people engage with information.

Tightly-Knit Communities: Disinformation can spread quickly through tight-knit communities, accelerated by social media and other communication platforms, as well as through offline networks.

COMMON ELECTION DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

SPREADING DISINFORMATION ABOUT ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND ELECTION INTEGRITY

Bad actors will often amplify specific incidents of fraud or election tampering to make it seem like these are widespread issues to sow distrust in our election systems. This relies on a lack of knowledge of the electoral process and, in some cases, language barriers. Further, we see misinformation on how the registration, voting, and tallying processes work to make it appear that U.S. election systems are ripe for fraud and manipulation. This includes, but is not limited to, topics such as voting early, voting-by-mail, the use of voting machines, and ballot collecting, which make voting more accessible.

Vote-by-mail: Recently, we have seen coordinated efforts from election deniers—including those within the government itself—to prematurely discredit and sow doubt in vote-by-mail. For AAPI communities, who are more likely than the general public to vote by mail, this type of disinformation has especially damaging effects.

SPREADING FALSE INFORMATION ABOUT CANDIDATES AND THEIR POSITIONS

AAPI communities' histories of trauma can be exploited to provoke emotional responses that manipulate how community members vote.

Redbaiting: a type of narrative which falsely characterizes a political candidate or their policies as communist. This tactic aims to trigger a fear response in populations who have experienced traumatic events as a result of communist regimes, such as Vietnamese refugees, and prevent them from voting for certain candidates or policies.

COMMON ELECTION DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

SPREADING FALSE NARRATIVES ABOUT POLITICAL ISSUES AND CURRENT EVENTS

GOOD IMMIGRANT VS. BAD IMMIGRANT

This narrative falsely divides immigrants into “good” and “bad” based on their criminal history and/or undocumented status. This narrative relies on the idea that there is a “right/legal” and “wrong/illegal” way to immigrate, and that legal immigrants deserve to be treated better than those who chose alternate immigration pathways. For example, this narrative has been used to talk about how ICE only detains “bad” immigrants who are dangerous to public safety, erasing the families that have been separated, individuals who are wrongfully held in detention, and the numerous civil rights violations by the agency. The goal is **to polarize powerful voting groups to support restrictive and inhumane immigration policies** such as mass deportations and avoid government accountability or oversight.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

From 2024 to 2026, there has been a steady increase in Islamophobic hate speech directed at BAMESA (Black, Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian) communities. This rhetoric targets Muslim communities through vicious tropes that **portray them as part of a demographic invasion, as people taking jobs and resources, and as participants in a terrorist incursion**. These messages are usually accompanied by calls to ban Muslim migrants, expand detention and enforcement measures, and, in some cases, incitements to violence. This content also extends beyond Islamophobic attacks to target South Asian communities more broadly. South Asians are framed as part of an “H-1B invasion,” alongside attacks on the community, calls to cancel H-1B visas, and more general racist abuse involving insulting and dehumanizing language.

Islamophobic narratives take advantage of misplaced fear or anger towards BAMESA communities to encourage voters to favor candidates with harmful policies such as immigration bans, detention, and deportation.

COMMON ELECTION DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

FEAR-BASED MESSAGING ON CRIME

Recent survey data shows that **80% of Asian American voters view crime as extremely or very important when considering how to vote**. With the rise in anti-Asian racism accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic, it's clear why Asian Americans care about this issue. However, sometimes this fear is exploited by disinformation narratives to create division in marginalized communities and fracture collective power, including by promoting 'tough on crime' policies to expand policing.

Ultimately, **the goal of employing these harmful disinformation narratives is to create deep polarization on issues such as crime**, making it much more difficult for candidates, elected officials, and local leaders to have nuanced conversations about how to enact policies that reduce harm in communities while keeping people safe. This often emerges as community-based solutions such as violence intervention programs being labeled "weak on crime." By taking advantage of Asian American communities' fear of crime, these narratives discredit attempts at major reform and influence how community members vote.

Recent disinformation narratives push **a false connection between immigration and crime**, claiming that immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crimes.

One common trope used in these disinformation narratives is the **"Black-on-Asian" crime trope, a false narrative** claiming that Black Americans commit the majority of anti-Asian hate crimes. Bad actors exploit the intense emotions around hate crimes in Asian American communities to claim that the two racial groups are at odds with each other. This narrative further weaponizes the harmful stereotype created by white supremacists which falsely claims that Black people are inherently violent. By preying on existing community fear and directing blame, bad actors attempt to divide the two communities, weakening cross-racial solidarity and collective power that could be used to challenge the status quo and advocate for all marginalized communities.

COMMON ELECTION DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

SPREADING NARRATIVES THAT SUPPORT ANTI-TRANSGENDER POLICIES

Across the country, there was a 45 percent increase in anti-trans bills in consideration between 2024 and 2025. Between 2021 and 2025, the number of bills in consideration **increased by 668 percent**.

Source: Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention [2026](#)

Banning transgender people from gender-specific sports and spaces such as bathrooms and locker rooms: these policies rely on the false narrative that transgender people, especially transgender women and girls, pose a threat to safety, privacy, and/or equal opportunity. By exploiting concerns about women's safety and children's well-being, anti-trans messaging creates fear and portrays transgender people as dangerous despite a lack of evidence supporting such claims. This fear-based narrative is often used as a wedge issue, framing transgender rights as being in conflict with the rights of women and families in order to build support for policies that exclude transgender people from schools, sports, bathrooms, and other public spaces.

Banning gender-affirming care: these bills rely on the false narrative that gender-affirming care is harmful to children. This plays on the sense of protectiveness that many people feel for children to spread fear towards the transgender community. In addition, healthcare is one of the top priorities for AAPI voters according to recent survey data. AAPI voters may be more likely to be swayed by anti-trans rhetoric targeting healthcare providers who give gender-affirming care, potentially making them more likely to favor candidates who oppose gender-affirming care.

Narrative Categories Source: Addressing election misinformation & disinformation in the Asian American community, Asian Americans Advancing Justice [2024](#)

CONCLUSION

Racialized disinformation seeks to control how communities think, feel, and act.

It often exploits fear, uncertainty, and lived experiences to divide communities, discourage civic engagement, and undermine trust within and between communities. For AAPI communities, these narratives are frequently tailored to our diverse languages, histories, cultural identities, and community networks, making them especially important to recognize and address.

We know that **one of the most effective ways to reduce the impact of disinformation is through inoculation**: helping people recognize common manipulation tactics before they encounter them. By understanding how disinformation works, learning to identify recurring narratives, and sharing accurate, culturally tailored information through trusted messengers, communities can become more resilient against attempts to deceive and divide them.

Every conversation with a friend, family member, neighbor, or community member is an opportunity to build that resilience. By approaching these conversations with empathy, curiosity, and reliable information, we can help ensure that AAPI communities are equipped to make informed decisions, participate fully in civic engagement, and build the collective power needed to shape a better future for everyone.