

# THE MANY VOICES OF OUR DEMOCRACY

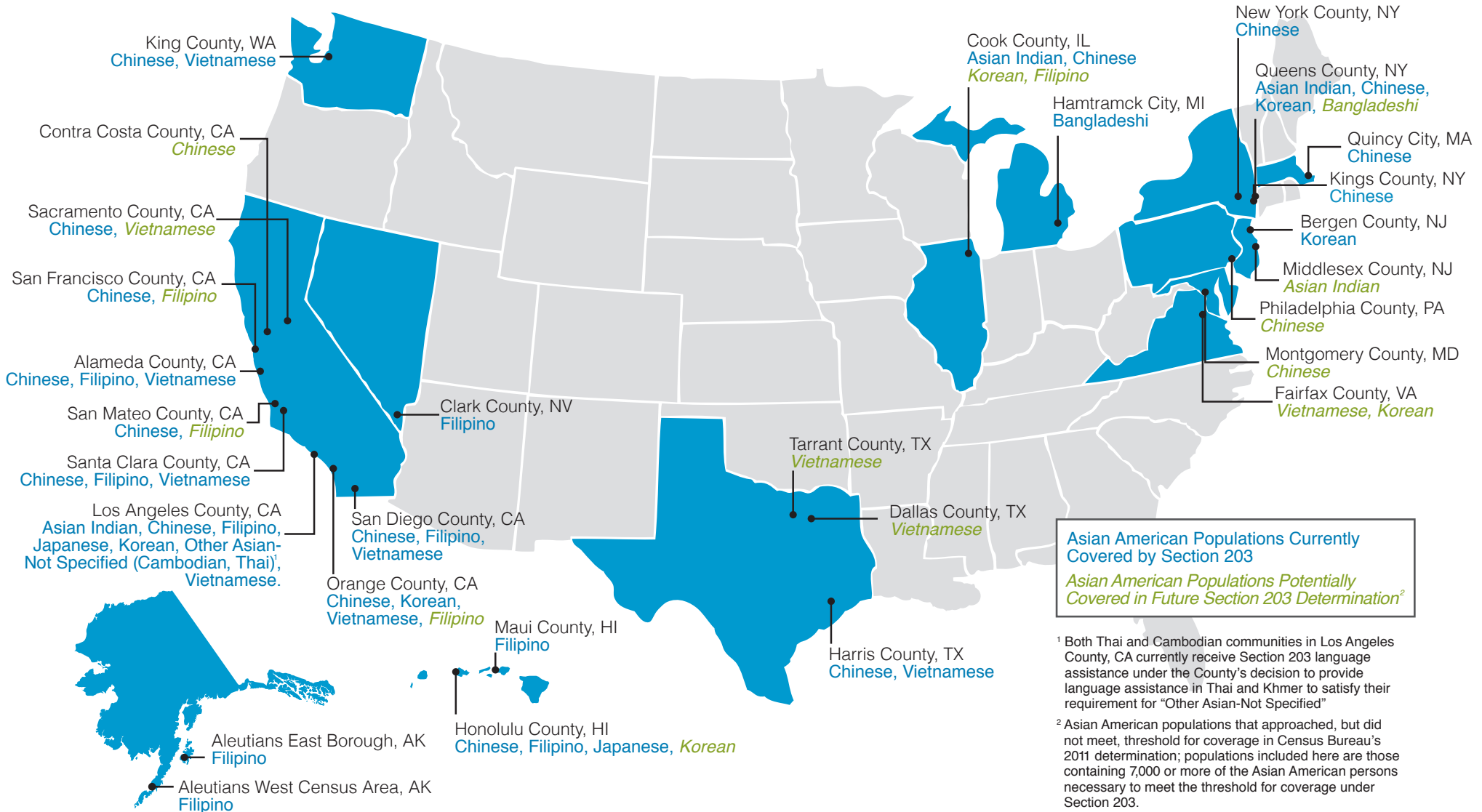
This infographic is from *Voices of Democracy: Asian Americans and Language Access During the 2012 Elections*, available at [www.advancingjustice.org](http://www.advancingjustice.org).

## Section 203 Map

Map indicates current and potential future covered jurisdictions and ethnic groups for Asian languages.

## What is Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act?

Section 203 requires certain jurisdictions to provide language assistance to voters such as translated materials, multilingual workers at polling sites and publicity of the availability of these resources. *Jurisdictions are determined every 5 years based on population size, English abilities and literacy rates in that area.*



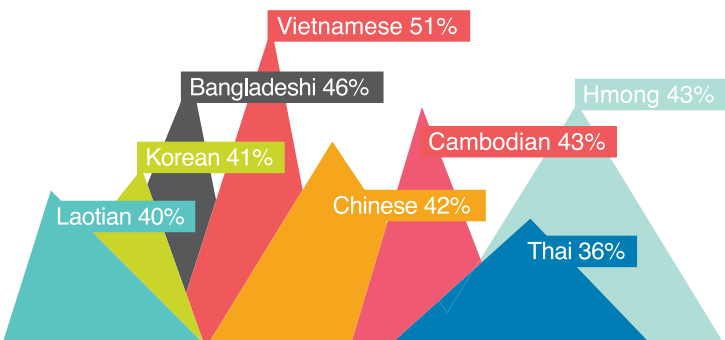
# ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE NEED FOR LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

LEP = Limited-English Proficient (i.e., speaks English less than very well)

## Asian Americans at a Glance<sup>3</sup>



LEP rates vary among Asian ethnic groups. For example,

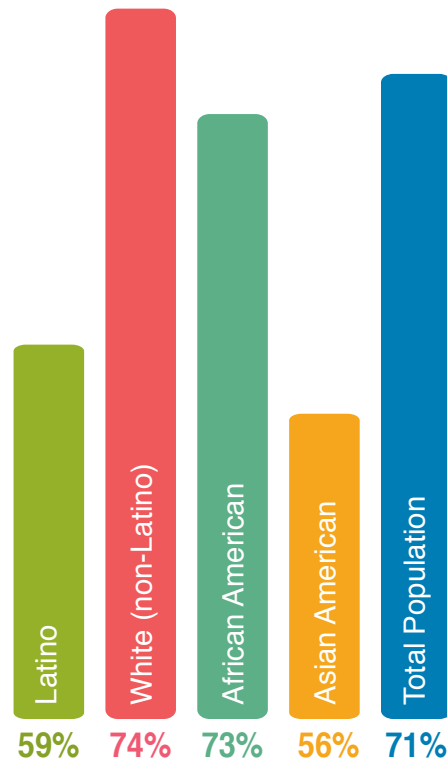


<sup>3</sup> Source: United States Census Bureau

## Coming Up Against the Language Barrier<sup>4</sup>

The language barrier contributes to lower voter registration and turnout among Asian American citizens – Asian Americans fall behind their white and other racial counterparts:

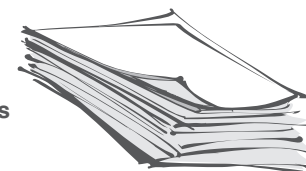
**Percent of Citizen Voting-age Population that has Registered to Vote**



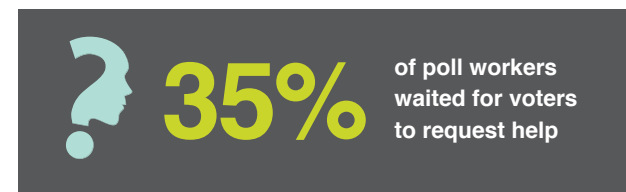
<sup>4</sup> Source: United States Census Bureau

## Common Problems Asian Americans Experienced at the Polls<sup>5</sup>

**45%** of precincts were missing translated materials or poorly displayed them



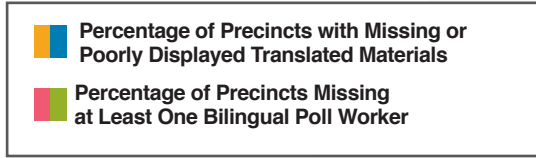
**23%** of precincts were missing at least one Asian language-speaking bilingual poll worker



Poll workers lacked knowledge about voting laws. For example, **14%** of precincts had poll workers who **DID NOT** provide provisional ballots when a voter's name was not on the roster

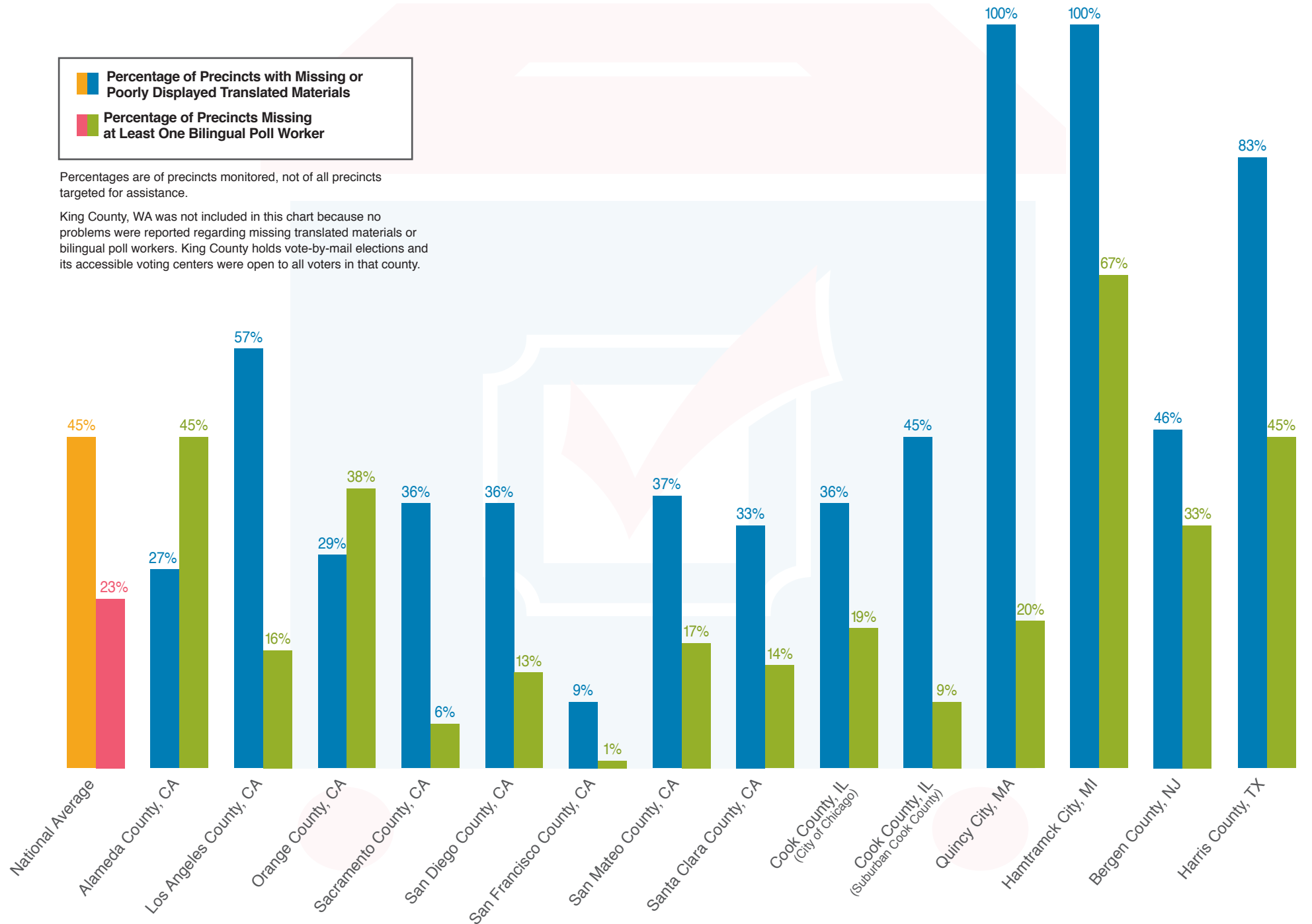
<sup>5</sup> Percentages are of precincts monitored, not of all precincts targeted for assistance.

# Continued Problems: How Precincts Measure Regarding Language Assistance (By Jurisdictions Monitored)



Percentages are of precincts monitored, not of all precincts targeted for assistance.

King County, WA was not included in this chart because no problems were reported regarding missing translated materials or bilingual poll workers. King County holds vote-by-mail elections and its accessible voting centers were open to all voters in that county.



## Complying with Section 203

### Poll Workers Should

- Actively approach voters who may need assistance
- Understand the needs of LEP voters and how to interact with them in a culturally sensitive manner
- Display translated signage and voting materials
- Wear identification to let voters know that they speak various languages
- Know the rights of all voters



### Election Officials Should

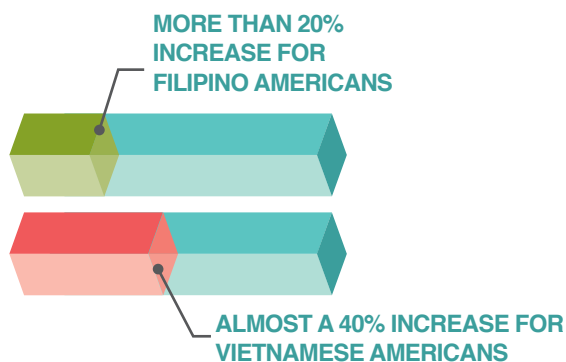
- Ensure that bilingual poll workers are present
- Conduct publicity through outreach and education
- Train all poll workers on how to serve LEP voters in an effective and respectful manner
- Have accurate translations of voting materials



## Upholding Section 203

San Diego County, CA – In 2004, DOJ sued the county to mandate compliance

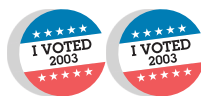
Result: Voter registration rose **by more than 20%** for Filipino Americans **and by almost 40%** for Vietnamese Americans



Harris County, TX – In 2004, the county signed an MOU with DOJ for Section 203 compliance

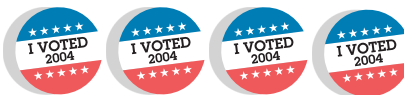
Result: Vietnamese voter turnout **doubled**

### 2003 VOTERS



V.

### 2004 VOTERS



## Examples of Best Practices

- ✓ Translate website and online forms into covered languages (e.g., King County, WA in Chinese and Vietnamese)
- ✓ Provide language assistance forms online and post “We Speak” signs in various languages to assist LEP voters (e.g., Los Angeles County, CA)
- ✓ Use large bulletin boards to display translated materials (e.g., Alameda, San Francisco and Santa Clara counties, CA)
- ✓ Recruit bilingual poll workers from high schools for adequate staffing at poll sites (e.g., San Francisco County, CA)

## Call to Action!

Asian Americans’ voices deserve to be heard at the polls!

*What you can do in your community:*



Meet with your elections officials about their Section 203 implementation plans



Participate in advisory committees that oversee language access



Educate voters in your community about their rights



Identify and work with local, mainstream and ethnic media

Help recruit bilingual poll workers and volunteer at your poll to provide bilingual assistance



Conduct trainings for poll monitors on language assistance

Work with community organizations in your area to monitor polls and report issues



For more information, please visit: [www.advancingjustice.org](http://www.advancingjustice.org).

