

# VOICES OF DEMOCRACY

The State of Language  
Access in California's  
November 2016  
Elections



*Findings from Asian Americans  
Advancing Justice - California's  
November 2016 Poll Monitoring  
and Recommendations for  
Improving Access for Limited-  
English Proficient Voters*

# Language Access Coverage in California

- 56 of 58 CA counties have language access requirements under either federal or state law
- Coverage under federal law:
  - 27 counties
    - All have Spanish coverage
    - 9 covered for at least one Asian language
    - 2 covered for a Native American language
- Coverage under state law:
  - 50 counties



# Need for Language Assistance During Elections

Language is a significant barrier to the ability of many to vote

	CA Latinos	CA Asian Americans
Speak a language other than English at home	77%	72%
Limited English proficient (LEP)	37%	34%

# Importance of Language Assistance in Asian American Communities

- Use of language assistance in Los Angeles
  - 32% of Asian Americans
- Use by ethnicity in Los Angeles
  - 50% Korean Americans
  - 46% Chinese Americans
  - 11% Filipino Americans



# Where We Worked



## VOICES OF DEMOCRACY Language Access Map of California

This map indicates the languages in which California counties were required to provide assistance under federal and state law in 2016. It is limited to the 25 counties in which we monitored.



### KEY

Languages covered by Section 203  
Languages covered by state law

**ALAMEDA**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean

**CONTRA COSTA**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese

**FRESNO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer

**KERN**  
Spanish, Filipino/Tagalog, Hindi

**KINGS**  
Spanish, Filipino/Tagalog

**LOS ANGELES**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Hindi

**MARIN**  
Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese

**MENDOCINO**  
Spanish, Chinese

**MERCED**  
Spanish, Hindi

**MONTEREY**  
Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese

**NAPA**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog

**ORANGE**  
Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino/Tagalog, Japanese, Khmer, Hindi

**RIVERSIDE**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese

**SACRAMENTO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese

**SAN BERNARDINO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog, Khmer, Korean, Vietnamese

**SAN DIEGO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Hindi

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog (treated as a Section 203 language due to local law), Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese

**SAN JOAQUIN**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Khmer, Filipino/Tagalog, Vietnamese

**SAN MATEO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Filipino/Tagalog

**SANTA CRUZ**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog

**SOLANO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Filipino/Tagalog

**STANISLAUS**  
Spanish, Hindi, Khmer

**SUTTER**  
Spanish, Hindi

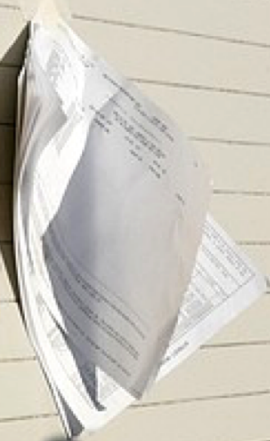
**TULARE**  
Spanish, Filipino/Tagalog

**YOLO**  
Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Filipino/Tagalog

## 25 counties, 32.9 million people

	County	Pop.
1	Los Angeles County	10,170,292
2	San Diego County	3,299,521
3	Orange County	3,169,776
4	Riverside County	2,361,026
5	San Bernardino County	2,128,133
6	Santa Clara County	1,918,044
7	Alameda County	1,638,215
8	Sacramento County	1,501,335
9	Contra Costa County	1,126,745
10	Fresno County	974,861
11	Kern County	882,176
12	San Francisco County	864,816
13	Ventura County	850,536
14	San Mateo County	765,135
15	San Joaquin County	726,106
16	Stanislaus County	538,388
17	Sonoma County	502,146
18	Tulare County	459,863
19	Santa Barbara County	444,769
20	Solano County	436,092

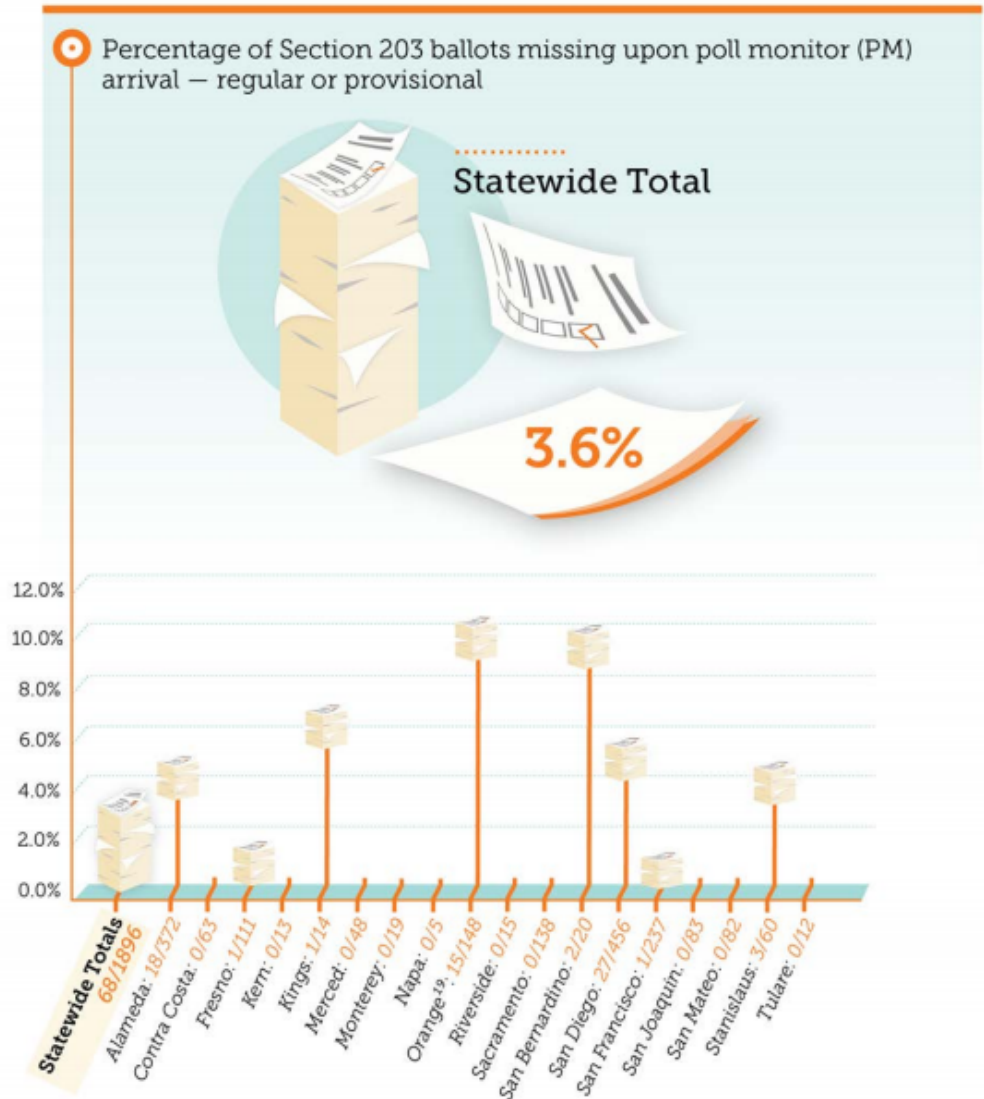




**576 volunteers**  
**1,286 polling places**  
**25 counties**



Compliance with most significant language access requirement in Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act -- **provision of translated ballots** -- was very strong.



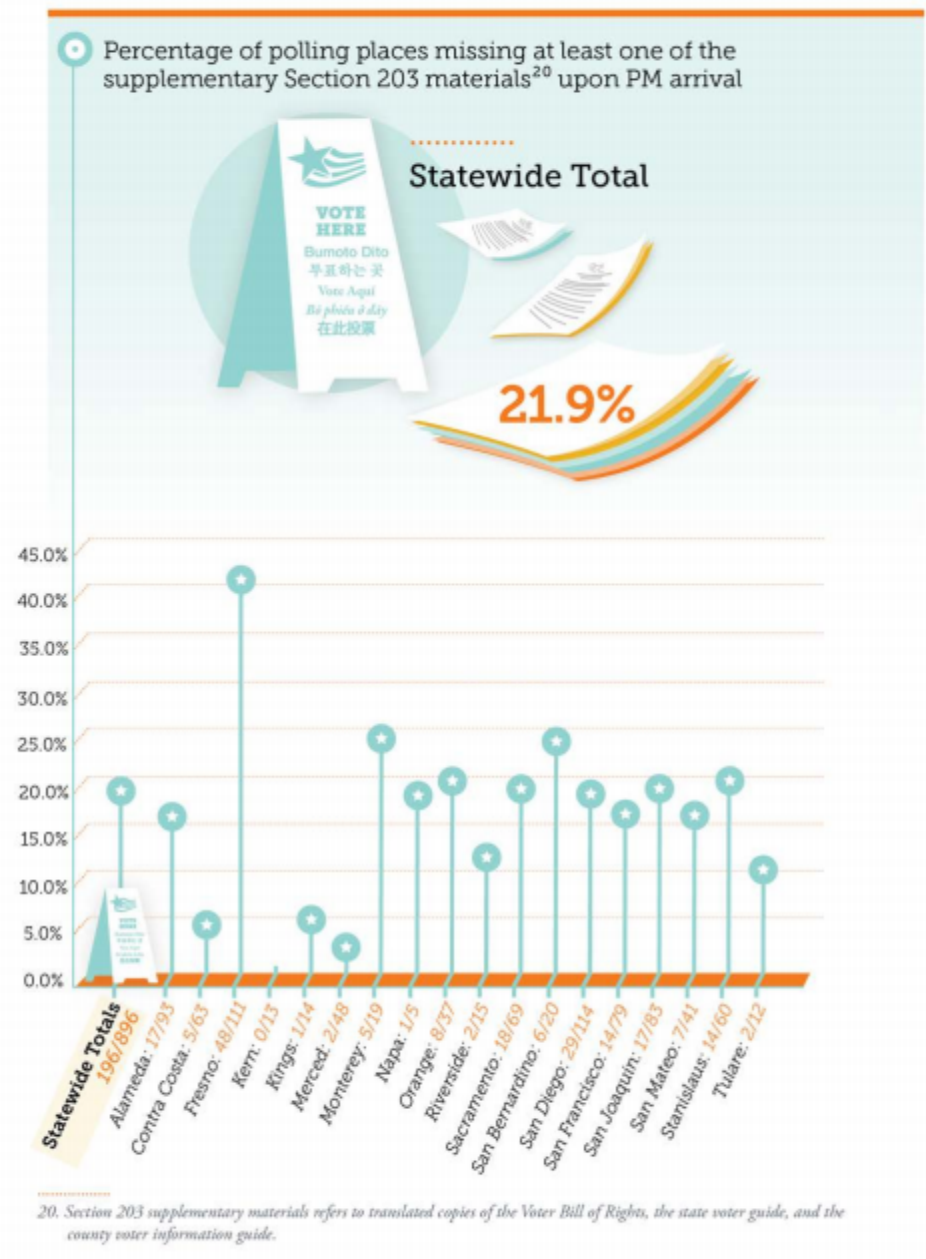
<sup>19</sup> While some paper copies of Section 203 ballots were missing in Orange County, translated Section 203 ballots were consistently available in electronic format.



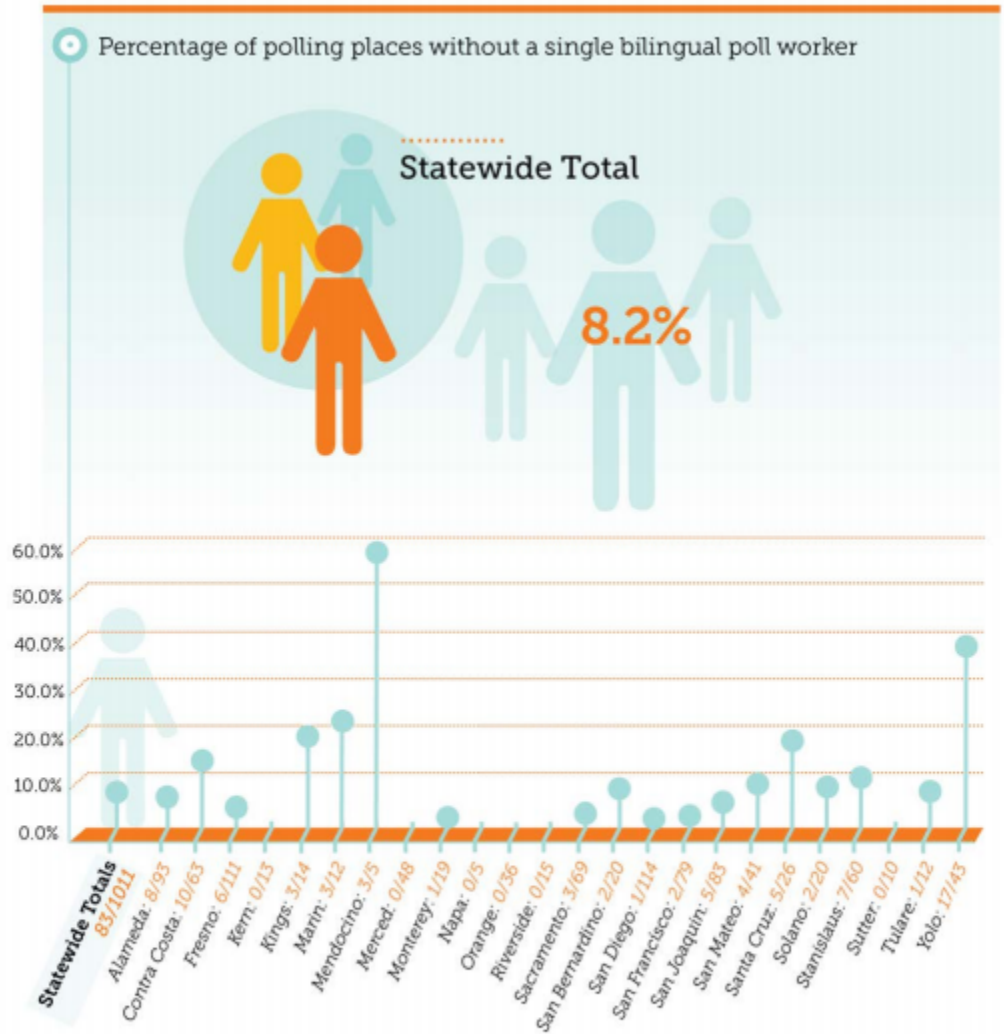
Less success in consistently providing **translated copies of supplementary materials** voters may need to vote.

Defined as

- State Voter Guide
- County Sample Ballot
- Voter Bill of Rights



Recruitment of bilingual poll workers overall was very strong.



# LA County

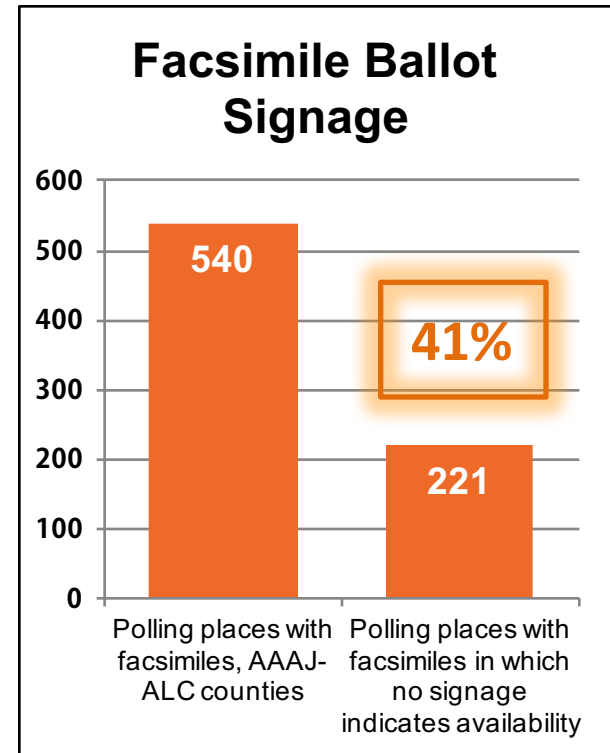
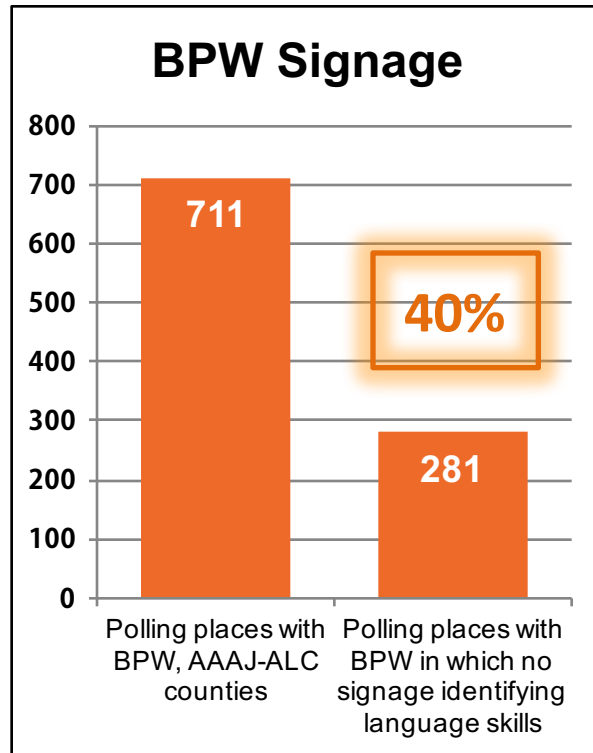
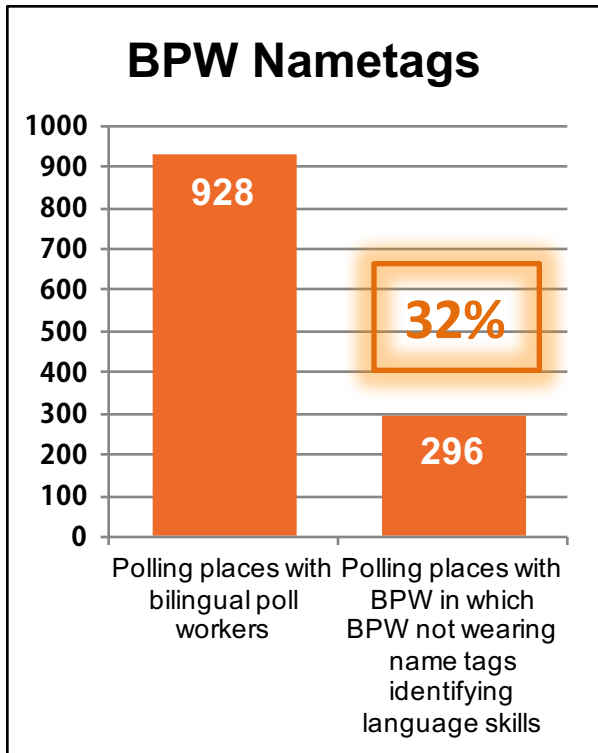


LANGUAGE	Percentage of precincts targeted by the County for a specific language that had a bilingual poll worker present who spoke that language
Chinese	87.9%
Hindi	78.3%
Japanese	71.4%
Khmer	66.7%
Korean	69.1%
Spanish	86.5%
Tagalog	81.4%
Thai	77.8%
Vietnamese	73.6%



# Implementation of Best Practices

- Bilingual poll workers are inconsistently identified for voters who need them.
- Signage that would alert voters to presence of facsimile ballots not used in uniform way.





ASIAN AMERICANS  
ADVANCING  
JUSTICE

## Report Link:

- [www.advancingjustice-alc.org/programs/voting-rights/](http://www.advancingjustice-alc.org/programs/voting-rights/)
- [www.advancingjustice-la.org/media-and-publications/publications/voices-democracy-state-language-access-californias-november-2016](http://www.advancingjustice-la.org/media-and-publications/publications/voices-democracy-state-language-access-californias-november-2016)

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