

# ASIAN AMERICAN, LATINO, BLACK AND WHITE VOTERS IN LOS ANGELES CITY ELECTIONS

## RACIAL DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION IN 2020 AND 2022

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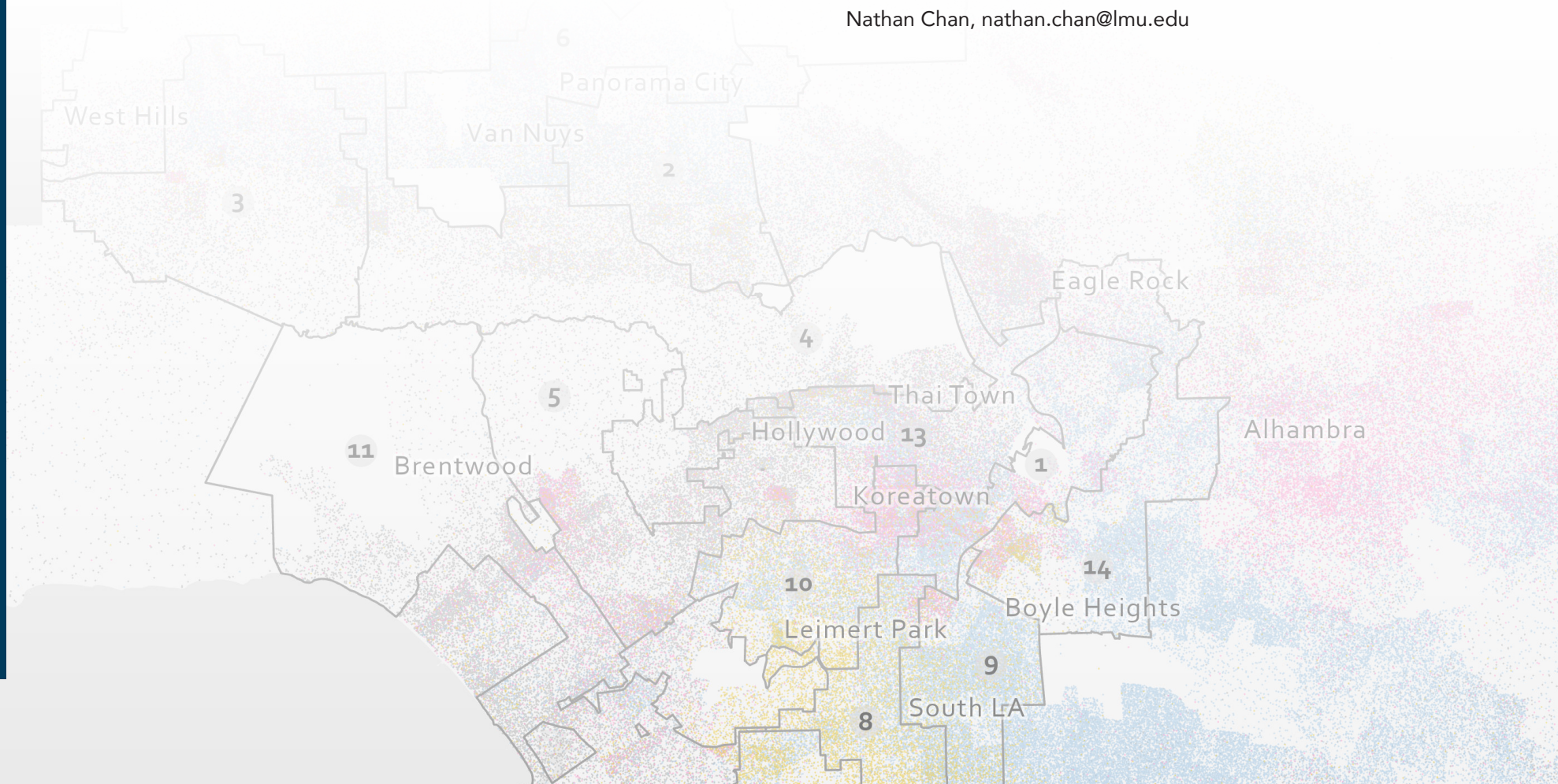
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to understand the role of race/ethnicity in Los Angeles citywide and city council district elections. The general objective of this report is to understand the nature of the Asian American electorate and the degree to which Asian Americans are adequately represented in elected leadership in the city of Los Angeles. We focus on Asian American voters but also offer a comparison with Latino, Black and White voters in the 2022 and 2020 elections. We find that while the number of Asian Americans running for office is on the rise in Los Angeles, redistricting efforts are needed in order to provide Asian American voters with a greater opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. Data from this report can help identify where more efforts are needed to ensure greater Asian American representation in local governance.

## ANALYSES IN THIS REPORT INCLUDE:

- Map visualizations that display the distribution of voters by race in the city of Los Angeles, racial diversity within Los Angeles city council districts and the distribution of Asian American registered voters within each city council district.
- Reporting on the racial diversity of candidates running for and elected representatives of citywide and city council offices.
- Analysis of racially polarized voting in 2022 and 2020 Los Angeles citywide and city council district elections with a focus on Asian American voting patterns.

## THE FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT DEMONSTRATE:

- There are growing numbers of Asian American residents living in Los Angeles. However, the slate of candidates running for city office is overrepresented by white candidates running for elected office.
- The average number of Asian American candidates running for office in Los Angeles has been low over the past decade reflecting a need for building a pipeline of Asian American leaders. 2022, however, was a notable year with three Asian American candidates winning elected office.
- Racially polarized voting occurs in citywide and city council elections in both 2022 and 2020. This means that Asian American, Latino, Black and White voters each hold distinct preferences for candidates. Redistricting efforts should consider remedies established by the Voting Rights Act.
- Asian American, Latino and Black voters show solid support for candidates who share their racial/ethnic background. This demonstrates that when there is greater racial/ethnic diversity in city leadership, Asian American, Latino and Black voters will see their communities and their interests better represented in governance.
- Asian Americans are the third largest racial group in the city but often are the minority voting group in a city council district. Unless Asian Americans vote in coalition with another racial/ethnic group, their candidate of choice does not win the election.

## INTRODUCTION

Asian Americans represent one of the fastest growing racial groups in the City of Los Angeles. Between 2010 and 2020, the Asian American population in Los Angeles grew by 8.2%. As a point of reference, the population of the entire city grew by 2.8% in the last decade. Today, Asian Americans represent the third largest racial group in the city (11.8%) behind Latinos (46.9%) and Whites (28.9%). Black Angelenos represent the fourth largest racial group at 8.3%. But while Asian Americans are visibly growing in Los Angeles, it is not clear if their power and growth in electoral politics matches the potential suggested by their population growth. Our general objective of this report is to understand the nature of the Asian American electorate and the degree to which Asian Americans are adequately represented in elected leadership in the city of Los Angeles. Findings from this report can help identify areas in need of greater attention and investment to ensure fair and proportional representation of Asian Americans in Los Angeles.

This report is divided into three parts. First, we examine the distribution of Asian American voters across the city and use GIS mapping to understand the degree of racial/ethnic diversity that exists within the Los Angeles city boundary and also within city council districts. Maps help to visualize the presence and distribution of Asian American voters within the city and city council districts. Second, we examine the slate of political candidates that Los Angeles voters have had the opportunity to elect. We take into context the racial/ethnic diversity of political

candidates running for citywide and city council district elections in the past decade. We argue that the slate of candidates on the ballot must be contextualized in terms of their racial/ethnic diversity in order to best understand the pattern of voter preferences in Los Angeles. Then, we turn to the core analysis of this report, an analysis of Asian American, Latino, White and Black voting preferences for citywide and city council representatives. We use a racial polarization analysis, one of the key scientific tools used to evaluate racial redistricting, to understand the degree to which Asian Americans, Latinos, Whites and Blacks vote in coalition in support of a candidate or the degree to which they develop distinct candidate preferences by race.

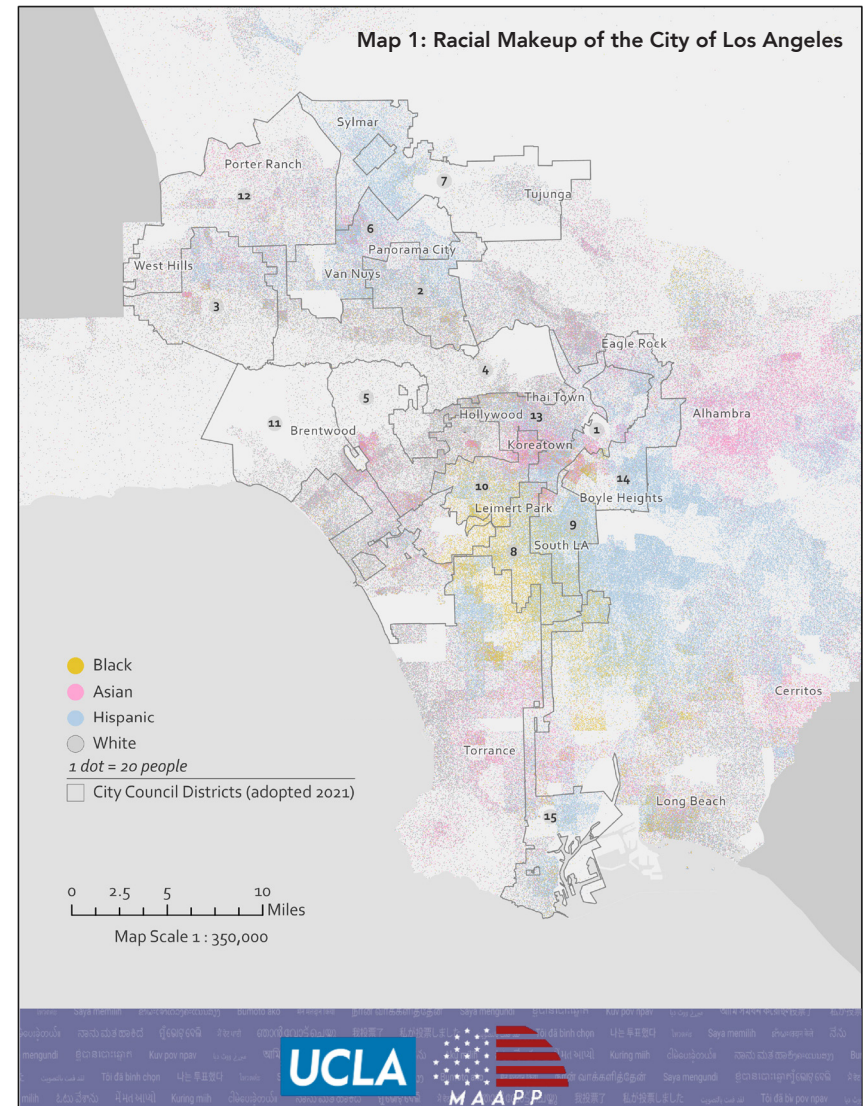
## RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS OF ASIAN AMERICAN VOTERS IN THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is a multiracial and multilingual city with a growing Asian American population. At the same time, the residential patterns of Los Angeles show that there is an uneven distribution of Asian Americans across the city. There is also distinct residential patterns of Latinos, Blacks and Whites.<sup>1,2</sup> Given these residential patterns, the racial demographic makeup of each city council district varies quite a lot. Some districts include large and concentrated Asian American communities, while other districts include smaller or more evenly dispersed Asian American residents within district boundaries.

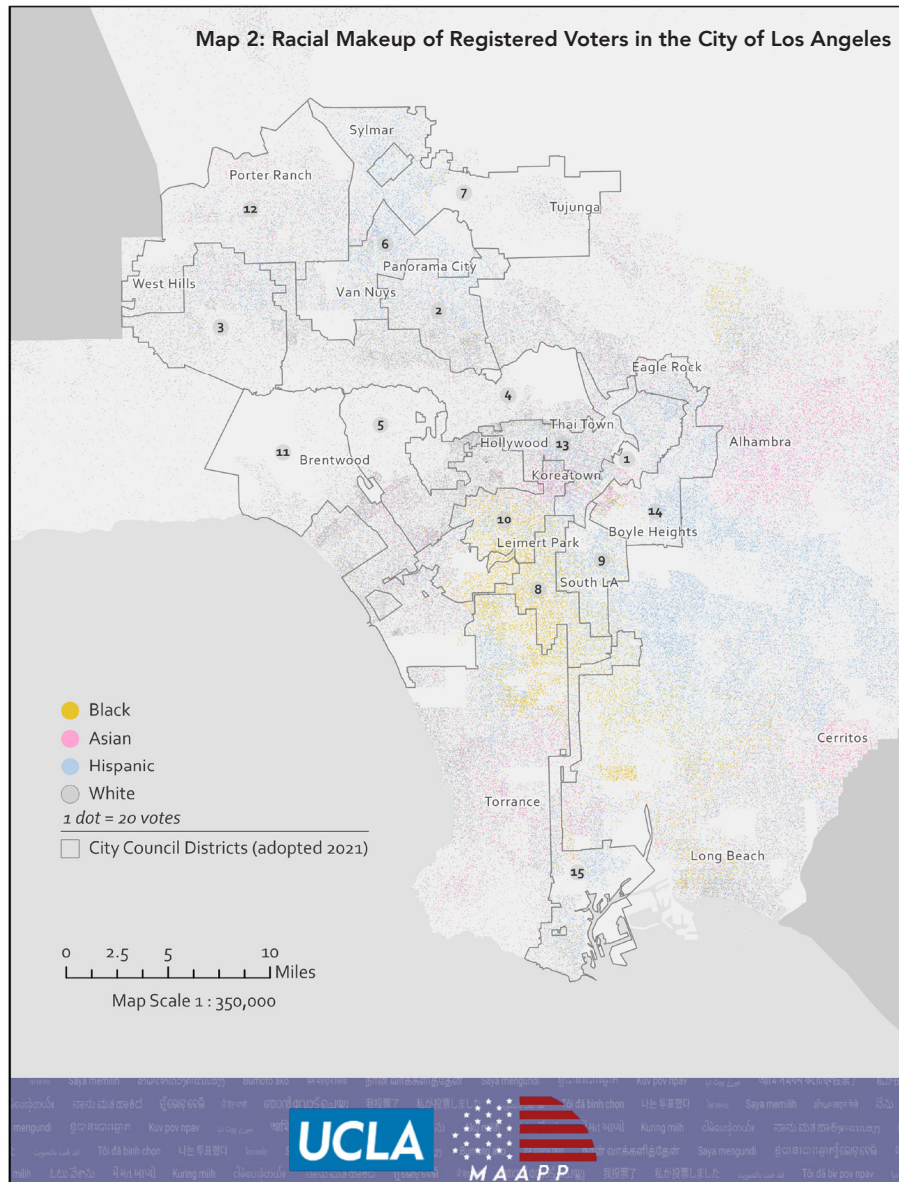
To get a more intuitive sense of the racial composition and geographic dispersion of Asian Americans, we created dot maps which also include the current boundaries of each city council district. For these dot maps, one dot is equivalent to 20 people, and each color designates the racial background of the residents. Denser populations are depicted as a deeper shade of the color and overlapping colors indicate two or more racial groups representing the dominant population of an area. In **Map 1**, we first present the racial makeup of the general population

<sup>1</sup> For all data in this report, we use data FROM the census categories "Non-Hispanic White," "Non-Hispanic Black," "Non-Hispanic Asian," and "Hispanic/Latino." But,

<sup>2</sup> We importantly acknowledge that there are other racial and ethnic groups living in Los Angeles. However, this report only analyzes data on four major racial/ethnic groups in Los Angeles. We recognize needed attention to other groups and hope future research efforts will offer more focused attention to groups not covered in this report.







in the city of Los Angeles. Focusing on the Asian American population (presented in pink dots), we can see that there are large and concentrated communities of Asian Americans in city council districts 10 and 13, which overlap Koreatown.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, city council districts 1 and 14 also have large Asian American communities, but Asian Americans in these districts live more evenly dispersed across the district and live among large Latino communities. Finally, on the Westside (districts 5 and 11) and in the Valley (districts 3 and 12), there are also sizeable but dispersed Asian American communities.

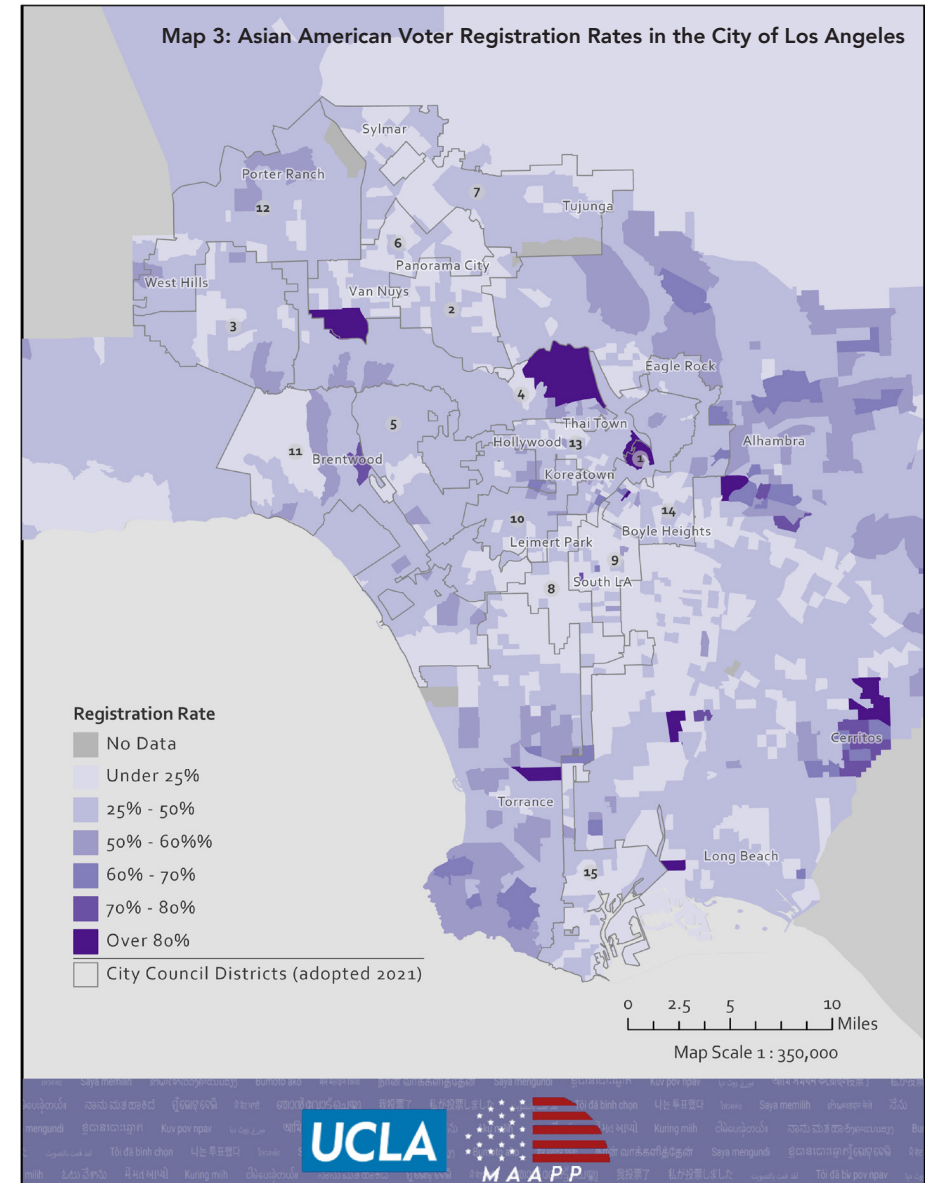
Since Asian Americans are largely an immigrant population, we are mindful that the presence of a large Asian American population does not directly translate into an eligible voting population. In **Map 2**, we present a dot map of the racial makeup of the registered voter population in Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup> As we see in this map, the visibility of Asian American voters on the map (again presented as pink dots) is distinctively lower compared to what is displayed in **Map 1**. In **Map 2** of registered voters, there is a stronger presence of White and Black voters in contrast to Asian American and Latino voters in Los Angeles. This offers important insight into

<sup>3</sup> The category of “Asian American” includes a diverse set of many Asian national origin groups. For the purposes of this report, we focus primarily on Asian Americans as a whole group. Due to data limitations, we cannot disaggregate by national origin.

<sup>4</sup> To determine race of voters for Maps 2 and 3, we obtained data from the Los Angeles County voter file, a public record of all registered voters in the county. We identified race of voters using Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG).

the untapped potential of Asian American voters in Los Angeles. There is a sizeable Asian American population in Los Angeles, but at the same time, Asian Americans make up a smaller share of registered voters. While the presence of Asian American populations in districts should be a strong public policy consideration for city council members representing those districts, this data also shows there to be much untapped electoral potential if more Asian Americans registered to vote.

To provide more detail on voter registration rates of Asian Americans within city council districts, we provide a final map presenting the more precise voter registration rates of Asian Americans in each city council district. In **Map 3**, the deeper shades of purple reflect higher voter registration rates among Asian American residents in a given area. Consistent with **Map 2**, the Asian American voter registration rate averages under 50% across most of the city. However, there are some pockets of Los Angeles where there are relatively higher voter registration rates among Asian American residents. For example, there are higher registration rates in the northern area of district 12 and the eastern sections of districts 4 and 5.





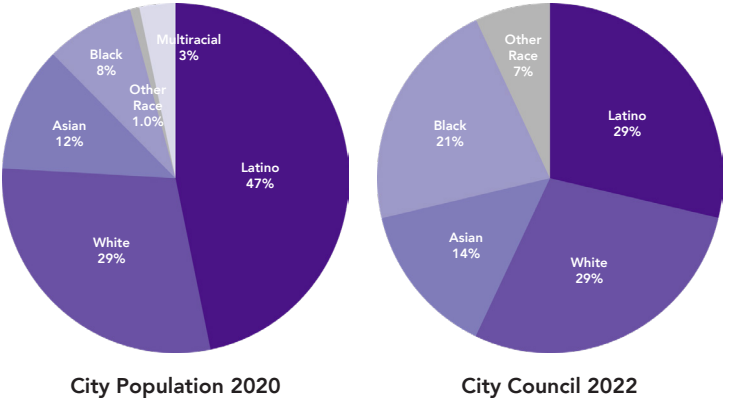
# RACIAL/ETHNIC MAKEUP OF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN LOS ANGELES

While Los Angeles is a diverse city, one dimension to consider is to what extent the elected representatives who lead the city reflect the same level of racial diversity found among residents. The concept of descriptive representation – when the elected representative shares the same racial or ethnic background as their constituents – is argued to not only be symbolically important but also is found to reflect more diverse viewpoints in governance. When elected officials come from different backgrounds, they bring different points of view to their job. This allows for richer

deliberation of policy. While representatives do not necessarily need to “look like” their constituents in order to be effective, it is at the same time, considered one important measure of how well city government represents the city’s diverse residents.<sup>5</sup>

For this analysis, we focus on two sets of elected offices: a) executive leadership offices of Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller and b) city council members since Los Angeles city government is a mayor-council style government. This section focuses on a comparison of Asian American, Latino, White and Black representation in elected office.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1: Racial Makeup of City Population and City Council as of 2022



Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number; Note: One city council seat is vacant as of October 2022.

Table 1: Racial Makeup of City population and City Council Members in 2022

	City Population (Census 2020)	City Council (as of 2022)	
	%	#	%
Latino	47%	4	29%
White	29%	4	29%
Asian	12%	2	14%
Black	8%	3	21%
Other Race	1%	1	7%
Multiracial	3%	0	0%

Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number; Note: One city council seat is vacant as of October 2022.

<sup>5</sup> For example see Dovi, Suzanne. 2002. "Preferable descriptive representatives: Will just any woman, Black, or Latino do?" American Political Science Review 96(4): 729-743.

<sup>6</sup> We researched existing records and news stories in order to classify elected officials and candidates into a racial/ethnic category. For as many cases as possible, we sought to identify at least one public record or one news story which described the race/ethnicity of the candidate. In those cases where we could not find a record of race/ethnicity, we assigned the candidate based on their surname.

Table 2: Racial Makeup of City Council Members 2011-2020

	2011		2013		2015		2017		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Latino	4	27%	4	27%	4	27%	4	27%	4	27%
White	6	40%	6	40%	5	33%	5	33%	4	27%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%	1	7%	1	7%	2	13%
Black	3	20%	3	20%	3	20%	3	20%	3	20%
Other Race	1	7%	2	13%	2	13%	2	13%	2	13%
Multiracial	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%

In 2022, elected officials in Los Angeles reflected notable racial/ethnic diversity, including the election of the first Black woman mayor and the first Asian American controller in the city's history. While city council members are also notably diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, at the same time, the racial makeup of the city council does not mirror that of the city population. **Figure 1** and **Table 1** offer a comparison between the racial/ethnic makeup of the general population in the city and that in the city council in 2022.<sup>7</sup> In the general city population, Latinos represent the largest racial/ethnic group and are 47% of all residents in Los Angeles. Consistent with their growing population, Asian Americans represent the third largest racial/ethnic group in the city at 12%.

The data show that in 2022, Asian Americans are proportionally represented on the council with 2 out of 15 members, or 14%, identifying as Asian American. Likewise, Whites are proportionally represented on the council in 2022, while the share of Black members on the council is higher than the share of Black residents in the city. The group currently most underrepresented on the city council are Latinos: 29% of the city council identifies as Latino even though Latinos make up nearly half of the city population.

Of course, we note that examining the racial/ethnic makeup of the city government leadership in 2022 is limited since this is only one point in time. To better understand descriptive representation in Los Angeles, we examined the racial/ethnic makeup of the city

<sup>7</sup> In this analysis, we recognize that elected officials often identify with multiple racial categories or not as "White," "Black," "Asian," or "Latino." In these tables, "Multiracial" includes those who identify as multiple races. "Other race" which includes those who do not identify as "White," "Black," "Asian," or "Latino." For example, Paul Krekorian (CD-2) identifies as Armenian.

council since the last redistricting in 2011. The patterns in **Table 2** show the growing presence of Asian American elected officials on the city council. In 2011, there were no Asian Americans on the city council, but this number has grown to two since 2020. This demonstrates important growth of Asian American leadership in recent years. In contrast, the number of Black representatives has held steady at three members over the past decade, and the number of Latino representatives has also held steady at four members over the past decade. A further breakdown by both race/ethnicity and gender over the entire decade finds that for all racial groups, both executive leadership and city council members are more likely to be men (see **Appendix A1-A2**).

Successful election into public office is often the focus but it is just as important to evaluate the pipeline of candidates who chose to run for office. Is there a sizeable slate of Asian American candidates running for office? In **Table 3**, we examined the racial/ethnic makeup of candidates who ran for elected office in previous election cycles. This table reports the racial/ethnic makeup of all candidates running for executive office (Mayor, City Attorney and Controller) since 2013 and for city council since 2011. We find that candidates running for office in Los Angeles are most likely to be white. 60% of all candidates running for executive office and 40% of all candidates running for city council are white. So, while Los Angeles is a diverse and majority-minority city, Los Angeles voters were much less likely to see a candidate of color on their ballot than a white candidate. Importantly, while the data show that Asian Americans have run for office, they represent only a small share of all candidates who appear on the ballot. Interestingly,

**Table 3: Racial/Ethnic Makeup of All Candidates Running Between 2011-2022**

	Executive		City Council	
	#	%	#	%
<b>Latino</b>	7	12%	62	32%
<b>White</b>	34	60%	77	40%
<b>Asian</b>	7	12%	13	7%
<b>Black</b>	5	9%	27	14%
<b>Other Race</b>	0	0%	13	7%
<b>Multiracial</b>	4	7%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	57	100%	193	100%

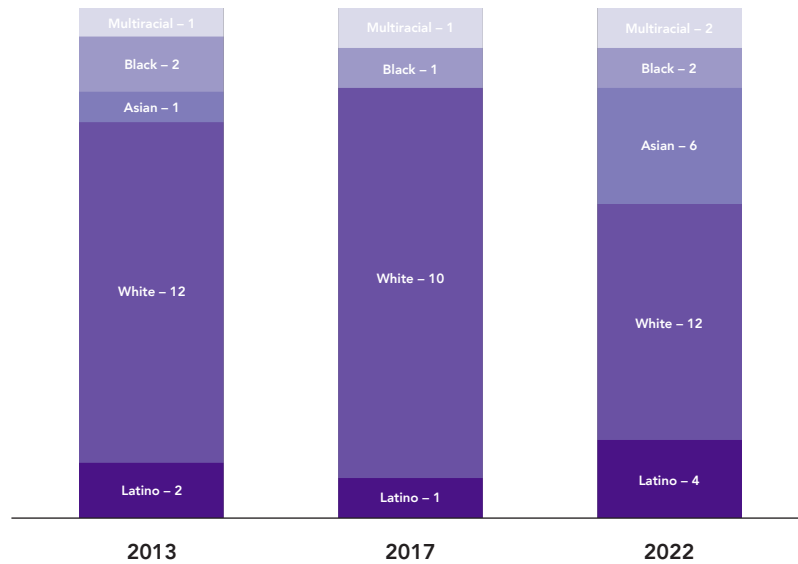
*Note: For city council, the total number reflects all candidates running since 2011 election. For executive office, the total number reflects all candidates running since 2013 election.*

Asian Americans made up a greater share of all candidates running for executive office compared to city council. Of the 193 total candidates running for city council between 2011-2022, only 13 (or 7%) were Asian American and most of which were men (see **Appendix A3-A4**). Thus, the pipeline that encourages more Asian American candidates running for city council could be an area of future investment.

When we further break down the total number of candidates running for office in each election over time, it further demonstrates that there is a limited pipeline of potential Asian Americans leaders for public office. **Figure 3** presents the total number of candidates by race/ethnicity running for an executive office in each of the three elections held since 2013. We find that the only in 2022 was there a large number (6) of Asian Americans running for executive office but in previous elections



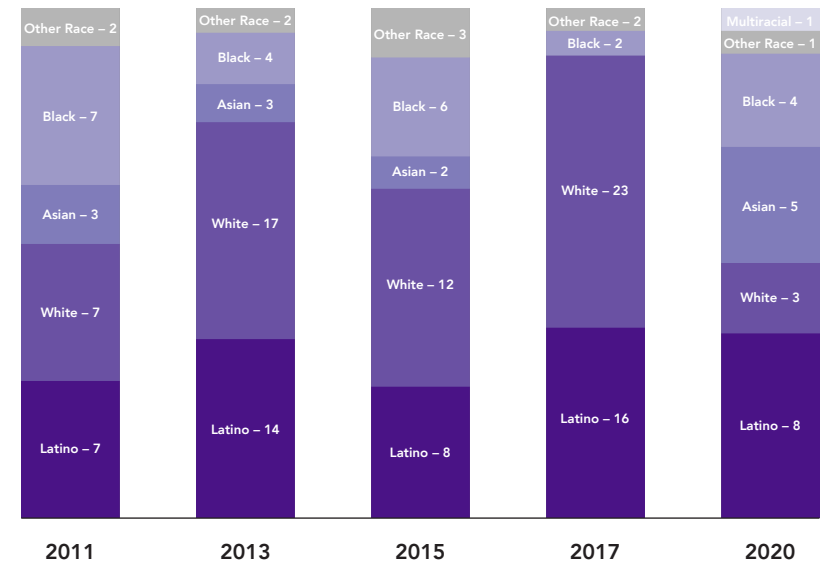
Figure 3: Total Number of Candidates by Race/Ethnicity Running for Executive Office in Each Election Since 2013



no more than one Asian American attempted to run for mayor, city attorney or city controller. In fact, this is the overall pattern as well for Latino and Black candidates running for executive office. This shows that 2022 was a welcome year with a racially diverse slate of candidates running for office but in 2013 and 2015 most candidates for executive office were white. A further breakdown by race/ethnicity and gender finds that men are more likely to run for executive office (see [Appendix A3](#)).

**Figure 4** displays the total number of candidates by race/ethnicity running in each city council elections since 2011. In any election since 2011, there has been no more than 5 total Asian

Figure 4: Total Number of Candidates by Race/Ethnicity Running for City Council in Each Election Since 2011



American candidates listed on the ballot for a city council seat. In 2017, there were no Asian Americans running for a city council seat. This data further demonstrates that the pipeline towards elected office for Asian Americans is limited. A further breakdown by race/ethnicity and gender finds that men are more likely to run for city council (see [Appendix A4](#)).

## IS THERE EVIDENCE OF RACIALLY POLARIZED VOTING IN LOS ANGELES CITY ELECTIONS?

In this third section we shift our attention to the voting electorate. We assess the extent to which Asian American voters face barriers against electing their preferred candidate of choice due to the strategic way representative districts have been drawn. One important analysis used in voting rights legal cases to understand if race should be considered as a factor for drawing district lines is a racial polarization analysis. This section presents a racial polarization analysis on city council elections in 2022<sup>8</sup> to identify the extent to which Asian Americans as a group hold distinct preferences for city council candidates.

### Background: Why Racial Polarization Analysis?

In the art of redistricting, it is possible to draw representative districts so that a given racial/ethnic group has a viable opportunity to elect their candidate of choice. But it is also possible to draw districts that diminish the power of that racial/ethnic group's vote, which is called vote dilution. Two districting strategies can be deployed to dilute the power of a group's vote: "cracking" and "packing."<sup>9</sup> The strategy of "cracking" divides up a racial/ethnic group across two or more districts so that the racial/ethnic group is only a small population

of voters in each district. As a small voting minority, this then means that the racial/ethnic group will not ever have a chance of electing their candidate of choice in the district. In contrast, the strategy of "packing" is used to place the entire population of a racial/ethnic group into one district. Packing creates one district dominated by one racial/ethnic group but at the same time only gives that group voting power in that one district, when it could be possible that they could elect candidates of choice in multiple districts.

According to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, if a racial minority group is large and geographically compact, votes as a cohesive group and a district map is drawn so that districts either "crack" or "pack" a racial minority group thereby diluting the power of their vote, then that said district map could be found to be in violation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. A required remedy would be that a new district map should be drawn so that racial minority voters have a more plausible opportunity to elect their candidates of choice.

A racial polarization analysis<sup>10</sup> has been adopted as the established scientific tool in voting rights legal cases to understand if one racial group regularly votes for one candidate, and the other racial group regularly votes for another candidate. In the presence of three or

<sup>8</sup> Due to a voter initiative passed in 2017 to increase voter participation in city government elections, Los Angeles city elections are now held in even numbered years to align with the primary and general elections for federal and state offices. The Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller serve a four-year term and can serve a maximum of two terms. The Los Angeles City Council is made up of members who each represent one of fifteen districts. Each city council member serves a four-year term and can serve a maximum of three terms. Elections for member seats alternate every two years between elections to decide members of even and odd numbered districts. In 2022, voters elected the Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller along with even numbered city council district seats.

<sup>9</sup> Bullock, Charles. 2010. *Redistricting: The Most Political Activity in America*. New York: Rowman and Littleman.

<sup>10</sup> Grofman, Bernard, Lisa Handley, Richard Niemi. 1992. *Minority Representation and the Quest for Voting Equality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

more candidates, such as in a primary election, racial polarization is typically considered to exist when one candidate receives either the plurality or the majority vote share of one racial group; and a different candidate receives the plurality or the majority of vote share of the other racial group. It is then important to assess if minority voters are choosing candidates who regularly lose. If a majority racial group often or always votes for one candidate and, in doing so, regularly defeats the minority racial group's preferred candidate, then that would mean that vote dilution is occurring.

While racial polarization analyses typically do not include an analysis of Asian American voters given their small population size in most areas of the nation, Asian Americans represent a growing population and are the third largest racial minority group in Los Angeles. The maps we present in the second section demonstrate that in many areas of the city, particularly in the Koreatown area and in the northeastern sections of the city, Asian Americans could be defined as geographically compact. A racial polarization analysis of Asian American voters in Los Angeles city council elections could thus be useful to assess the degree to which Asian American voters have a fair opportunity to elect their candidates of choice.

### **Description of Methodology**

In this section, we focus primarily on the most recent 2022 election. This was the first city council election occurring after the new 2021 district map was implemented. In 2022, Los Angeles voters elected

candidates for executive office, and voters in odd numbered city council districts elected their city council representative.

The data used for the analyses were obtained from the Statement of Vote found on the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters website. Our unit of analysis is by precinct. We then appended race/ethnicity demographic data to each precinct. For demographics on race/ethnicity, we use citizen voting age population (CVAP) data obtained from the 2019 5-year estimates provided by the American Community Survey. We then estimated the vote share for each candidate running for office using ecological inference, or ecological regression<sup>11</sup> when needed, which has been established as the key statistical methods used in legal cases related to the 1965 Voting Rights Act.<sup>12</sup>

In order to calculate vote share estimates using ecological inference or ecological regression with some statistical confidence, the size of the racial minority population must be relatively large. In many city council districts, Asian Americans make up only a small share of the district's population and so estimates for these districts would be less reliable. In order to provide relatively more reliable estimates, we only conduct analyses for city council districts where the Asian American CVAP population in the district is larger than 15%. We thus present analyses for only districts 1, 5 and 13. Given that we are limited to only an analysis of three districts, we also conduct a racial polarization on the races for mayor, city attorney, and controller since all city residents vote in these elections.

<sup>11</sup> King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior From Aggregate Data*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Guidance under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, 52 U.S.C. 10301, for redistricting and methods of electing government bodies," Sept. 1, 2021, p. 6



## FINDINGS ON THE 2022 CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT ELECTIONS

### 2022 City Council District 1

Of all current city council districts, District 1 has the largest population of eligible Asian American voters. In terms of the overall population, Asian Americans make up only 17.3% of the district. When we focus on the citizen eligible voting age population, Asian Americans represent a sizeable 21.3% of that district. Asian Americans are a large and politically powerful group of voters in District 1. At the same time, the majority of the district is made up of Latino residents (68.3%).

In the 2022 primary election, incumbent Gil Cedillo ran for reelection against challenger Eunisses Hernandez. Hernandez won the seat with 54% of the vote. Our analysis finds that there is racially polarized voting in District 1 (see **Table 4**). Hernandez was the candidate of choice for Asian American voters, receiving 57% of their vote. Hernandez was also the overwhelming candidate of choice among white voters. In contrast, Cedillo was the candidate of choice for both Latino and Black voters in the district. Therefore, although Latinos who are the majority racial/ethnic group in District 1 did prefer incumbent Cedillo, given the large size of eligible Asian American voters, Hernandez was able to win the district with sizeable support of both Asian American and white voters in the primary election and so there was no runoff election.

### 2022 City Council District 5

This westside district has the largest Asian American population of all current city council districts: 21.3%. This is also a district where Asian Americans represent a sizeable share of the eligible voter population at 18.3% of the district CVAP. This is a majority white district (57.3%), with

Table 4: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 City Council District 1

City Council District 1					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
2022 Primary Election					
Gilbert Cedillo	46%	38%	60%	1%	67%
Eunisses Hernandez	54%	57%	35%	98%	35%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. Results calculated using ecological inference.

Table 5: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 City Council District 5

City Council District 5					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
2022 Primary Election					
Jimmy Biblarz	11%	24%	28%	6%	<1%
Katy Young Yaroslavsky	49%	39%	55%	36%	>99%
Sam Yebri	30%	<1%	<1%	41%	<1%
2022 General Election					
Katy Young Yaroslavsky	60%	70%	83%	40%	80%
Sam Yebri	40%	19%	18%	48%	20%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results; Primary election table presents vote outcomes for only top three candidates in the race. Primary election estimates calculated using ecological regression; general election calculated using ecological inference.

Asian Americans represented as the second largest racial/ethnic group in the district. In the 2022 District 5 race, there was no incumbent.

We find that in both the 2022 primary and general elections, there

was racially polarized voting (see **Table 5**). For both elections, Katy Young Yaroslavsky was the candidate of choice of Asian American, Latino and Black voters. In contrast, Sam Yebri was the candidate of choice for white voters. Although relative to the other racial groups in the district, White voters were relatively split in their preferred candidate of choice. This analysis finds that Yaroslavsky was able to win this district due to the strong support of the three minority (Asian American, Latino and Black) voting groups in the district.

### 2022 City Council District 13

District 13 has a large share of eligible Asian American voting population (18.3% of CVAP) but at the same time, this is a district that is largely made up of Latino and white residents (who make up 42% and 32% of the overall population, respectively). The 2022 District 13 race included incumbent Mitch O’Farrell, who is a recognized member of the Wyandotte Nation. The winner of the plurality of votes in the primary election was Hugo Soto-Martinez, who identifies as Latino. Soto-Martinez won the seat with 58% of the vote.

Our analysis finds that in both the primary and general elections, incumbent O’Farrell was the candidate of choice for Asian American voters in the district, whereas Soto-Martinez was the candidate of choice for Latino voters (see **Table 6**). In the primary election, white voters were evenly split in their candidate of choice between O’Farrell and Soto-Martinez. In the general election, white voters supported Soto-Martinez. This election demonstrates that although O’Farrell was not the plurality winner in the primary election, the strong support he received from Asian American voters attributed to his ability to make it to the run-off election.

### Summary of 2022 City Council Elections Analysis

This analysis of city council elections shows that within districts where there is a sizeable Asian American CVAP population, racially polarized voting occurred in the 2022 election. Most importantly, we find that Asian American voters demonstrate distinct patterns of candidate vote choice compared to other racial groups. This suggests that Asian Americans have their own distinct political preferences that should be not only recognized but can be a factor taken into account in a redistricting effort. Due to factors including the makeup of communities that compose city council districts and Asian Americans’ population size as the third largest racial group in Los Angeles, Asian Americans are always the minority voting group in a district. Therefore, the Asian American vote alone cannot ensure a winning candidate. So, unless Asian Americans are placed in districts where they can form a voting coalition with other groups who share their same candidate of choice, their preferred candidate is unlikely to win an election.

**Table 6: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 City Council District 13**

City Council District 13					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>2022 Primary Election</b>					
Hugo Soto-Martinez	41%	14%	55%	31%	--- <sup>a</sup>
Mitch O’Farrell*	32%	41%	22%	31%	---
Kate Pynoos	16%	11%	3%	22%	---
<b>2022 General Election</b>					
Hugo Soto-Martinez	58%	23%	60%	58%	---
Mitch O’Farrell*	42%	48%	36%	36%	---

*Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results; Primary election table presents vote outcomes for only top three candidates in the race. Results calculated using ecological inference.  
\* designates incumbent; <sup>a</sup> results unreliable, so not reported*

## FINDINGS ON THE 2022 MAYOR, CITY ATTORNEY AND CONTROLLER ELECTIONS

Because our analysis on city council elections was limited to only three districts, we also analyzed voting patterns for the election of Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller. Since these are citywide positions, this analysis of the Mayoral, City Attorney and City Controller elections offers us a chance to understand the degree of racially polarized voting for the city as a whole.

### 2022 Mayoral Election

The 2022 Mayoral election primary included a number of candidates with Karen Bass and Rick Caruso winning most of the votes across the city. Our analysis of the mayoral election finds there to be more apparent racial polarization in the general election compared to the primary election (see **Table 7**). In the

primary election for mayor, the candidate who received the most votes among Asian Americans, Latinos and whites was Rick Caruso. However, we note that among Asian American, Latino and white voters, there was not a clear candidate of choice in the primary since there was also sizeable support for Karen Bass among these groups. For Black voters in the primary election, however, Karen Bass was the clear candidate of choice.

Turning to the general election, we find a distinct split by race. The candidate of choice for Asian Americans, Latinos and Blacks was Karen Bass. In contrast, the candidate of choice among white voters was Rick Caruso. These results show that Bass was able to win the election with majority support from voters of color.

Table 7: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 Election for Mayor

Mayoral Candidate	Citywide total %	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>Primary Election</b>					
Karen Bass	43%	19%	22%	45%	75%
Rick Caruso	36%	26%	27%	46%	9%
Kevin De Leon	8%	1%	25%	1%	<1%
<b>General Election</b>					
Karen Bass	55%	53%	51%	45%	89%
Rick Caruso	45%	43%	47%	52%	10%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results; Primary election table presents vote outcomes for only top three candidates in the race. Results calculated using ecological inference.

### 2022 City Attorney Election

The primary election for City Attorney included a diverse slate of candidates and as a result each racial group had a different candidate of choice. We find that in general, voters of color preferred descriptive representatives in the primary contest (see **Table 8**). In the primary election, the candidate of choice for Asian American voters was Asian American candidate Richard Kim. Interestingly, the other Asian American candidates for City Attorney, Faisal Gill and Teddy Kapur were also top candidates for Asian American voters. Latino primary voters preferred Latino candidate Marina Torres, while Black voters preferred Sherri Cole. White voters' preferred candidate of choice was Hydee



Feldstein Soto in the primary. Gill and Feldstein Soto were the two candidates advanced to the runoff election.

For the runoff held during the general election in November 2022, Gill was the candidate of choice for Asian American, Latino and Black voters, whereas Feldstein Soto was the candidate of choice for White voters. Feldstein Soto won the election due to her support of white voters along with relatively strong support from Latino voters.

**Table 8. Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 Election for City Attorney**

Candidate	Citywide total %	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>2022 Primary Election</b>					
Faisal M. Gill	24%	13%	19%	15%	18%
Hydee Feldstein Soto	20%	<1%	4%	26%	1%
Marina Torres	20%	6%	38%	6%	15%
Richard Kim	17%	36%	9%	16%	5%
Teddy Kapur	5%	12%	3%	3%	7%
Sherri Cole	5%	2%	9%	2%	20%
Kevin James	9%	3%	4%	11%	5%
<b>2022 General Election</b>					
Hydee Feldstein Soto	55%	22%	43%	53%	34%
Faisal M. Gill	45%	49%	46%	26%	57%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. Results calculated using ecological inference.

## 2022 City Controller Election

The election for City Controller is an important case study for understanding Asian American voting patterns since this race included an Asian American candidate, Kenneth Mejia, in both the primary and general election. In both the primary and general elections, Mejia was the overwhelming candidate of choice for Asian American voters demonstrating that when Asian American candidates run for office, they are able to gain the support of Asian American voters across in the city (see **Table 9**). This finding aligns well with surveys of Asian Americans in Los Angeles who were found to have strong desire for descriptive representation.<sup>13</sup> Mejia was also the candidate of choice for

**Table 9: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2022 Election for City Controller**

Candidate	Citywide total %	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>Primary Election</b>					
Stephanie Clements	16%	4%	14%	9%	9%
Paul Koretz	24%	<1%	19%	20%	31%
Kenneth Mejia	43%	68%	36%	37%	11%
<b>General Election</b>					
Paul Koretz	37%	5%	26%	34%	44%
Kenneth Mejia	63%	85%	63%	49%	43%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results; Primary election table presents vote outcomes for only top three candidates in the race. Results calculated using ecological inference.

<sup>13</sup> Chan, Nathan and Sara Sadhwani. 2022. Racial Discrimination, Hate, and the Politics of AAPIs in Los Angeles. The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA.

<sup>13</sup> King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior From Aggregate Data*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Latino and White voters in both the primary general elections, although the margin of preference was strongest among Asian American voters. In contrast, the plurality of Black voters supported Paul Koretz in the primary and general elections. However, there was a nearly even split in preference for Koretz and Mejia among Black voters in the general election.

### **Summary of 2022 Mayoral, City Attorney and City Controller Analysis**

Like our analysis of city council elections, we find evidence of racially polarized voting in citywide elections for Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller in 2022. In this analysis of citywide elections, we find that when given a choice, voters of color prefer descriptive representatives and candidates of color. In contrast, white voters demonstrate strong support for white candidates. This analysis offers two important insights. First, it shows the importance of having a diverse slate of candidates running for office because when given a choice, voters of color will support candidates of color. As a result, candidates of color can win the election with strong support of all racial minority groups. Second, we find that especially for Asian American and Black voters in Los Angeles, their candidate of choice cannot win an election unless they win the support of a multiracial coalition of voters.

## HAVE ASIAN AMERICAN VOTERS SUPPORTED ASIAN AMERICAN CANDIDATES IN PAST CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

The analysis for the City Controller race in the above section demonstrates that Asian American voters strongly support an Asian American candidate running for office. But is this finding unique to the 2022 race for City Controller? To further examine if Asian American voters demonstrate a unique preference for Asian American candidates, we also examine city council races in 2020. This is because in 2020, there were four city council elections with at least one Asian American candidate on the ballot: District 4 (David Ryu and Nithya Raman), District 10 (Grace Yoo), District 12 (John Lee) and District 14 (Cyndi Otteson). This analysis seeks to answer the question: When there is an Asian

American candidate on the ballot, does that candidate win the support of Asian American voters?

We use a similar racial polarization analysis as employed in the above section to estimate the vote share support for candidates in each race. We note importantly that the city council district map for the 2020 elections uses the older 2011 city council district map. Therefore, we cannot necessarily take the results that we calculate for the 2020 races for Districts 4, 10, 12 and 14 and use these results to make direct predictions of voting patterns for today's Districts 4, 10, 12 and 14 because these are differently drawn districts. We can use this analysis of 2020 races to identify if Asian American voters demonstrate strong preferences for Asian American candidates in different electoral contexts in Los Angeles.

**Table 10: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2020 City Council District 4**

City Council District 4					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>2020 Primary Election</b>					
Nithya Raman	41%	32%	56%	39%	<1%
David Ryu*	45%	72%	25%	33%	~100%
Sarah Kate Levy	14%	<1%	12%	15%	<1%
<b>2020 General Election</b>					
Nithya Raman	53%	43%	71%	48%	3%
David Ryu*	47%	56%	22%	41%	87%

*Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. For primary election we present only the top three candidates. Results calculated using ecological inference.*

*\*designates incumbent*

### 2020 District 4 Election: A Race Between Two Asian American Candidates

First, we examine the contest between two Asian American candidates in 2020 to represent District 4. In 2020, District 4 included the areas surrounding Griffith Park, Hollywood, Sherman Oaks and some of the Mid City area west of Koreatown. Demographic statistics provided in 2011 report that this was a majority White district at 61.2%. This race included two Asian American candidates, incumbent David Ryu and challenger Nithya Raman. Raman won the run-off election with 53% of the

vote.

Our analysis finds that in both the primary and general elections, Asian American voters overwhelmingly supported David Ryu as did Black voters in the district (see **Table 10**). In contrast, Latino voters in the district supported Nithya Raman in both the primary and the general election. The White majority voting population was relatively split, but the plurality of votes went to Nithya Raman, who won the run-off election. In this case, while David Ryu was the candidate of choice for Asian Americans, the Asian American support could not alone ensure a victory for Ryu. Rather the candidate of choice for the majority voting group, Whites, won the election.

### 2020 District 10 Election: Asian American candidate in a Majority-Minority District

The second district we analyze in 2020 was the race for District 10, where Asian American Grace Yoo was on the ballot for both the primary and general elections. In this race, incumbent Mark Ridley-Thomas was running for re-election. When District 10 was drawn in 2011, it included most of South Los Angeles and Koreatown. In terms of demographics, in 2011, the district was almost a majority Latino district at 48.7%. The second largest racial group was Black, followed by Asian American. Incumbent Ridley-Thomas won the run-off election with 61% of the vote.

Our analysis finds that incumbent Mark Ridley-Thomas was the candidate of choice for the two largest racial/ethnic groups, Latinos and Blacks, in both the primary and general election (See **Table 11**). Ridley-Thomas's strong support from the two largest

**Table 11: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2020 City Council District 10**

City Council District 10					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
<b>2020 Primary Election</b>					
Mark Ridley-Thomas*	44%	<1%	58%	14%	87%
Aura Vasquez	21%	19%	30%	18%	20%
Grace Yoo	24%	75%	<1%	39%	<1%
<b>2020 General Election</b>					
Mark Ridley-Thomas*	61%	7%	77%	32%	98%
Grace Yoo	40%	80%	18%	49%	<1%

*Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. For primary election we present only the top three candidates. Results calculated using ecological inference.  
\*designates incumbent*

racial demographic groups in the district led to a clear victory in the runoff with 61% of the vote. Asian American candidate Grace Yoo was the candidate of choice among Asian American and White voters in the district. Although Asian Americans demonstrated a strong and cohesive vote for Yoo, their relatively small population size in 2020 District 10 was not large enough to ensure Yoo victory.

### 2020 District 12 election: Asian American candidate in a White Plurality District

The third election that we analyze in 2020 was the race for District 12, which at that time was the most northern district in the city located in the San Fernando Valley. In 2020, this district included the areas such as Porter Ranch, Northridge and West

Hills. When this district was drawn in 2011, it was a plurality-White district with a White population of 47.7%. The next largest group was Latinos at 25.9% followed by Asian Americans at 16.3%. This race had no incumbent running for office. The primary election was a two-candidate race between Asian American candidate John Lee and Loraine Lundquist. Lee won the seat with 51% of the vote.

Our analysis finds a distinct racial divide in the 2020 District 12 election (see **Table 12**). The White majority along with Asian American voters preferred Lee. In contrast, Latino and Black voters preferred Lundquist. Given the coalition of Asian American and White voters, Lee was able to collect 51% of the vote to win the election. This race demonstrates a case when the Asian American minority vote shared a similar preference with the majority voting group (Whites), they can see their candidate of choice actually elected.

### 2020 District 14 election: Asian American candidate in a Latino Majority District

The final district we analyze for the 2020 election is for District 14. In 2011, areas included in this district were downtown areas including Little Tokyo, Boyle Heights, El Sereno, Lincoln Heights and parts of northeast Los Angeles including Highland Park and Eagle Rock. When this district was drawn in 2011, it was a Latino majority district (67.2%). Asian Americans in the district represented the next largest group at 13%. In 2020, this race had no incumbent running for reelection. Therefore, there was a large slate of candidates, one of which was Cyndi Otteson

**Table 12: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2020 City Council District 12**

City Council District 12					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	White voter support %	Black voter support %
2020 Primary Election					
John S. Lee*	51%	94%	29%	58%	<1%
Loraine Lundquist	49%	2%	63%	33%	~100%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. Results calculated using ecological inference. \*designates incumbent

**Table 13: Estimated Vote Share by Racial Group, 2020 City Council District 14**

City Council District 14					
	Final district outcome	Asian Am voter support %	Latino voter support %	NH White voter support %	NH Black voter support %
2020 Primary Election					
Monica Garcia	11%	<1%	15%	<1%	44%
Kevin De Leon	53%	21%	55%	21%	20%
Cyndi Otteson	19%	77%	3%	71%	2%
Raquel Zamora	14%	<1%	15%	<1%	<1%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to estimation results. For the primary election, we present the top four candidates. Results calculated using ecological regression.

who identifies as Korean American. The winner of the primary election, Kevin De Leon, received 53% of the vote and so there was no runoff election.

Our analysis finds that Asian American voters in District 14 strongly supported the Asian American candidate, Cyndi Otteson (see **Table 13**). We find evidence of racial polarization in this district with both Asian American and White voters



overwhelmingly supporting Otteson, whereas Latino voters favored De Leon. Since this is a Latino majority district, De Leon's strong support from Latino voters led to a clear win in the primary election. Although Asian American and White voters strongly supported Otteson, Otteson placed a distant second with 19% of the vote. The candidate who received the strongest support from Black voters in the district was candidate Monica Garcia, who placed fourth in the race.

### **Summary: Asian American Voters Support Asian American Candidates**

This analysis of 2020 city council races demonstrates that Asian American voters cast strong support for Asian American candidates. In contests with Asian American candidates on the ballot, Asian Americans vote strongly and cohesively for descriptive representatives, demonstrating their potential as a bloc vote. Like our analysis for the 2022 elections however, our analysis also demonstrates that Asian American candidates can only successfully win elected office if they can gain support of other racial groups in addition to Asian American voters.

## FINAL REPORT SUMMARY ON ASIAN AMERICAN VOTERS IN LOS ANGELES CITY ELECTIONS

This report highlights the growing political potential of Asian Americans in Los Angeles but at the same time, identifies some challenges that may need future investment. This report shows the impressive population growth of Asian Americans in the city and calls attention to the importance of Asian American representation in city government. We demonstrate that while no Asian Americans held elected office after the previous redistricting cycle in 2011, in recent years, Asian American candidates are able to successfully run and win elected office in Los Angeles. After the most recent 2022 election, the first Asian American was elected as City Controller and two Asian Americans hold seats in the city council. While the pipeline of candidates running for office in Los Angeles city should include more Asian Americans, this research shows that once they run, Asian American candidates command strong voter support in city elections.

While this report offers a positive outlook on the growth of Asian American elected officials, one area of continued challenge is the degree to which the preferred candidate of choice for Asian American voters has the actual opportunity to win an election. Along with the growth of the Asian American population in Los Angeles, there will also be a growth in the size of the Asian American voting electorate. One important area to monitor is thus whether Asian American voters act as a bloc vote and if as a bloc vote they can influence the outcome of an election. This report finds that Asian American voters do often vote as a bloc in support of Asian American candidates but at the same time, they are often not a large enough group of voters to sway the outcome of an election in Los Angeles. Only when Asian

Americans vote in coalition with another large racial/ethnic group does their preferred candidate of choice have a viable chance of winning the election.

However, we warn that while the total population size of Asian Americans in the city may explain why the Asian American vote alone cannot determine the election of a citywide representative like the mayor, this should not necessarily be the case for city council elections. Asian Americans are the third largest racial/ethnic group in the city, yet Asian American voters are placed in city council districts where they are typically the minority group in the district. Our analysis shows that Asian American voters do demonstrate distinct preferences for candidates (often supporting the Asian American candidate for office), but because they are the minority group in a district, their vote alone cannot determine the winner. Only when Asian Americans vote in coalition with another group will the Asian American preferred candidate of choice win the election. An important case demonstrating what could happen if Asian Americans made up a larger electorate of a city council district can be gleaned from the City Council District 1 race in 2022. City Council District 1 has the largest Asian American electorate across all districts in the council, with over 20% of the eligible voter population in the District 1 being Asian American. In 2022, strong Asian American voter support was a critical voting bloc leading to the election of Hernandez over incumbent Cedillo. This shows the potential of the Asian American vote in cases where Asian Americans represent a sizeable population in the district. We hope this report generates a greater understanding of the current status of Asian American voters as well as demonstrates the future potential of this growing group of voters in the city of Los Angeles.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## APPENDIX - ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table A1: Count of Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller by Race/Ethnicity and Gender since 2013

	2013	2017	2022
<b>Latino (All)</b>	0	0	1
Latino Women	0	0	1
Latino Men	0	0	0
<b>White (All)</b>	2	2	0
White Women	0	0	0
White Men	2	2	0
<b>Asian (All)</b>	0	0	1
Asian Women	0	0	0
Asian Men	0	0	1
<b>Black (All)</b>	0	0	1
Black Women	0	0	1
Black Men	0	0	0
<b>Other race (All)</b>	0	0	0
Other race Women	0	0	0
Other race Men	0	0	0
<b>Multiracial (All)</b>	1	1	0
Multiracial Women	0	0	0
Multiracial Men	1	1	0
<b>Total Elected Officials</b>	3	3	3

Table A2: Count of City Council Members by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Since 2011

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2020	2022
<b>Latino (All)</b>	4	4	4	4	4	5
Latino Women	0	0	2	3	2	3
Latino Men	4	4	2	1	2	2
<b>White (All)</b>	6	6	5	5	4	4
White Women	1	0	1	1	0	2
White Men	5	6	4	4	4	2
<b>Asian (All)</b>	0	0	1	1	2	2
Asian Women	0	0	0	0	1	1
Asian Men	0	0	1	1	1	1
<b>Black (All)</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3
Black Women	1	0	1	1	0	0
Black Men	2	3	2	2	3	3
<b>Other race (All)</b>	1	2	2	2	2	1
Other race Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other race Men	1	2	2	2	2	1
<b>Multiracial (All)</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0
Multiracial Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Multiracial Men	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Elected Officials</b>	15	15	15	15	15	15

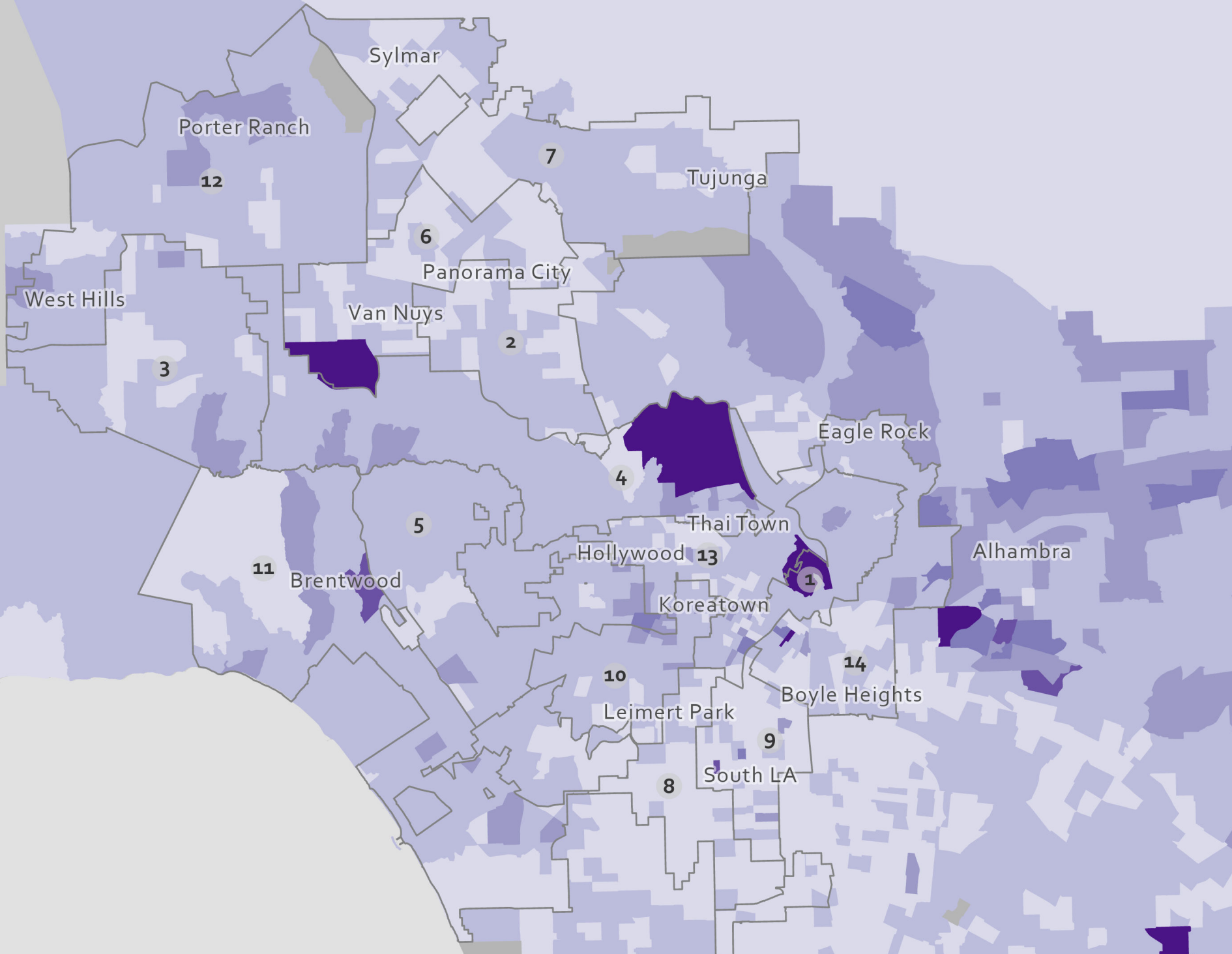
**Table A3: Total Number of Candidates for Executive Office Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

	2013	2017	2022
<b>Latino (All)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Latino Women	1	0	2
Latino Men	1	1	2
<b>White (All)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
White Women	1	1	2
White Men	11	9	10
<b>Asian (All)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Asian Women	0	0	0
Asian Men	1	0	6
<b>Black (All)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Black Women	2	0	1
Black Men	0	1	1
<b>Other race (All)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Other race Women	0	0	0
Other race Men	0	0	0
<b>Multiracial (All)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Multiracial Women	0	0	1
Multiracial Men	1	1	1
<b>Total Elected Officials</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>

**Table A4: Total Number of Candidates for City Council Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2020	2022
<b>Latino (All)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
Latino Women	0	1	4	5	3	6
Latino Men	7	13	4	11	5	3
<b>White (All)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>
White Women	0	3	4	7	2	4
White Men	7	14	8	16	1	11
<b>Asian (All)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
Asian Women	0	0	1	0	3	0
Asian Men	3	3	1	0	2	0
<b>Black (All)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Black Women	2	2	2	1	0	0
Black Men	5	2	4	1	4	4
<b>Other race (All)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
Other race Women	1	0	1	0	0	0
Other race Men	1	2	2	2	1	3
<b>Multiracial (All)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Multiracial Women	0	0	0	0	1	0
Multiracial Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Elected Officials</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>







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