



# Political Implication of Residential Segregation

## A Spatial Analysis

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GLOBAL AFFAIRS



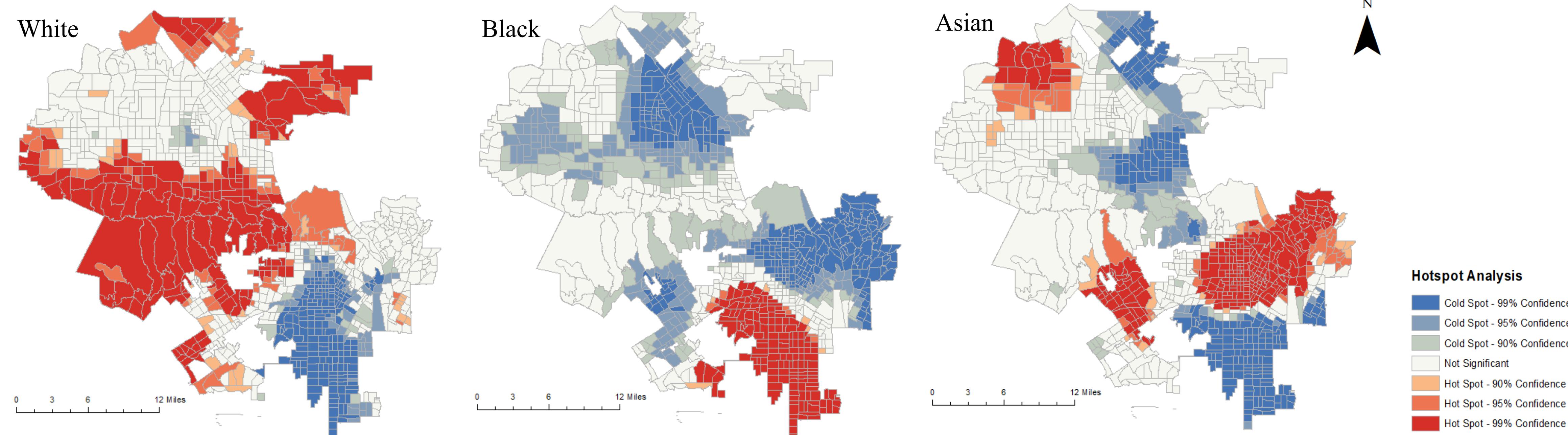
### Abstract

Residential segregation, defined as the physical separation of two or more groups in different parts of the urban environment, has profound impact on people's access to job market, transportation, safety, etc. This research sheds light on the political implication of racial segregation by spatially analyzing the relationships between polling station locations and residential segregation by race, income, and age in Los Angeles City. It is found that residential segregation still prevails in Los Angeles as different racial groups reside in different areas of the city. It is an integral process shaped contemporaneously by race and income and might have unexpected political consequences. Middle- and high-income whites who choose to reside in the mountainous suburbs could restrict their electoral influence by moving away from the ballots. The old age structure further diminishes their political will and limit their accessibility to the polling stations. Therefore, the Los Angeles City government should increase the voting accessibility by providing mobile ballot-boxes or free transportations for people living in the mountainous suburbs.

### Introduction

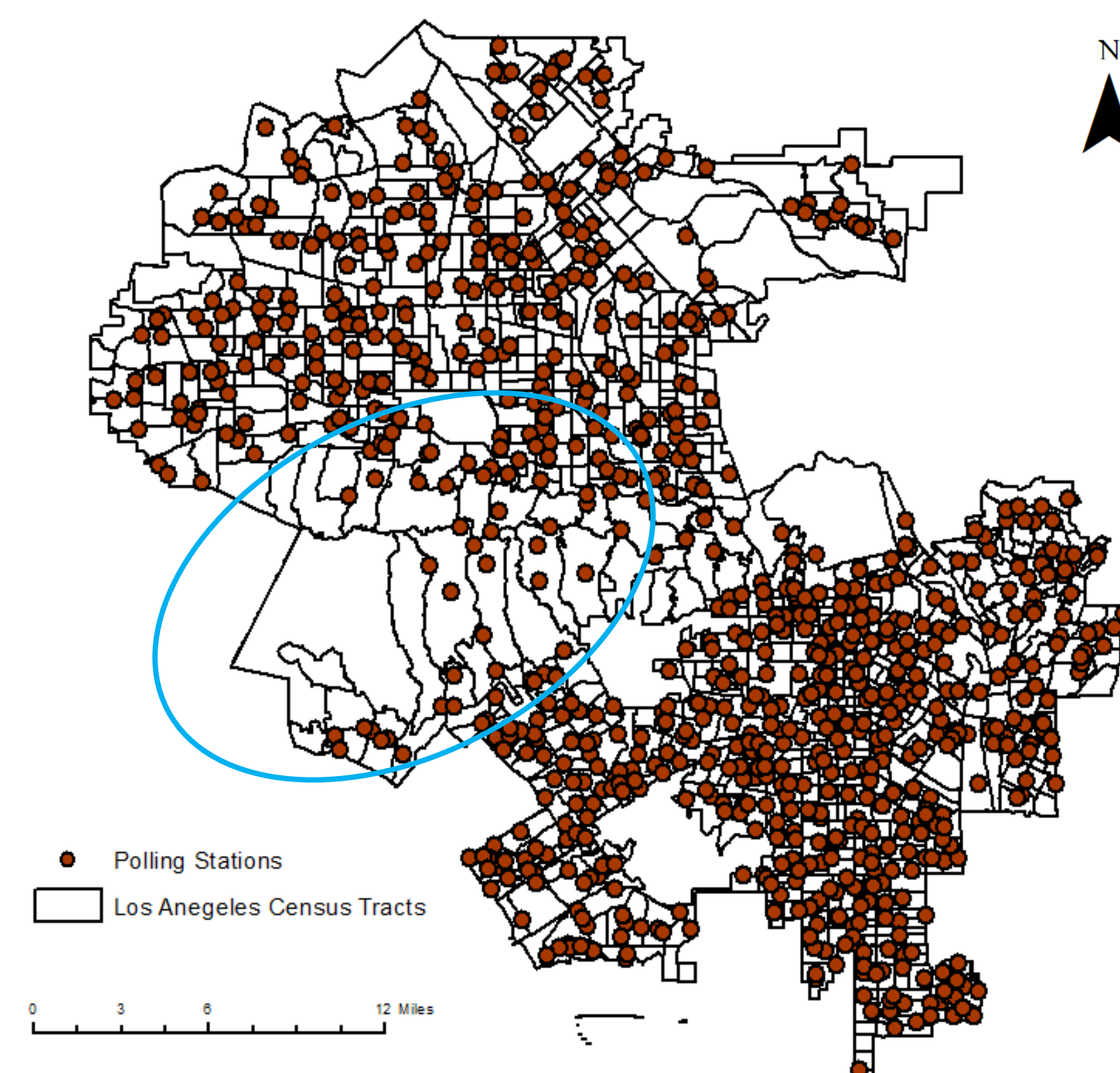
Residential segregation has been one of the defining feature of American cities. Disguised by the simple definition of living separately. It is in fact a extremely complicated process, in which race and income play dominant roles (Ong, Chhea, and Lee, 2016). Race-based resident segregation is caused by the enduring effect of ethnoracial identity and racial preference. Denton and Massey's research (1988) demonstrates that the blacks are highly separated from the whites across the U.S. While the income-based residential segregation failed to explain the full-scale white-black segregation at all socio-economic levels, it is more applicable when explaining Asian and Latinx segregations as the level of residential segregation drops dramatically when the socioeconomic status of these two groups improves (ibid., 1988). The implications of residential segregation are huge. Health, transportation, working opportunity, education, leisure and many other aspects of life are significantly constrained by the residential environment. Plenty of research has identified that residential segregation can lead to unequal access for African Americans and poor communities (e.g. Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996; Wallace, 1990). This research finds, however, residential segregation can have negative impacts on whites and middle- and high-income households as well. By fleeing from urban centers and residing in mountainous suburbs, the whites and the middle- and high-income groups distance themselves from the polling stations, which reduces their access to the ballots and might restrain their political participation. Policy recommendations, such as offering mobile polling station and free transportation during voting periods, are proposed to increase the voting accessibility and ensure citizens' right to vote in elections.

### 1. Hotspot Analysis of Residential Segregation in Los Angeles



### Methodology

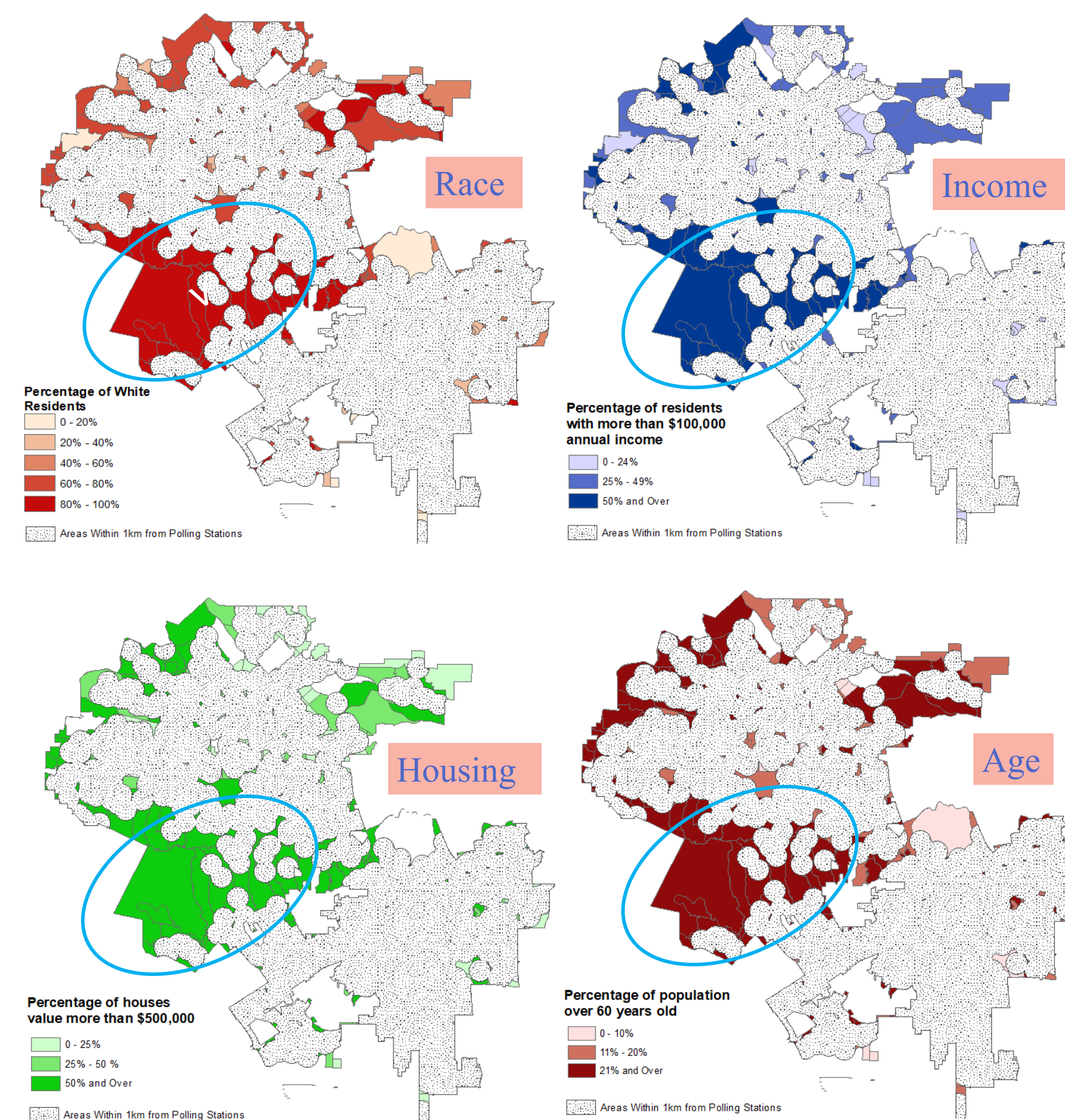
To analyze the spatial distribution of residents in Los Angeles, we download the spatial information of tracts in Los Angeles County from the Tiger/Line Shapefiles provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and clip it based on the Los Angeles City boundary. Thus, we obtained census tracts of the Los Angeles City. Then, information about residence, race, income and age is acquired from the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) through the American FactFinder website. To assess the political influence of residential segregation, we obtain polling station locations for the November 6, 2018 Statewide General Election in Los Angeles county from the Los Angeles County GIS Data Portal website and clip it based on the Los Angeles City boundary as well. By joining the table of residential information and spatial joining the polling stations into the tracts, we construct the complete dataset to analyze the residential segregation and its political implications in Los Angeles City.



### 2. Locations of Polling Stations in Los Angeles

### Result - 1

The Hotspot analyses of residential segregation by race and income are telling. Illustrated by the Hotspot map matrixes, there is clear residential segregation by race. The middle and northeast areas of the city are predominantly white communities. Black communities concentrate in the south of the city. Asian communities cluster in the southeast, southwest and northwest blocks..



### 3. Selected Features of Areas far from Polling Stations

### Result - 2

The political implication of residential segregation is unexpected. Map 2 demonstrates that the area with sparse polling station indicated by a blue circle is in the middle-west of the city. Shown in the Buffer maps, most areas that are more than 1 kilometer (0.62 mile) away from the nearest polling station are characterized by a high proportion of the whites and middle- and high-income residents. The topography of these areas features mountains and forests. Therefore, by fleeing from urban centers and residing in scenic mountainous suburbs, the whites and the middle- and high-income groups distance themselves from the polling stations, which reduces their access to the ballots and might restrain their political participation. Since the white flight can be dated back to the 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement prevailed, the age structures of these areas are quite old, shown in the age map below. Consequently, it is even hard for the elderly to get out to vote in elections considering their diminishing physical capacities. Therefore, the government should increase the voting accessibility by providing mobile ballot-boxes or free transportation during the voting periods for people who live in the mountainous suburbs.

### Conclusion

Although the residential segregation in the Los Angeles City has been declining, there were still one third of the residents living in segregated neighborhoods in 2010, due to either racial preference or social stratification (Clark, et al., 2015). One of the unexpected political consequence of residential segregation is that the whites and the middle- and high-income population distance themselves from the polling stations by moving to suburbs of the city. The voting access of these groups, especially the elderly, can be restricted because of low density of polling stations in these areas. The policy suggestion for the Los Angeles City government is that it should provide mobile ballot-boxes or free transportation for people living in the mountainous suburbs to increase the voting accessibility ensure citizens' right to vote in elections.

### References

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