MEMO: LA City Council enlargement - Mapping, charts and improved representation
FROM: Marcela Miranda-Prieto, Executive Director, CalRCV and Michael Feinstein, former Santa Monica Mayor and City Council member
February 4, 2026

Executive Summary: When using single-seat districts* to elect the Los Angeles City Council, there are significant difficulties in achieving broad racial representation for all of LA's largest racial minorities, even when increasing the size of the Council from the current 15 seats to as many as 33.

The two largest racial groups in LA - Latino and White - exist in substantial percentages in most parts of the city, such that in most districts, they are able to either elect or influence the election of a candidate of their choice.

The same is not true for LA's Black and AAPI populations. On average, Black voters have *at most* influence over 2 seats under single-seat districts on Councils between 23 and 33 seats' and AAPI votes at most one, and often none.

By contrast, under three-seat districts elected by proportional ranked-choice voting (PRCV), Black and AAPI voters experience more meaningful opportunities to elect (or influence the election of) candidates of their choice, because the threshold to win representation within each district is much lower. This is the case even in three-seat PRCV districts that include substantial numbers of Latino and/or White voters, where this lower threshold creates more meaningful opportunities for Black and AAPI voters to elect candidates of their choice.

This same dynamic applies to political- and issue-based diversity in a district, where single-seat districts tend to give representation to only one such perspective, while three-seat districts allow a greater diversity of political/issue-based perspectives within a district to gain representation.

Background: One of the primary considerations in increasing the size of the Los Angeles City Council, is 'what number of seats can provide improved representation for LA's diverse communities, including voters who are members of protected classes of voters under the California Voting Rights Act - Black, Latino and Asia Pacific Islander.'

To answer this question, the Government Structure Committee looked at increasing the size of the City Council from 15 to a range of 23 to 31 seats, focusing on (i) single-seat district models of 23, 25 and 31 seats, and (ii) a multi-seat district proportional ranked-choice voting (PRCV) model of 27 seats.

Commission Staff declined to produce maps of potential representation scenarios corresponding to these numbers of seats, citing concerns that this would imply some sort of official representation on the part of the City, when such formal mapping is only done on behalf of the City by the City's Independent Redistricting Commission.

This memo communicates such needed mapping and charts, prepared for CalRCV by More Equitable Democracy or MED (a self-described 'racial justice organization working to advance racial equity through electoral reform', based out of Washington state) comparing single-seat district models of 23, 25, 27, 31 and 33 seats and three-seat district models of 27 and 33 seats. Why these numbers of seats?

Since the Committee considered a three-seat district model of 27 seats, it made sense to compare representation of 27 seats elected from both single- and three-seat models. Since the Committee considered 31 seats elected from single-seat districts, the closest comparison from multi-seat districts was 33 seats elected from 11 three-seat districts.

In addition to the compare and contrasts below between single- and three-seat models for 27 and 33 seat Councils, an expanded presentation from MED that will also be shared with the Charter Reform Commission will also look at the limited single-seat representation offered by 23, 25 and 31 seat models, for which there is no exact three-seat comparison because those numbers of seats are not divisible by three.

Assumptions in mapping/charts: To estimate expected representation by race, MED used Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP), a metric generally used in redistricting. CVAP is the number of persons who are U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. At the request of the Department of Justice, the U.S. Census Bureau publishes an annual (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity special tabulation, based upon either the most recent Decennial Census or the American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

To map various scenarios, MED utilized the principle embedded in the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), that elections should allow protected classes of voters to either 'elect or influence the election of' a candidate(s) of their choice.

The attached charts show when a protected class of voters falls within various 10% ranges in a given district. For single-seat districts, a candidate needs 50% + 1 of the vote to be elected. The charts use a "45% - 55%" range to cover this threshold, so that a group of voters that make up between 45%-55% in a district have a strong likelihood of electing a candidate of their choice. Similarly, if a group of voters

makes up between 35% - 45% of the voters in a district, we call that an “influence district”, where that group of voters has a strong ability to influence the election of a candidate of their choice.

For three seat PRCV districts, the threshold to be elected is 25% + 1 of the vote to win. Any group of voters that make up at least 25% or more of all voters in a district have a strong likelihood of electing at least one candidate of their choice. If a group of voters makes up between 15% - 25% of the vote in a three seat district, we see that as a reasonable metric for “influence districts.”

Finding #1 - Multi-seat districts provide fuller representation for protected classes of minority voters under the California Voting Rights Act, compared to under single-seat districts , when the redistricting process follows redistricting requirements under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the LA City Charter Redistricting Criteria:

(1) MED averaged results from **10,000 simulated maps** across multiple district structures, and found

- **Single-Seat Districts consistently limit minority influence. On average**:
    - **API voters** have *at most* influence over **1 seat** under SMDs—and often none.
    - **Black voters** have *at most* influence over **2 seats** under SMDs.
- **Multi-Seat Districts substantially increase representation. On average**:
    - **API voters** are likely to influence **4–5 seats** under MMDs.
    - **Black voters** are likely to influence **3–4 seats** under MMDs.
- **Latino and White representation remains relatively stable** across SMD and MMD plans, with small variations depending upon the total number of seats.

Summary of Data

Estimated Representation by Race by District Plan

	AAPI Seats (Influence + Solid)	Black Seats (Influence + Solid)	Latino Seats (Influence + Solid)	White Seats (Influence + Solid)
33 * 1 SMD	0/33 (0 + 0)	2/33 (1 + 1)	20/33 (7 + 13)	15/33 (4 + 11)
31 * 1 SMD	0/31 (0 + 0)	2/31 (0 + 2)	17/31 (6 + 11)	15/31 (4 + 11)
29 * 1 SMD	0/29 (0 + 0)	3/29 (1 + 2)	16/29 (6 + 10)	14/29 (4 + 10)
27 * 1 SMD	0/27 (0 + 0)	2/27 (1 + 1)	15/27 (5 + 10)	13/27 (4 + 9)
25 * 1 SMD	0/25 (0 + 0)	2/25 (1 + 1)	14/25 (5 + 9)	12/25 (4 + 8)
23 * 1 SMD	0/23 (0 + 0)	2/23 (1 + 1)	13/23 (6 + 7)	11/23 (4 + 7)
11 * 3 MMD	5/33 (5 + 0)	4/33 (3 + 1)	17/33 (5 + 12)	15/33 (5 + 10)
9 * 3 MMD	4/27 (3 + 0)	3/27 (1 + 2)	9/27 (2+ 7)	10/27 (2 + 8)

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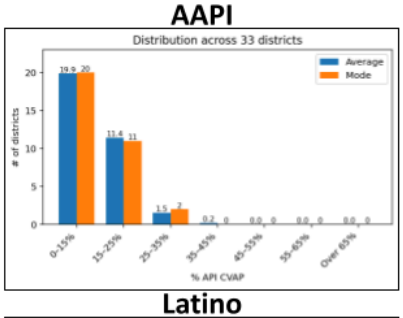
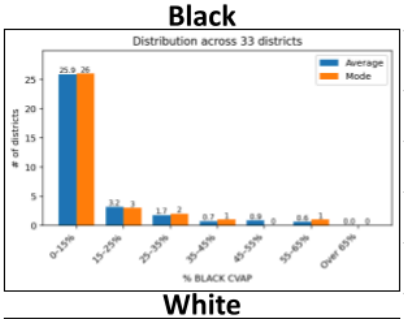
CVAP Distribution by Race: 33 SMD

Average & Mode (10,000 Simulated Maps)

AAPI

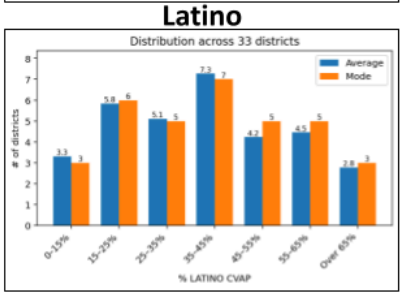


Black

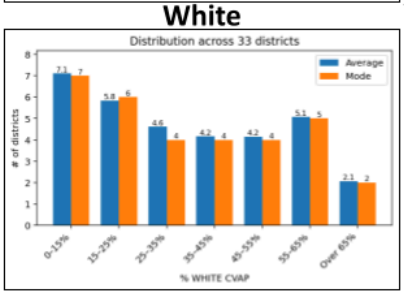


	Influence Districts *(35 - 45%)*	Solid Districts *(45% +)*	Total *(35%+)*
AAPI	0/33	0/33	0/33
Black	1/33	1/33	2/33
Latino	7/33	13/33	20/33
White	4/33	11/33	15/33

Latino



White



Finding #2 - Even if single-seat districts are gerrymandered to an extreme in order to maximize voting strength for either Black or AAPI voters at the expense of most other redistricting considerations – something which would not occur in the real world – Black and AAPI voters are still less able to elect (or influence the election of) candidates of their choice under single-seat districts than under the same number of multi-seat districts elected by PRCV. Even in three-seat PRCV districts that include substantial numbers of Latino and/or White voters, this lower threshold creates more meaningful opportunities for Black and AAPI voters to elect candidates of their choice.

Black - For Black representation, even when drawing as many as 33 seats to maximize Black voter voting strength, at best three 46% Black districts could be drawn. But in one Black voters would still be outnumbered by 50% Latino voters and in another, Latino voters would make up a nearly equivalent 43%, as per the charter below. Note: In gerrymandering districts to maximize Black voting strength, one exception was made, to not break up Koreatown and Chinatown, so as not to pit Black vs. AAPI voting strength in such examples.

By comparison, in a City Council elected from 11 three-seat PRCV districts, again with a win-threshold of 25% + 1, Black voters would have a better chance to elect or influence the election of more seats. By comparison, in a City Council elected from 11 three-seat PRCV districts, with a win threshold of 25% + 1, Black voters would have three solid districts over that threshold, with 26%, 29% AND 27%.

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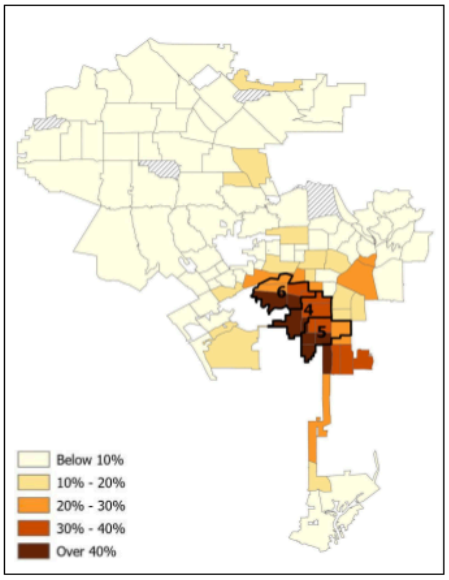
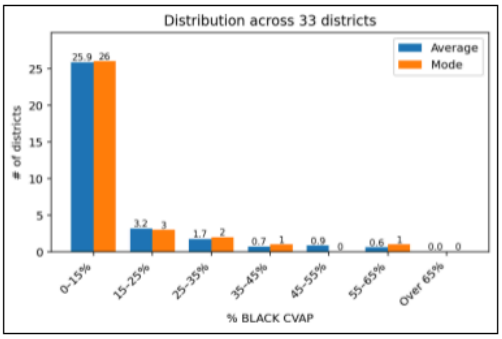
33 SMD: Maximum Black Representation

% Black CVAP by Neighborhood

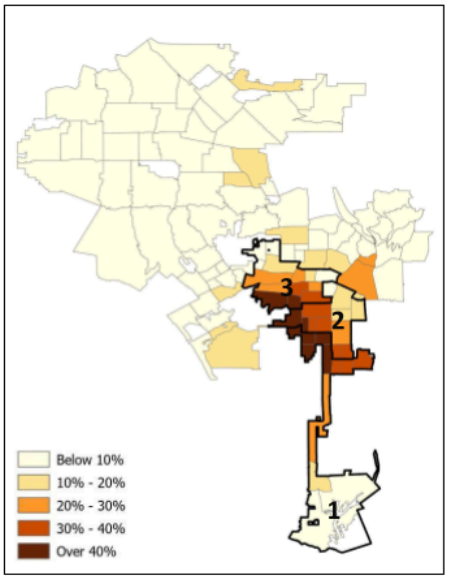


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods ** Neighborhood is Split*
4	4%	46%	43%	6%	Leimert Park, Baldwin Hills / Crenshaw, Jefferson Park, West Adams, Mid-City*, Exposition Park*
5	1%	46%	50%	2%	Vermont Square, Hyde Park, Chesterfield Square*, Exposition Park*
6	5%	46%	36%	12%	Gramercy Park, Manchester Square, Vermont Knolls, Vermont-Slauson, Harvard Park, Chesterfield Square*, Florence*



11 MMD: Maximum Black Representation

% Black CVAP by Neighborhood

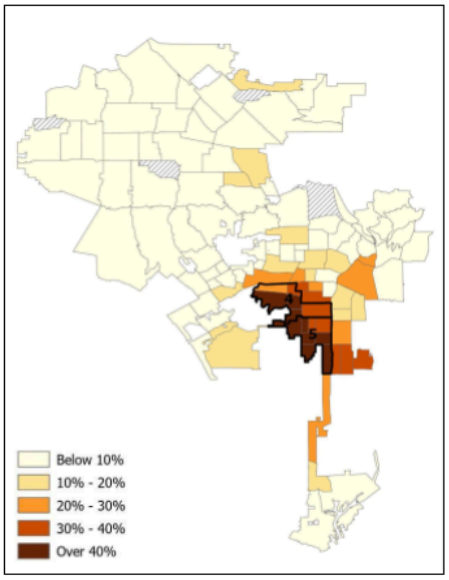


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods ** Neighborhood is Split*
1	8%	26%	50%	16%	Gramercy Park, Harbor City, Harbor Gateway, Hyde Park*, Manchester Square, San Pedro, Vermont Knolls, Vermont Vista, Watts, Wilmington, Broadway-Manchester*, Green Meadows*
2	3%	29%	61%	6%	Chesterfield Square, Florence, Harvard Park, Historic South-Central, South Park, University Park, Vermont-Slauson, Vermont Square, Broadway-Manchester*, Green Meadows*, Central-Alameda*
3	11%	27%	34%	27%	Adams-Normandie, Arlington Heights, Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw, Beverly Grove, Carthay, Exposition Park, Fairfax, Harvard Heights, Jefferson Park, Leimert Park, Mid-City, Mid-Wilshire, Pico-Union, West Adams

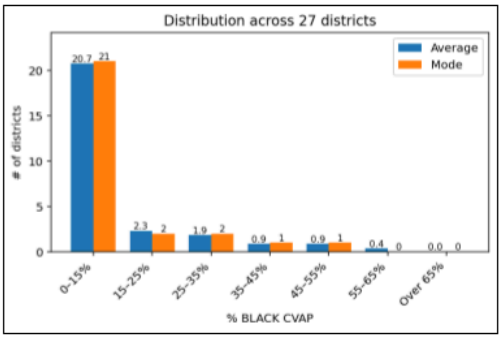
In comparing City Councils of 27 seats, two strong Black districts of 52% and 50% could be drawn, with corresponding Latino populations of 42% and 40%, as per the chart below. By comparison, in a City Council elected from nine three-seat PRCV districts, with a win threshold of 25% + 1, Black voters would have one solid district with 25% and two more just under that threshold, with 24%.

27 SMD: Maximum Black Representation

% Black CVAP by Neighborhood

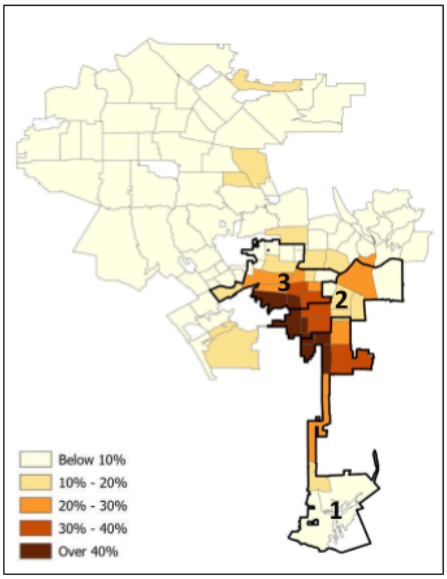


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods * Neighborhood is Split
4	4%	50%	38%	8%	West Adams, Baldwin Hills / Crenshaw, Leimert Park, Vermont Square, Jefferson Park*, Hyde Park*
5	1%	52%	42%	3%	Vermont Vista, Vermont Knolls, Vermont-Slauson, Harvard park, Chesterfield Square, Manchester Square, Gramercy Park, Hyde Park*



9 MMD: Maximum Black Representation

% Black CVAP by Neighborhood



Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods ** Neighborhood is Split*
1	7%	25%	54%	14%	Broadway-Manchester, Florence, Gramercy Park, Green Meadows, Harbor City, Harbor Gateway, San Pedro, Vermont Knolls, Vermont Vista, Watts, Wilmington, Manchester Square*, South Park*
2	8%	24%	56%	11%	Boyle Heights, Central-Alameda, Chesterfield Square, Downtown, Harvard Park, Historic South-Central, Hyde Park, University Park, Vermont-Slauson, Vermont Square*, Manchester Square*, South Park*
3	13%	24%	30%	32%	Adams-Normandie, Arlington Heights, Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw, Beverly Grove, Carthay, Exposition Park, Fairfax, Hancock Park, Harvard Heights, Jefferson Park, Leimert Park, Mid-City, Mid-Wilshire, Palms, Pico-Union, West Adams, Windsor Square, Vermont Square*, Pico-Robertson*, Larchmont*

AAPI - For AAPI representation, even when drawing as many as 33 seats, at best, a single 41% AAPI district can be created that is also 30% Latino. The next two highest percentage AAPI districts would also have larger Latino and White pluralities than the AAPI total. Thus in a best case scenario, AAPI would get only one strong influence district. By comparison, in a City Council elected from 11 three-seat PRCV districts, with a win threshold of 25% + 1, AAPI voters would make up one solid 25% district and two more strong influence districts of 24% and 20%.

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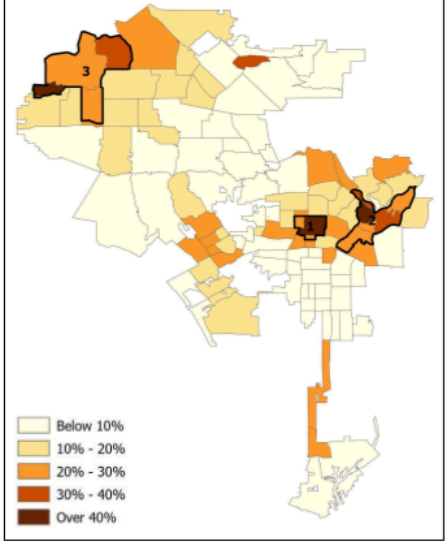
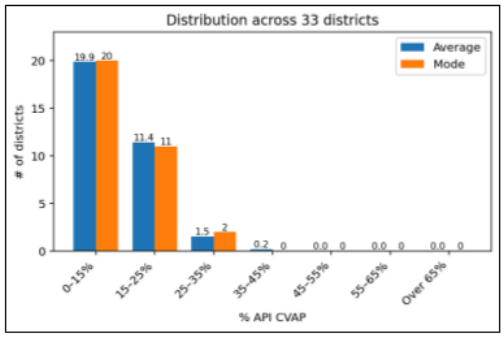
33 SMD: Maximum AAPI Representation

% AAPI CVAP by Neighborhood (Asia-Pacific Islander.)

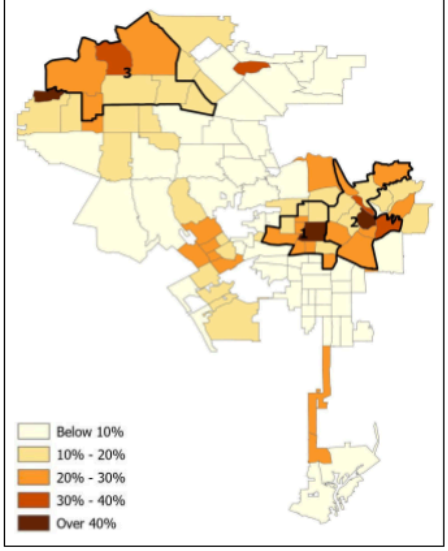


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods * Neighborhood is Split
1	41%	10%	30%	18%	Koreatown, Windsor Square, Harvard Heights*
2	30%	13%	33%	22%	Elysian Park, Elysian Valley, Chinatown, Lincoln Heights, Montecito Heights, Downtown*
3	24%	7%	26%	42%	Porter Ranch, Chatsworth, Chatsworth Reservoir, Winnetka*



11 MMD: Maximum AAPI Representation

% AAPI CVAP by Neighborhood

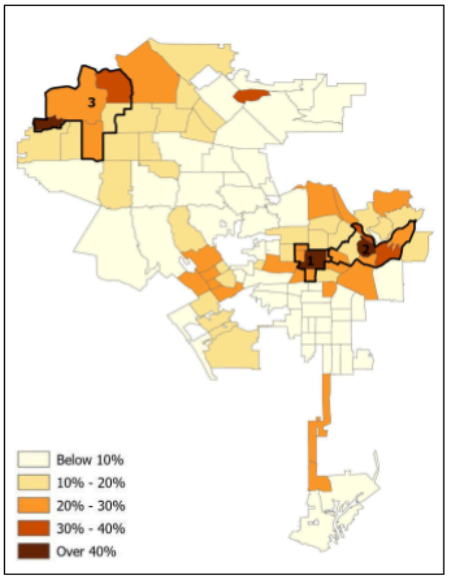


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods * Neighborhood is Split
1	25%	10%	34%	29%	Koreatown, Mid-Wilshire, East Hollywood, University Park, Pico-Union, Harvard Heights, Arlington Heights, Larchmont, Hancock Park, Windsor Square, Hollywood*
2	24%	11%	35%	29%	Westlake, Eagle Rock, Lincoln Heights, Chinatown, Echo Park, Silver Lake, Glassell Park, Atwater Village, Elysian Valley, Elysian Park, Downtown*
3	20%	6%	35%	37%	Northridge, Granada Hills, Chatsworth, Panorama City, North Hills, Porter Ranch, Winnetka*

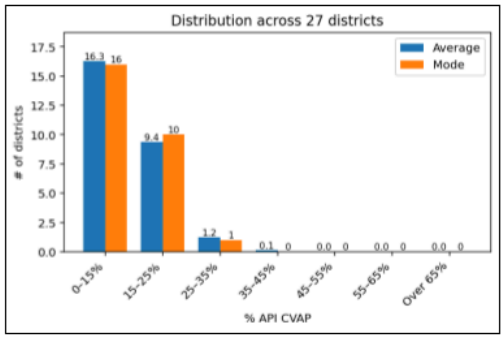
In comparing City Councils of 27 seats, the maximum AAPI district would be 38% CVAP, followed by Latino 31% CVAP, meaning one strong AAPI influence district. In the next two largest AAPI concentrations of 25% CVAP and 24% CVAP, the AAPI population would be second largest, following 43% Latino and 41% white. By comparison, in a City Council elected from nine three-seat PRCV districts, again with a win-threshold of 25% + 1, AAPI would again have one solid district with 26% of voters and two more influence districts (in the 15% to 25% range) of 20% and 19%.

27 SMD: Maximum AAPI Representation

% AAPI CVAP by Neighborhood

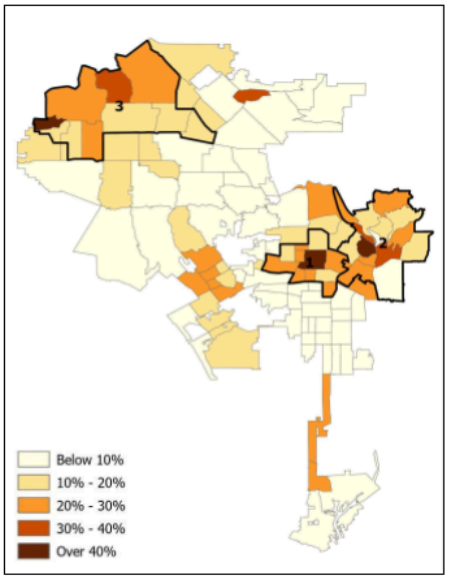


Dist.	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods ** Neighborhood is Split*
1	38%	10%	31%	19%	Koreatown, Harvard Heights, Windsor Square, Larchmont, Westlake*
2	25%	9%	43%	22%	Elysian Park, Elysian Valley, Chinatown, Lincoln Heights, Montecito Heights, Echo Park, Westlake*
3	24%	7%	27%	41%	Porter Ranch, Winnetka, Chatsworth, Chatsworth Reservoir, Northridge*



9 MMD: Maximum AAPI Representation

% AAPI CVAP by Neighborhood



	AAPI CVAP	Black CVAP	Latino CVAP	White CVAP	Neighborhoods ** Neighborhood is Split*
1	26%	11%	36%	26%	Koreatown, Mid-Wilshire, East Hollywood, University park, Pico-Union, Harvard Heights, Arlington Heights, Larchmont, Hancock Park, Windsor Square, Westlake*
2	19%	7%	50%	23%	Eagle Rock, Lincoln Heights, Highland Park, Chinatown, Echo Park, El Sereno, Montecito Heights, Glassell Park, Atwater Village, Boyle Heights, Elysian Valley, Mount Washington, Elysian park, Cypress Park, Downtown*, Westlake*
3	20%	6%	36%	37%	Northridge, Granada Hills, Chatsworth, Winnetka, Panorama City, North Hills, Porter Ranch, Canoga Park, Chatsworth Reservoir, West Hills*

Finding #3 - While ensuring that under the redistricting process, California's protected classes of racial minority voters have the ability to elect candidates of their choice, at the same time most voters do not vote exclusively or even primarily only upon race, but upon a range of issues and political perspectives.

Under winner-take-all single-seat districts, various political/issue constituencies voting upon a range of issues surrounding development and land use, social services, public safety, homelessness, parks and recreation, the arts and others, and to different groups of voters like renters and others may have little chance of winning a seat. By eliminating winner-take-all dynamics and allowing proportional representation of politically diverse groups, three-seat PRCV districts can better translate meaningful vote shares into actual seats.

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* Note - the terms single-seat districts and single-member districts, and multi-seat districts and multi-member districts are often used interchangeably. In the text above 'single-seat districts' and 'multi-seat' districts are used. In the charts, the abbreviations 'SMD' and 'MMD' refer to single- and multi-member districts.