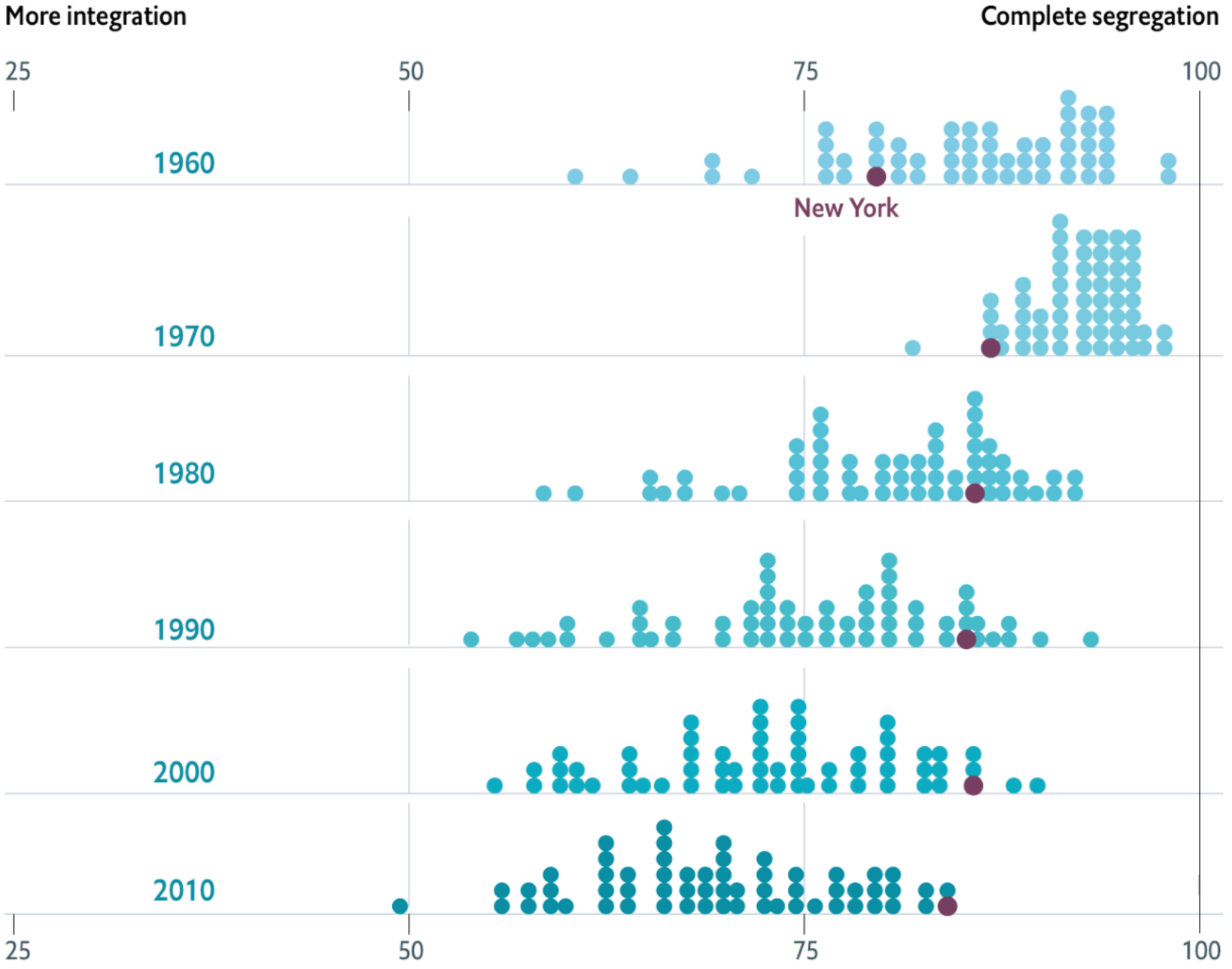
Distribution of black-white segregation in 60 largest metro areas



The **index of dissimilarity** is a demographic measure of the evenness with which two groups are distributed across component geographic areas that make up a larger area. The index score can also be interpreted as the percentage of one of the two groups included in the calculation that would have to move to different geographic areas in order to produce a distribution that matches that of the larger area. The index of dissimilarity can be used as a measure of segregation.

The basic formula for the index of dissimilarity is:

$$\frac{1}{2}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\left|\frac{a_i}{A}-\frac{b_i}{B}\right|$$

where:

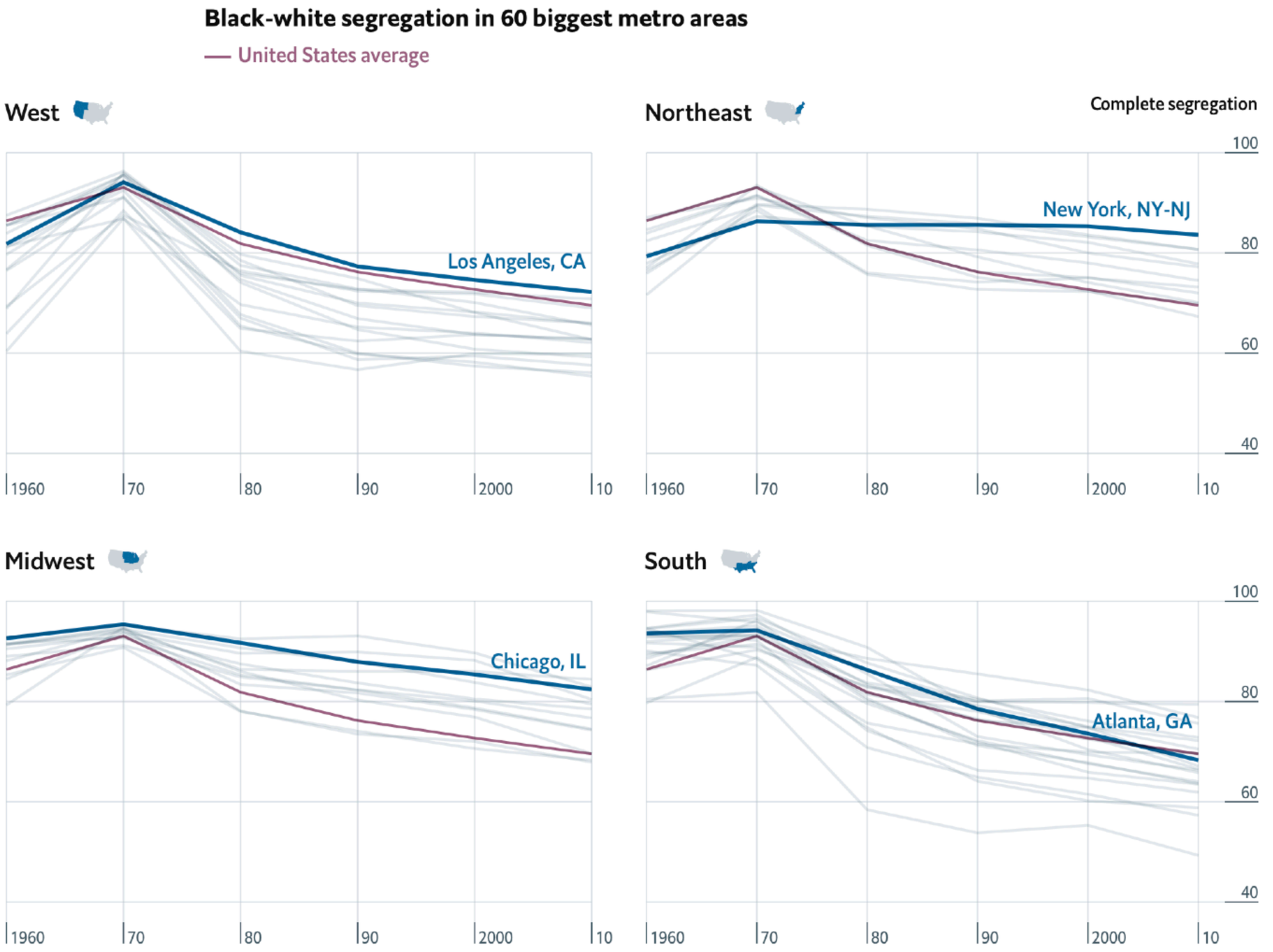
a_i = the population of group A in the i^{th} area, e.g. census tract

A = the total population in group A in the large geographic entity for which the index of dissimilarity is being calculated.

b_i = the population of group B in the i^{th} area

B = the total population in group B in the large geographic entity for which the index of dissimilarity is being calculated.

The index of dissimilarity is applicable to any categorical variable (whether demographic or not) and because of its simple properties is useful for input into multidimensional scaling and clustering programs. It has been used extensively in the study of social mobility to compare distributions of origin (or destination) occupational categories.


Black-white segregation in 60 biggest metro areas
United States average
West
Los Angeles, CA
Northeast
Complete segregation
New York, NY-NJ
Midwest
Chicago, IL
South
Atlanta, GA
100
80
60
40
1960
70
80
90
2000
10