

# Racial Demographic Change Increases Support for Voters' Veto Power Over Affordable Housing

Michael Hankinson\*

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## Abstract

Racial demographic change can induce group-based threat among those of the majority racial group. At the local level, such demographic change may cause white residents to use ostensibly race-neutral housing policy to maintain economic — and therefore racial — segregation. How does local racial demographic change affect voters' support for this exclusionary power? Using ballot referendum vote share from nearly 4,000 precincts in Los Angeles County, I find that an increase in the local non-white population leads to greater precinct-level support for direct democracy over affordable housing. This effect exists in both majority white and non-white precincts. I argue that voters' unwillingness to give up this "voters' veto" is grounded in the goal of excluding poor, largely non-white citizens from their community. Thus, local demographic change may entrench existing tools of segregation, despite larger movements for institutional reform. These findings underscore the tension between integration and local democracy in a diversifying society.

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\*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, GWU. [hankinson@gwu.edu](mailto:hankinson@gwu.edu)

A tension between integration and local democracy shapes the landscape of American society. Since 1917, American jurisprudence has slowly stripped away the ability to racially segregate communities (Rothstein 2017). In turn, voters and elected officials have increasingly relied on legal zoning practices to maintain economic segregation — and therefore a degree of racial segregation (Trounstine 2018; Sahn 2019). This “exclusionary zoning,” from the enshrinement of single-family zoning to the obstruction of affordable housing, can help establish a local price floor that prevents the immigration of lower-income residents into the municipality (Rothwell and Massey 2009; Trounstine 2020).

Traits of local democracy magnify these exclusionary tendencies. Off-cycle local elections generate low turnout, skewing whiter, wealthier, and towards homeowners, demographics associated with a financial interest in excluding lower-income migrants (Hajnal and Trounstine 2005; Hajnal, Kogan and Markarian 2022)<sup>1</sup>. At public meetings, residents are invited to appeal directly to policymakers. Not only are these attendees even less representative of the public compared to those who vote (Einstein, Palmer and Glick 2019), but comments made by white attendees are highly correlated with the eventual policy decisions (Sahn 2023). Taken to an extreme, residents can stymie integration via direct democracy when housing proposals and land use policies are placed on the local ballot. In short, local voters hold substantial veto power over the construction of new housing in their communities.

While the effect of local participatory institutions on segregation is well theorized, little is known about voters’ support for the institutions themselves. To date, researchers have focused on persuading voters to either support inclusionary housing policies (e.g., Hankinson 2018; Hankinson and de Benedictis-Kessner 2023; Marble and Nall 2021) or promote greater representation *within* existing institutions (e.g., Einstein et al. 2023). But even were attitudes and representation improved, not only would voters still be generally able to block unwanted projects, but the time, fees, and uncertainty that come with these institutions would continue to limit the construction of affordable housing options. In contrast, reforming institutions to limit voters’ direct control over housing may expand the entire housing pipeline, both promoting integration and addressing the supply-side of the affordability crisis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Though compare to de Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw (2023).

<sup>2</sup>See Been, Ellen and O'Regan (2019) for a review of the role of supply in the affordability of housing.

What shapes a voter’s willingness to limit or even give up their veto power over local policy? Racial demographic change often presents an economic, cultural, and political threat to the majority demographic group (Blumer 1958; Key Jr 1949), especially within a segregated context and when the demographic change occurs in close spatial proximity (Enos 2017). Thus, voters facing nearby demographic change may be less willing to cede their control over housing and exclusionary zoning. Integration itself may spur further opposition to pro-integration reforms.

In this paper, I assess the effect of local demographic change on support for the voters’ veto using a behavioral outcome. Since 1950, any proposal for new “low-rent” housing in California must win the support of a majority of voters via the municipal-level ballot. While initially targeted towards public housing, “low-rent housing” has been interpreted to include even privately-owned housing in which 50% or more of the units are government-subsidized.<sup>3</sup> Known as “Article 34,” this policy transferred final decision making over affordable housing from the city council to the local electorate. Recognizing that placing this veto power in the hands of voters made it more difficult to build affordable housing, the California legislature has tried repeatedly to repeal Article 34 via statewide ballot referenda, with failed attempts in 1974, 1980, and 1993.<sup>4</sup> These repeal efforts provide an opportunity to observe voters’ behavioral support for protecting their veto power over new, nearby affordable housing.

Using electoral returns from 3,718 precincts across Los Angeles County in the 1993 effort to repeal Article 34, I find that an increase in the local non-white population over the preceding decade leads to a higher precinct-level vote share in support of the voters’ veto over affordable housing. I use two analytical strategies to assess this relationship. First, I show that a standard deviation increase in a precinct’s non-white population decreases support for the repeal by 2.3 percentage points ( $d = .17$ ); similar effects are found when defining change as a proportion. Second, to account for the possibility that new voters in each precinct are driving this change, I measure the effect of a precinct’s spatial proximity to neighborhoods in which the non-white population increased most rapidly. Even in precincts which had experienced minimal change in their own racial demographics over this period of time, a standard deviation increase in spatial proximity to the nearest diversifying area led to higher support for the voters’ veto (+1.6 percentage points,  $d = .12$ ). As evidence that

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<sup>3</sup>While Article 34 still constrains the supply of affordable housing, local governments have found workarounds for supplying affordable housing without triggering a referendum (Barboza 2022).

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix Section A for the full text of Article 34 and the 1993 repeal ballot proposition.

this relationship generalizes beyond Los Angeles County, I show similar findings when using Census place-level data from nearly 400 California places, including in analyses which exclude Los Angeles County.

These findings contribute to our understanding of institutions, race, and voting behavior. Local racial demographic change increases support for voters' veto power over affordable housing. I argue that voters support this direct democracy as a defense against further demographic change in their community. But the effect is not exclusive to white communities. Even non-white communities share this backlash towards non-white migration. While I cannot directly observe the mechanism behind this opposition, I discuss alternative pathways beyond racial threat felt by white voters. For instance, middle-class minorities may desire to protect their perceived economic status by distancing themselves from the stigma associated with non-white migrants and a declining white population (e.g., Charles 2006; Lacy 2007; Pattillo-McCoy 1999).

My findings also underscore a fundamental quality of American local democracy: exclusion. Local governments in the United States have long been founded for the explicit purpose of excluding undesirable residents (Burns 1994). Compared to other Western democracies, the ability to shape the local population via housing and land use policy is not only uniquely strong, but also incentivized through fiscal competition and a lack of interjurisdictional redistribution (Freemark, Steil and Thelen 2020). In California, direct democracy over affordable housing likely originated to enable voters to exclude poor, non-white migrants from their communities (Cavin 2019). Debates over protecting this voters' veto against state preemption should consider these results as further evidence that voters understand and utilize this power in the pursuit of exclusion.

In November 2024, California citizens statewide will again vote on whether to repeal Article 34. Unlike previous efforts, this repeal is being explicitly framed as an anti-racism referenda (Vanderheiden 2022).<sup>5</sup> But the past decade of demographic change in California perfectly mirrors that of Los Angeles County in the lead-up to the failed 1993 repeal effort. Not only has the state's non-white population substantially increased, but high housing prices may be fostering the same sense of competition and territoriality among socioeconomic groups as recorded in Los Angeles of the early 1990s. In short, the November 2024 election is primed to again show how racial demographic change

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<sup>5</sup> "Article 34 is a scar on the California Constitution — designed to keep people of color and poor people out of certain neighborhoods — and it needs to be repealed." - Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco)

affects support for the voters' veto. Despite the state's liberal reputation, California's struggle to repeal this exclusionary institution stands as a microcosm of the wider conflict between integration and democracy in a diversifying society.

## Putting Housing on the Ballot

In the United States, direct democracy has a long history of enabling voters to bypass legislative processes (Bowler and Donovan 2006; Gerber 2011). At the turn of the 20th century, urbanization was outpacing the established rural preferences within state legislatures. Direct democracy allowed policy to move more quickly with changing public preferences, facilitating greater spending on the infrastructure needed to support an urbanizing electorate (Matsusaka 2008). The institution saw a second bloom starting in the 1970s, when a conservative public was more eager to cut taxes compared to liberal state legislatures (Matsusaka 2008). Thus, the institution is arguably neither conservative nor liberal, but may foster a better congruence between public preferences and policy outcomes (Leemann and Wasserfallen 2016; Simonovits, Guess and Nagler 2019)<sup>6</sup>

Within the state and local context, direct democracy frequently targets housing and has been used to perpetuate racial segregation. In a 1964 statewide election, California voters in predominantly white cities near diversifying areas were more likely to support a ballot measure allowing property sellers, landlords, and real estate agents to racially discriminate (Reny and Newman 2018). Once such *de jure* segregation was prohibited, voters began constructing economic barriers to integration (Trounstine 2018). Municipalities near center cities which experienced greater levels of mid-century Black migration were more likely to adopt single-family zoning (Sahn 2019). By preventing the construction of more affordable multifamily housing, single-family zoning helps set a minimum price of residency. This use of policy levers to economically "defend" one's community is collectively known as "exclusionary zoning" (Einstein, Glick and Palmer 2020).

In this paper, I focus on voter support for repealing one of these exclusionary tools: direct democratic control over affordable housing. While the institution appears race-neutral, the context of its implementation in 1950 underscores the tension between racial demographic change and support for voters' veto power. Following World War II, Congress passed the Housing Act of

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<sup>6</sup>Though a state's ability to use ballot initiatives is not associated with improved congruence (Caughey and Warshaw 2022).

1949, promising “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family” by building 810,000 units in six years. Simultaneously, the Second Great Migration was accelerating, with ultimately more than 5 million Blacks leaving the Southeast and moving to the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast (Wilkerson 2020). Consequently, backlash to this progressive housing program was swift. Residents in the Northern California coastal city of Eureka spearheaded a statewide constitutional amendment which would allow voters to stop their local housing authority from developing low-income housing in their community (Cavin 2019; Varian 2022).

Seeking a megaphone, the Eureka movement partnered with the California Real Estate Association (CREA), a precursor to the modern California Association of Realtors and the largest real estate group in the country. The CREA paid for the campaign to pass the measure, pitching the amendment as essential to countering “minority pressure groups,” preserving white neighborhoods and therefore home values (Staff 2019). In contrast, the “pro” argument in the 1950 official voter guide did not explicitly oppose affordable housing, but instead elevated local democracy:

A “Yes” vote for this proposed constitutional amendment is a vote neither for nor against public housing. It is a vote for the future right to say “yes” or “no” when the community considers a public housing project...It is an expression of confidence in the community’s future and in the democratic process of government. To strengthen the grass roots democracy which has made America protector of the world’s free peoples, vote “YES” on the Public Housing Projects Law (*Voter Information Guide for 1950, General Election 1950*).

Passing with a narrow 50.8 percent majority, Article 34 immediately began throttling the state’s supply of new affordable housing. By 1968, voters had turned down nearly half of the public housing that had been proposed — around 15,000 units. Many public housing agencies shelved projects rather than put them to a vote. Others attempted to ameliorate voters’ concerns about aesthetics and concentrated poverty. In 1968, the San Jose Housing Authority put forward a referendum in support of small duplexes and apartments of no more than four units scattered throughout the city. Still, the measure failed (Cavin 2019).

Meanwhile, the democratic appeal of Article 34 followed it beyond the ballot box. The amendment eventually arrived before the U.S. Supreme Court, where it was upheld in a 5-3 vote (*James*

v. *Valtierra*, 402 U.S. 137 (1971)).<sup>7</sup> Writing for the majority, the generally liberal Justice Hugo Black emphasized the democratic nature of the law, finding no evidence that the law was racially motivated:

This procedure ensures that all the people of a community will have a voice in a decision which may lead to large expenditures of local revenues. It gives them a voice in decisions that will affect the future development of their own community. This procedure for democratic decisionmaking does not violate the constitutional command that no state shall deny to any person “the equal protection of the laws.”

At the justices’ private conference, Chief Justice Warren Burger allegedly scoffed at the plaintiff’s claims, framing their argument as a suggestion that “too much democracy violates the Equal Protection Clause” (Cavin 2019).

Having lost at the Supreme Court, efforts to repeal Article 34 returned to the ballot box. In 1980, the pro-Article 34 campaign focused on taxes and local democracy and again defeated the repeal effort.<sup>8</sup> Facing a third repeal attempt in 1993, the pro-Article 34 campaign continued to emphasize the sanctity of local democratic voice:

Don’t give away our voting rights! Prop. 168 is a power grab by politicians. Elections are NOT “confusing” and “wasteful.” We should be able to vote on low rent housing projects in our communities. Government policies have caused a shortage of affordable housing in the first place.

What public comments exist on the 1993 repeal effort connect the proposition to quality of life issues. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, State Assembly Member Gebe Ferguson framed support for voters’ veto power over housing as both unrelated to race and shared by a diverse constituency (Martinez 1993):

I don’t think anyone can blame the general public for feeling that way. You have a drive-by shooting in Mission Viejo and then you tell [residents] you want to move in

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<sup>7</sup>Justice William O. Douglas did not participate in the case.

<sup>8</sup>“We all have to pay property taxes on our houses, or in our rent. The people in tax-exempt low-income public housing don’t pay any. We get stuck with their share of the costs.” Additionally, “The proponents don’t even mention they are *are going to take away your automatic right to vote for or against tax-exempt low-income public housing projects*” (*Voter Information Guide for 1980, Primary Election 1980*).

low-income people?...It's not a matter of race or income either, because low-income black communities don't want low-income housing built in their communities either, because of past experiences with that.

While Assembly Member Ferguson may have extrapolated when describing the preferences of “low-income black communities,” affordable housing has been historically stigmatized due to stereotypes about its occupants. If voters associate direct democracy over housing with an ability to exclude such occupants, then the veto power granted by Article 34 would be a valuable backstop against racial demographic change.

## Racial Demographic Change and Direct Democracy

What shapes voter support for direct democracy over local housing? From a principle-based perspective, voters may believe that some decisions should be voted on directly, others should not. In this case, support for direct democracy would be expected to remain stable or change in a way orthogonal to the expected policy outcome itself. But research has found voters to be only “weakly principled,” caring more about policy outcomes than the principles themselves (e.g., Bartels and Johnston 2020; Prothro and Grigg 1960). In contrast, from a policy-based approach, voters may be more likely to protect direct democracy if they believe that doing so would lead to the policy outcomes they prefer, compared to turning control over to an administrative or legislative entity.

As a third perspective, voter support for direct democracy may be based on their perception of their group’s status. A primary threat to the majority group’s power is demographic change, wherein a new population threatens the status quo power structure (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Blumer 1958; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Threat-induced support is conceptualized as less a concern about the particular policies pursued by the outgroup, but rather a general anxiety over the loss of economic, cultural, and political power. This group-based threat can be more psychological than strategic. For instance, Key Jr (1949) argues that racial threat increased white turnout in the American South, despite the inability of Blacks to wield political power at the ballot box at that time.

The November 1993 vote to repeal Article 34 is an opportunity to assess these competing theories. From 1980 to 1990, Los Angeles County — the focus of this study — saw relatively

little growth in its Black population. Instead, the county experienced a large increase in Hispanic migration and a proportionally large increase in Asian migration. Consequently, from 1980 to 1990, Los Angeles County's non-Hispanic white population decreased from 53 to 41 percent of the population. From an individual's perspective, the median Los Angeles County voter experienced an 11 percentage point (32 percent) increase in the non-white population share of their precinct.

This change did not go unnoticed. A 1992 survey of Los Angeles County residents found that 56 percent of respondents felt that their neighborhood was experiencing a change in ethnic composition (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996). Furthermore, this influx of Hispanic and Asian residents was concentrated in areas which were previously majority Black going back to the 1950s (Bergesen and Herman 1998). As a result, Black residents were the racial group most likely (78 percent) to agree that their neighborhood was racially changing (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996).

This neighborhood change contributed to two drivers of racial tensions. First, groups may inherently have different preferences regarding the identity of their neighbors. While all racial groups tend to show a degree of in-group preference (Charles 2006; Farley et al. 1994; Krysan et al. 2009), non-white residents may prefer having a sizable share of white neighbors compared to living in a uniformly non-white community due to concerns for their neighborhood's trajectory and their own economic status. An influx of non-white residents may signal a risk of declining in political influence, city services, or even property values. Second, a perceived competition for resources and status — defined by changing neighborhood landscapes — may magnify intergroup conflict.

Regarding preferences, Charles (2006)'s contemporaneous research uses an experimental design wherein respondents were asked their willingness to move into stylized neighborhoods of varying racial composition. Known as the Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality (LASUI), the survey was fielded from 1992 to 1993, making its conclusions especially relevant for understanding the November 1993 election in Los Angeles County. Documenting these preferences, Charles (2006, p. 183) writes:

Across racial groups, patterns of neighborhood racial composition preferences reveal a clear and consistent racial rank-ordering of out-groups as potential neighbors. Whites are always the most preferred out-group neighbors, and they are also the most likely to prefer entirely same-race neighborhoods or only limited contact with non-whites —

especially blacks.

Charles also finds that this preference hierarchy extends to neighborhood change: “Across racial groups, blacks are indisputably the least-desired neighbors. It is equally clear that, among non-whites, integration with whites is more favorable than integration with other non-whites” Bobo et al. (2000, p. 193). This preference for white neighbors may come from a belief that white constituents receive better responsiveness and public goods provision from elected officials.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, the preference may also come from who replaces the white neighbors. Middle-class minority communities may struggle to preserve economic status, especially in segregated contexts where they are spatially proximate to poorer minorities. Pattillo-McCoy (1999, p. 6) writes:

Middle-income black families fill the residential gap between the neighborhoods that house middle-class whites and the neighborhoods where poor African Americans live. Unlike most whites, middle-class black families must contend with the crime, dilapidated housing, and social disorder in the deteriorating poor neighborhoods that continue to grow in their direction. Residents attempt to fortify their neighborhoods against this encroachment...

This intra-racial cleavage has also been found among longtime Latino residents in the face of newer immigration waves. Located in Los Angeles County, the City of Pomona’s Latino population increased by 139% from 1980 to 1990. By 1993, tension within the Latino community was notable: “With the incoming groups of immigrants, there’s a new way of life. And I think these people [long-time Latino residents] feel a little threatened...They’ve been here for years and years and years and got used to a certain way of life. Now they see that they’re being outnumbered” (Romney 1993).

A second way minority voters may be as responsive to changing local demographics as whites is via perceived competition among racial groups for space. Drawing from her research in Los Angeles County, Charles (2006, p. 164) notes: “Concerns about relative group position are also somewhat apparent among blacks, whose preferences for both Asian and same-race neighbors are negatively

<sup>9</sup>Quoting a white constituent who spoke out in favor of moving to district elections, Anaheim city council member Jose Moreno recounts: “She was saying, ‘the one thing I noticed in my neighborhood is, the more Latinos moved in, the worse services we were getting — I don’t see our streets getting taken care of, I see divestment happening from our neighborhoods. And what I’ve come to understand is, it’s not that Latinos diminish the neighborhood; it’s that politicians diminish Latinos, and when they move into a neighborhood that neighborhood is not invested in.’” - Conversation with Jose Moreno, 01/13/20 (Hankinson and Magazinnik 2023).

influenced by the belief that this group poses a competitive threat to economic opportunities and political power.” Contemporary reporting reflects this conflict. A *Los Angeles Times* article written months before the 1992 Rodney King riots captures the unease among minority residents. Clifford (1991) writes:

Cultural collisions, often violent, occasionally fatal, are occurring every day. Hostilities between black residents and Korean shop-keepers, Latinos and blacks vying for jobs at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center, interracial fighting at Lawndale high school, and repeated charges of police brutality against minorities — all of this is disturbing the city’s racial peace in a way that has some political analysts recalling Watts.

Additional reporting at the time highlights the competition felt by long-time Black residents towards the new arrivals. Noble (1995) notes:

Marilyn Thompson, 45, a [Black woman and] telephone company manager who lived in Los Angeles for nearly 20 years before moving to Atlanta last year, also said the doors of opportunity seemed open for Hispanic and Asian residents but shut for blacks in California. “It seems like you can come into California and have nothing and end up with everything,” she said of other immigrants to the state. But, she said, blacks “can’t seem to get ahead.”

How does this perceived racial hierarchy and competition over housing and jobs shape inter-group relations? Eighteen months prior to the 1993 election, four white Los Angeles police officers were acquitted in the beating of Rodney King, a Black man. Rioting began within hours, concentrated in South Central Los Angeles and Koreatown. Researchers argue that the riots highlighted competition-fueled resentment between racial groups, with Black and Latino rioters targeting the Korean community. Black residents viewed Latinos as having taken over their community and competing in the labor market, whereas Latinos believed they were underrepresented politically (Johnson Jr and Farrell Jr 1992). Bergesen and Herman (1998) attribute the intensity of the riots to this desegregation and neighborhood succession, with areas of demographic change showing the

highest rates of violence.<sup>10</sup>

Research commonly associates racial demographic change with feelings of group-based threat among white voters. However, local demographic change can also provoke threat among non-white voters. These concerns may be grounded in what a shrinking white population may mean for a community's access to public goods or economic status. Or, the response can be directed towards the arriving group, either driving competition for resources or animating within-group tensions. Through any of these pathways, local racial demographic change may increase voters' desire to exclude or "fortify their neighborhoods against this encroachment" (Pattillo-McCoy 1999, p. 6). Thus, increases in the local non-white population may drive support for the voters' veto over affordable housing among all racial groups, not just white residents.

## Effect of Demographic Change

To test the effect of racial demographic change on support for the voters' veto over housing, I use two analytical strategies. First, I assess the effect of within-precinct demographic change from 1980 to 1990 on that precinct's support for repealing Article 34. Second, I subset to precincts which were demographically stable from 1980 to 1990, then measure the effect of spatial proximity to rapidly diversifying census tract on support for repealing the voters' veto. Results from both approaches are substantively the same. I begin with the within-precinct design.

## Data

I combine precinct-level election returns with tract-level Census data to generate 3,718 precinct-level observations in Los Angeles County. Compared to citywide returns, precinct-level measurement provides substantially more statistical power and is more likely to accurately reflect the variation in residents' local experiences. The analysis is limited to Los Angeles County as that is the only county where I have been able to find the contemporaneous voter file required for the analysis. However, I extend the proximity-based analysis to the remainder of California counties and find substantively similar results. Still, as of 1990, Los Angeles County contained 30% of California's

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<sup>10</sup>Viewing the riots as function of animosity may best explain the beliefs of non-white residents in South Central Los Angeles. In contrast, proximity to the riots surprisingly increased white voters' support for liberal policies (Enos, Kaufman and Sands 2019).

population, making this a substantively meaningful subset of the state's population.

Combining precinct returns with Census data presented a challenge. Los Angeles County does not have a shapefile of 1993 precinct boundaries. Thus, I use a geocoded Los Angeles County voter file from 1992 which includes each voter's address and precinct. I overlay the voters on shapefiles of the 1980 and 1990 Census tracts, generating data for the total number of voters per tract and per tract-precinct sub-unit. These quantities allow me to estimate the share of each tract's population that can be attributed to each precinct. I use this ratio to allocate counts of other Census data, e.g., the number of non-white residents, the number of manufacturing employees, the number of homes valued between \$80,000 and \$99,999, etc. After allocating these tract-level counts to each tract-precinct sub-unit, I sum the counts within each precinct. Using these precinct-level counts, I then calculate the percentages and values needed for the analysis.<sup>11</sup>

**Dependent Variable** My dependent variable is based on the precinct-level vote share for the repeal of Article 34 as voted on in November 1993. Within my precinct data, the weighted mean vote share was 44.6% in favor of repeal. This is compared to a recorded Los Angeles County vote share of 43.4% and a statewide vote share of 40.2% in favor of repeal. However, for conceptual clarity, I define *support for the voters' veto over housing* as the complement of support for repealing Article 34. Rather than contextualize effects as one's opposition to repealing the amendment, I can say that 55.4% of voters supported direct democratic control over affordable housing proposed for their community.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of support for this voters' veto across Los Angeles County. Blue points are the centroids of precincts that are in the top tercile of support ( $\geq 62\%$  in favor of the voters' veto), orange points are precincts in the bottom tercile of support ( $\leq 47\%$  in favor of repeal), and the middle tercile is omitted for visualization purposes only. Support for the voters' veto is concentrated outside of the central, more urbanized areas of Los Angeles County. The spatial trend largely aligns with partisanship as found using voter file party registration. Precincts with higher rates of Republican registered voters were also more likely to support the voters' veto (Figure C-1).

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<sup>11</sup>I repeat the process with two alternative approaches: using the Longitudinal Tract Data Base's standardized tract boundaries (Logan, Xu and Stults 2014), as well as using the tract of the precinct's centroid. While both alternative approaches generate nearly identical results, they also introduce noise via measurement error.

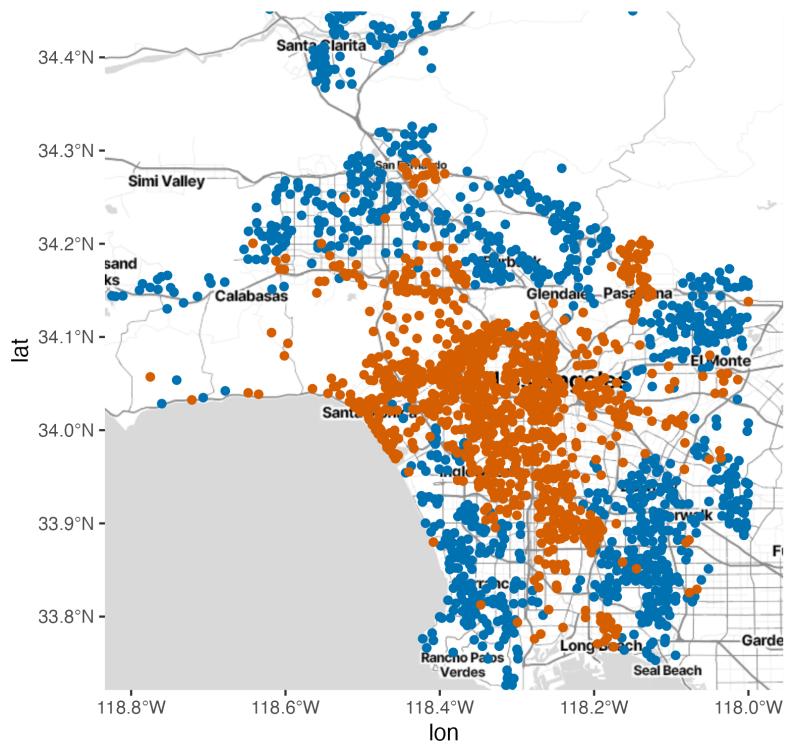


Figure 1: Distribution of support for the voters' veto using precinct centroids. Blue as the top tercile of support; orange as the bottom tercile of support. The middle tercile is omitted for visualization purposes only.

**Independent Variables** The treatment of interest is racial demographic change in the lead-up to the 1993 election. Given the election occurred prior to the creation of the American Community Survey in 2005, the data are limited to the decennial Census. Thus, my time domain for demographic change is from 1980 to 1990.<sup>12</sup> I operationalize this change in two ways:

- Percentage point change ( $Pop_t - Pop_{(t-1)}$ )
- Proportion change ( $\frac{Pop_t - Pop_{(t-1)}}{Pop_{(t-1)}}$ )

For reference, the population-weighted median precinct experienced an 11 percentage point (32 percent) increase in non-white population from 1980 to 1990. It is theoretically unclear which definition better captures local demographic change, so results are reported for both (e.g., Hill, Hopkins and Huber 2019). However, the correlation between the two measures of demographic change is 0.65, suggesting that the treatments are capturing different aspects of a similar phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

## Empirical Strategy

I regress precinct-level vote share in support of the voters' veto on the 1980-1990 change in non-white population at the precinct level. For comparability, I operationalize both treatments as a standard deviation increase in the precinct's non-white population.

My control variables are intended to account for other changes which may confound the relationship between non-white population change and support for repealing direct democracy over affordable housing. These include each precinct's 1980 pre-treatment percent non-Hispanic white, homeownership rate, vacancy rate, median household income, median home value, poverty rate, population density, population share with a college degree or higher, unemployment rate, and share of manufacturing as employment. Tables G-3 and G-4 include both the 1980 pre-treatment level of each control as well as the change in each control from 1980 to 1990 (e.g., Hill, Hopkins and Huber 2019). While including changes in controls over time biases the effect of demographic change

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<sup>12</sup>Capturing the additional 2 to 3 years of demographic change would require linear interpolation of the change in demographics between the 1990 and 2000 decennial Census. These additional years of change would be important if we believed that precinct trends from 1990 to 1993 were substantially different from those between 1980 and 1990. It is unclear whether the reduced bias from adding these 2 or 3 years would outweigh the noise caused by imprecision from interpolating yearly demographic change using decennial Censuses.

<sup>13</sup>Appendix D discusses in detail the ways in which these two measures differ in the context of Los Angeles County.

as a treatment, results are substantively identical and statistically significant.<sup>14</sup> I condition for time-invariant place attributes by using a Census place-level fixed effect and weight the data by the precinct population.

As shown in Figure D-3, treatment across precincts is non-random. Non-white residents may be more likely to select Census places to live, rather than selecting specific precincts. To account for this correlation across observations, I cluster standard errors at the Census place-level. However, there are likely other omitted variables that contribute to the error term and are spatially correlated. Likewise, this paper's proximity-based analysis (below) is premised on the belief that precinct outcomes are affected by nearby Census tracts. Both conditions violate SUTVA (Cliff and Ord 1970). As a robustness check, I use a spatial Durbin error model (SDEM) to account for potential spillover effects from neighboring precincts which may be affecting the relationship, as well as spatial autocorrelation among standard errors (LeSage 2014). The results are substantively the same as the non-spatial OLS models. For ease of interpretation, I present the non-spatial OLS model results here and the SDEM results in Appendix E.

Given my precinct-level treatment is estimated by aggregating Census tracts, there is inevitable measurement error in operationalizing demographic change from 1980 to 1990. Even more, because the treatment is derived from two precinct-level estimates (1980 and 1990), the two opportunities for measurement error may compound each other, producing outlier swings in demographic change which do not reflect reality. While these errors are not expected to introduce bias, I account for them by presenting all results using winsorized treatments — truncating extreme values at both ends to their 5th and 95th percentile, respectively. The results using non-winsorized data are substantively the same, statistically significant, and reported in Appendix G.

## Results

Figure 2 shows the bivariate relationship between my two treatment variables and precinct support for the voters' veto (Article 34 repeal) using a LOWESS curve with population weighting. Precincts that experienced greater increases in non-white population from 1980 to 1990 showed greater support for the voters' veto over affordable housing in the 1993 election.

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<sup>14</sup>I do not include a control for precinct-level partisanship, as I do not have pretreatment levels of partisanship. Effects are substantively similar when including 1992 voter registration, but the variable is post-treatment.

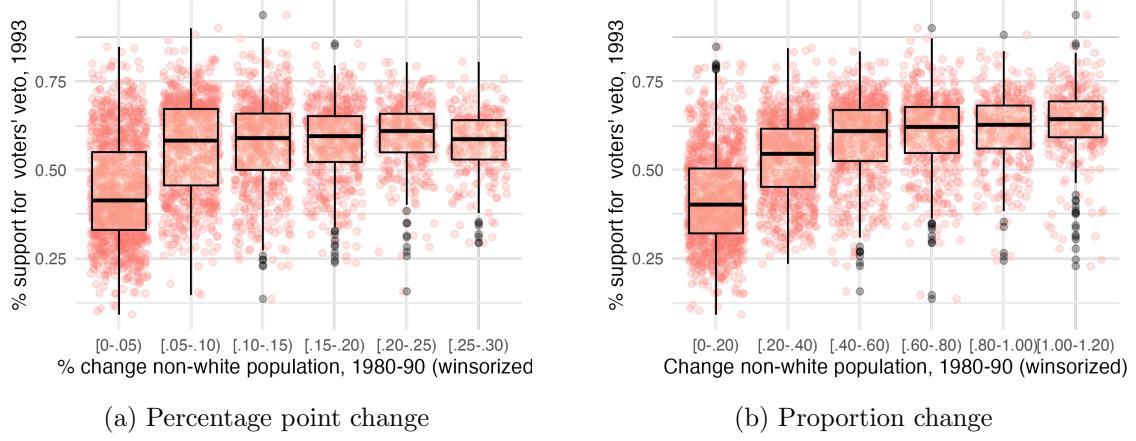


Figure 2: Relationship between precinct-level change in non-white population (winsorized) and support for Article 34 repeal.

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Percentage point change in non-white pop., 1980-90	0.045** (0.013)	0.023*** (0.006)		
Proportion change in non-white pop., 1980-90			0.061*** (0.010)	0.013*** (0.004)
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.569	0.791	0.611	0.782
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.552	0.782	0.596	0.773
Num. obs.	3718	3623	3718	3623
RMSE	3.714	2.586	3.527	2.637
N Clusters	144	141	144	141

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Table 1: Effect of change in a precinct's non-white population on support for voters' veto, 1993.

Table 1 presents the effect of a standard deviation increase in the non-white population on support for the voters' veto over affordable housing. Results for a percentage point change are shown in Models 1 and 2, while results from a proportion change are in Models 3 and 4. Models 1 and 3 use only Census place-level fixed effects, whereas Models 2 and 4 add controls for pretreatment levels. A standard deviation increase in the percent non-white (+8.6 percentage points) is associated with a 2.3 point ( $d = .17$ ) increase in support for direct democracy over housing. A standard deviation increase in the non-white population as a proportion change (+40.2 percent) is associated with a 1.3 point ( $d = .09$ ) increase in support for the voters' veto. These effects are nearly identical to those using non-winsorized data and are stable across an array of model specifications (see Tables G-3 and G-4).

### Mechanisms by Racial Groups

Much of the literature on racial demographic change has emphasized the sensitivity of white voters to the presence of racial minorities. Accordingly, I expect the largest effect of demographic change in precincts that were the most uniformly white as of 1980. To assess this differential response, I divide precincts into terciles by their pre-treatment non-Hispanic white population. I then replicate the models in Table 1, but interact treatment with an indicator for whether a precinct falls in the top tercile of percent white ( $\geq 83\%$ ). I drop the middle tercile of pre-treatment white population. The bottom tercile include precincts which were less than 55% white as of 1980. I also omit the control for pre-treatment percent white, due to collinearity with the percent white tercile indicator.

Across both definitions of demographic change, a precinct's white population in 1980 is a significant moderator of the treatment. However, not in the way hypothesized. The effect of demographic change is larger in more racially diverse precincts. In contrast, "white precincts" show much more muted effects. This may be the white precincts believed they could successfully mobilize against the affordable housing, even without the ballot vote; or that their largely white city councils would never approve the affordable housing without their consent. At the same time, non-white residents may have been more wary of the encroachment of poverty when they were losing white neighbors they associated with high property values, status, and public goods provision (e.g. Pattillo-McCoy 1999). Unfortunately for statistical power, Los Angeles County was very white in 1980. Thus, no individual racial group is large enough to make the ecological inference assumptions in a way

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Percent change, 1980-90	0.046*** (0.007)	0.046*** (0.006)		
Proportion change, 1980-90			0.104*** (0.017)	0.094*** (0.014)
Percent change, 1980-90 x Precinct white, 1980	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.036*** (0.006)		
Proportion change, 1980-90 x Precinct white, 1980			-0.091*** (0.012)	-0.086*** (0.012)
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.684	0.795	0.678	0.786
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.666	0.783	0.660	0.773
Num. obs.	2454	2402	2454	2402
RMSE	3.395	2.727	3.426	2.785
N Clusters	129	127	129	127

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Effect of change in nonwhite population on support for voters' veto, interacted with percent white, non-Hispanic at precinct level, 1980.

similar to white voters. Still, these findings indicate that the whitest areas pre-treatment were not the most sensitive to local racial demographic change.

## Effect of Proximity to Demographic Change

One threat to the above analysis is the possibility that voters within a diversifying precinct were not changing their behavior in response to the demographic change, but rather the composition of the precinct's electorate was changing. In other words, the higher support for the voters' veto may be coming from the new voters arriving in these precincts.

This alternative explanation is unlikely for two reasons. First, precincts with more non-white voters on average show lower support for the voters' veto (Figure C-2). Thus, it is not immediately clear that the newly arrived non-white voters would be more likely to vote against Article 34 repeal compared to long-time white residents. Second, for residential churn to increase support for the voters' veto, voters leaving the precinct would have to be *less* likely to support direct democracy over housing than those staying behind. This is improbable. Exit in response to demographic change is more likely among the least racially tolerant (Clark 1991) — those who are the most

supportive of the voters' veto. If anything, I would expect to see less support for direct democracy in diversifying areas if the least racially tolerant were being replaced with new arrivals.

Another way to account for the possibility that these effects are driven solely by residential turnover is to use an identification strategy which does not rely on racial change *within* each precinct as the treatment. Instead, I measure exposure to demographic change via the proximity of each precinct to a rapidly diversifying Census tract (e.g., Reny and Newman 2018). Across a variety of specifications, I find that precincts closer to diversifying neighborhoods were more supportive of the voters' veto over affordable housing. Furthermore, I show that this effect persists even in precincts which experienced little demographic change themselves. These findings suggest that residential churn is unlikely to be responsible for the results observed in the previous section.

## Data

Starting with the same precinct data as described above, I calculate each precinct's proximity to a "diversifying tract," a Census tract which experienced extreme demographic change. Given the magnitude of demographic change is relative, I define the population of Census tracts as those within 20,000 meters (12 miles) of any precinct within my dataset of Los Angeles County. From this population, I generated the percentile cutpoints (85th, 90th, 95th, 98th) for the degree of precinct-level non-white population change from 1980 to 1990.

**Dependent Variable** My dependent variable remains precinct-level vote share in support of the voters' veto over affordable housing in 1993.

**Independent Variable** My treatment is the proximity of each precinct to a Census tract which experienced an extreme increase in non-white population. To define extreme, I calculate the change in each Census tract's percentage point and proportion non-white from 1980 to 1990. For my main specification, I define stimulus tracts as those exceeding the 90th percentile of the increase in the non-white population. For the percentage point treatment, this is a  $\geq 24$  percentage point increase in non-white population. For the proportion change, this a  $\geq 98$  percent increase in the non-white population. Results are substantively the same using a range of cutpoints from the 85th to 98th percentiles (See Appendix G). I then measure proximity as the distance between the centroid of

each precinct and its nearest diversifying tract.

One challenge of using Census tracts to identify diversifying areas is that they do not perfectly match known neighborhood boundaries, meaning voters' perceptions of change may not match the administrative boundaries of Census tracts. On the other hand, Census demographers are careful to construct tract boundaries based on known landmarks, such as rivers, rail lines, and major streets. These boundaries tend to be very stable over time and are the most widely used unit of observation in quantitative studies of neighborhood racial change (Lee et al. 2008).

Still, some tracts have few residents, meaning a large swing in the non-white population may be neither substantively meaningful nor perceptible to those nearby. Thus, after defining the percentile cutpoints for demographic change, I subset to tracts with greater than the median population size (3,780 residents).<sup>15</sup> These diversifying tracts are those which experienced large increases in the non-white population from 1980-1990; they are also large enough such that their demographic change should register in voters' minds. Figure 3 shows the distribution of these tracts using both the percentage point change and proportion change definitions.

## Empirical Strategy

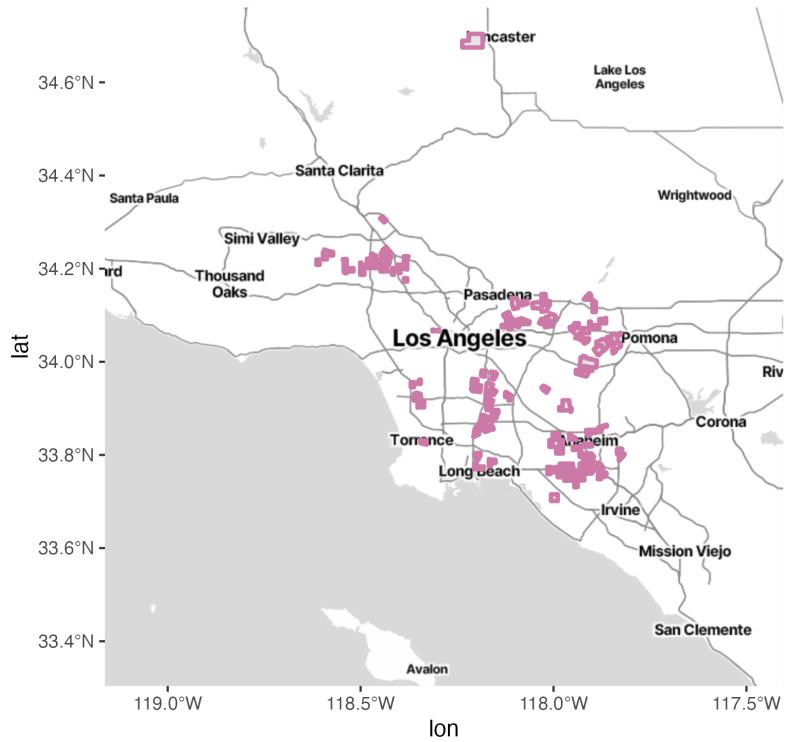
In this design, the treatment is a precinct's proximity to a diversifying Census tract — one which diversified significantly from 1980 to 1990. As in the previous models, I control for pre-treatment (1980) precinct-level covariates that would confound the relationship, including percent non-Hispanic white, homeownership rate, median household income, median home value, vacancy rate, poverty rate, population density, education, unemployment, and share of manufacturing as employment. Because treatment is based on proximity to a diversifying tract, I cluster standard errors at level of the nearest diversifying tract.

## Results

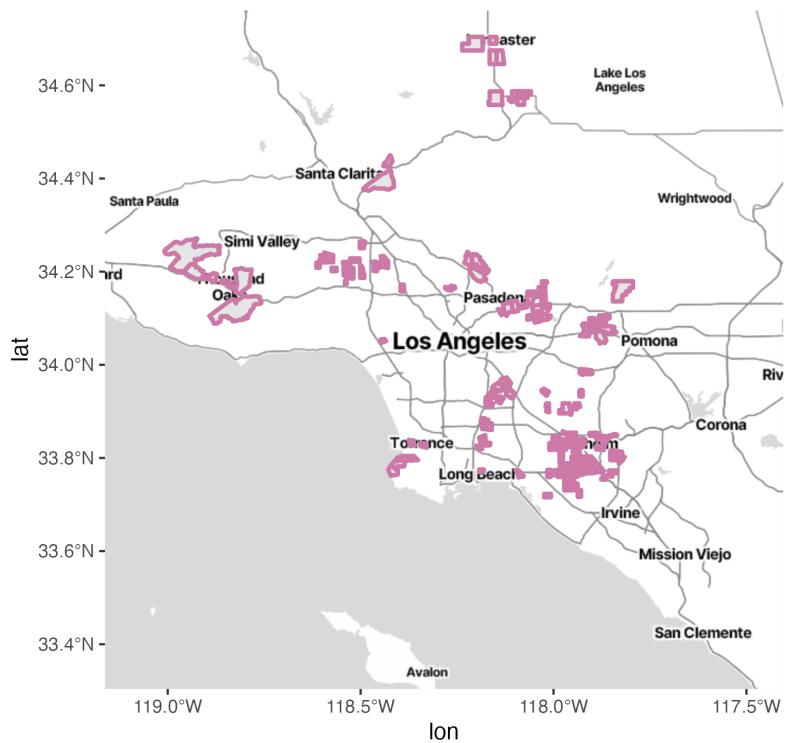
Figure 4 shows the bivariate relationship between a precinct's distance from a stimulus tract and support for the voters' veto using a LOWESS curve weighted by population. Precincts farther from these diversifying tracts — defined using either percentage point change or proportion change —

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<sup>15</sup>Results are identical when dropping only the bottom quartile of tract size, meaning all stimulus tracts would be greater than 2,897 residents.



(a) Percentage point change



(b) Proportion change

Figure 3: Stimulus Census tracts for proximity analysis.

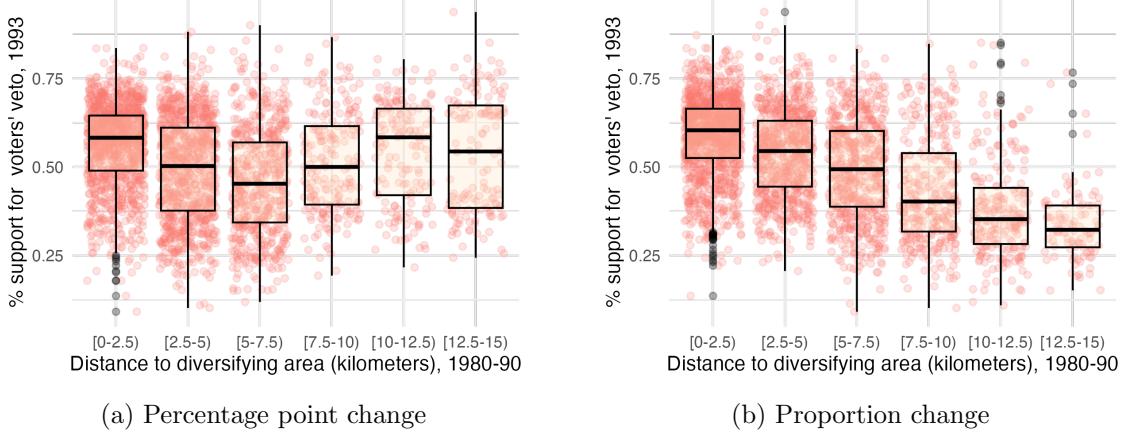


Figure 4: Relationship between distance from a diversifying Census tract and support for Article 34 repeal in 1993. X-axis clipped for visualization only.

show less support for direct democracy over housing. To assess the robustness of this relationship, I transform “distance away from” into the more analytically useful “proximity to” by multiplying distance by -1. I then standardize proximity so that the treatment is a standard deviation increase in proximity to a diversifying Census tract, centered at the mean. I regress support for the voters’ veto in 1993 on proximity to a diversifying tract, weighting by population.

The purpose of this analysis is whether the effects extend to precincts which experienced little change in their demographics from 1980 to 1990. If so, that would suggest that the within-precinct effects are less likely to be driven by residential turnover. Unfortunately, Census data from 1990 does not measure residential churn over the previous ten years. Therefore, as a proxy for residential churn, I subset to precincts which experienced little change in their own non-white population from 1980 to 1990.

Table 3 shows the effect of proximity to a diversifying tract among precincts in the bottom tercile of demographic change. For Models 1 and 2, these are precincts where the non-white population increased by fewer than 4.5 percentage points. For Models 3 and 4, the non-white population increased by less than 20%. I again vary whether diversifying tracts are defined based on percentage point (Models 1 and 3) or proportion changes (Models 2 and 4). All models include 1980 covariates and Census place fixed effects. Diversifying tracts are the same as those in the prior analysis. Across three of the four specifications, even subsetting to precincts which saw little demographic change themselves, areas which were closer to diversifying Census tracts showed

	Percentage Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity to change in non-white	0.013*		0.015**	
	(0.006)		(0.005)	
Proximity to prop. change in non-white		0.007		0.013*
		(0.006)		(0.006)
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.772	0.771	0.712	0.712
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.756	0.754	0.690	0.689
Num. obs.	1034	1034	1036	1036
RMSE	2.525	2.532	2.807	2.810
N Clusters	51	51	55	55

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Effect of proximity to diversifying tract on support for voter's veto, among precincts which changed minimally over the past ten years.

greater support for the voters' veto over housing compared to those farther away ( $d = .10$ ).

## Generalizing beyond Los Angeles County

With the granularity that comes from the Los Angeles County voter file, there are also limitations. To what extent are these findings a function of Los Angeles County in the year and a half following the Rodney King riots? One way to assess generalizability would be to replicate these findings using data from beyond of Los Angeles County.

While I do not have a voter file or precinct boundaries for other counties in California, I digitized Census place-level vote shares from the 1993 Article 34 repeal effort. Additionally, I aggregated covariate data from Census tracts to the Census place-level, providing controls for pre-treatment (1980) level of percent non-Hispanic white, unemployment rate, homeownership rate, vacancy rate, median home value, and percent with a college education or higher. Furthermore, because Census place boundaries are relatively stable across the decade, I am able to control for the place-level vote share for the previous Article 34 repeal effort in 1980.

Using these data, I replicate the proximity-based analysis based on a place's proximity to another Census place which experienced a large increase in the diversity from 1980 to 1990.<sup>16</sup> But

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<sup>16</sup>This design more closely following Reny and Newman (2018).

the replication is not exact. This analysis assumes that the effect of demographic change operates not only within a county, where the standard deviation of proximity is roughly 4 kilometers, but between cities. Here, the standard deviation of proximity to the nearest place is around 150 kilometers. To account for the larger scale, I define diversifying places as those at greater than the 95th percentile and with greater than median population. I also log the proximity measure, as the relationship is unlikely to decay linearly across space. Standard errors are clustered based on the nearest diversifying Census place.

For Models 1 and 2, halving the proximity to a diversifying block is associated with a roughly 1.2 point ( $d = .13$ ) increase in support for the voters' veto<sup>17</sup>. To further assess whether these effects generalize beyond Los Angeles, Models 3 and 4 estimate this relationship while excluding all Census places from within Los Angeles County. The effect remains substantively similar, with a halving of the proximity associated with a 1.5 point increase in support for direct democracy over housing ( $d = .16$ )<sup>18</sup>. Finally, these effects persist even in cities in the bottom of tercile racial demographic change, areas where I expect the least residential churn (Table G-9).

	All Places		No LA County	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity to change, 1980-90	0.018*** (0.004)		0.034** (0.005)	
Proximity to prop. change, 1980-90		0.016 (0.008)		0.022* (0.009)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.807	0.745	0.859	0.742
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.802	0.738	0.854	0.734
Num. obs.	332	339	274	272
RMSE	10.560	11.959	8.448	11.397
N Clusters	19	20	6	11

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Effect of proximity to diversifying Census place on support for voters' veto, including and excluding places from within Los Angeles County.

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<sup>17</sup> $1.6 * \log(2) = 1.2$  points.

<sup>18</sup> $2.2 * \log(2) = 1.5$  points.

## Implications for Evaluating Local Democracy

Researchers have increasingly warned of democratic backsliding in the United States and abroad (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; Waldner and Lust 2018), with American scholars interrogating the quality of democracy at the state level (Caughey and Warshaw 2022; Grumbach 2022). A natural extension is the quality of democracy with American local governments. However, my findings suggest that a local government’s control over land use and housing makes evaluating its democratic quality uniquely challenging.

The largely unfettered control local governments have over housing and land use policy brings a new dimension to their democracy: exclusion. Housing and land use policy have been used since the 19th century to exclude individuals from municipalities and shape the local electorate (Burns 1994; Trounstine 2018). While these exclusionary tactics may match local voters’ preferences, democratic theorists have argued that they conflict with liberal democracy (Young 2002, e.g.).<sup>19</sup> This tendency towards exclusion is pervasive in local government. From housing to education, American federalism has been a protracted conflict of local preferences for segregation versus the pursuit of integration and equality (Hochschild 1984). My findings underscore the importance of democracy for whom; that democratic institutions at the local level do not necessarily facilitate democratic outcomes.

## Conclusion

It is difficult to know what exactly was on the voters’ minds in the 1993 November election. By then, the large-scale, “slab-block” public housing developments associated with Pruitt-Igoe and urban renewal were no longer being built. Even if the proposition passed and Article 34 were repealed, voters would still have been able to block unwanted housing via the ballot. But rather than receiving an automatic placement on the citywide ballot, housing opponents would have had to collect signatures from 10% of local registered voters — the same protocol as most other local ballot initiatives.

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<sup>19</sup>Young (2002, p. 213) notes: “Class segregation endangers democracy in at least three ways. First, it discourages public spaces and public encounters. Like residential racial segregation, secondly, class segregation impedes communication between groups. Most importantly, by segregating themselves in enclosed enclaves or separate political communities, those more well-off can abandon a sense that wealthier citizens share problems with their less well-off neighbours and should co-operate with them to produce public goods.”

Still, the attempted repeal of Article 34 is a rare case of observing voters' behavioral support for voters' veto power. Using precinct-level returns, I find that local exposure to an increasing non-white population led to greater support for voter control over affordable housing. Furthermore, this behavior was not only expressed by majority white precincts, but shared by precincts with already sizeable Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations. For these voters, direct democracy over affordable housing was possibly a means of defense; fortifying their communities in the face of potential political, economic, and social decline.

These findings are timely. Los Angeles County of 1993 was a bellwether for California as a whole. In the 1990 Census, Los Angeles County was 41% non-Hispanic white, 11% non-Hispanic Black, and 10% Asian; 38% of residents identified as Hispanic or Latino. As of 2020, California is nearly identical: 41% non-Hispanic white, 6% non-Hispanic Black, and 15% Asian; 39% of Californians identify as Hispanic or Latino. The housing costs and competition that Charles (2006) documented in South Central Los Angeles have now spread across the state, with California having the highest housing costs in the nation. Yet despite these high costs, California continues to diversify. From 2010 to 2020, California's white population decreased by 24 percent, the largest statewide decrease in the entire United States. Coincidentally, from 1980 to 1990, Los Angeles County's white population also decreased by 23 percent. In November 2024, Californians will vote again on repealing Article 34. Voters statewide are primed to respond to these demographic changes and possibly fail to repeal this voters' veto for a fourth time.

Be it via ballot box or legislature, local control of land use has been a tool of segregation. Hopes to loosen local control to address both racial segregation and the supply-side of the housing affordability crisis hang on not only weakening the voters' veto, but on scaling up control to the state level. But these findings should give us pause: diversity begets greater support for local democracy in housing. And while Californians will be voting on Article 34 again in November 2024, a countermovement — “Our Neighborhood Voices” — is collecting signatures for a competing initiative that would end effectively state preemption of local land use policy. With California continuing to experience demographic change and increasing competition over housing, not only may this fourth repeal of Article 34 fail, but voters may instead jump at the chance to solidify local control over housing and thus integration. Wrapped in the guise of “small-d democracy,” local government’s ability to exclude citizens magnifies the challenges of liberal democracy in a

diversifying society.

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# Online Appendix for “Racial Demographic Change Increases Support for Voters’ Veto Power Over Affordable Housing”

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## A Article 34 Background

Article 34 of the California Constitution:

“No low rent housing project shall hereafter be developed, constructed, or acquired in any manner by any state public body until, a majority of the qualified electors of the city, town or county, as the case may be, in which it is proposed to develop, construct, or acquire the same, voting upon such issue, approve such project by voting in favor thereof at an election to be held for that purpose, or at any general or special election.”

1993 ballot measure to repeal Article 34 (Proposition 168):

“LOW RENT HOUSING PROJECTS. LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Amends state constitutional definition of low rent housing projects to include only projects owned by a governmental entity as defined. Excludes projects found to have no significant negative impact on the revenues of the affected governmental entity, and whose physical appearance is found to have no significant negative impact on the surrounding community. Requires approval by voters only upon qualification of ballot petition as specified. Exempts projects approved on or before November 3, 1992, or projects with existing contracts for federal financial assistance.”

## B Data Construction

### B.1 Voter File

The foundation of both analytical strategies is a 1992 Los Angeles County voter file generously provided by Enos, Kaufman and Sands (2019). This voter file is crucial because the November 1993 election precinct boundaries for Los Angeles County do not exist in a digitized form. Thus, I use precinct data included in the 1992 voter file to estimate these 1993 precinct boundaries. By geocoding each voter’s address, I estimate each precinct’s geography as well as match up the voters to Census tract boundaries for covariates.

The 1992 Los Angeles County voter file contains 3.7 million voters spread across 9,444 unique precincts. The Los Angeles County 1993 election returns contain 3,785 unique precincts. Why is there a discrepancy? Merging the voter file to the 1993 precinct returns by precinct ID generates a dataframe of 3,718 unique precincts, meaning some election precincts have unique IDs that do not match the voter file. This mismatch occurs because precincts are re-defined for each election. As a result, a “fresh” 1993 voter file would be necessary for this analysis if the 1993 electoral precincts were completely redrawn from scratch. But in reality, “new precincts” are almost always formed by combining existing precincts from the voter file. Thus, if a precinct ID from the 1992 voter file matches a precinct ID from the 1993 election returns, we can assume that its boundary has stayed intact.

What about precinct IDs from the voter file that do not appear in the 1993 election returns? These “misses” often occur because individual precincts may be combined into one precinct for the purpose of the election. Given 1993 was an off-cycle election with relatively low turnout (33% of registered voters in Los Angeles County voted), we should not be surprised that many precincts are consolidated into one precinct (one polling location) for the 1993 election.

But just because precincts are combined does not mean we are unable to recover their data. Precincts that are combined together generally contain the same prefix. For instance, Precinct 0050051A exists in both the voter file and the 1993 election returns. However, there is also a string

of precincts from the voter file that share the first 7 digits of Precinct 0050051A but are missing from the electoral returns. Think  $0050051x$ , where  $x$  is a vector of 10 letters: B, C, D, E, K, M, N, R, T, and Z. All of these missing precincts border each other. As further evidence that these voter file precincts are being combined for the election, the precinct which straddles both the voter file and the election returns (Precinct 0050051A) contains 116 votes in the election returns, but only 7 registered voters in the voter file. Where are the other voters coming from? If we sum the voters in all  $0050051x$  precincts from the voter file (435 voters) and multiple that sum by the Los Angeles County Turnout (.3368), we get 137 expected voters in the 1993 election. In reality, the election returns state that 116 voters turned out in Precinct 0050051A. This is strong evidence that precincts which share a prefix were bundled together for the purpose of the 1993 election. I treat these voter file precincts as such, bundling them under their prefix for the purpose of merging them with the 1993 election returns.

## B.2 Census Data

All of these approaches rely on Census data for the treatment and control variables. Because the election precedes the creation of the American Community Survey, I rely on decennial Census data. The election of interest occurred in November 1993. I rely on demographic change from 1980 to 1990. While this approach misses the last 3 years of demographic change prior to the election, extending the treatment and controls to 1993 would rely on linearly interpolating the trend using decennial data from the 2000 Census as an endpoint. This introduces measurement error which would only be worthwhile if there were meaningful trend changes within Los Angeles County from 1990 to 2000.

The Census data comes from the tract level so that I may include an array of meaningful covariates. Race and housing characteristics are drawn from the full SF1 dataset, while employment, education, and income variables come from the sample-based SF3 dataset.

## B.3 Weighted Voters to Census Tracts

A key assumption of using the voter file overlay to aggregate Census tract data to precincts is that the proportional distribution of voters over tracts is an accurate reflection of the population distribution over tracts. This is hard to verify, but realistic. The risk comes from the degree to which the voter file does not represent the population. For example, one part of a Census tract may have residents who are less likely to register to vote. Thus, this neighborhood would be under-weighted when allocating attributes to a precinct. All of the people in the low-registration neighborhood are still allocated to some precinct, but they are spread more to the areas where residents are more likely to be registered to vote.

Imagine a wealthy precinct and a poor precinct overlapping a middle class tract. The wealthy precinct has more registered voters compared to the poor precinct. Given the tract attributes are "evenly distributed", the wealthy precinct will take a larger share of these residents given it has more registered voters. This makes the wealthy precinct appear slightly less so in the data compared to reality. The poor precinct will capture fewer middle class voters from the tract, thus appear poorer than in reality. I do not expect this to introduce substantial bias.

Another challenge may be the final weighting of the model. All regressions are weighted by the population of the precinct. The population of the precinct is estimated by the tract allocations, introducing some measurement error. While I have total votes at the precinct level without any measurement error, turnout may be a downstream outcome of treatment, which would introduce bias into the model. Thus, I weight the models by estimated precinct population.

## C Descriptives

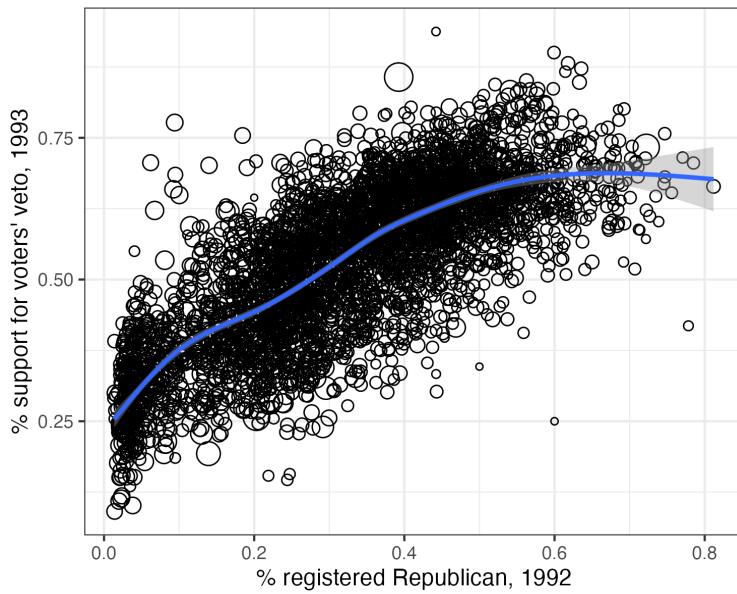


Figure C-1: Relationship between precinct-level Republican registration in 1992 and support for Article 34 repeal in 1993.

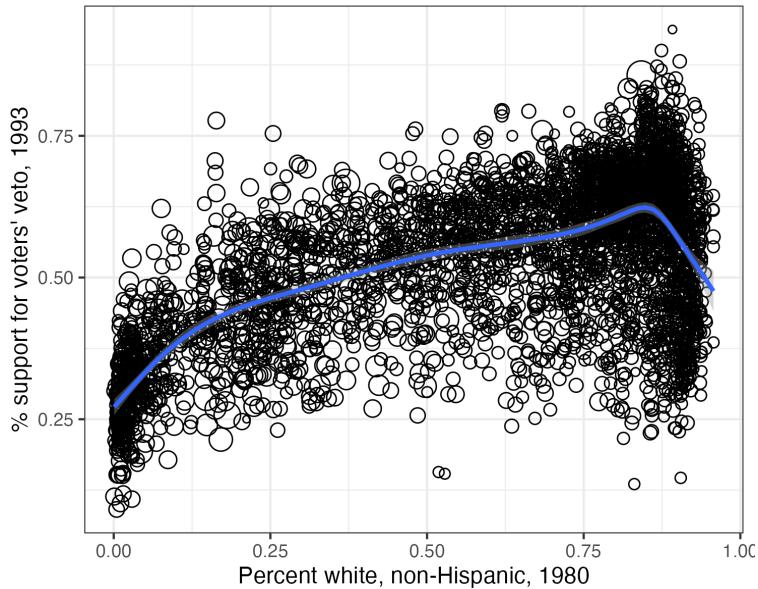


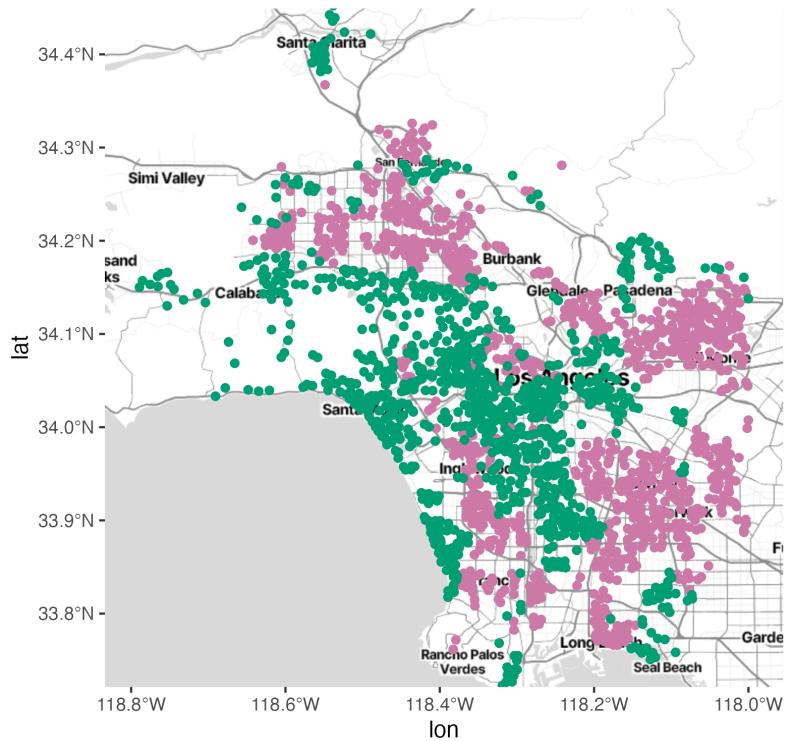
Figure C-2: Relationship between precinct-level percent white, non-Hispanic (1980) and support for Article 34 repeal (1993).

The relationship is nonlinear, but the association is statistically significant even when controlling for partisanship, education, employment, poverty rate, and traits of the local housing market.

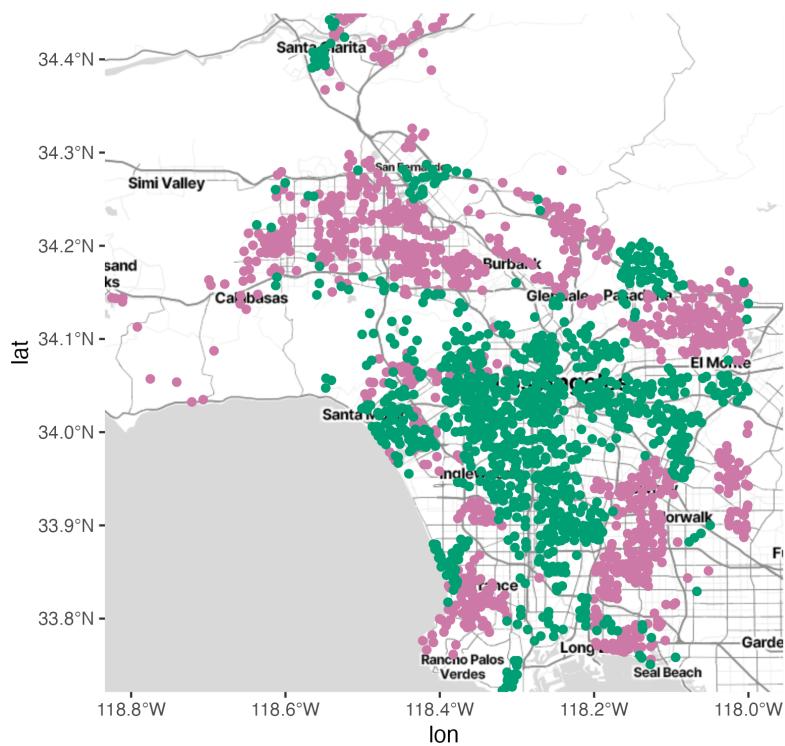
## D Defining Treatment

Figure D-3 shows a map of how precincts changed from 1980 to 1990. Green precincts changed the least (bottom tercile), pink precincts changed the most (top tercile), with the middle tercile omitted. Q3 precincts (pink) of both measures of racial change generally cover comparable areas, though with some notable exceptions around the Santa Monica Mountains in the upper left quadrant of each map.

To understand how areas of intense demographic change may differ, Figure D-4 shows the relationship between the 1980 percent non-Hispanic white population (i.e., pre-treatment white population) on the x-axis and each treatment measure on the y-axis. In very white areas, large changes in percentage point population are unlikely, e.g., 98% white precincts cannot experience 20 percentage point increases in non-white population. However, a large proportion change is common in very white areas. A 98% white precinct could easily experience a 4 percentage point increase in the non-white population, equaling a 200% percent change in the non-white population. In short, most of the variation in the percentage point change in population occurs in areas between 50 and 80 percent white, whereas most of the variation in proportion change is in areas that are greater than 80 percent white circa 1980.



(a) Percentage point change



(b) Proportion change

Figure D-3: Distribution of racial demographic change from 1980 to 1990 shown using precinct centroids. Green as bottom quartile of racial change; pink as top tercile of racial change. Middle tercile omitted.

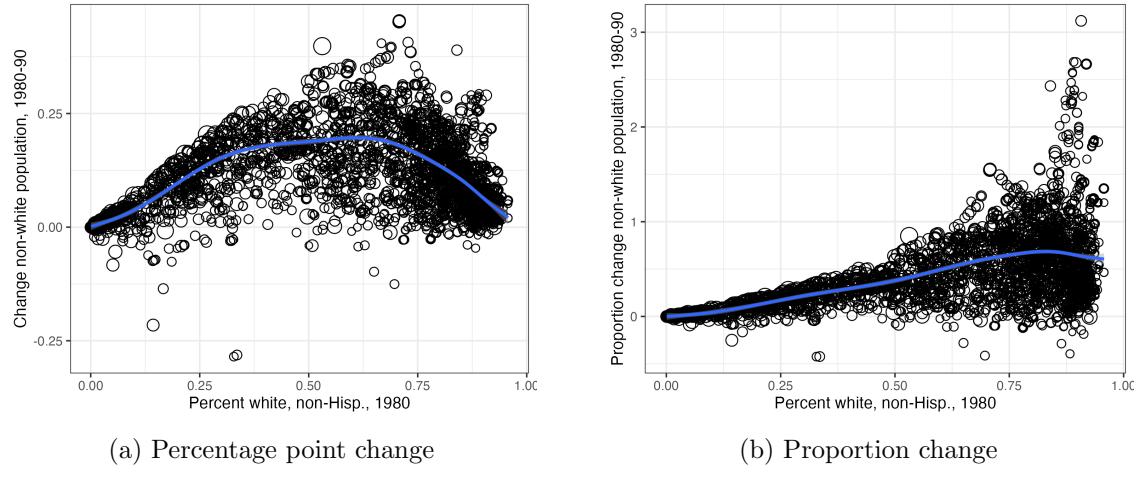


Figure D-4: Variation in the two treatment variables based on a precinct-level percent white, non-Hispanic population in 1980 (pre-treatment).

## E Spatial Durbin Error Model

Spatial autocorrelation can be a problem when using geographic data due to the data's violation of SUTVA. Neighboring observations can influence each other, violating SUTVA's independence assumption. Likewise, omitted variables may be spatially correlated. Fortunately, these relationships can be modeled.

Using a spatial model requires two steps: the definition of spatial relationships and the choice of a model to account for spatial dependence. The most common way to model spatial relationships is by using queen contiguity weights. These weights account for spatial interactions between units sharing either a border or a vertex. Contiguity weights are especially helpful for the precinct data used in this analysis because the relationships are not sensitive to absolute distance. For example, some parts of Los Angeles County are very dense, where spillovers may only extend 500 meters. In contrast, interactions between precincts in rural Los Angeles County may occur at the level of several kilometers. By defining spatial interactions at the level of shared precinct borders, this design accounts for variation in the scale of human interaction across Los Angeles County.

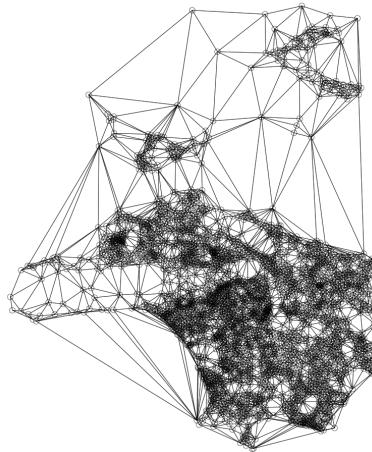


Figure E-5: Spatial relationships for queen contiguity weights.

Figure E-5 shows the spatial interactions between units in Los Angeles County as defined by a queen contiguity weights matrix. Figure E-6 shows the distribution of the number of links each precinct has. Each precinct has at least 3 spatial neighbors, while the median precinct has 6 neighbors that the spatial model will take into consideration.

To select a model, I considered how spatial dependence may be affecting the analysis. First, the treatment of demographic change is likely to be affecting neighboring precincts. In fact, the second analysis of this study is based on exposure to nearby diversifying precincts. Thus, the model would need to account for this spillover effect. Second, there are likely omitted variables which may be spatially correlated. A spatial Durbin error model (SDEM) accounts for the spatial spillover effects

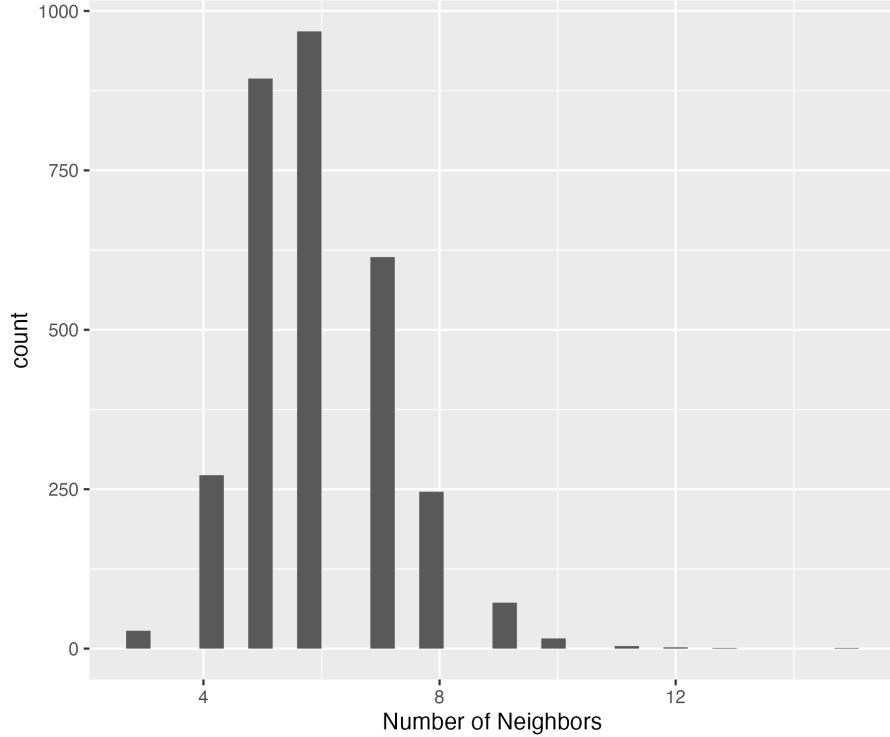


Figure E-6: Distribution of links between precincts using queen contiguity weights.

of covariates as well as autocorrelation in the error term (LeSage 2014).

I reproduce the results from the Table 1 using the SDEM. Due to the computational intensity of incorporating the spatial autocorrelation, adjustments were made to the model specifications. Models 1 and 3 include Census place-level fixed effects, but no covariates. Models 2 and 4 include covariates, but no fixed effects. Due to the computational intensity, the covariates in Models 2 and 4 are limited to the 1980 precinct-level percent non-white residents, homeownership rate, vacancy rate, population density, median household income, and unemployment rate. The results are substantively similar across all four models. All models use the queen continuity weights matrix and are weighted by precinct population.

Having accounted for spatial spillovers and spatially correlated error terms, a standard deviation increase in the local non-white population causes a 1.5 to 1.8 percentage point increase in support for direct democracy over housing. When defined as a proportion increase, the effect is a 0.8 to 2.4 point increase in support for the voters' veto over affordable housing. These effects largely the results from the non-spatial OLS model in Table 1.

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Change in prop. non-white, 1980-90	0.015*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)		
Prop. change in prop. non-white, 1980-90			0.024*** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)
Place FE	Yes	No	Yes	No
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num. obs.	3118	3118	3118	3118
Parameters	235	19	235	19
Log Likelihood	3536.483	3541.869	3577.418	3501.771
AIC (Linear model)	-5136.636	-5572.850	-5651.671	-5258.356
AIC (Spatial model)	-6602.966	-7045.738	-6684.837	-6965.542
LR test: statistic	1468.331	1474.887	1035.166	1709.186
LR test: p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table E-1: Effect of change in percent nonwhite on support for voters' veto, spatial Durbin error model.

## F Mechanisms by Race

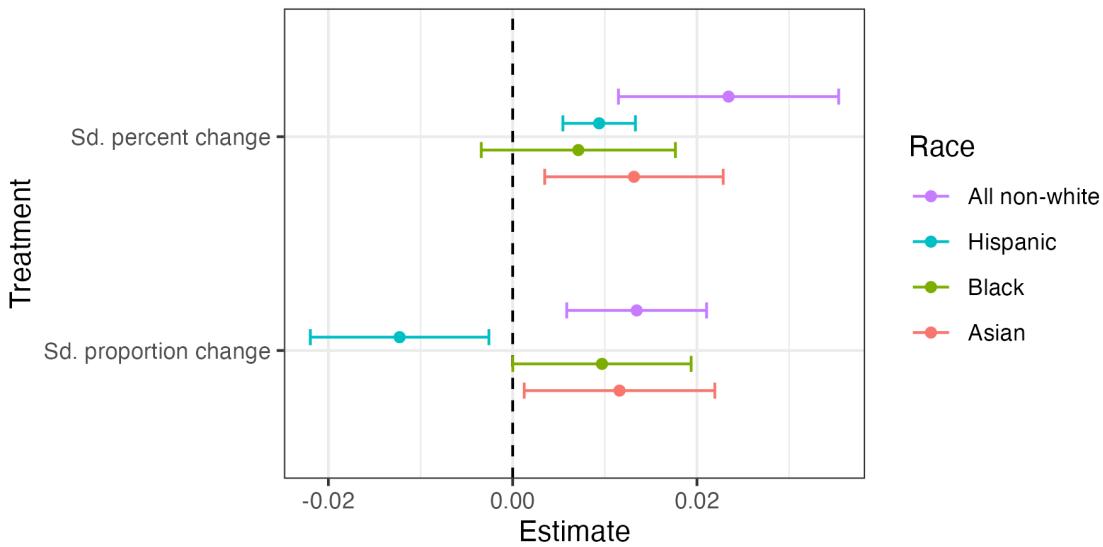


Figure F-7: Relationship between precinct-level change in non-white population and support for Article 34 repeal.

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Percent change, 1980-90	0.046*** (0.007)	0.046*** (0.006)		
Proportion change, 1980-90			0.104*** (0.017)	0.094*** (0.014)
Percent change, 1980-90 x Precinct white, 1980	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.036*** (0.006)		
Proportion change, 1980-90 x Precinct white, 1980			-0.091*** (0.012)	-0.086*** (0.012)
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.684	0.795	0.678	0.786
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.666	0.783	0.660	0.773
Num. obs.	2454	2402	2454	2402
RMSE	3.395	2.727	3.426	2.785
N Clusters	129	127	129	127

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table F-2: Effect of change in nonwhite population on support for voters' veto, interacted with percent white, non-Hispanic at precinct level, 1980.

## G Alternative Models

### G.1 Internal Change Across Multiple Models

	Change				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Change in non-white, 1980-90	0.057*** (0.010)	0.045** (0.013)	0.037*** (0.007)	0.015** (0.005)	0.023*** (0.006)
Place FE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.163	0.569	0.602	0.729	0.791
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.163	0.552	0.601	0.727	0.782
Num. obs.	3718	3718	3612	3612	3623
RMSE	5.075	3.714	3.491	2.887	2.586
N Clusters	144	144	141	141	141

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-3: Effect of change in percent non-white on support for voters' veto.

	Change				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Change in prop. non-white, 1980-90	0.086*** (0.004)	0.061*** (0.010)	0.028*** (0.005)	0.011*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.004)
Place FE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.340	0.611	0.570	0.724	0.782
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.340	0.596	0.568	0.723	0.773
Num. obs.	3718	3718	3612	3612	3623
RMSE	4.508	3.527	3.633	2.911	2.637
N Clusters	144	144	141	141	141

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-4: Effect of change in proportion non-white on support for voters' veto.

## G.2 Internal Change, Non-Winsorized Data

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Change in prop. non-white, 1980-90	0.040*** (0.012)	0.019*** (0.005)		
Prop. change in prop. non-white, 1980-90			0.059*** (0.012)	0.010* (0.004)
City FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.562	0.788	0.596	0.781
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.545	0.779	0.579	0.772
Num. obs.	3718	3623	3718	3623
RMSE	3.743	2.603	3.598	2.643
N Clusters	144	141	144	141

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-5: Effect of change in percent nonwhite on support for voters' veto.

### G.3 Internal Change, Quadratic Model

	Change		Proportion Change	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Change in prop. non-white, 1980-90	0.056*** (0.013)	0.031*** (0.007)		
Prop. change in prop. non-white, 1980-90			0.079*** (0.007)	0.027*** (0.005)
Change, squared	-0.021*** (0.005)	-0.011*** (0.003)		
Prop. change, squared			-0.034*** (0.004)	-0.013*** (0.003)
City FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.583	0.794	0.649	0.786
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.566	0.785	0.634	0.777
Num. obs.	3718	3623	3718	3623
RMSE	3.655	2.566	3.354	2.616
N Clusters	144	141	144	141

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-6: Effect of change in percent nonwhite on support for Article 34 repeal, quadratic and winsorized.

### G.4 Proximity to Change, Alternative Percentile Thresholds

	Proportion Change			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity to change (98th)				0.004 (0.008)
Proximity to change (95th)				0.026 (0.014)
Proximity to change (90th)			0.020** (0.006)	
Proximity to change (85th)	0.020** (0.006)			
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.787	0.787	0.785	0.783
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.778	0.778	0.776	0.774
Num. obs.	3132	3132	3132	3132
RMSE	2.654	2.656	2.667	2.680
N Clusters	131	96	41	13

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-7: Effect of proximity to diversifying tract on support for voter's veto.

	Proportion Change			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity to proportion change (98th)				0.023** (0.006)
Proximity to proportion change (95th)				0.002 (0.005)
Proximity to proportion change (90th)			0.006 (0.005)	
Proximity to proportion change (85th)	0.004 (0.005)			
Place FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.783	0.784	0.783	0.790
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.774	0.775	0.774	0.781
Num. obs.	3132	3132	3132	3132
RMSE	2.680	2.678	2.680	2.641
N Clusters	131	96	41	13

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-8: Effect of proximity to diversifying tract on support for voter's veto.

## G.5 Proximity to Change, Places

	Min. Change Percent	Min. Change Prop.		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximity to change, 1980-90	0.037** (0.008)		0.017** (0.004)	
Proximity to prop. change, 1980-90		0.035* (0.015)		0.022* (0.009)
Include Los Angeles	Yes	Yes	No	No
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.859	0.785	0.841	0.820
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.851	0.773	0.833	0.811
Num. obs.	152	152	162	162
RMSE	9.089	11.203	10.326	10.971
N Clusters	10	15	13	17

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table G-9: Effect of proximity to diversifying Census place on support for voters' veto, among census places in the bottom tercile of demographic change (1980-1990).