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Water Inequality and Race in Austin, Texas

Due to disparities between Austin Texas's predominantly minority east, and the whiter, wealthier west, various disparities have emerged. One of these disparities is in water quality. Industrial facilities and landfills in the east of Austin contribute to pollution which ends up in the water system. In this paper, we examine the relationships between pollution sources, water quality, and race in Austin. We will use City of Austin water quality data combined with watershed boundaries to examine affected areas, as well as census maps to track race and land use maps to track activities associated with pollution. We combined these maps using intersection and area calculation to determine what areas are most affected by water quality. We have found high levels of correlation between polluting land uses and race, but not for water quality. However, it appears that the data source itself focused more on west Austin, with fewer points collected in the east. Further data collection will be needed to attain a better understanding of water quality.