

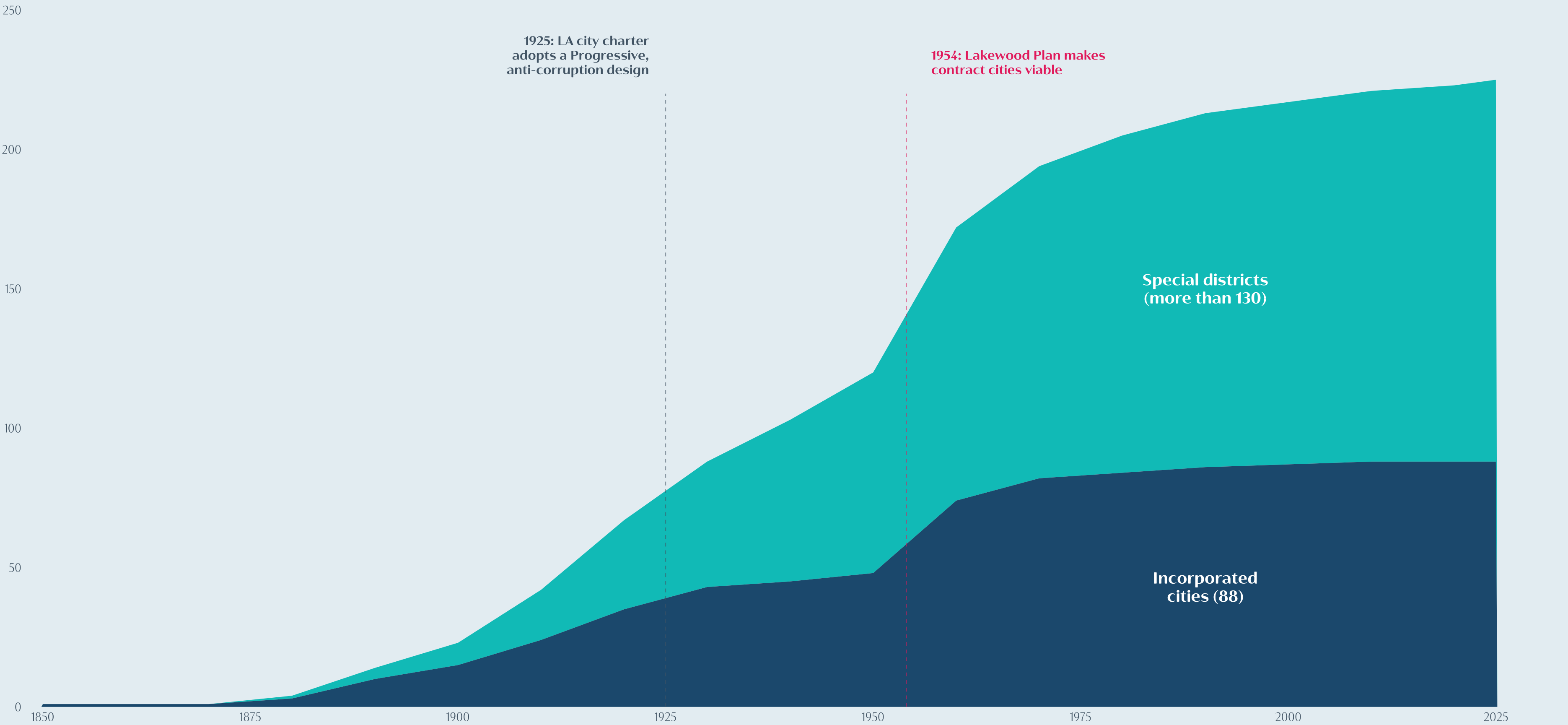
The Fragmented Metropolis

Mayoral Power in Los Angeles

Weekend Wanderings | June 2026
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Fragmented Metropolis: One County, Hundreds of Governments

Cumulative incorporated cities and special districts, Los Angeles County, 1850 to 2025



1925: LA city charter
adopts a Progressive,
anti-corruption design

1954: Lakewood Plan makes
contract cities viable

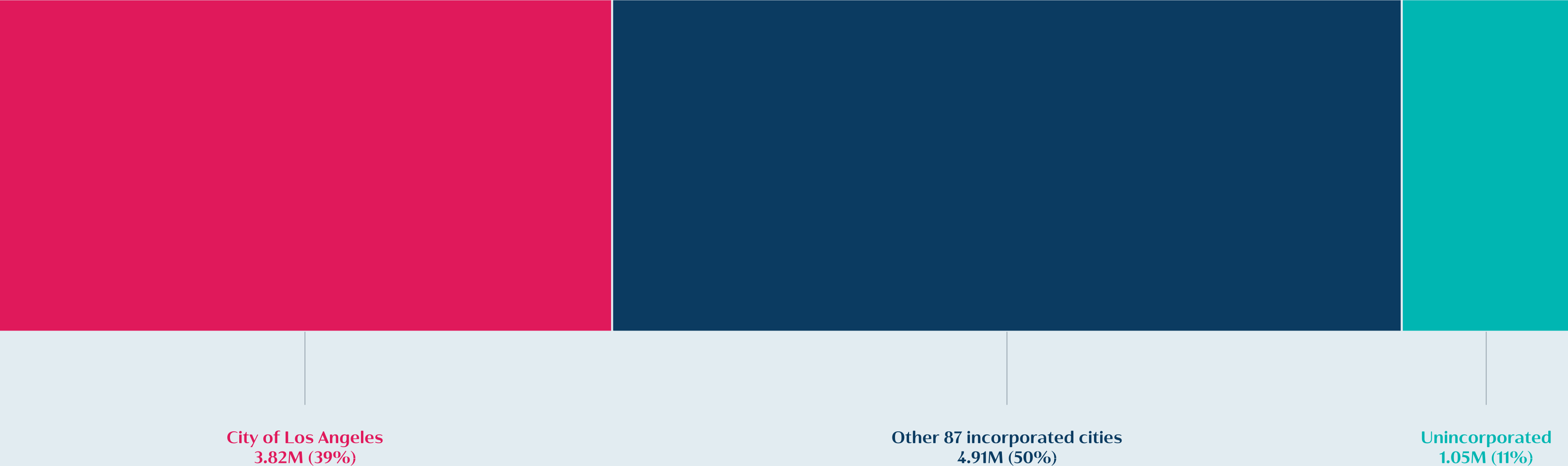
Special districts
(more than 130)

Incorporated
cities (88)

Source: LA LAFCO incorporation registry; LA County Auditor-Controller special-districts list; California State Controller Special Districts Annual Report.
Special-district count varies by classification and source. | jeffreycleveland.com/presentations

Phantom Majority: Most of "LA" Lives Outside the City

Share of LA County's 9.78 million residents by jurisdiction (2020-2024 ACS)



Dispersed Authority: The Mayor Leads Just Five of Fifteen

Primary and shared authority over 15 core public services, by level of government

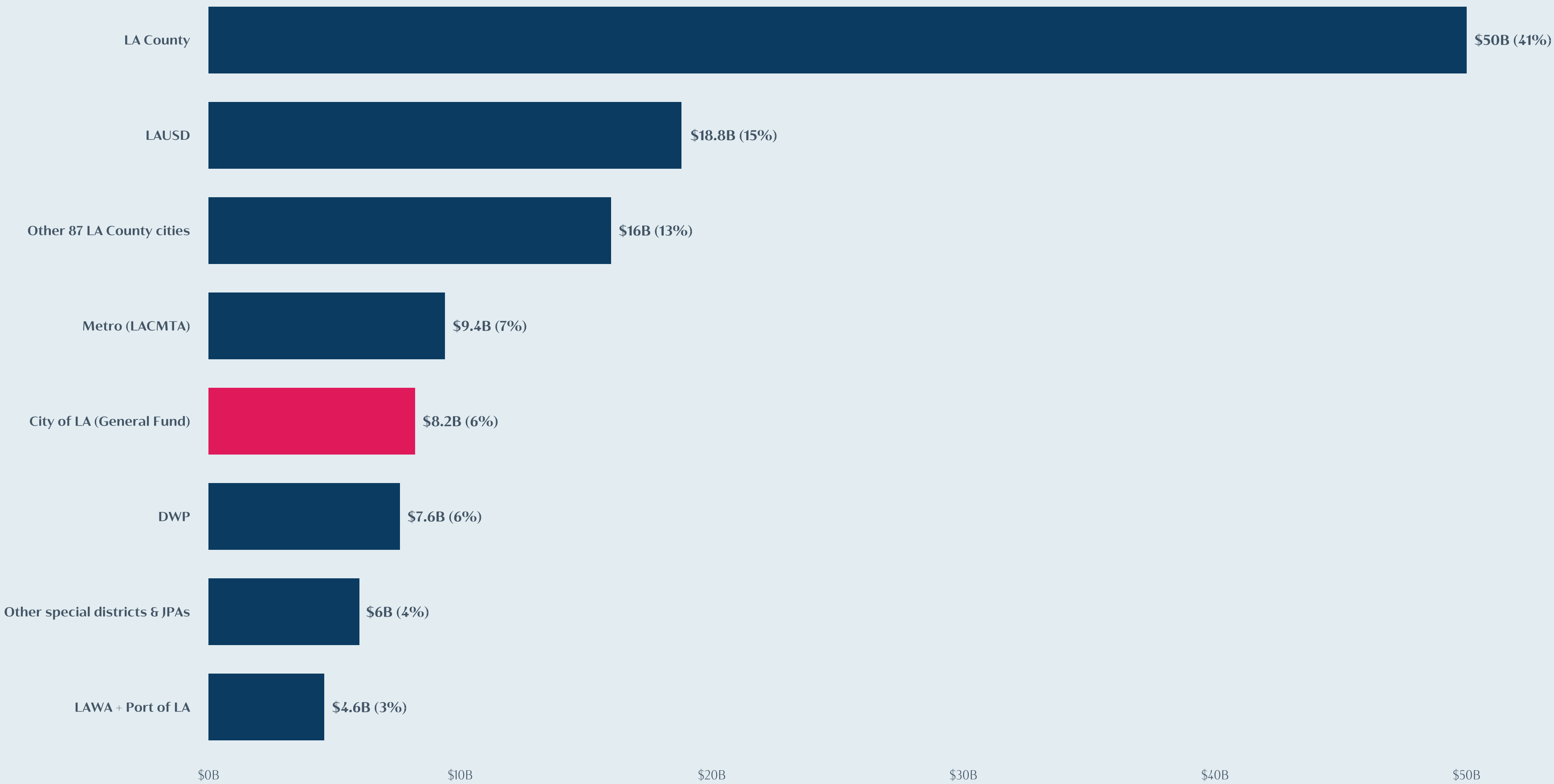
Primary authority Shared authority No formal role

	City of LA	LA County	LAUSD	Metro	State/Fed	Spec. Districts
K-12 schools	No formal role	No formal role	Primary authority	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role
Police	Primary authority	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role
Fire & paramedics	Primary authority	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role
Sheriff & jails	No formal role	Primary authority	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role
Homelessness	Shared authority	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	Shared authority
Public health	Shared authority	Primary authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role
Transit	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Primary authority	No formal role	Shared authority
Streets & sidewalks	Primary authority	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role
Water supply	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	Primary authority
Electricity	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	Primary authority
Parks	Shared authority	Shared authority	Shared authority	No formal role	Shared authority	Shared authority
Housing	Shared authority	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	Shared authority
Welfare	No formal role	Primary authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role
Ports	Primary authority	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role	No formal role
Airports	Primary authority	Shared authority	No formal role	No formal role	Shared authority	No formal role

Sources: Sonenshein, 'Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government' (LWV, 2006); LA City Charter; LA County Charter. 'Primary' means direct operational or budgetary control of the core service. 'Shared' includes joint powers, board representation, regional programs, state or federal funding and regulation, and material policy influence. Stylized authority map, not an exhaustive legal matrix. | jeffreycleveland.com/presentations

Small Slice: The City's General Fund Is Six Percent of the Pie

Approximate FY2026 budgets of major LA County public entities, in billions



Sources: City of LA Adopted Budget FY26 General Fund; LA County FY2025-26 adopted and final adopted; LAUSD FY26; LACMTA FY26; LADWP FY26; LAWA FY26; Port of LA FY26. Figures are approximate and not fully additive across all-funds, operating, and proprietary categories; proprietary departments (DWP, LAWA, Port) are shown on operating or appropriations bases. | jeffreycleveland.com/presentations

Constrained Mayor: A Weaker Hand Than New York's

Formal mayoral powers under the Los Angeles and New York City charters

Mayor controls directly Shared or qualified Mayor has no role

	Los Angeles	New York City
School board	Elected by district (mayor has no role)	Mayor appoints chancellor and 13 of 24 members
Department heads	Mayor appoints with council; council can reinstate on appeal	Serve at the mayor's pleasure
Budget	CAO advises mayor and council	Set by mayor and council
Governing body	No single governing body	The mayor