# SOUTH AFRICA'S LANGUAGE PROBLEM

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GIS101, May 2018
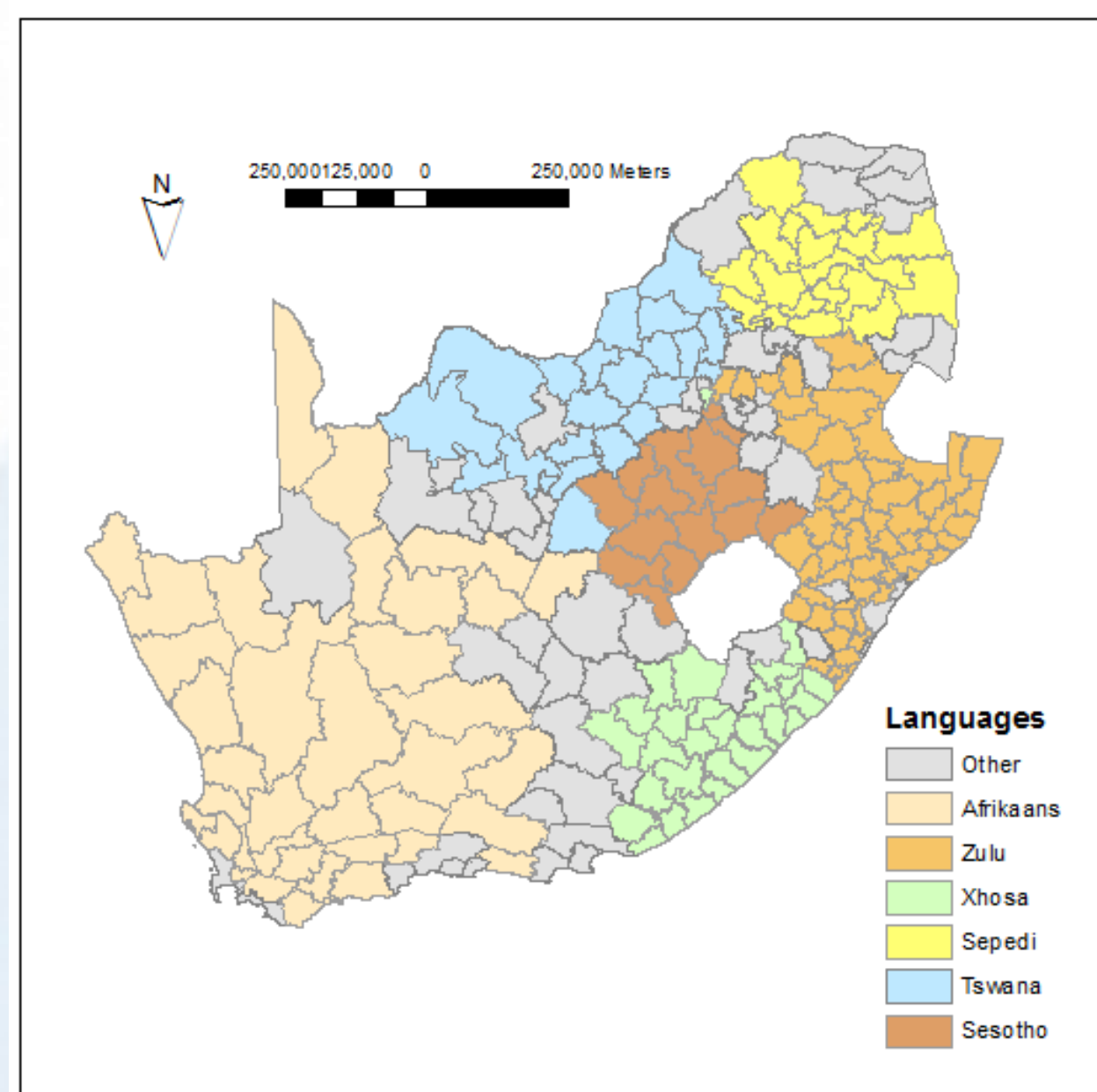
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## BACKGROUND

There are 11 national languages in South Africa, but unlike other countries with multiple languages, South Africa lacks an effective regulatory authority. The current regulatory body, the Pan South African Language Board (SALB), faces allegations of corruption and poor management, and little action has been seen to effectively any languages other than Afrikaans and English[1]. This is especially concerning given the historical legacy of language segregation in South Africa. During the apartheid era, South Africans were forced to learn Afrikaans or English rather than traditional Bantu languages under the Bantu Preservation Act, alongside systematic oppression of black South Africans. What this report attempts to analyze is whether areas with areas with greater language diversity receive fewer government services than areas dominated by Afrikaans and English.
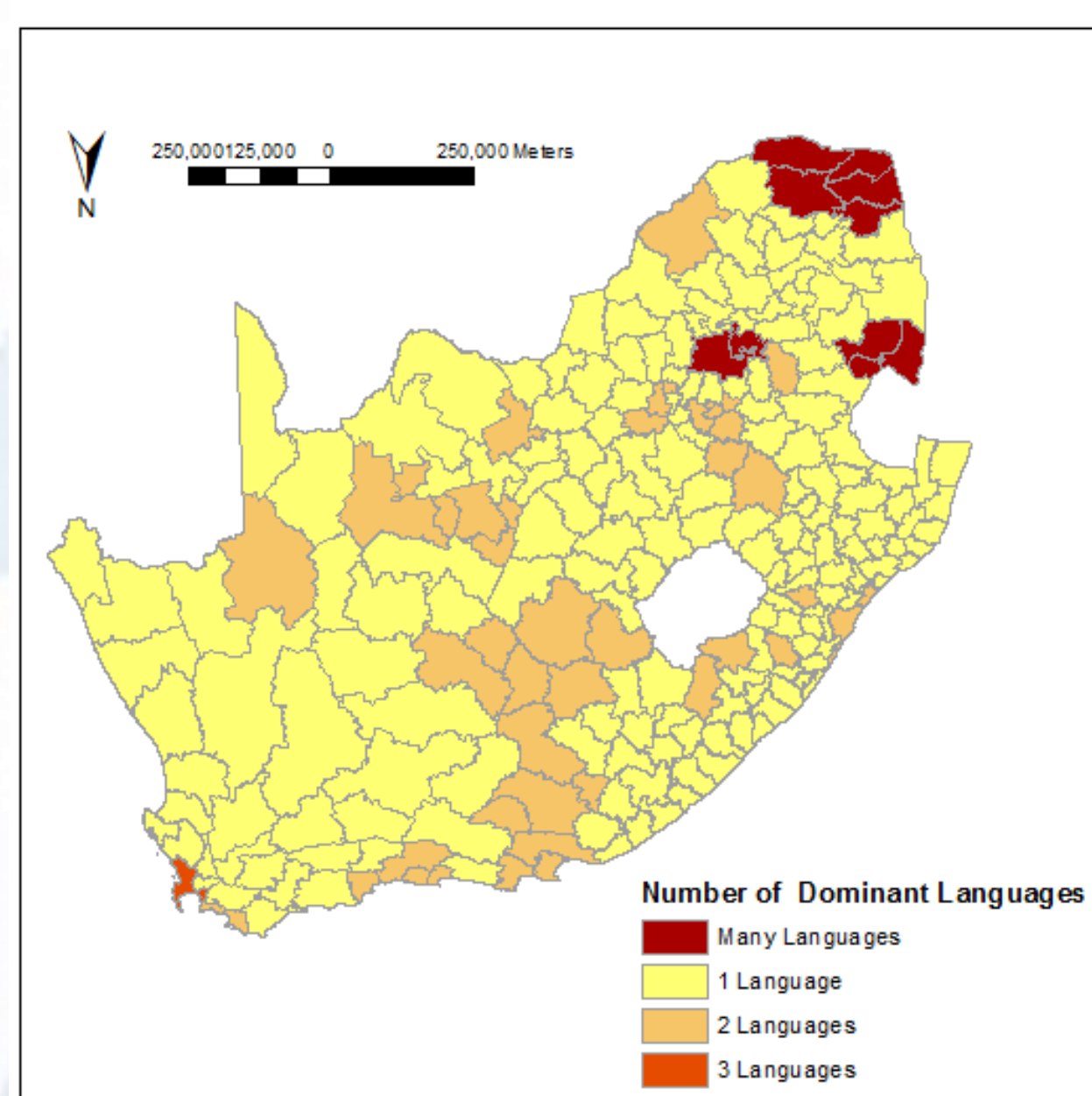
## METHODS

The first step was to isolate the areas where languages reigned dominant in South Africa, or whether clustering of languages existed at all. Information was gathered from Stats South Africa (STATSSA), the national census organization, regarding populations' primary languages per municipal area. High language diversity was observed across the nation, and thus I categorized languages with 20% of a municipal area's speakers as dominant in that region. I also calculated which municipal areas have multiple dominant languages, to see which areas had multiplicity of language.

### DOMINANT LANGUAGES IN MUNICIPAL AREAS



Languages
- Other
- Afrikaans
- Zulu
- Xhosa
- Sepedi
- Tswana
- Sesotho

### LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN MUNICIPAL AREAS



Number of Dominant Languages
- Many Languages
- 1 Language
- 2 Languages
- 3 Languages

### SOURCES

[1]Johnson. "An Official Mess." *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 05 July
      2012. Web. 09 May 2017.
[2]"Language Debate Continues in SA Schools." *Enca.com*. ENews Channel Africa, 16
      June 2014. Web. 09 May 2017.
[3]"South Africa Profile - Timeline." BBC News. BBC, 06 Apr. 2017. Web. 09

May 2017.
Background: https://mybroadband.co.za/news/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Proudly-South-African-Flags.jpg

**Coordinate System:** Hartebeesthoek94_Lo25
**Projection:** Transverse Mercator

Data from Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) and District Health Information System (DHIS)

## METHODS CONT'D

I then compared each of the interpretations of language distribution in South Africa with accessibility to government services such as tap water, refuse disposal and education in municipal areas.
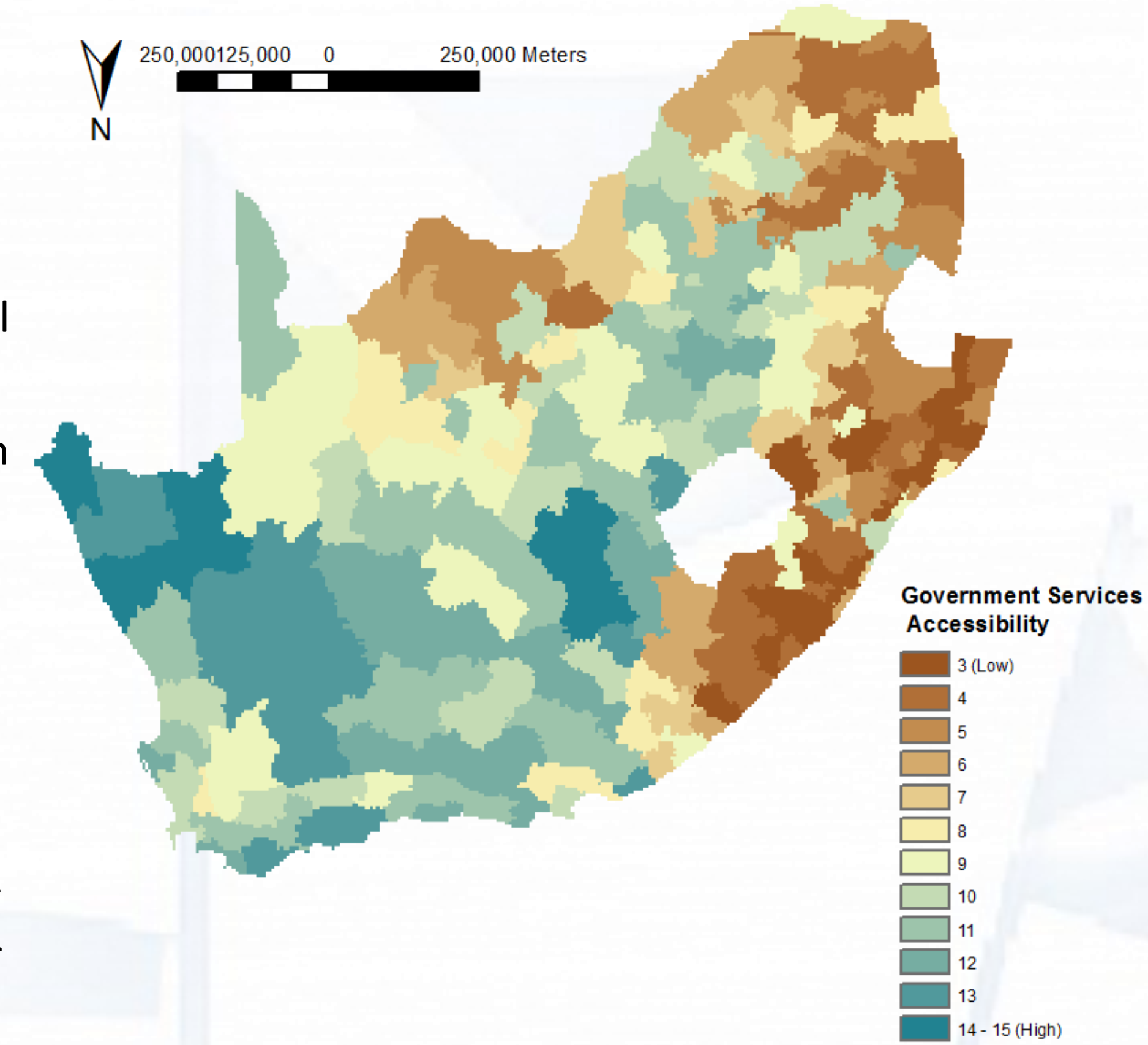
I then compared each of the interpretations of language distribution in South Africa with accessibility to government services such as tap water, refuse disposal and education in municipal areas.

To calculate each of these graphs, I accessed data from STATSSA:

⇒ accessible tapwater
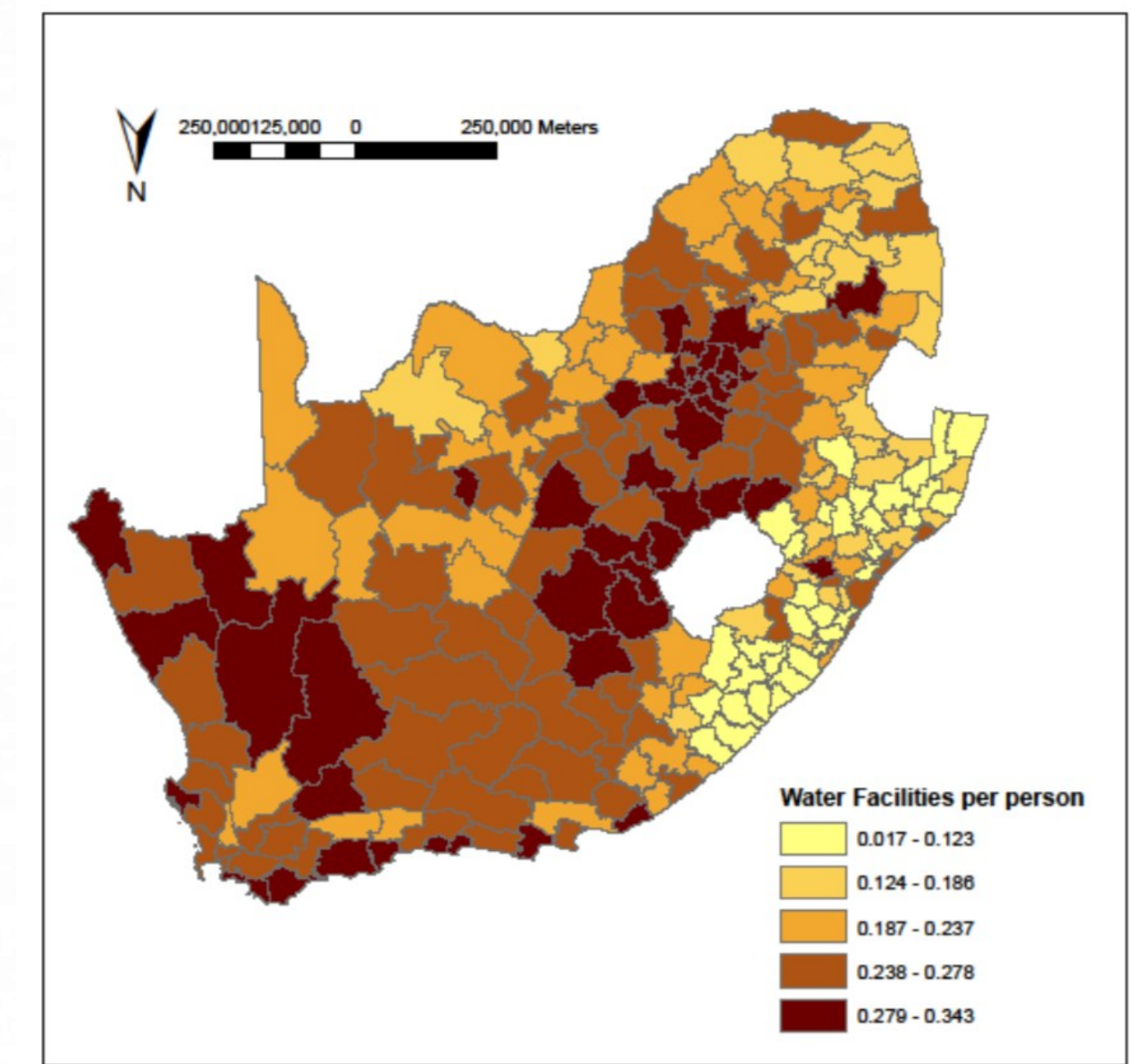⇒ households with refuse disposal access
⇒ health facilities

I normalized this data by population per each municipal area to obtain density of government services. I also reclassified this data and used the Raster Calculator to weight them equally in an index, thus representing the areas in which government services are most or least accessible.

Lastly, I compared the government service accessibility percentages within Afrikaans-dominant municipalities and within the other municipalities.
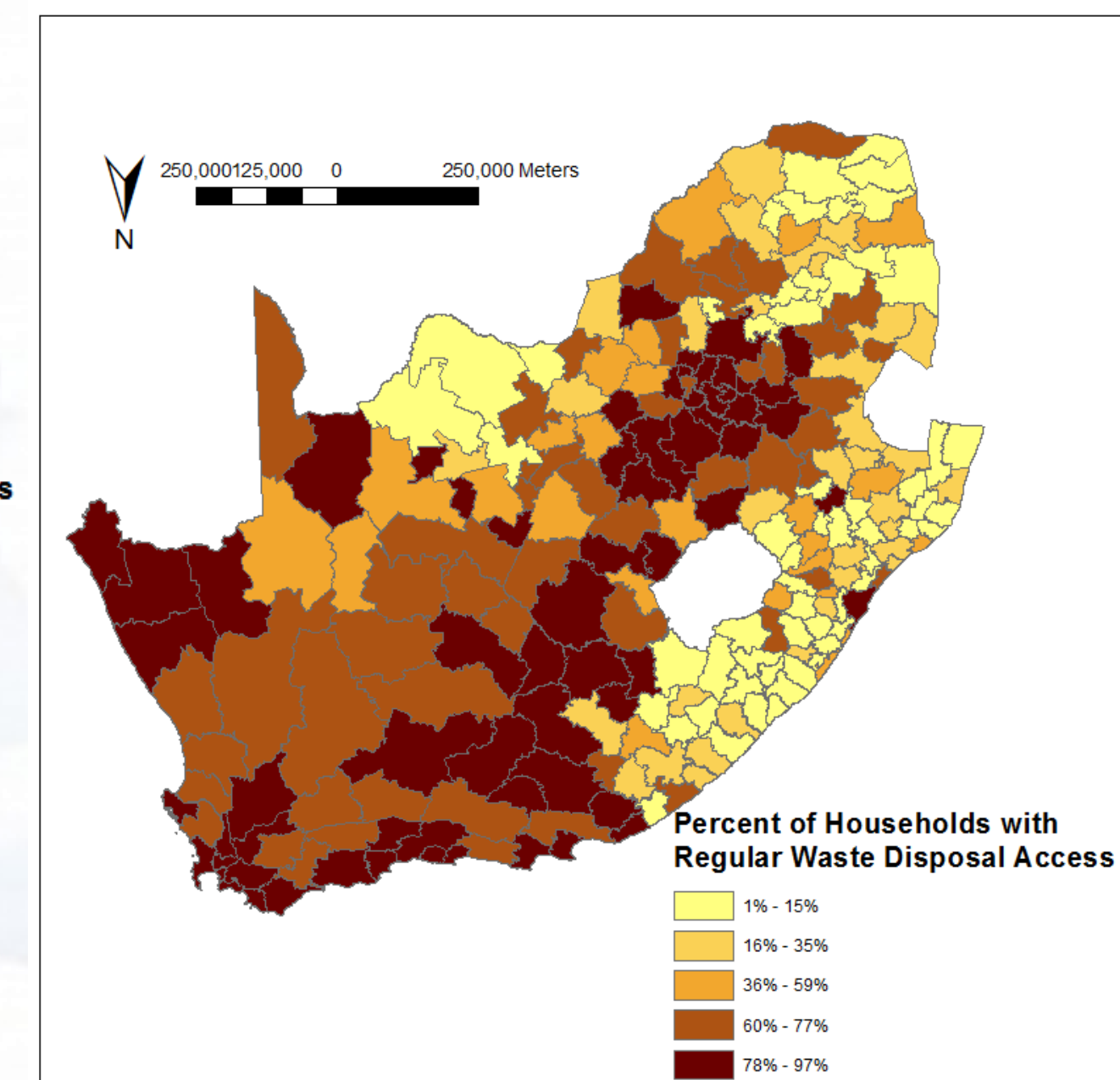
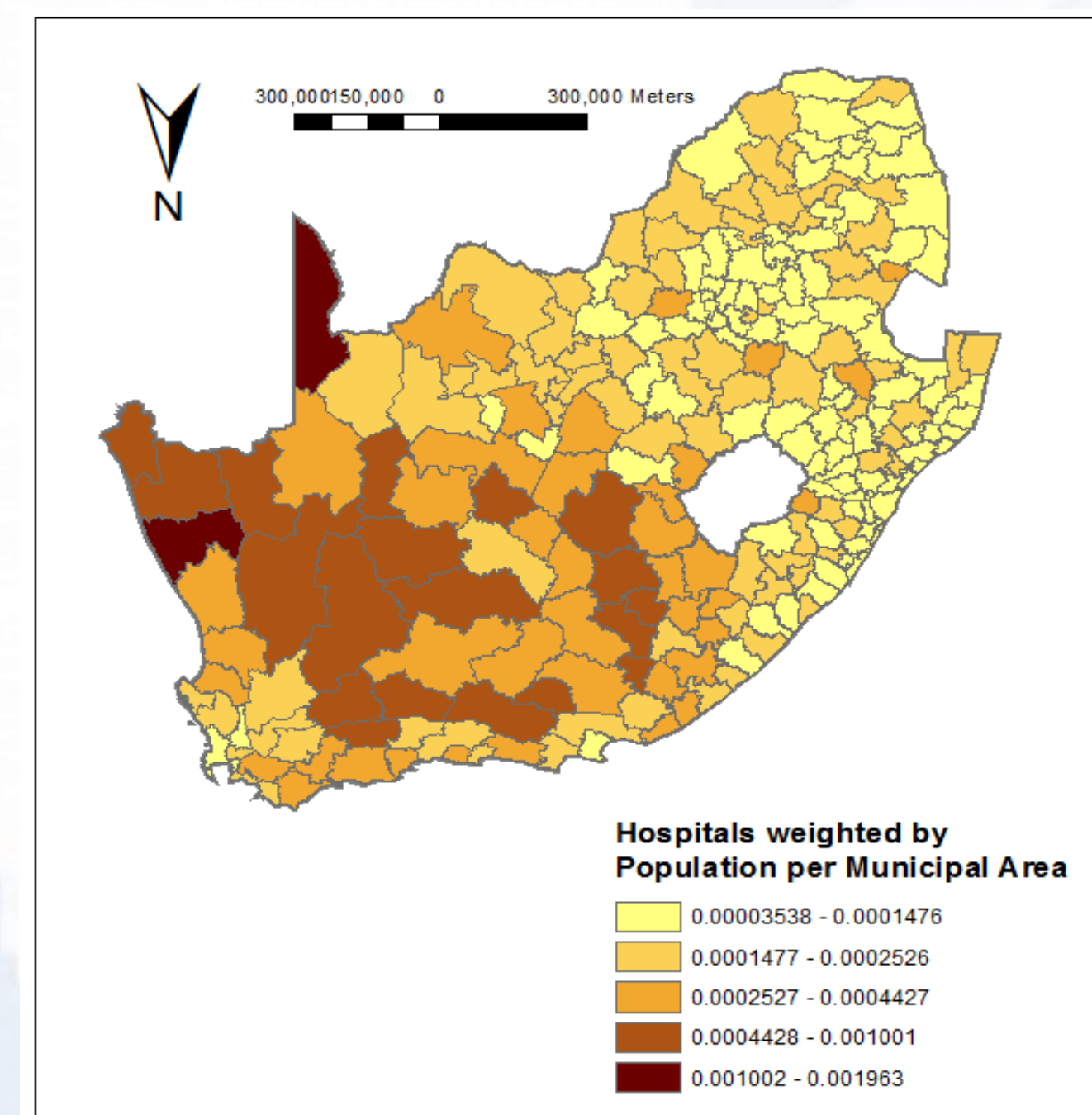### GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY INDEX



Government Services Accessibility
- 3 (Low)
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14 - 15 (High)

### ACCESSIBILITY TO TAPWATER FACILITIES



Water Facilities per person
- 0.017 - 0.123
- 0.124 - 0.196
- 0.187 - 0.237
- 0.238 - 0.278
- 0.279 - 0.343

### ACCESSIBILITY TO REGULAR REFUSE DISPOSAL



Percent of Households with Regular Waste Disposal Access
- 1% - 15%
- 16% - 35%
- 36% - 59%
- 60% - 77%
- 78% - 97%

### ACCESSIBILITY TO HOSPITALS



Hospitals weighted by Population per Municipal Area
- 0.00003538 - 0.0001476
- 0.0001477 - 0.0002526
- 0.0002527 - 0.0004427
- 0.0004428 - 0.001001
- 0.001002 - 0.001963

| Language Dominant Municipalities | # of Municipalities | # of People Per Hospital | % of Population with Nearby Water | % of Households with Regular Refuse Disposal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Afrikaans Municipalities | 167 | 7721.96 | 19.93 | 10.68 |
| Afrikaans Dominant Municipalities | 67 | 4224.92 | 26.54 | 21.71 |

## RESULTS

Even today, 26 years after apartheid[3], areas with Afrikaans-speaking populations, and therefore a stronger historically colonist presence, have greater access to government services than the areas with traditional Bantu languages. Municipal areas in Afrikaans speaking languages have more hospitals relative to population, more accessible pipewater facilities, and more regular refuse disposal; this can be seen by examining the chart below or observing that where Afrikaans is dominant, the southwest of the nation, government services are more accessible as well.

However, this data is only half the conversation. It is important to keep in mind that the language barrier may make communication and representation difficult, some public services may in fact be privatized, or that there might be progression over time that has not been accounted for here.