

Redistricting Summary for COG Discussion by Joy Phillips/DC Office of Planning - 02/09/2021

There are two main data releases from the U.S. Census Bureau after each decennial census. The first is the release of the apportionment data and the second is the release of the redistricting data.

What is apportionment?

Apportionment is the process of determining the number of representatives in Congress from each state. There are 435 members in the House of Representatives and each state's share is determined by their population count in the decennial census.

Traditionally, the U.S. Census Bureau must deliver the apportionment results to the President and Congress by December 31 of the decennial census year, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other issues, the **planned delivery date is now by April 30, 2021.**

The District of Columbia (DC) is the nation's capital district. Although DC has a larger population (705,749) than two states (Vermont – 623,989; Wyoming – 578,759), the District is not one of the fifty states and so has no senators and its representative in the House of Representatives is a delegate with limited voting privileges. Delegates have a marginalized role in Congress and their constituents are not represented in Congress in the same manner as most citizens.

District of Columbia's one representative, called an "at-large" representative because they represent the entire area - Eleanor Norton

What is Redistricting?

Redistricting data is the second main data release after each decennial census.

Redistricting refers to the process by which census data are used to redraw the boundaries of electoral or legislative districts within states and local jurisdictions with the aim of giving residents a fair and equal share in the way they are governed. After each decennial census (2020 Census), legislative boundaries such as U.S. House of Representatives, state legislature, county or city council, school board, and so forth are redrawn. Law (Public Law 94-171) requires that the redistricting data be delivered to state officials within one year of Census Day or no later than April 1, 2021. Again, this census timeframe is unusual so the **planned delivery date at this point is after July 31, 2021.** (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/program-management.html>)

For the District of Columbia this process affects the legislative district boundaries of the eight wards, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), single-member districts (SMDs) and voting precincts.

Who conducts redistricting in states and local jurisdictions?

In 25 states, the [state legislature](#) has primary responsibility for creating a redistricting plan, in many cases subject to approval by the state [governor](#). To reduce the role that legislative politics might play, thirteen states ([Alaska](#), [Arizona](#), [California](#), [Colorado](#), [Hawaii](#), [Idaho](#), [Michigan](#), [Missouri](#), [Montana](#), [New Jersey](#), [Ohio](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Washington](#)) determine congressional redistricting by an independent or bipartisan [redistricting commission](#). Five states: [Maine](#), [New York](#), [Rhode Island](#), [Vermont](#), and [Virginia](#) give independent bodies authority to propose redistricting plans, but preserve the role of legislatures to approve them. [Arkansas](#) has a commission composed of its governor, attorney general, and secretary of state.

What is the timeline for redistricting in general?

While redistricting is done after each decennial census, each state has their own timeline for redistricting based on many factors with one of the main factors being the election cycle.

For the District of Columbia, the official code states that 10 days after receiving the data, the Mayor shall transmit the data to the Council. The Council shall, by act after public hearing, make any adjustment in the boundaries of election wards that is necessary as a result of population shifts and changes, not later than 90 days after the Council's receipt of data or not later than July 14 of that year, whichever is later.

Redistricting Criteria

Each state can set its own standards for Congressional and legislative districts but the most common criteria are:

1. Compactness – extent to which a district’s geography and population is dispersed around its center
2. Contiguity – a requirement that a district be in one piece, boundaries must touch each other
3. equal population
4. preservation of existing political communities
5. partisan fairness
6. racial fairness

For the District of Columbia:

- The District of Columbia Official Code 1-1-11.01 requires that the Council divide the District into 8 compact and contiguous election wards, each of which shall be approximately equal in population size.
- D.C. Code requires that the Wards fall within a range of plus-or-minus five percent of the average Ward population size, unless the deviation results from the limitations of census geography or from the promotion of a rational public policy, including but not limited to respect for the political geography of the District, the natural geography of the District, neighborhood cohesiveness, or the development of compact and contiguous districts.

When will the redistricting data be released and when does the redistricting process begin in the District?

The release of the P.L. 94-171 redistricting data is still uncertain but the Census Bureau is promising to release this data after July 31, 2021. The U.S. Census Bureau has begun releasing the 2020 Census geographic support products. These products consist of 2020 Census geography with the newly created 2020 Census blocks and updated block groups, census tracts, voting districts, and current boundaries for legal governments and school districts. These products are provided to support redistricting efforts by state and local governments.

What tools/applications are used to conduct the redistricting process?

There are many off the shelf and customized tools used to conduct redistricting. Beside using local in-house created tools, two of the main commercial tools are from Caliper Corporation – Maptitude for Redistricting and ESRI's - ESRI's Redistricting.

For the District, due to technological changes and expectations for greater public engagement, and to facilitate greater transparency, accuracy in the redistricting process, OP will provide a web-based tool (ESRI Redistricting – Managed Cloud Services) to support the Redistricting Committee.

What role will the Office of Planning play in the redistricting process?

- Provide technical and analytical services necessary for redistricting by assisting with redistricting data from the U.S. Census Bureau and providing mapping services needed by the Redistricting Committee;
- Coordinate public feedback process and tool to ensure residents and stakeholders can provide feedback.