



Senate Counsel, Research, and Fiscal Analysis

State of Minnesota

Redistricting FAQ

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This document provides brief answers to frequently asked questions about redistricting in Minnesota after the 2020 Census. This document is not a comprehensive review of all aspects of redistricting.

What is redistricting?

For purposes of electing members of the state legislature and for the United States House of Representatives, Minnesota is divided into districts. Redistricting is the process of redrawing the boundary lines of these districts. Since populations grow, shrink, and move over time, districts might no longer provide proportional representation to their residents as currently drawn. Redrawing the maps after the census ensures that each district has roughly the same number of residents.

What does the Census have to do with redistricting?

Every ten years, the United States federal government conducts the Census to count how many people live in the country. The Census also provides very detailed information on where people are living. Minnesota uses the Census population counts and locations to conduct redistricting for the state's legislative and congressional districts.

The Census is also the basis for determining the number of congressional districts in each state. After the Census is completed, Congress apportions the 435 United States House of Representatives seats among the 50 states based on the Census data.

Does Minnesota have to redistrict? And if so, why now?

State and federal laws require redistricting to occur following each Census. The Census was conducted in 2020 and population counts were released in 2021, so it is time for redistricting to occur. In addition, states are required to have districts with roughly equal population. Redistricting ensures that districts reflect changes in population.

What districts are subject to redistricting?

The legislature will redraw districts for Minnesota's 8 congressional districts, 67 state Senate districts, and 134 House of Representatives districts. In addition, the legislature will adopt a redistricting plan for Metropolitan Council districts. Local governments may need to conduct redistricting for local districts.

Whose responsibility is it to draw the new maps?

Under the Minnesota Constitution, the state legislature is responsible for drawing new maps for congressional and legislative districts. The legislature does this in the same manner as it enacts other laws – by passing a bill through both bodies that is signed by the governor. If a local government has election districts, the local government must conduct redistricting for those districts.

What is the deadline to get the maps done?

Under state law, the legislature intends to finish congressional and legislative redistricting no later than 25 weeks before the state primary election in a year ending in 2. That date for enacting maps this decade is February 15, 2022. If the legislature does not enact a map, the court's special redistricting panel will likely issue a new map shortly after that date passes. There isn't a statutory deadline for completing Metropolitan Council districts, but the new districts are effective in 2023. Local governments must generally complete local redistricting within the weeks after congressional and legislative redistricting is completed.

What happens if the legislature doesn't enact a plan by the deadline?

If the legislature does not enact redistricting plans by the deadline, the state courts will step in and draw the maps. The Chief Justice of the state Supreme Court has appointed a special redistricting panel made up of five judges to hear all legal challenges related to redistricting and to draw the maps if the legislature does not. This has been the common practice for the past few decades and continues this cycle. The redistricting panel was established in June of 2021. The panel is hearing issues and holding public hearings to prepare to draw maps if necessary. You can see the panel's orders and other filings [here](#).

Can the boundaries of districts be drawn just anywhere?

Not exactly. The Census designates "blocks" of territory that usually contain from zero to several hundred residents. These blocks become the basic units that map drawers use to create new district maps. Additionally, map drawers follow a set of principles to produce maps that reflect legal requirements and other identified values.

What are redistricting principles?

Redistricting principles are the ideals that will guide the legislature in drawing the districts. Some redistricting principles are required by state or federal law. These principles include ensuring equal population among districts, not discriminating on the basis of race, drawing districts that are convenient and contiguous, and not dividing political subdivisions more than necessary. The legislature may also adopt additional redistricting principles that it will use when drawing the maps. One principle commonly used principle is to try to keep "communities of interest" together in a district so they have a chance to elect representatives of their choice.

Where can I learn more?

You can read more about the history of legislative redistricting [here](#) and congressional redistricting [here](#). For more information on principles used in past decades, you can read about legislative principles [here](#) and congressional principles [here](#). You can also find more information on the Legislative Reference Library's [website](#) and on the Legislative Coordinating Commission's GIS Office's [website](#).