

GLOSSARY

Alternative Population Base—A population count other than the official census data that is used for redistricting.

Apportionment—The process of assigning seats in a legislative body among established districts.

At-large—When one or several candidates run for an office, and they are elected by the whole area of a local political subdivision, they are being elected at-large.

Census—Enumeration of the population as mandated by the U.S. Constitution.

Census blocks—the smallest geographic area defined for decennial census tabulations. States have input into the boundaries through the first phase of the Redistricting Data Program—the Block Boundary Suggestion Project. The Census Bureau provides redistricting data at the block level, which is the lowest level of census geography.

Census block group—A cluster of census blocks having the same first digit of their 4 digit code within a census tract. Data are tabulated by block groups, which are usually locally defined.

Census tract—Small, geographic statistical subdivision within counties usually defined by local participants for data collection and analysis.

Commission—A statutory or constitutional body charged with researching or implementing policy. Redistricting commissions have been used to draw districts for legislatures and Congress.

Communities of interest—Geographical areas, such as neighborhoods of a city or regions of a state, where the residents have common political interests that do not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of a political subdivision, such as a city or county.

Compactness—Having the minimum distance between all the parts of a constituency (a circle, square or a hexagon is the most compact district).

Contiguity—All parts of a district being connected at some point with the rest of the district.

Cracking—A term used when the electoral strength of a particular group is divided by a redistricting plan.

Deviation—The measure of how much a district or plan varies from the ideal.

District—The boundaries that define the constituency of an elected official.

Gerrymander—A district intentionally drawn to advantage one group or party over another, especially a district with a bizarre shape.

GIS—Geographic Information System. Computer software used for creating and analyzing maps and data.

Ideal population—The total state population divided by the number of seats in a legislative body.

Majority-minority districts—Term used by courts for seats where a racial or language minority constitutes a majority of the population.

Metes and bounds—A detailed description of district boundaries using specific geographic features.

Multimember district—A district that elects two or more members to a legislative body.

Natural boundaries—District boundaries that are natural geographic features, such as bodies of water.

One person, one vote—Constitutional standard established by the U.S. Supreme Court that all legislative districts should be approximately equal in population.

Overall range—The difference in population between the largest and smallest districts in a districting plan in either absolute or percentage terms.

Packing—A term used when one group is consolidated as a super-majority in a small number of districts, thus reducing its electoral influence in surrounding districts.

Partisan gerrymandering—The deliberate drawing of district boundaries to secure an advantage for one political party.

PL 94-171—Federal law enacted in 1975 requiring the U. S. Census Bureau to provide the states with data for use in redistricting as well as mandating the program where the states define the blocks for collecting data.

Plurality—A winning total in an election involving more than two candidates, where the winner received less than a majority of the votes cast.

Racial Gerrymandering—The deliberate drawing of district boundaries to secure an advantage for one race.

Reapportionment—The allocation of seats in a legislative body (such as Congress) among established districts (such as states), where the district boundaries do not change but the number of members per district does.

Redistricting—The drawing of new political district boundaries.

Sampling—Technique or method that measures part of a population to determine the full number.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act—Part of the federal law that protects racial and language minorities from discrimination by a state, or other political subdivision, in voting practices.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act—Part of the federal law that requires certain states and localities to pre-clear all election law changes with the U.S. Department of Justice or the federal district court for the District of Columbia before those laws take effect.

Single-member district—District electing only one representative.

Standard deviation—A statistical formula measuring variance from a norm.

Tabulation—The totaling and reporting of the census data.

TIGER—Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing. The system and digital database developed at the U.S. Census Bureau to support computer maps used by the census.

VAP—Voting Age Population. The number of people over 18 years of age.

VTD—Voting Tabulation District. Census term for geographic area, such as an election precinct, where election information is collected.