Alternative Data Sets for Redistricting

By Kimball Brace
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Indiana lawmakers planning on redistricting votes

Indiana legislators won't adjourn when they adjourn
Late Census Data Complicates Iowa Redistricting

16 states back Alabama's challenge to Census privacy tool

Census delay leaves Oregon's redistricting process in a lurch

Lawmakers given more time to redraw Oregon political lines

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

April 8, 2021

Census redistricting must work every year well. This is not an entitlement, it’s not a right. It’s something that every generation has to work until the next generation to get right. This isn’t a right that can be handed out. It’s a right that every generation has to work to get right.
What’s a State To Do?

Take that one last vacation before the data arrives in September?

WRONG
Calendar can be your ally or your enemy
State legislative redistricting deadlines, 2021-2023

The map below groups states by the quarter in which their redistricting deadlines fall. The legend below the map explains which colors correspond with which quarters.
So Make Use of Your Calendar

Investigate Alternative Datasets

Not a permanent solution

Only temporary until PL files are released
Some States are seeking different data to actually draw their final plans

Exclude Non-Citizens

NOT In Today’s Discussion

Just Registered Voters
Alternative Data Sets for temporary line drawing

“ACS” American Community Survey

Commercially Available Databases

Pluses And Minuses
“ACS”
American Community Survey

History

• Designed in 1990s by Census Bureau to replace high cost of long-form questionnaire (continuous measurement)
• Instead of being created once a decade, could come out between decades
• Tests done 2002-2005, sample sites
• First appeared 2006 – Yearly estimates (large areas)
• 3 year estimates – 2008 (2005-2007)
• 5 year estimates – 2010 (2005-2009) (block groups)
“ACS”
American Community Survey

**Pluses**

- Created by Census Bureau
- Use recognized by the courts
“ACS”
American Community Survey

Minuses

- Covers long period of time to get small geographic estimates

Current Release

2019 – Covers 2015-2019 to get block group level data

2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

Midpoint

Really 3 years away from 2020
“ACS”
American Community Survey

Minuses

• It’s a survey VS Census count of everyone
• Small Sample size survey
• Like survey’s, there are deviations - +/-
• 2009 ACS varied from +14% to -11% from 2010 decennial
• Designed to provide demographic information, not really total population estimates
• At most at block group level, not block
“ACS”
American Community Survey

Minuses

Currently built off 2010 block groups
Don’t be mistaken by

Block Group 3 data for 2010

NOT Equals

Block Group 3 geography for 2020
Don’t go backwards in time
Only move forward

Don’t attempt to squeeze 2020 data onto your 2010 geography from your old system

Use your time now to migrate forward.

2020 Geography files released in February.

Start studying them now
Subtle changes in 2010 to 2020 geography

Bringing a shape file of your districts from your 2010 system will need to be cleaned up to match the 2020 geographic blocks.

Bureau has some tools to help, but true “n to n” circumstance:

- Single 2010 block = single 2020 block
- Single 2010 block = multiple 2020 blocks
- Multiple 2010 blocks = single 2020 block
- Multiple 2010 blocks = multiple 2020 blocks

Adding 2010 population data to 2020 geography not always easy
Commercially Available Databases

**Pluses**

- Current – data available for 2020
- Has total population estimates, plus racial demographic information
Commercially Available Databases

**Minuses**

- Available at Block Group level
  - Have to disaggregate like precinct data
- Dealing with 2010 Block Groups
- Expense item in budget
  - State estimates: $5K-$8K
Illinois Counties
District Population comparison between 2019 Census Pop Estimates and 2019 5-year ACS Estimates

Statewide Pops
ACS 5-yr (2019) - 12,770,631
PEP (2019) - 12,671,821

PEP Population compared to ACS
- 4 to 8% Smaller
- 2 to 4% Smaller
- 0 to 2% Smaller
- 0 to 2% Greater
- 2 to 3% Greater
State Population Estimates and Census 2010 Counts: Did They Match?

Digging into the estimates data, Pew Research Center demographer Jeffrey Passel has analyzed how the bureau’s population estimates for states compare with the official 2010 Census counts for states. He began with state estimates for July 1, 2009 (the latest available), and projected them forward to Census Day based on average growth rates for each state for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. (This method produces a slightly different total for the nation than the Census Bureau computed, 309,081,328.)

According to his analysis, for most states, the census count and projected population estimates are quite close, showing a difference of less than 1%. In only six states—Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, North Dakota, Utah and Wyoming—did the count and estimates differ by 2% or more. Arizona had the largest numerical and percentage difference. The population estimates had about 294,000 more people living in the state on Census Day than the 2010 Census counted, a difference of 4.6% from the census count.
Getting Data Now

• Begin Analyzing population
  • By your jurisdictions
  • Change since 2010
  • Various minority group concentrations
  • District populations & deviations
    • Where are shifts in districts needed

Remind Members:
  Even if their district is setting at the ideal population, unless they are in the corner of the state, some portion of their district will change

No one is exempt
Remember

“Time is more important the later it is in the project”

John Morgan
Thank you

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Questions?