

Glossary of Redistricting Terms

Apportionment

The process of assigning the number of members of Congress that each state may elect following each census. On the state level, apportionment is the process of assigning the number of House members to each county.

Census

Enumeration of the population as mandated by the United States Constitution.

Census block, Census tract

Geographic areas recommended by the states and used by the Census Bureau for the collection and presentation of data. Blocks are the smallest unit of geography used by the Census Bureau for counting people.

Compactness

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

Contiguity

A part of a district being connected at some point with the rest of the district.

Deviation

A measure of the degree to which a single district's population varies from the ideal population of the district.

Absolute deviation - the difference between a single district's population and the ideal population.

Average deviation – average of all deviations in a state without regard to whether they are above or below the ideal population.

Deviation percentage variance - the difference between a single district's population and the ideal population, divided by the ideal population, expressed as a percentage. Thus, if the ideal population of a district is 100,000, and the population of a particular district in a redistricting plan is 102,000, the absolute

deviation would be 2,000 and the deviation percentage variance would be .02 or 2 percent for that district.

Overall Range – difference between the largest and the smallest district in a state or county; total of all deviations.

District

The boundaries that define the constituency of an elected official.

Floterial District

Legislative district that includes in its boundaries several separate districts which independently would not be entitled to additional representation but whose conglomerate population entitles the area to another seat in a legislative body undergoing redistricting.

Fracturing

A term used when the electoral strength of a particular group is divided by a redistricting plan (also *cracking*). When members of a group are spread among as many districts as possible, they are not able to establish a majority in any one district and elect a representative of their group.

GIS – Geographic Information System

Computer software that can display spatially encoded data in the form of maps.

Gerrymander

The drawing of districts intentionally to give one group or party advantage over another (see also: *packing* and *fracturing*).

Homogeneous District

A voting district in which at least 90% of the population share common racial characteristics.

Ideal Population

The result of the total state population divided by the number of seats in a legislative body (the 2010 census reported that New Hampshire's total population was 1,316,470. Therefore, the ideal population for NH House districts is 3,291.)

Majority-minority Districts

Term used by the courts for seats where an ethnic minority constitutes a majority of the population.

Multi-member District

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

Natural boundaries

District boundaries that are natural geographic features.

One person, one vote

Constitutional standard established by the Supreme Court that all congressional districts should be approximately equal in population.

Packing

A term used when one group is consolidated into a small number of districts in a districting plan. Such consolidation creates a supermajority of the group in the packed districts and their votes in excess of a simple majority are 'wasted'. Packing limits the ability of a group to elect representatives in proportion to their numbers in the state as a whole.

Partisan gerrymandering

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

Plurality

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

Post-enumeration Survey

Quality check surveys conducted by the Census Bureau and used to correct an overcount or an undercount.

Preclearance

Requirement under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act that certain states (including New Hampshire) gain prior approval (preclearance) from the United States Department of Justice or the federal district court for the District of Columbia for all election law changes before such laws take effect.

PL 94-171

The federal law that requires the U.S. Census Bureau to provide the states with data for use in redistricting. The law requires the bureau to allow the states to define the boundaries of the areas in which the population data is collected.

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 process of drawing of new political district boundaries within a state and its political subdivisions.

Retrogression

Drawing a redistricting plan that reduces the chances for minority groups to elect representatives of their choice.

Sampling

Technique or method that measures part of a population to estimate the total population. Sampling was proposed as a remedy for the undercount.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act

Applies to all states and prohibits a state or political subdivision from imposing or applying voting qualifications; prerequisites to voting; or standards, practices, or procedures to deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race, color or because a person is a member of a language minority group.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act

Establishes requirements for certain states and locations to gain prior approval (preclearance) from the United States Department of Justice or the federal district court for the District of Columbia for all election law changes before such laws take effect. Section 5 applies in all or parts of 16 states, including New Hampshire.

Single-member district

District that elects only one representative.

TIGER/Line files

Topologically **I**ntegrated **G**eographic **E**ncoding and **R**eferencing (TIGER) is the name for the system and digital database developed at the Census Bureau to support its mapping needs for the Decennial Census and other Bureau programs. These files are not graphic images of maps, but rather a digital database describing geographic features, such as roads, railroads, rivers, lakes, political boundaries, census statistical boundaries. To make use of these data, a user must have mapping or Geographic Information System (GIS) software that can import TIGER/Line data.

Undercount

The estimated number of people who are not counted by the Census.

VAP – Voting Age Population

Number of people over the age of 18

VTD – Voting Tabulation District

Usually a precinct or a ward