

Fair Maps

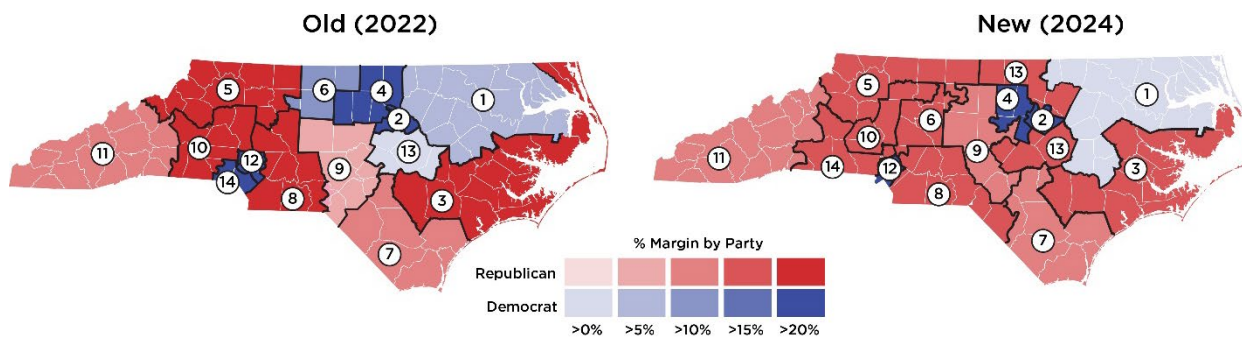
Improving the Redistricting Process to Protect Democracy and Better Represent Voters

States task redistricting authorities to redraw the lines of electoral district maps every 10 years based on the most recent census. In most states, the legislature draws district boundaries; in others, a special or independent commission draws the map. These maps should be drawn such that each electoral district fairly reflects and represents both all voters and also Communities of Interest (COIs), communities of people who share common interests and concerns, within that district.

When maps are drawn unfairly and deny equal representation to COIs, their concerns and voices at local, state, and federal levels of government may not be heard or addressed. Democracy and science-based policymaking throughout the country are threatened when redistricting does not reflect or is unfair to COIs, polarizes voting patterns, [violates the Voting Rights Act](#), and/or [gerrymanders](#) (cuts electoral district lines to advantage one party or candidate, See Figure 1). To view additional examples, please visit [here](#) and [here](#).

One way redistricting authorities can create fairer maps is by strengthening public engagement throughout the process. By establishing an inclusive input process that welcomes and considers district map submissions by COIs and citizen-initiated organizations, public

Figure 1. Change in North Carolina Congressional Districts, 2022 to 2024



North Carolina is a prime example of gerrymandering. Between 2022 and 2024, a new electoral map was drawn that provides a big advantage for one party, even though partisan voter registrations are nearly evenly divided between the two parties.

Source: Coleman, J. Miles. 2023. *North Carolina Redistricting: Republicans Bring Out Their Golden Goose (again)*. University of Virginia Center for Politics. <https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/north-carolina-redistricting-republicans-bring-out-their-golden-goose-again/>

comment participation, and evaluations and diagnostic measures of draft maps, states can more effectively design maps that balance the interests of the different communities within each district. Authorities should also provide tools and training on mapping software to members of the public so they can highlight the communities that matter to each of them.

Effective public participation should be prioritized throughout the design process to craft equitable redistricting maps. Fairly drawn maps based on COIs allow for their voices to be heard on pressing issues such as healthcare, climate change, and more.

The Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists has compiled a list of recommendations that could increase public participation in the map-drawing process and result in fairer maps.

Election Science Recommendations on Fair Maps

Redistricting authorities/commissions should take the following actions:

- Establish an inclusive input process that includes and accounts for submissions of districting plans from COIs and citizen-initiated organizations, public comment participation, and evaluations and diagnostic measures of draft maps.
- Hold public map-drawing forums for submission of alternative district plans and COI maps.
- Provide the public with access to the necessary tools and training on open-source map-making software, for the creation of maps. In addition, authorities should provide a diagnostic tool that tracks input during the map-making process and measures the effectiveness of public participation.
- Provide data on racial polarization and partisan voting patterns for legal compliance analysis.
- Allow public input through a combination of in-person, online/virtual, and digital communication processes that focuses on map submission representing COIs. In addition:
 - Ensure outreach efforts consider language minorities and people with disabilities.
 - Provide translation services and materials in multiple languages during comment periods. Interpreters should also receive training on redistricting terminology.
- Support public participation with adequate staffing that facilitates the collection and dissemination of all public input on draft maps. This includes a submission platform for maps and the tracking/posting of comments (for the redistricting authority).
- Maintain accessible websites that host a searchable public input database, adopted policies, and other important documents related to redistricting authorities' work.

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