Getting to Know Districtr

MGGG Redistricting Lab

April 2020

Introduction

Districtr is an open-source web-app for redistricting built by MGGG. It is designed to help state legislatures, independent commissions, and community organizers collect public input throughout the redistricting process. These exercises are intended to get you familiar with Districtr and with some of the tradeoffs inherent in the redistricting process. If you are the kind of person who likes to read a manual, check out the Districtr User Guide before you begin. Otherwise, we hope these exercises will walk you through.

1 Pennsylvania

Navigate to the Pennsylvania 18 Congressional Districts module. First, start drawing districts, making sure you explore the following features.

- **Population balance.** Start drawing a district with the paintbrush tool, and look in the *Population* tab. When you mouse over the population bars, they tell you how far off they are from ideal size.

- **County boundaries.** You can find a toggle to display these under *Data Layers*. Some states have a rule that you should try not to split counties between multiple districts. Districtr doesn't have a split counter, but it does let you choose to select a whole county at a time (by selecting the *Paint counties* toggle under the brush size).

- **Demographics.** You can visualize the demographics under *Data Layers*, and you can check the demographic proportions in your districts under *Evaluation*. Also notice that the share of overall population tends to be different from the share of voting-age population in each racial group.

- **Unassigned units**. There's a checkbox at the bottom of the *Population* tab that makes it easier to find the units that have not yet been assigned to a district.

YOUR TASK: Create a Congressional plan for Pennsylvania where each district is contiguous (connected), there are no unassigned precincts, and the maximum population deviation of any district is under 5%. Your plan should have at least two majority-Black districts and should split no more than 20 counties.

2 Chicago

Navigate to the Chicago module and choose *Multi-member districts of varying sizes, Built out of community areas.* This module lets you build a districting plan for Chicago's 50-member City Council. The 77 "community areas" (see Wikipedia) are a loose attempt at identifying the actual community structure in the city. Rather than 50 different districts electing one person each, this module lets you draw a smaller number of bigger districts.

Start drawing districts, considering the following features.

- **Adding districts.** You can add any number of districts with the + sign in the brush tool. When you draw a district in this module, a number will show up in the "seats" column of the population panel. This is the number of city council seats allotted to that district based on its population.

- **Demographics.** Like the Pennsylvania module, the Demographics tab shows the racial/ethnic breakdown of Chicago's voting age population (VAP). Where are there large populations of Black Chicagoans? Latino/Hispanic Chicagoans? Asian Chicagoans? White Chicagoans?

- **Inspect tool.** In the very top row, there's a tool with a magnifying glass, which you can set to show you population or VAP. When you hover over a community area this will tell you its name and demographics.

Your Task: Create a plan for Chicago's City Council with any number of multi-member districts, where each district has between 4 and 7 seats and the population deviation is $\leq 5\%$ for each district.

Some other possible goals:

- Make every district have 5 or 6 seats.

- Make at least two districts have greater than 50% BVAP and two have greater than 50% HVAP.

- Make a district whose VAP balance is similar to the city overall.

You'll find that it's not necessarily possible to do all these things at the same time!

If you want to see the current 50-district plan, or explore some other possibilities, you can check out our Chicago landing page.

3   Communities of interest

From the Districtr front page, navigate to Identify Your Community. Choose a module for an area that you are familiar with personally, if you can find one. Features to explore:

- **Designating communities.** You can add any number of communities with the + sign in the brush tool. Then select a color, paint a community, and select its number in the dropdown menu, where you can name it and give it a description. (Don't forget to hit the SAVE button underneath!)

- **Landmarks.** On the top menu between the eraser tool and the magnifying glass there's a *Landmark* tool. You can mark a point instead of coloring a region, and you can name it and describe why it's important.

- **Community composition.** Under the *Population* tab, you can see how the demographics in each community compare to the city or state overall.

Your Task: In the module of your choice, create at least two communities and place at least two landmarks that are actually meaningful for districters to keep in mind.