
Redistricting San Francisco: An Overview of Criteria & Data

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Criteria discussion in the Charter:

Districts must conform to all legal requirements, including the requirement that they be equal in population. Population variations between districts should be limited to 1 percent from the statistical mean unless additional variations, limited to 5 percent of the statistical mean, are necessary to prevent dividing or diluting the voting power of minorities and/or to keep recognized neighborhoods intact; provided, however, that the redistricting provided for herein shall conform to the rule of one person, one vote, and shall reflect communities of interest within the City and County.

Criteria in more detail

- U.S. Constitution: Equal population
 - 1% deviation allowed – up to 5% if complying with other criteria
- Federal Law: Compliance with the Voting Rights Act
 - Covers protected racial and language groups
- Neighborhoods
 - Maintain “recognized” neighborhoods
- Communities of Interest
 - “reflect” - incorporate

Data in Redistricting

- Which data are used to draw lines?
- Which data are used for which criterion?
- Which data are easily accessible?
- Which ones are not?
- Which datasets have to be collected?

Redistricting Criteria and Data used:

Equal Population – PL94-171 – Decennial Census Data

Compliance with Federal Law (VRA) – PL94-171 – Decennial Census Data, American Community Survey (Citizen Voting Age Population), Statement of Registration, Statement of Vote

Preserve recognized Neighborhoods – Data/Geography collected from official sources, City/County; submitted by residents via Public Testimony and Input

Preserve Communities of Interest – Public Testimony, Data/Geography submitted by residents

Contiguity and Compactness – Census Geography

Equal Population

- First Criterion
- Constitutional requirement
- One person, One vote
- 14th Amendment: Equal protection clause

- How equal is equal???

How equal is equal?

- ❑ Different standards for different jurisdictions
- ❑ For San Francisco's Board of Supervisors:
Population variations between districts should be limited to 1 percent (+/- ~796 persons) from the statistical mean unless additional variations, limited to 5 percent (+/- ~3977 persons) of the statistical mean, if necessary to prevent dividing or diluting the voting power of minorities and/or to keep recognized neighborhoods intact

Population Deviation By District

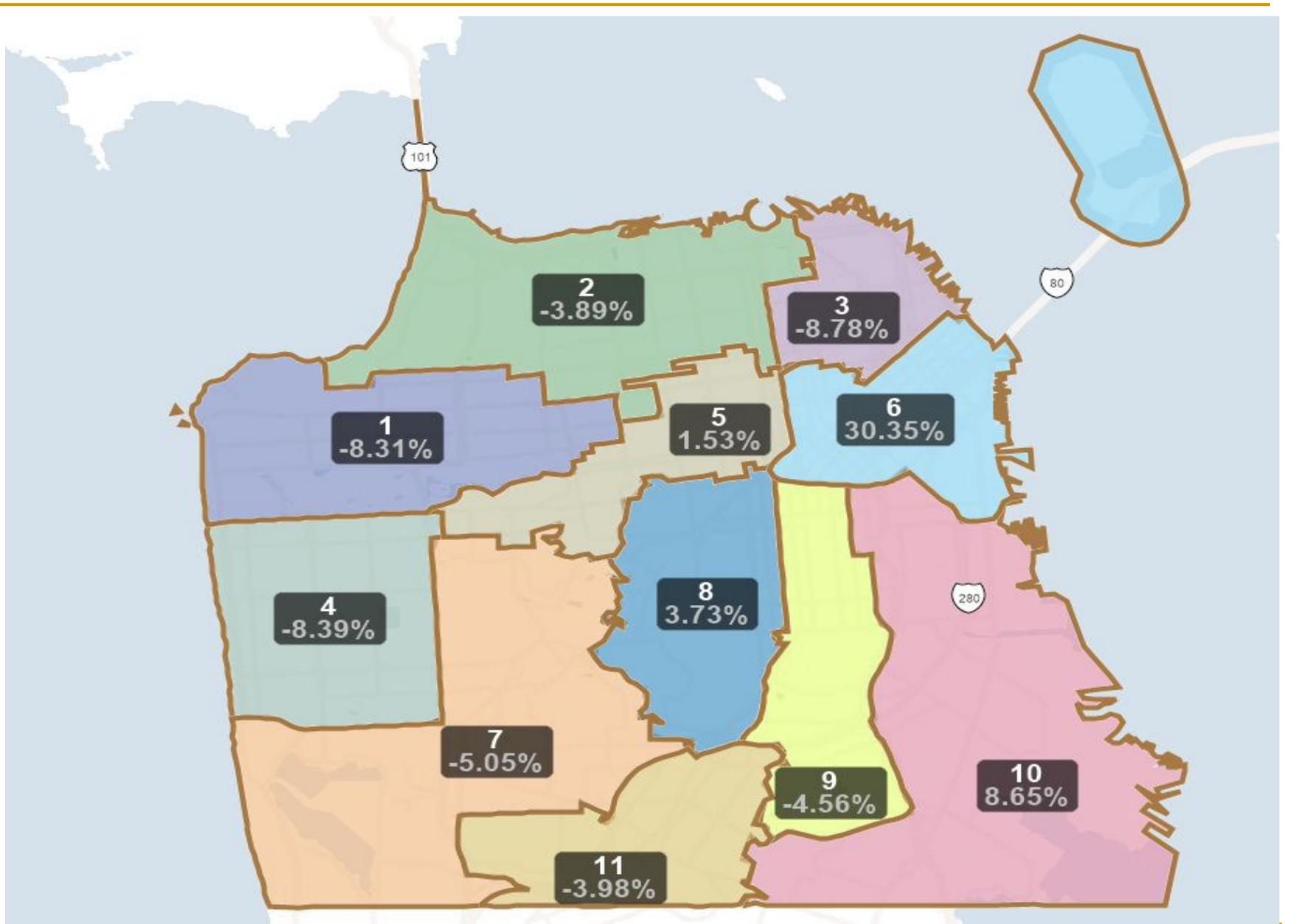
Total Population for Redistricting:
874.993

Ideal Population per District?
Total Population ÷ # Districts

$874.993 \div 11 \sim 79.545$ persons per
District

Datasource: Official Redistricting Data
for the State of California;
statewidedatabase.org/redistricting2021

District	Population	Percent Deviation
1	72,848	-8.31%
2	76,363	-3.89%
3	72,474	-8.78%
4	72,784	-8.39%
5	80,667	+1.53%
6	103,564	+30.35%
7	75,436	-5.05%
8	82,418	+3.73%
9	75,829	-4.56%
10	86,323	+8.65%
11	76,287	-3.98%



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Federal Voting Rights Act (FVRA), Section 2

- Prohibits the denial or abridgement of voting rights on the basis of race or language minority status. (42 USC § 1973)
- FVRA defines “language minority” as Asian, Native American, Alaskan Native or Spanish heritage. Does not apply to other language groups.
- Prohibits practices that have the purpose or effect of discriminating on the basis of race or language minority status.
- Applies nationwide, to ALL jurisdictions that conduct elections.

FVRA and Redistricting: Vote Dilution

- Electoral systems can limit the “ability to elect a candidate of choice” by a protected class of voters in various ways:
 - Example: at-large election systems can make it impossible for even a large minority group to elect a candidate of choice, when the majority votes against them.
 - Example: single-member trustee areas can be drawn in ways that minimize voters’ ability to elect a candidate of choice.
- Systems that limit ability to elect in this way are said to “dilute” minority voting strength.

What is a Section 2 or Majority/Minority District?

- “Gingles” Criteria*:
- Minority group must be compact and large enough to constitute a majority in the district or Trustee Area (50%+ CVAP**)
- Minority group votes cohesively
- There must be evidence of polarized voting against the minority group

□ * Thornburg v Gingles, 478 U.S. 30, 1986

□ **CVAP = Citizen Voting Age Population

Race and Redistricting

- Supreme Court opinions have limited the role that race can play in redistricting
- Race cannot be the predominant criterion in line drawing
- Race should not subjugate “traditional (re)districting principles” (Compactness, Contiguity, Communities of Interest)
- District appearance has been important in some cases (Compactness)

Redistricting Data

- Why does the Census bureau report different population totals than the State for local jurisdictions?
- California's Inmate Data reallocation law
 - Addresses data of persons incarcerated in facilities under the control of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- Data for California are publicly available here: statewidedatabase.org/redistricting2021

Components of the Statewide Database

- Census Block and Precinct Geography
- Decennial Census Data
 - Total Population, Voting Age Population, Race, Ethnicity
- American Community Survey Data
 - Citizen Voting Age Population by Race and Ethnicity
 - 2015-2019 release
- Statements of Vote and Registration
- These data are used to meet the first 2 Criteria*
- *additional data may be collected as needed for VRA assessments

Neighborhoods & Communities of Interest

- Data for these criteria are not in the Redistricting Database
- Neighborhoods:
 - Vary in size
 - Varying Definitions (Planning, DoE, feedback from community)
 - “Recognized neighborhoods” – which ones will the taskforce use?

Communities of Interest (COIs)

- What are they? It depends...
- Generally described as a geographic area comprised of residents who share similar interests
 - (“actual shared interests” Miller v Johnson, 1995)
- COIs are defined by those that are familiar with the Community (i.e. live or work in or with the community)
- Interests need not be limited to current situation, but can also include common goals
- Law does not generally limit the definition of COIs except:
 - Communities of interest shall not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates

Common Interest Examples

- Economic interests:
 - Current situation: common employment or economic opportunities (or lack thereof).
 - Goals: expanding opportunities and access, etc.
- Social interests:
 - Current: schools, culture, language, transportation
 - Goals: improving recreational opportunities or public safety, preserving historic resources, etc.
- Neighborhoods are often thought of as Communities of Interest

How to document a COI

- Please answer the following questions:
 - What bonds your community?
 - Outline what defines the COI:
 - What is your mission or commonality?
 - Think about what is different outside of the boundaries of your Community of Interest
- Where is your community located?
 - Create a map of the boundaries
 - Write down the boundaries
- Our website will have instructions and resources available to facilitate this process

Other Traditional Redistricting Criteria

■ Contiguity

- A district in which all parts are adjacent to another part is contiguous

in other words

- A district in which one may travel from any location to any other location without crossing another district boundary is a contiguous district
- California law specifies that areas that meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous
- Areas that are separated by water and not connected by a bridge, tunnel, or regular ferry service are not contiguous.

Compactness

- A ‘traditional’ redistricting criterion
 - Many different ways to measure
 - CA’s definition: Don’t bypass nearby areas of population in favor of more distant populations
 - Assumed to “guard against all types of gerrymandering”: “drastic departures from compactness are a signal that something may be amiss”

THANK YOU!

- Questions?