



Mechanics,
Opportunities
+ Perils

DEMOCRACY 2020

REED Alumni College



REED COLLEGE

REDISTRICTING IN OREGON WORKING TITLE

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REED COLLEGE

THE ROLE OF REDISTRICTING IN OREGON

- What is it? How does the districting process work?
- Drawing Metro Council districts after 2020
- Potential reform to districting practices



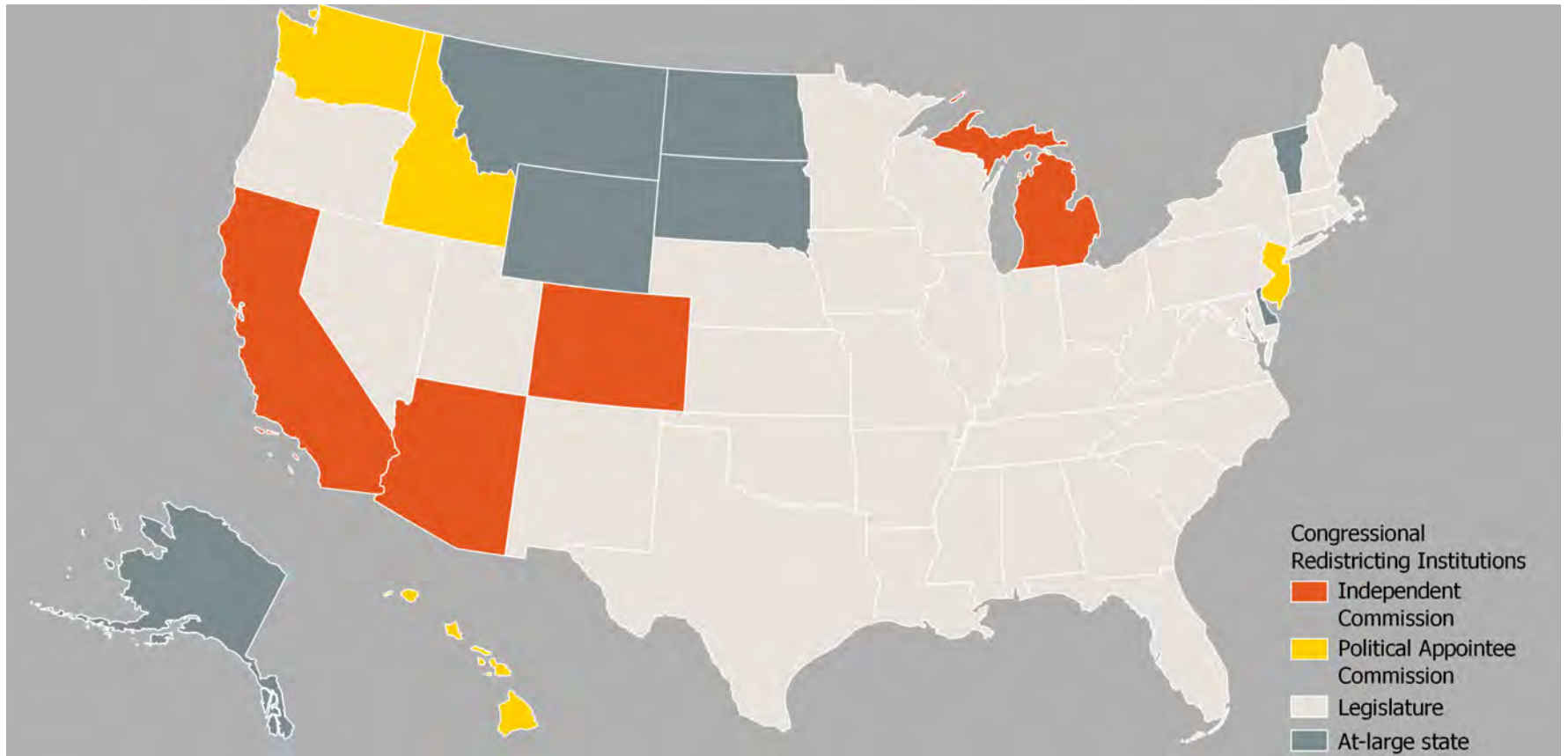
A GENERAL COMMENT ON THE PURPOSE OF ELECTIONS

- Elections get us from individual preferences to social choices (Riker 1982)
 - The critical variable for elections is district magnitude, M , the number of seats in a district (Cox 1997)
 - In American congressional elections $M=1$ in 435 districts
 - In Finnish parliamentary elections M ranges between 7 and 35 in 12 districts (excluding the Åland Islands district)
 - Districts can be drawn for strategic advantage in any electoral system, but this is uniquely controversial in the United States



THE CENSUS AND REDISTRICTING SCHEDULE

- April 1, 2020: Census Day
- December 31, 2020: Apportionment completed and submitted to the president for certification
 - Likely delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic
- April 1, 2021: Census data transmitted to the States for redistricting
- December 2021: Census data released to the public
- November 8, 2022: Next congressional and legislative elections



Who draws the lines in the states?



Source: (Donovan, 2011). Colorado adopted a “kingmaker” commission in 1974 which was itself reformed in 2018. At the same time Colorado also adopted an independent commission for congressional redistricting.

When were commissions adopted?

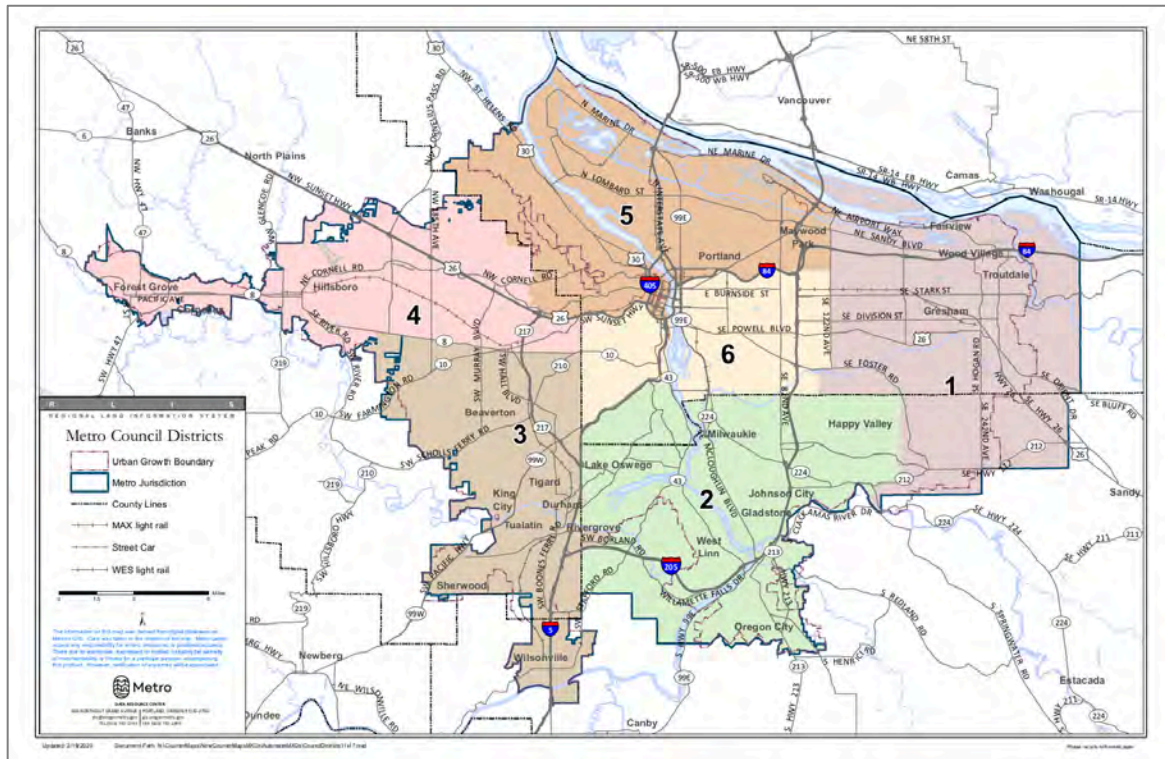
CRITERIA FOR REDISTRICTING

- Federal, mandatory standards
 - Population equality
 - Less stringent standard in legislative and local redistricting
 - Compliance with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act
- State standards vary; Oregon is exceptional (ORS § 188.010)
 - Contiguity
 - Respect existing geographic and political boundaries
 - Preserve communities of common interest
 - Maintain transportation links
 - Do not favor a party, incumbent, or person
 - State house districts are “nested” within state senate districts



THE OREGON METRO COUNCIL

- A unique, regional planning and coordination agency across Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties
- Elects a regional president and auditor
- Six nonpartisan councilors are elected from districts
- The districting process is scheduled to start in spring 2021



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR REDISTRICTING

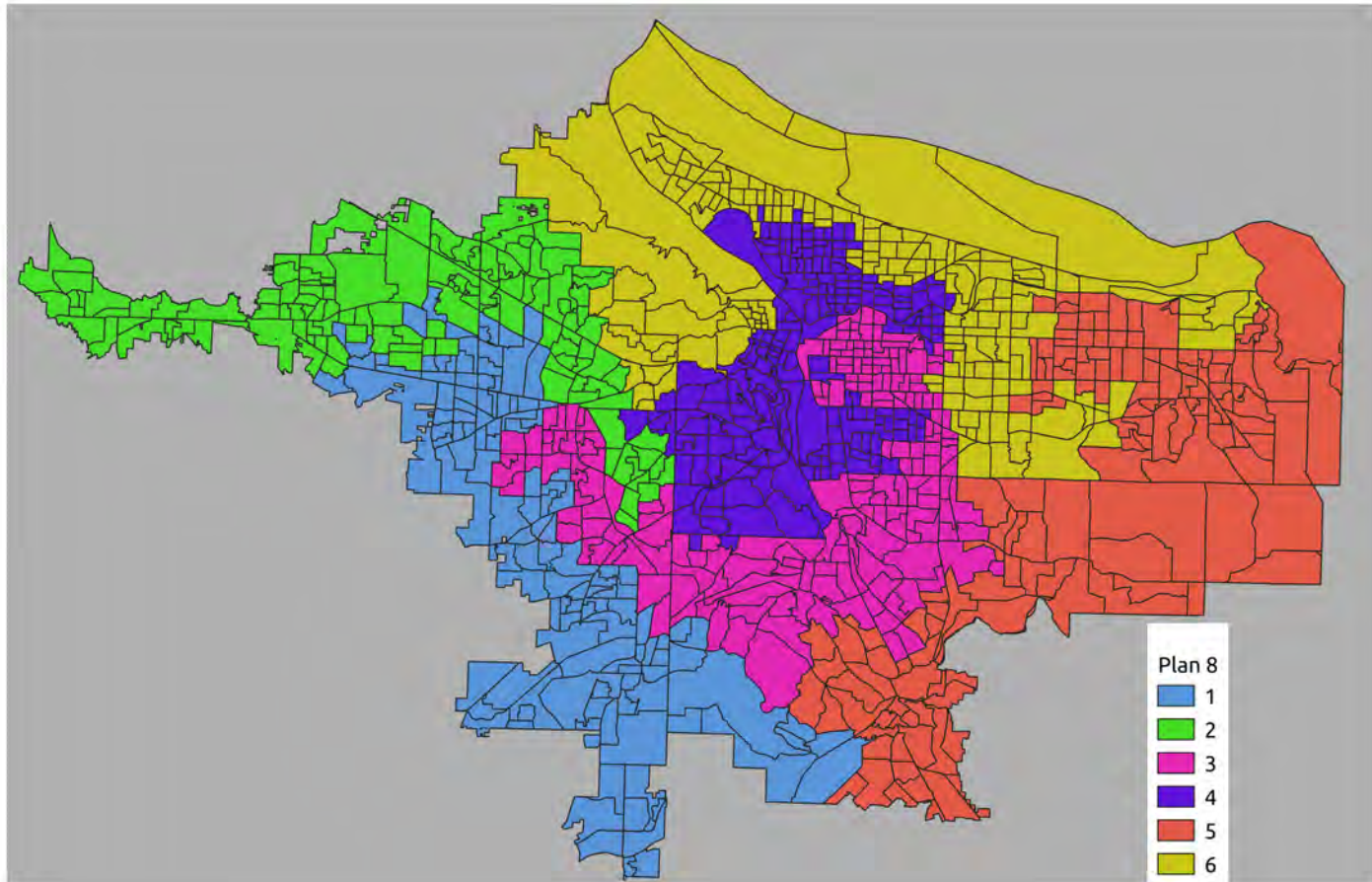
- Compliance with federal and state requirements
- A role for the public
 - Participation in comment hearings
 - What is a community?

COMPUTER-BASED DISTRICTING

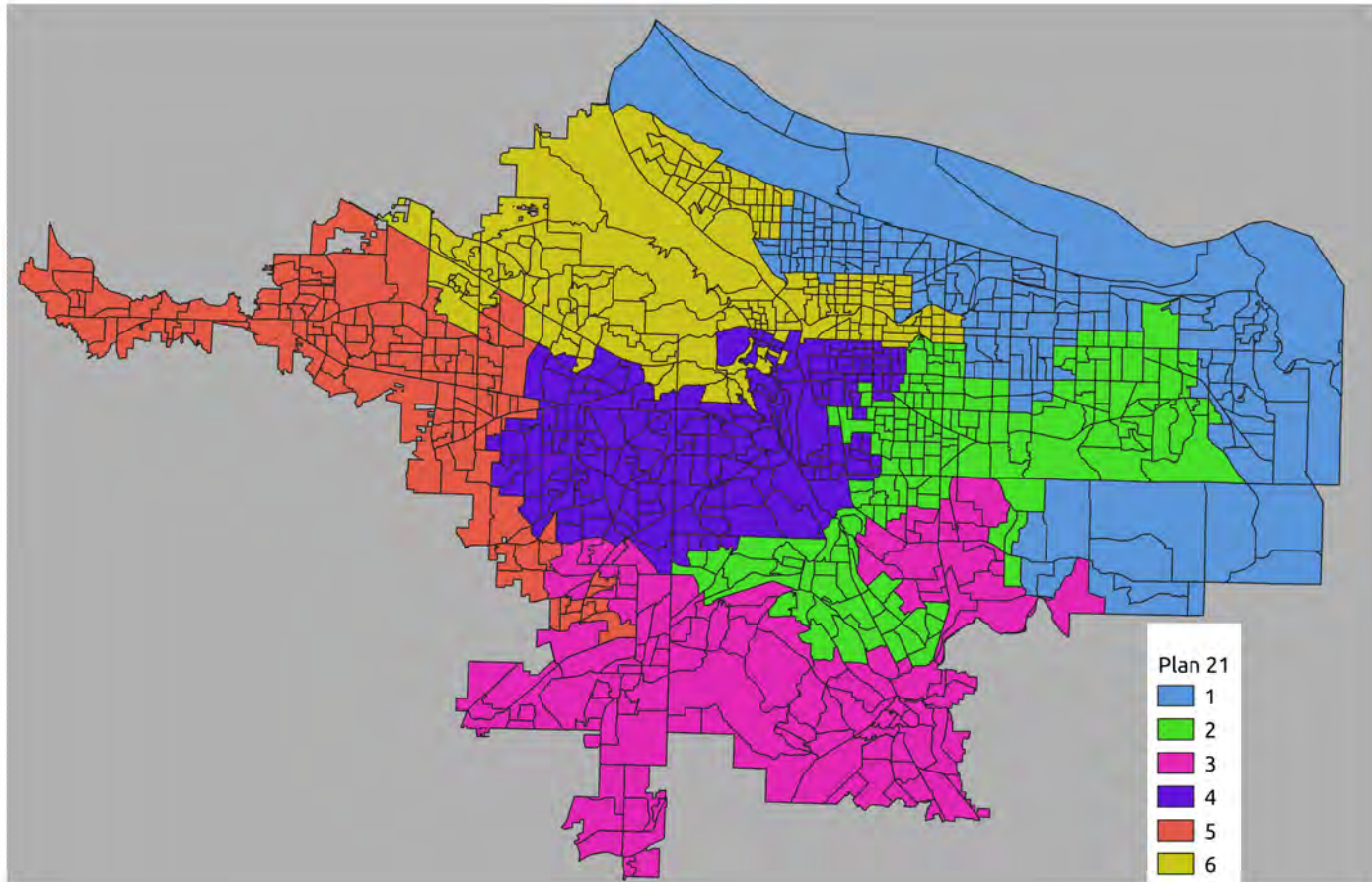
- Can we use algorithms to provide a set of district maps to select among?
- Some colleagues and I have developed an algorithm to do this task
 - We can produce contiguous and population balanced district plans (additional criteria to come)
 - We use 2018 ACS data at the block group level (N=964) for our simulated maps
 - We start with random “hubs” and then add block groups to each hub before swapping block groups to reach population balance



Simulated Plan 8



Simulated Plan 21

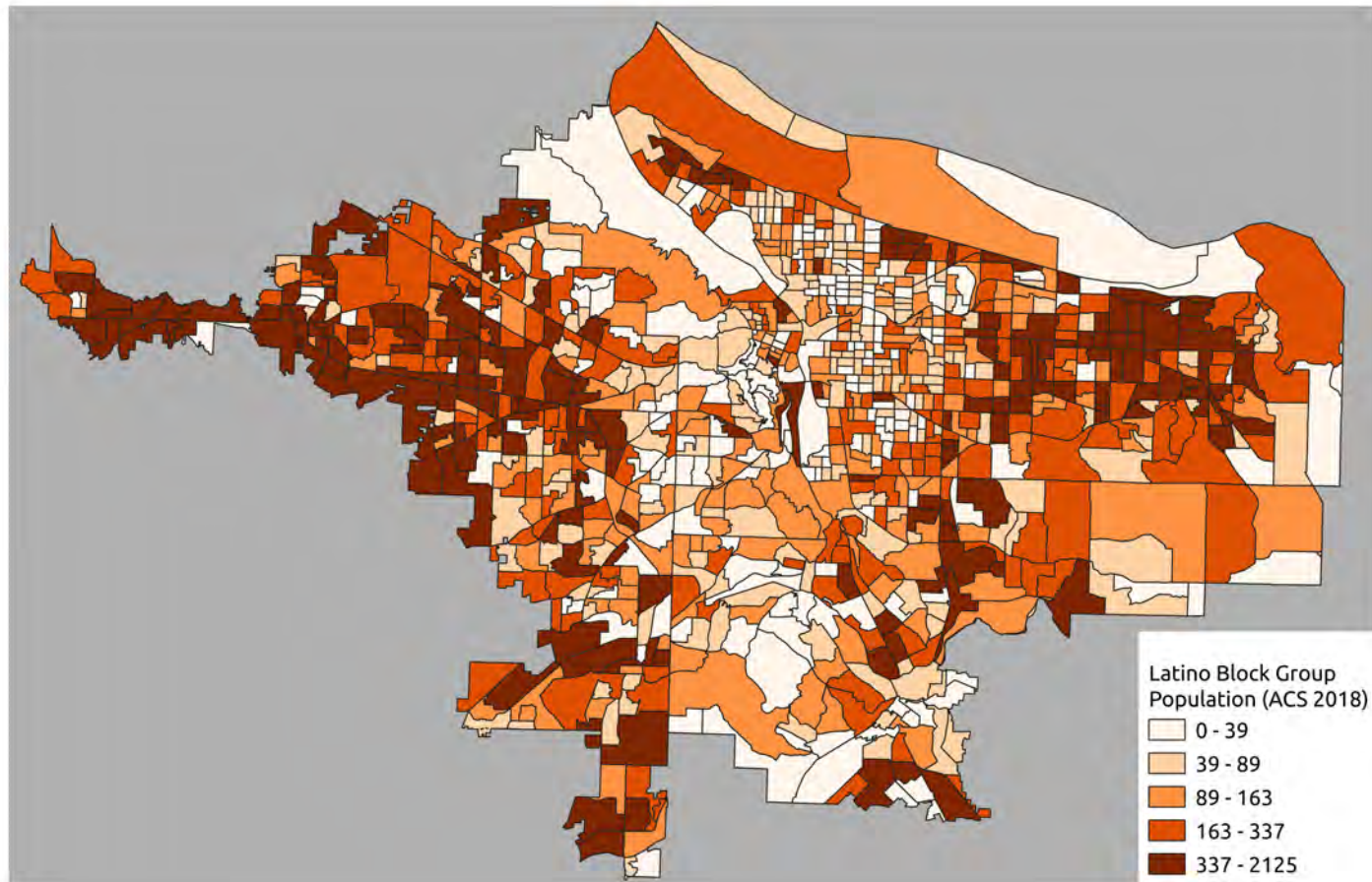


CAN WE DRAW A LATINO-MAJORITY DISTRICT?

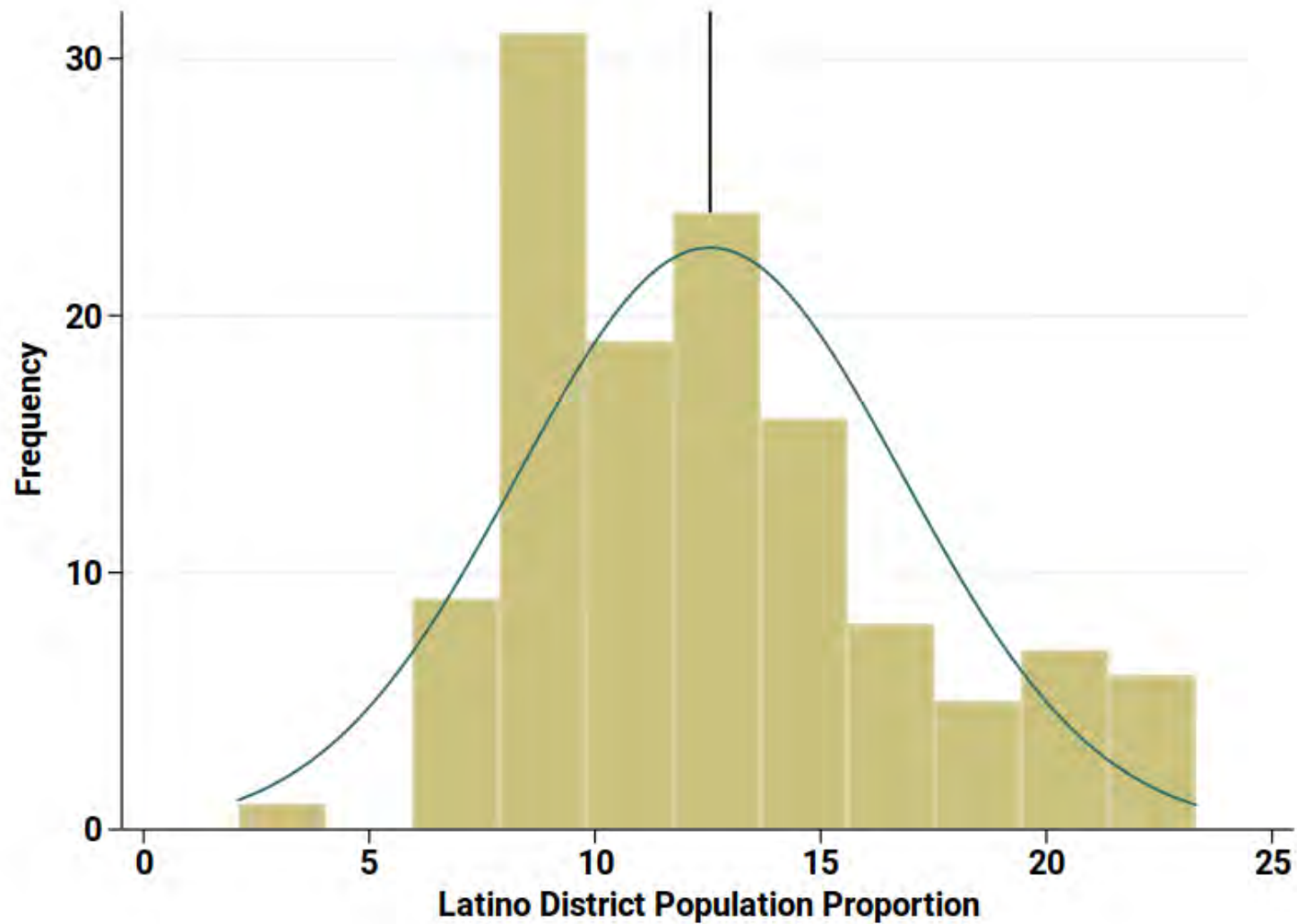
- The Latino population is 12.7% in these block groups but the effective threshold for a district is 16.7%
- Is it possible to draw a Latino-majority population district?



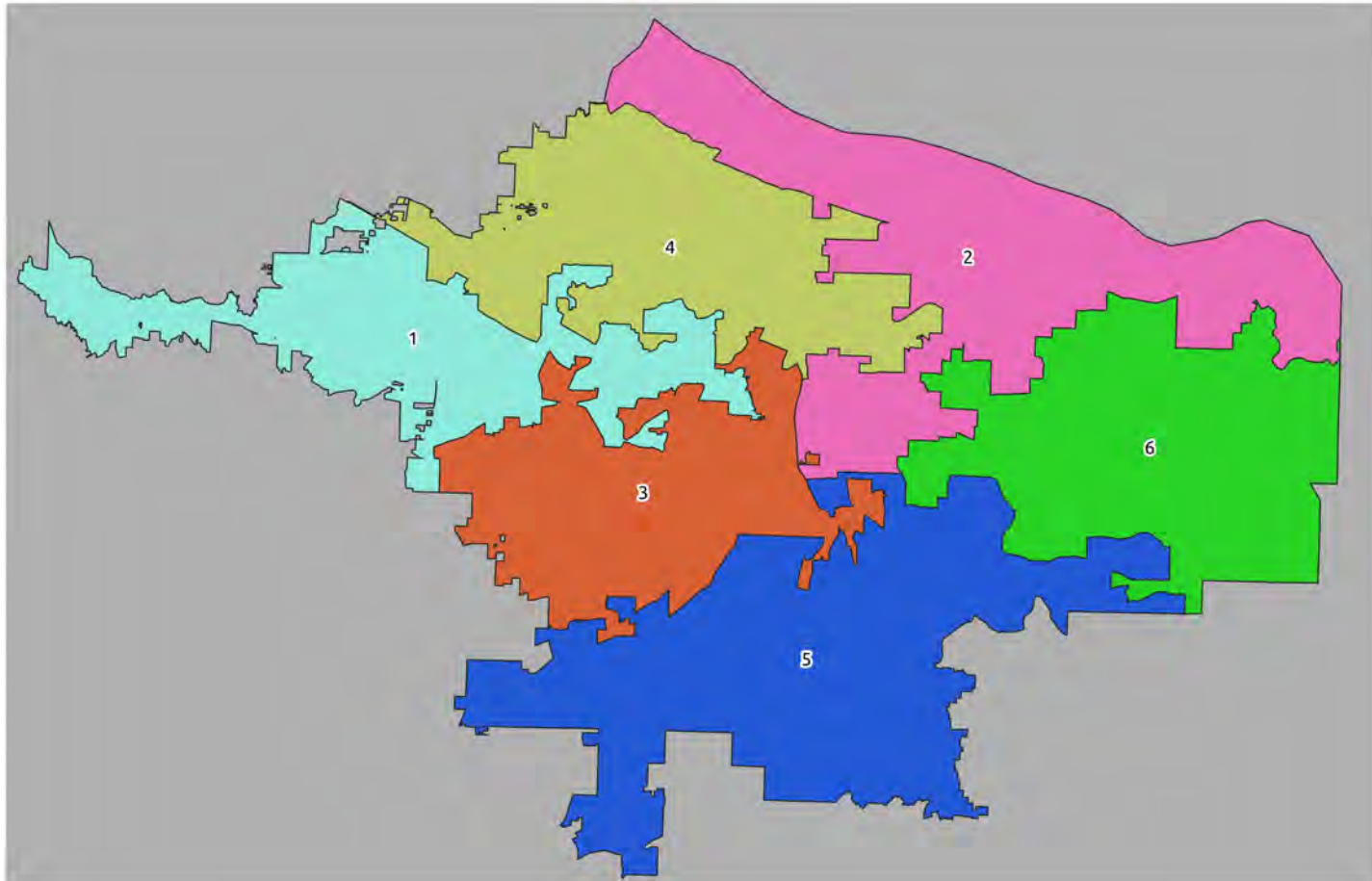
Latino Population in the Metro Block Groups



Histogram of Latino Population in 126 Simulated Districts



District 1 in this Simulation is 22% Latino



SHOULD OREGON CHANGE HOW REDISTRICTING IS DONE?

- Like most states the Oregon legislature has primary authority to draw congressional and legislative districts
- In the event the legislature does not pass a redistricting bill:
 - The congressional map is drawn by the courts
 - The legislative map is drawn by the Secretary of State
- There is an effort to qualify for the ballot a measure that will adopt a 12-member independent redistricting commission
 - <https://www.peoplenotpoliticiansoregon.com/>



HOW DOES A COMMISSION CHANGE THE PROCESS?

- Districts are more competitive
 - (Carson et al. 2014, Miller and Grofman 2013, Carson and Crespin 2004)
- Communities of interest are respected
 - (Stephanopoulos 2012)
- Reduced concerns about conflicts of interest, though politics may still be present
 - (Cain 2012)
- Maps are produced on a timely basis and largely avoid litigation
 - (Miller and Grofman 2013)



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