

Ohio on Track to Lose Two Congressional Seats

The United States was the first country to call for a census of the population in its Constitution.¹ According to Article I, Section II of the U.S. Constitution, an apportionment of representatives for each state is conducted every ten years. The House of Representatives was designed with population change in mind – the number of seats allocated to each state depends on the size of the state’s population in comparison to the population of other states. This is why an accurate Census count is so important. The Census has been conducted every ten years since 1790,¹ and the numbers that come from the Census are used to determine how many of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives are allocated to each state. Each state, regardless of its population, automatically receives one House seat. Beginning with the 51st seat, priority values are used to distribute the remaining seats to the states based on population. This is done by dividing the state’s population by the geometric mean of the previous and next seats attributed to that state.

The total counted population in each state at the time of the Census is divided by the number of seats in the House of Representatives apportioned to that state to determine the number of people that should live inside of each Congressional district. For instance, the population of Ohio at the time of the 2000 Census was 11,353,140, when 18 House seats were attributed to Ohio.¹ Dividing the state population by 18 yields a number of 630,730 – each district in the state must be redrawn to contain this number of constituents. It is up to the redistricting process within each state to ensure that each district is redrawn in this manner.

Figure 2: Population Change in Ohio Congressional Districts, 2002 – 2008²

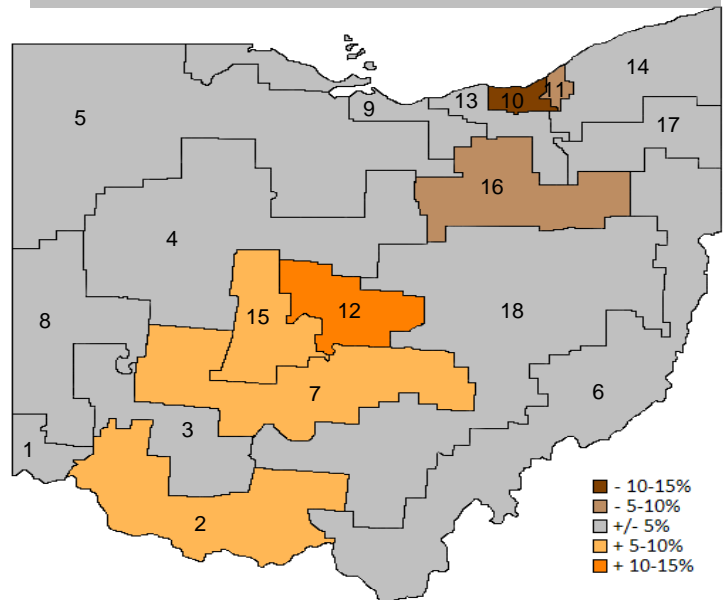


Figure 2 shows rates of population change in Ohio congressional districts between the time of the last redistricting (2002) and 2008 (most recent estimates). These rates were calculated by dividing the difference between the beginning population of each district immediately after redistricting (630,730) and the most recent population of each district by the beginning population of each district. The map shows that districts close to Cleveland have lost population while districts close to Columbus and Cincinnati have gained population.

Figure 1: Ohio Population Change, 1900-2000¹

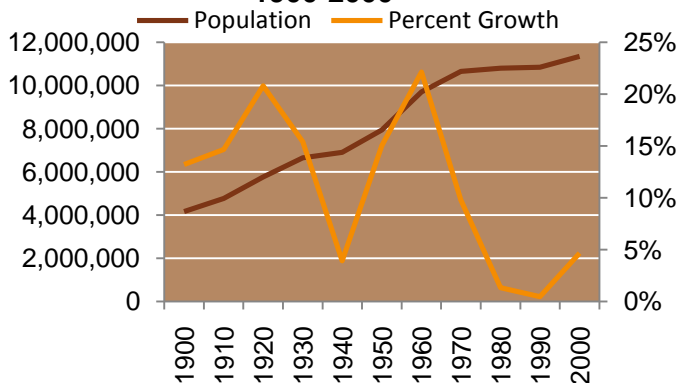


Figure 1 shows the change in population in Ohio relative to the percentage of population growth between 1900 and 2000. Although the population steadily increases, the rate at which the population grows per decade has fluctuated over the past century. Note that flattened portions of the brown line correspond with sharp decreases in the orange line. When population growth is stagnant, the rate of growth drops. According to Census estimates, population growth in Ohio is expected to remain low.

Population Growth Rates in Ohio – Ohio experienced a 22.1% growth in its population between 1950 and 1960. The rate declined to 0.5% between 1980 and 1990. Though the rate of population growth increased to 4.67% between 1990 and 2000, it was not enough to keep Ohio from losing a seat in Congress for the next decade. Ohio was the 44th ranked state in population growth during that period.³

In this Ohio Population News, we use data from the U.S. Census Bureau to project how the 2010 Census will affect congressional apportionment for Ohio. The data are attained from Census population projections and population estimates. The most recent population estimates are from 2009, and the most recent population projections are for 2010.

Population Estimates and Projections - We used Census population estimates and projections to predict Ohio’s number of House representatives after the 2010 Census. The Census Bureau releases population projections after each Census based on assumptions about births, deaths, and international and internal migration.¹ In contrast to population projections, which are used for estimating future populations, the population estimates program conducted by the Census is aimed at assessing the size of present and past populations.

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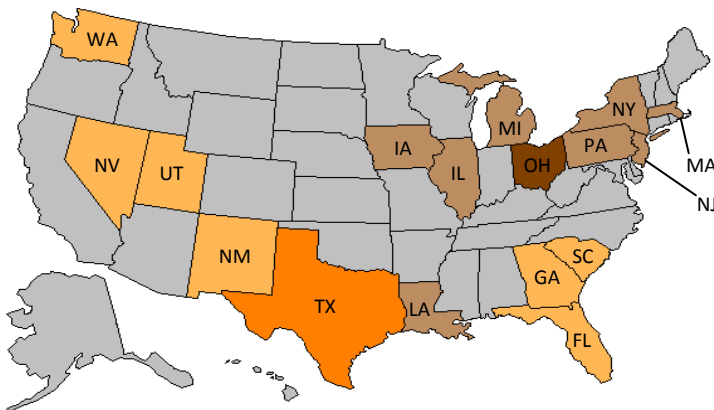


Figure 3: Reapportionment Projections

- Losing two districts - Ohio
- Losing one district - Iowa, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
- No Change
- Gaining one district - Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina, Utah, Washington
- Gaining three districts - Texas

The Ohio midyear population estimate for 2009 is 11,542,645, and the 2010 projection is 11,576,181.¹ These estimates represent an increase from the population at the time of the 2000 Census of only 1.7 and 2.0 percent, respectively. The 2009 population estimate and the 2010 projection for the states are used to forecast how the 2010 Census will affect congressional apportionment, with focus on Ohio. Using the Census priority value formula, congressional apportionment projections for all states were calculated. Based upon both sets of estimates, it is our projection that Ohio will lose two seats in the House of Representatives. Apportionment is a function of each state's population growth as compared to other states. Though the Ohio population has continued to grow since the 2000 Census, it has not grown as quickly as many other states.

The Ohio Apportionment Board controls the redrawing of congressional boundaries following each Census and is comprised of various members of the Ohio state government.⁴ New congressional boundaries will be drawn in 2011, elections for the newly redrawn districts will take place in 2012, and the newly elected representatives will take their places in Congress in 2013.

Regardless of which estimate is used, Ohio appears destined to lose two seats in the House of Representatives. Despite a continually growing population, Ohio has lost at least one House seat after every Census since 1960, when the state was at its peak of 24 representatives. In fact, the projected 16 House seats held by Ohio representatives after redistricting would be the lowest number of Ohio delegates since 1820, when the state had 14 representatives in the House.¹ As Ohio and other states in the Midwest and Northeast regions of the United States continue to show slow population gains as compared to the rest of the country, the power structure of Congress will continue to shift towards states in the west and south (Figure 3).

Census Controversy – The process of redistricting has been subject to controversy in American history. In some cases, when a political party has enough sway over the redistricting process, it will attempt to re-draw districts in a manner that will benefit them politically. This process, called “gerrymandering,” has been common in American politics since Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry used Census data in 1812 to benefit his political party through redistricting.⁵

Sources:

1. U.S. Census Bureau
2. American Community Survey
3. www.censusscope.org
4. Cleveland State University Center for Election Integrity
5. Martis, Kenneth C. “The Original Gerrymander.” *Political Geography*, v. 27 issue 8, 2008, p. 833-839.

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