

The Participatory Consequences of Florida Redistricting

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In the wake of the 2012 election, redistricting became a controversial topic. Journalists, politicians, and political scientists argued vociferously over whether the redrawing of congressional district lines had allowed the Republican Party to hold the U.S. House of Representatives, despite the fact that Democratic congressional candidates collectively won the popular vote. “Redistricting drew such a GOP-friendly map that, in a neutral environment, Republicans have an inherent advantage,” Aaron Blake of the *Washington Post* wrote two days after the election.¹ Political scientists Eric McGhee and John Sides suggested, however, that the Democrats’ seat deficit was principally from other sources: “These claims about gerrymandering aren’t as strong as they appear.”² (On this point, see also chapter 6.)

While the particulars of these debates were new to the 2012 election, the script was familiar: debates over redistricting focus almost exclusively on electoral outcomes and seat shares in Congress. Given redistricting’s importance to party competition in American politics, these exchanges are valuable to study. Nevertheless, although the emphasis on election outcomes is important, redistricting debates almost always ignore another important feature of the reapportionment process—its potential effects on voter participation. A growing body of research suggests that the drawing of district lines can influence who votes and who does not, for a specific office affected by the redrawing of political boundaries. Our task in this chapter is to investigate whether and how redistricting has participatory effects that are often given little attention.

We examine precinct-level data from congressional and state legislative elections in the 2012 Florida elections. The analysis allows us to broaden the

empirical evidence on redistricting’s effects on participation and to extend such an analysis for the first time beyond congressional races.

Redistricting and Participation

When congressional district lines are redrawn after every decennial census—or, as happened several times over the last two decades for partisan or legal reasons in many Southern states like Florida—the connection between some citizens and their representatives is severed. This is an unavoidable part of the reapportionment process, and it injects instability into United States elections.³ One consequence is that citizens who are redrawn into an unfamiliar incumbent’s district experience an increase in information costs, since in U.S. House elections, the identity of the incumbent is one of the few things voters know about the contest.⁴ A large literature has shown that increases in information costs lead to lower rates of participation.⁵ This has generated the hypothesis that, all else equal, redrawn citizens should be less likely to participate than individuals who remain in a district with a familiar incumbent.

Indeed, survey data show that people who are redrawn are less likely to know their new incumbent’s name.⁶ For instance, Hayes and McKee find in an analysis of 1992 National Election Studies (NES) data that citizens redrawn after the 1990 Census were 16 percentage points less likely to recall and 11 percentage points less likely to recognize their incumbent’s name than those who remained with a familiar incumbent.⁷ Likewise, Winburn and Wagner examine counties that are split by congressional districts and find a similar pattern in NES data from 1994 through 2000.⁸ Redrawn voters evidently have less information about their new incumbent than voters who remain with the same incumbent.

The literature is less clear, however, about whether this decline in incumbent familiarity leads to lower levels of participation. Two studies have found that redrawn citizens are less likely to vote in U.S. House contests in the election following a redistricting. In an analysis of precinct-level data from Texas, Hayes and McKee report that in portions of the state redrawn before the 2002, 2004, and 2006 elections, the level of “roll-off”—the proportion of voters failing to cast a ballot in the House election after having voted in a top ticket race—was between three and eight percentage points higher than in parts of the state that were not redrawn, controlling for other factors.⁹ A second study revealed the same pattern in a series of

11 post-redistricting elections from 1992 through 2006 in a larger sample of states—California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, as well as Texas.¹⁰ The average roll-off effect was smaller—less than two percentage points—but the emergence of the pattern in a wider sample of states in various elections adds a measure of generalization and reliability to the initial finding that redistricting increases voter abstention in contests affected by a boundary change.

Drawing firm causal inferences, however, from such studies is treacherous. As Sekhon and Tiunuk point out, such a design assumes that precincts that were redrawn are identical in politically relevant ways to those that were not redrawn.¹¹ If that assumption is right, any differences in participation rates can be attributed to redistricting, not some other characteristic. However, this may not be a justifiable assumption, since the parts of a state targeted for redistricting are often redrawn precisely because they have a particular demographic or political composition. If these characteristics are correlated with participation rates, then “post-treatment” differences may actually be the result of “pre-treatment” differences rather than redistricting itself.

For that reason, individual-level analyses, in which analysts can control for a host of potential confounding variables, have been a crucial supplement to aggregate-level investigations. Nevertheless, the results of these studies have been mixed. Using NES data, Hayes and McKee find that redrawn voters are less likely to know their incumbent’s name, and that this lack of information increases voter roll-off, controlling for a host of other attributes such as education levels, partisanship, and various demographic characteristics.¹² Other studies, however, have not found the same pattern. For instance, Winburn and Wagner do not find a relationship between the split of a county into multiple congressional districts with either turnout or roll-off.¹³ Hayes et al. find that redistricting affected turnout in the 2006 Georgia congressional elections, but, counter to the negative participation hypothesis, redrawn voters in some cases were *more* likely to vote.¹⁴ Keele and White study a subset of redrawn and same-incumbent registered voters in North Carolina, and they find no effect of redistricting on turnout.¹⁵ Individual-level data carry significant advantages over precinct-level analyses, but these studies have limitations of their own. Winburn and Wagner do not actually attempt to compare redrawn and same-incumbent voters, instead focusing on the geographic overlap between a respondent’s congressional district and county of residence.¹⁶ Hence, their results cannot

speak precisely to participatory-based differences or similarities in groups of voters whose information costs have been altered as a direct consequence of a change in the incumbent-constituent relationship. Hayes et al. suggest that mobilization efforts—which they do not measure—might explain why some redrawn voters were more likely to vote, while others were less likely to turn out.¹⁷ In addition, Keele and White’s use of a voter file to track individuals identified as having been redrawn is a considerable improvement.¹⁸ Nevertheless, their approach actually eliminates many voters whose behavior might alter the results. For instance, they do not include in their analysis citizens drawn into a district with an incumbent of a different race.

This last point is particularly important because previous work suggests an interaction between the race of constituents and the race of incumbents can condition how redistricting affects participation. Hayes and McKee find that redistricting has its strongest negative effects among African Americans drawn into white incumbents’ districts.¹⁹ Redistricting can mobilize blacks, however, when they are drawn into districts represented by African Americans. Thus, accounting for the characteristics of voters as well as the electoral context—and particularly, the race of incumbents—appears central to understanding how redistricting’s participatory effects manifest themselves.

All of this underscores the need for the collection of more data and better research designs to test for the purported causal relationship between redistricting and participation. Furthermore, it is imperative that research move beyond congressional elections to determine whether any relationship between redistricting and participation can be broadly generalized in political contexts outside of congressional elections.

In particular, state legislative elections are a promising area for more research. Most voters know little about candidates for state legislative offices, but many are at least familiar with their sitting incumbent. When voters are redrawn into a new incumbent’s district, however, their information costs are likely to rise significantly, in large part because state legislative campaigns are very low-profile. As a result, we might expect redistricting’s effect on participation to be even stronger in state legislative elections than in congressional contests.

In the analysis that follows, we use precinct-level data from the 2012 Florida congressional and state legislative elections to explore the relationship between redistricting and voter participation. This allows us to put to a test with new data, a hypothesis that has been raised by the existing lit-

erature. This analysis gives us an opportunity to broaden the investigation of redistricting's effects. All of the previous work has focused on U.S. House elections. Presently, we examine whether the same patterns are also evident in post-redistricting state legislative contests.

Data and Method

The data we analyze in this chapter were compiled from several sources. As mentioned, we have precinct-level data for both U.S. House and state legislative races for the 2012 general election. In addition to vote returns for congressional and state legislative offices, we also have returns for U.S. Senate and for president of the United States. Data for top of the ballot races, specifically for the presidential contest, is critical to the construction of our dependent variable, which is a measure of voter roll-off. Each Florida county delivered their precinct-level vote returns for various offices in electronic format to the Florida Division of Elections website, where they were made available electronically. Additionally, we merged the vote returns data with data from the Florida voter registration and history files when they were made available by the state after the 2012 general election.

The voter registration file includes important demographic data at the individual level, which we aggregated up to the precinct. We have data on party affiliation, race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The demographic data include numbers for both registration and turnout in a given precinct (e.g., the number of females who registered and voted in Precinct 1 in Alachua County). We also have district level data for several key variables like the type of contest (incumbent or open seat), whether a district was contested (Democrat versus Republican), and the total spending by major party candidates (Democrats and Republicans). Finally, we are able to code properly our primary independent variable of interest, whether or not a precinct was redrawn.

An important caveat we accounted for concerns the handful of districts where the race is technically open but includes the presence of an incumbent who previously represented a different office. These cases are all confined to state legislative races. Briefly, there was one incumbent state senator²⁰ who ran for the Florida House in 2012 and ten state representatives running for the Florida Senate in 2012. All but one of these state legislators ran in a district that contained a share of the constituents they represented prior to redistricting, when they served in the opposite legislative chamber.

In the descriptive analysis, we treat the precincts that these state legislators represented while serving in the opposite legislative chamber as "same" precincts as opposed to coding them redrawn and show these data separately. Similarly, in the multivariate analysis, we include dummy variables to indicate those precincts these state legislators retained after redistricting albeit while running for a different legislative office.

In keeping with previous research on redistricting and political participation,²¹ our dependent variable for all the analyses that follow is a measure of voter roll-off. The roll-off measure is: $1 - (N \text{ of votes cast in U.S. House/ Florida state senate/Florida state house of Representatives divided by the } N \text{ of votes cast for president})$. Taking the example from Hayes and McKee, "a precinct with 1,000 votes in the presidential contest and 900 votes in the U.S. House election has a 0.90 full voting rate and a roll-off rate of 0.10."²² For the sake of mathematical computation, roll-off is calculated only when the total number of votes cast for the lower office (U.S. House, state senate, or state house) is greater than or equal to zero *and* the total number of votes cast for the higher office (president) is greater than or equal to one.²³

We begin our analysis with a descriptive assessment of the relationship between redistricting and voter roll-off in Florida's U.S. House, state senate, and state house contests in 2012. The expectation is that compared to precincts retained by incumbents (same precincts), redrawn precincts (precincts drawn into an incumbent's district) will exhibit a higher roll-off rate. This is hypothesized because redrawn voters are less familiar with their new incumbent vis-à-vis voters who retain the same incumbent after redistricting, and this reduces the likelihood of voting for the specific office affected by a boundary change because of the greater propensity to abstain when one does not recognize the representative running in the district.

We then turn to multivariate analyses that further test the expectation that redrawn precincts exhibit higher roll-off rates. In addition to the presence of several demographic controls (created from the Florida voter registration file), the initial models include indicators for open seat districts and contested races in the U.S. House, state senate, and state house. In the state senate and state house models, we also include the dummy variables that identify the precincts retained by the chamber switching state legislators. Finally, we limit our assessment of the relationship between redistricting and roll-off in these three types of district-based offices, to just those districts with incumbents seeking reelection against a major party challenger.²⁴

Descriptive Results

Table 8.1 presents the distribution of Florida precincts for the U.S. House, state senate, and state house, classified as redrawn, same, or open seat in the 2012 elections. Whereas the modal distribution is the same precinct category for the U.S. House (56.3 percent), in both the state senate and state house, most precincts are located in open seat districts (41 and 39.7 percent, respectively). The higher rate of open seat precincts in the state senate and state house reflects a greater number of districts compared to the U.S. House, coupled with the reality that many state legislators were term-limited. There were more redrawn precincts than open seat precincts in the U.S. House (24.2 percent versus 19.5 percent), and in all three types of offices, the proportion of redrawn precincts exceeds twenty percent (22.7 percent in the state senate and 27.7 percent in the state house). Given the number of precincts in each category ($N \geq 900$) and overall for each office, the population size for our unit of analysis is large enough to conduct multivariate tests of the effects of redistricting on voter roll-off.

Table 8.2 displays the average roll-off rate for the three types of precincts for the U.S. House, state senate, and state house in the 2012 elections. Not surprisingly, in every case the rate of voter roll-off is positive, which means that more votes were cast for president than for the corresponding down-ballot district-based office (U.S. House, state senate, or state house). Roll-off is displayed as a percentage of voters failing to cast a ballot in the down-ballot race. For example, in the U.S. House, roll-off averaged 6.5 percent in redrawn precincts. Two patterns are evident in table 8.2. First, roll-off increases as we go from the highest office (U.S. House) to the low-

Table 8.1. The distribution of redrawn, same, and open seat precincts (%) in Florida for the U.S. House, state senate, and state house in the 2012 elections

Office	Redrawn	Same	Open Seat	Total
U.S. House	24.2 (1,250)	56.3 (2,911)	19.5 (1,009)	100 (5,170)
State senate	22.7 (971)	36.3 (1,554)	41.0 (1,754)	100 (4,279)
State house	27.7 (900)	32.6 (1,061)	39.7 (1,291)	100 (3,252)

Notes: Data compiled by the authors. Ns of precincts in each category are in parentheses. The state senate data exclude District 34, where an incumbent Democrat (Maria Sachs) ran against an incumbent Republican (Elynn Bogdanoff).

Table 8.2. Roll-off rates in redrawn, same, and open seat precincts (%) in Florida for the U.S. House, state senate, and state house in the 2012 elections

Office	Redrawn	Same	Open seat	Total roll-off
U.S. House	6.5	5.1	4.6	5.3
State senate	8.1	7.3	5.9	7.3
State house	11.6	9.0	10.7	10.4

Notes: The table shows the average roll-off rate for each office in the 2012 elections. The roll-off rate is the percentage difference in the votes cast for president compared to the number of votes cast for each lower office displayed in the table. In this case, the positive roll-off rates reflect the fact that on average there were more votes cast for president vis-à-vis any of the district-based offices displayed in the table. For example, on average, there were 6.5 percent fewer U.S. House votes cast than presidential votes cast in redrawn Florida precincts in the 2012 elections. The state senate data exclude District 34, where an incumbent Democrat (Maria Sachs) ran against an incumbent Republican (Elynn Bogdanoff). The state house and state senate data also exclude the ten districts highlighted in table 8.3, which show the cases where an incumbent state legislator ran for election in a different chamber.

est (state house), irrespective of the precinct type (redrawn, same, or open seat). Overall, the roll-off rate almost doubles when we go from U.S. House contests (5.3 percent) to state house contests (10.4 percent). This finding is consistent with the assumption that abstention rates will be higher in lower profile offices. Second, and more significant to our hypothesized relationship regarding redistricting and voter roll-off, in all three types of races, the roll-off rate in redrawn precincts exceeds the abstention rate in the same precincts. We also see that the roll-off rate is lowest in open seat races in the U.S. House and state senate (4.6 and 5.9 percent, respectively), but in state house contests voter roll-off is lowest in same precincts (9 percent).

The roll-off rates in table 8.2 exclude the ten districts where an incumbent state legislator ran for election in a different chamber and retained some of their old precincts. As mentioned previously, one state senator ran for the state house in 2012 (Senator Mike Fasano-R), and ten state representatives sought a state senate seat in the 2012 general election. Omitting the one case where a state representative (Representative John Legg-R) ran for the state senate (District 17) in a district that did not overlap with his old house seat (District 46), table 8.3 displays the roll-off rates for the ten state legislators who sought election in districts where they retained a portion of their old precincts. Since none of these ten legislators are truly incumbents by the fact that they are seeking election to a different office, in the multivariate analyses we produced, their districts are coded as open seats. These multivariate analyses also include a dummy variable that identifies

Table 8.3. Roll-off rates (%) for legislative chamber switching incumbents in Florida precincts in the 2012 elections

Switch to:	New	Same	Total roll-off
House District 36	NA (0)	14.1 (28)	14.1 (28)
Senate District 8	5.1 (67)	4.8 (44)	5.0 (111)
Senate District 12	7.0 (47)	4.7 (21)	6.3 (68)
Senate District 14	4.3 (43)	4.7 (27)	4.5 (70)
Senate District 15	6.5 (69)	6.1 (37)	6.3 (106)
Senate District 21	6.5 (102)	4.8 (18)	6.3 (120)
*Senate District 22	29.9 (120)	29.0 (30)	29.7 (150)
Senate District 25	6.1 (188)	6.5 (51)	6.2 (239)
*Senate District 27	24.4 (146)	24.2 (70)	24.3 (216)
Senate District 39	16.4 (145)	7.3 (29)	14.9 (174)

Notes: Florida House District 36 completely contained all of the precincts Republican state senator Mike Pasano represented in Florida Senate District 11 before redistricting (hence zero new precincts). Ns of precincts are in parentheses.

*These state senate districts were not contested by both major parties (a Republican ran in District 22 and a Democrat ran in District 27).

all of the precincts these legislators retained from when they served in the opposite chamber before redistricting. As the heading in table 8.3 states, we refer to these candidates as “chamber switching incumbents.” In addition, instead of denoting precincts as redrawn, for these state legislators seeking election to a different chamber, the districts they did not represent while serving in the opposite chamber are labeled “new”; whereas, the precincts they represented prior to redistricting are designated as “same.”

In the single instance where a state legislator went from the state senate to the state house, all of the precincts in the new house district were contained in this incumbent’s old state senate district. This explains why there are no roll-off data under the column for new precincts—none of the precincts in House District 36 were new to this legislator. However, the fairly

high roll-off rate of 14.1 percent in same precincts reflects the fact that this legislator had token opposition in the form of a write-in candidate who collected 52 votes in the general election (compared to 54,197 for the chamber switching legislator). Consistent with the theory that candidate familiarity reduces roll-off, out of the nine cases where chamber switching incumbents ran in districts with both new and same precincts (see state senate districts shown in table 8.3), we find voter roll-off in just two instances to be lower in new precincts vis-à-vis same precincts (Florida Senate Districts 14 and 25). In the rest of the senate districts analyzed, the roll-off rates are lower in the same precincts, and this is the case by a whisker in the two state senate districts (22 and 27) lacking two-party competition. In these two senate districts we attribute their massive voter roll-off rates to the fact that these incumbent legislators faced obscure write-in opponents who collectively garnered 586 votes.²⁵

So far, the descriptive data tell a consistent story in line with our theoretical expectation that redrawn precincts should exhibit higher roll-off rates versus same precincts, where in the latter, representatives have the opportunity to cultivate greater familiarity with their constituents. In fact, a simple bivariate correlation between roll-off and redrawn precincts exhibits a positive and highly significant coefficient in all three types of elections (+.133 in the U.S. House, +.074 in the state senate, and +.056 in the state house; $p < .01$, two-tailed).²⁶ Of course, we need to find out if the relationship remains when we control for numerous other factors that may affect voter roll-off, and hence the next section presents the findings from our multivariate models.

Multivariate Analysis of Redistricting and Roll-off

Using turnout data we created a number of demographic variables at the precinct-level relating to race/ethnicity, gender, and age. We include indicators for the percentage of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other [race] at the precinct-level, with non-Hispanic white turnout serving as our excluded comparison category. For gender, we include a measure of the percentage of precinct turnout comprised of female voters. Turnout by age is divided into various categories (25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65–74, 75–84, and 85–105), with the 18 to 24 year-old range serving as the comparison category. Also measured at the precinct-level is the percentage of turnout comprised of Republican registrants and our primary variable of interest, *Redrawn*, a

dummy variable indicating that a precinct was shifted to a new incumbent during the redistricting process.

A number of district-level variables are also incorporated into the models presented. These include two election-related indicators, *Open Seat* and *Contested Seat*, which are dummy variables denoting if the district lacked an incumbent and if it was contested by both a Democratic and Republican candidate, respectively. In addition, we include a measure of the total spending (*Spending*) by major party candidates associated with each contest.²⁷

For the models analyzing roll-off for state senate and state house races, we also include a set of binary indicators to denote those precincts that incumbent state legislators retained after redistricting while running for a seat in the opposing legislative chamber. For the state house model, this includes state senator Fasano running in House District 36 and for the state senate this includes the following state house members: Hukill (District 8), Thompson (District 12), Soto (District 14), Stargel (District 15), Grimsley (District 21), Brandes (District 22), Abruzzo (District 25), Clemens (District 27), and Bullard (District 39).

Since our dependent variable is a continuous measure, we utilize a panel regression model that includes a random intercept to estimate roll-off rates for the three office-holding levels of interest. Standard errors are clustered by legislative district.²⁸ Using this technique we are able to include both substantive district-level indicators while also controlling for district-level heterogeneity (via the inclusion of a random intercept).

The results of our multivariate analyses of roll-off are shown in tables 8.4 and 8.5. Table 8.4 includes the results for all types of contests—open, contested incumbent, or otherwise. Our primary variable of interest, *Redrawn*, is positive and statistically significant across all three types of office-holding levels analyzed: U.S. House, state senate, and state house. This is an indication that voters in redrawn precincts were more likely to roll-off (not cast a ballot for these down-ticket contests) compared with those voters whose precinct remained in the same incumbent's district after redistricting. For state house races the percentage of black voters is negatively related to roll-off and the percentage of Hispanics is associated with increased roll-off. The percentage of female voters is negatively associated with roll-off for congressional and state senate races, as is the percentage of voters in the 45 to 54 age group category in U.S. House races.

At the district level one can see that contested races featuring a Republican and a Democratic candidate are significantly less likely to experience

Table 8.4. Roll-off analysis, Florida 2012 general elections

	U.S. House	State senate	State house
Redrawn	.0140** (.0038)	.0083* (.0034)	.0147** (.0050)
Open seat	.0070 (.0051)	.0238 (.0137)	.0145 (.0158)
Contested seat	-.0686*** (.0154)	-.1274*** (.0347)	-.1032** (.0351)
Spending	-.00006* (.000002)	-.0022 (.0017)	-.0045 (.0043)
% Female	-.0602* (.0293)	-.0854* (.0387)	-.0180 (.0651)
% Republican	-.0392 (.0227)	-.0409 (.0509)	-.1428** (.0479)
% Black	-.0398 (.0223)	-.0291 (.0287)	-.1039*** (.0327)
% Hispanic	.0136 (.0079)	.1162 (.0870)	.0870** (.0353)
% Asian	.1122 (.1316)	.0468 (.1593)	.1577 (.1805)
% Other race	.1776 (.1081)	.1229 (.2288)	.4125 (.2112)
% 25–34	.0286 (.0551)	-.1043 (.0899)	-.0434 (.0680)
% 35–44	-.0367 (.0341)	-.1023 (.0573)	-.0453 (.0789)
% 45–54	-.0925*** (.0281)	-.1821 (.1130)	-.0899 (.0773)
% 55–64	-.0252 (.0227)	-.0540 (.0644)	.0520 (.0665)
% 65–74	-.0223 (.0263)	-.0660 (.0717)	-.0503 (.0673)
% 75–84	-.0253 (.0306)	-.0819 (.0632)	-.0235 (.0661)
% 85–105	-.0411 (.0338)	-.0032 (.0769)	-.0071 (.0765)
Hukill (SS 8)	—	-.0089** (.0030)	—
Thompson (SS 12)	—	-.0158 (.0161)	—
Soto (SS 14)	—	-.0103 (.0062)	—
Stargel (SS 15)	—	-.0021 (.0023)	—
Grimsley (SS 21)	—	-.0192*** (.0041)	—
Brandes (SS 22)	—	-.0064*** (.0019)	—
Abruzzo (SS 25)	—	-.0073** (.0024)	—
Clemens (SS 27)	—	.0044 (.0054)	—
Bullard (SS 39)	—	-.0809*** (.0130)	—
Fasano (SH 36)	—	—	-.0386 (.0281)
Constant	.1825*** (.0241)	.3316*** (.0778)	.2504*** (.0615)
R ²	.36	.41	.25
N	4,516	3,737	2,812

Notes: Entries are regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

roll-off across all three types of elections analyzed. For congressional races the total amount of campaign spending is negatively related to roll-off, an indication that competitive races are more likely to maintain voter interest. As for the incumbent officeholders switching legislative chambers, we see that in five of ten cases, precincts retained by these candidates significantly

Table 8.5. Roll-off analysis of contested incumbent districts, Florida 2012 general elections

	U.S. House	State senate	State house
Redrawn	.0134*** (.0036)	.0087*** (.0025)	.0044 (.0042)
Spending	-.00005* (.00002)	-.0003 (.0011)	-.0024 (.0015)
% Female	-.0571 (.0422)	-.0951** (.0351)	-.0495 (.0509)
% Republican	-.0257* (.0129)	.0091 (.0171)	-.0171 (.0111)
% Black	-.0305*** (.0085)	-.0537*** (.0149)	-.0549*** (.0124)
% Hispanic	.0273*** (.0065)	.0655*** (.0169)	.0490*** (.0132)
% Asian	-.0648 (.1032)	-.1581 (.1598)	-.0247 (.2136)
% Other Race	.2059 (.1363)	.5589** (.2005)	.5385* (.2476)
% 25–34	.0855 (.0594)	-.2049 (.1372)	-.0992 (.0487)
% 35–44	-.0729* (.0355)	-.0360 (.0635)	-.0668 (.0724)
% 45–54	-.0494* (.0209)	-.2904 (.1814)	-.1063 (.0576)
% 55–64	-.0399 (.0236)	-.1009 (.0522)	-.0503 (.0669)
% 65–74	-.0019 (.0182)	-.1952 (.1088)	-.0530 (.0331)
% 75–84	.0083 (.0334)	-.0750 (.0832)	-.1147** (.0398)
% 85–105	-.0127 (.0461)	-.0743 (.1012)	.0189 (.0458)
Constant	.0910** (.0332)	.2394* (.0943)	.1579*** (.0477)
R ²	.13	.21	.07
N	2,885	1,677	1,115

Notes: Entries are regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

reduced voter roll-off. This is not surprising given the fact that these state legislators ran in new districts that contained some degree of overlap with their previous legislative districts in the opposite chamber.

Table 8.5 confines our analysis to contested races that featured either a Republican incumbent running against a Democratic challenger or a Democratic incumbent facing a Republican challenger. As such, a number of variables drop out, including the indicators for those officeholders switching state legislative chambers. For congressional and state senate contests we see that redrawn precincts were significantly more likely to experience roll-off compared to same precincts. The coefficient for state house races, while positive, is not statistically significant. Overall, spending in congressional races is again associated with a lower incidence of roll-off, as is the percentage of Republican voters at the precinct-level. Consistently, across the three office holding levels analyzed, the percentage of black voters at the precinct-level is negatively associated with roll-off while the percentage

of Hispanics is positively related to roll-off rates. For state senate races, the percentage of female voters is also negatively related to the level of roll-off within a precinct.

Figure 8.1 summarizes roll-off rates for the six types of election contests analyzed in tables 8.4 and 8.5. Because these are regression coefficients, it is fairly straightforward to interpret the effects for our primary variable of interest—those precincts redrawn into a new incumbent's district. For each type of contest, figure 8.1 presents the difference in roll-off rates for redrawn versus same precincts. For example, in contested congressional races featuring an incumbent, the roll-off rate is estimated to be 1.3 percent higher in redrawn precincts as compared to same precincts. Since the coefficients for the redrawn indicator are all positive for the six models estimated, the difference measures are also all positive. With the exception of incumbent-contested state house contests, the roll-off rate differential between redrawn and same precincts is statistically significant. Again, this robust finding underscores the fact that voters moved to a new incumbent's district across a redistricting cycle are less likely to vote for that down-ticket contest compared to voters who remained in the same district.

Conclusion

On the firm footing of past research, this chapter demonstrates once again that redistricting has the effect of reducing participation. We are impressed by the consistency in finding that redrawn precincts increase voter roll-off. Out of six multivariate regressions that include a host of important controls, only in incumbent-contested state house races do we find that the coefficient for redrawn precincts fails to reach statistical significance. In the other five models, redrawn precincts clearly have the effect of increasing voter roll-off in the 2012 U.S. House, state senate, and state house elections in Florida. We are not yet ready to contend that redistricting generally has the effect of leading to greater abstention rates in district-based contests, but the body of evidence certainly pushes us in this direction.

With a different methodology and unit of analysis (registered voters in Georgia), we conducted a previous examination that found in some cases redrawn voters were in fact more likely to turn out to vote. Nonetheless, that study was considerably different from this one because the most theoretically appropriate method for capturing the participatory effects of redistricting is to evaluate voter roll-off as opposed to turnout. This makes the most sense because it is dubious that redistricting deters people from

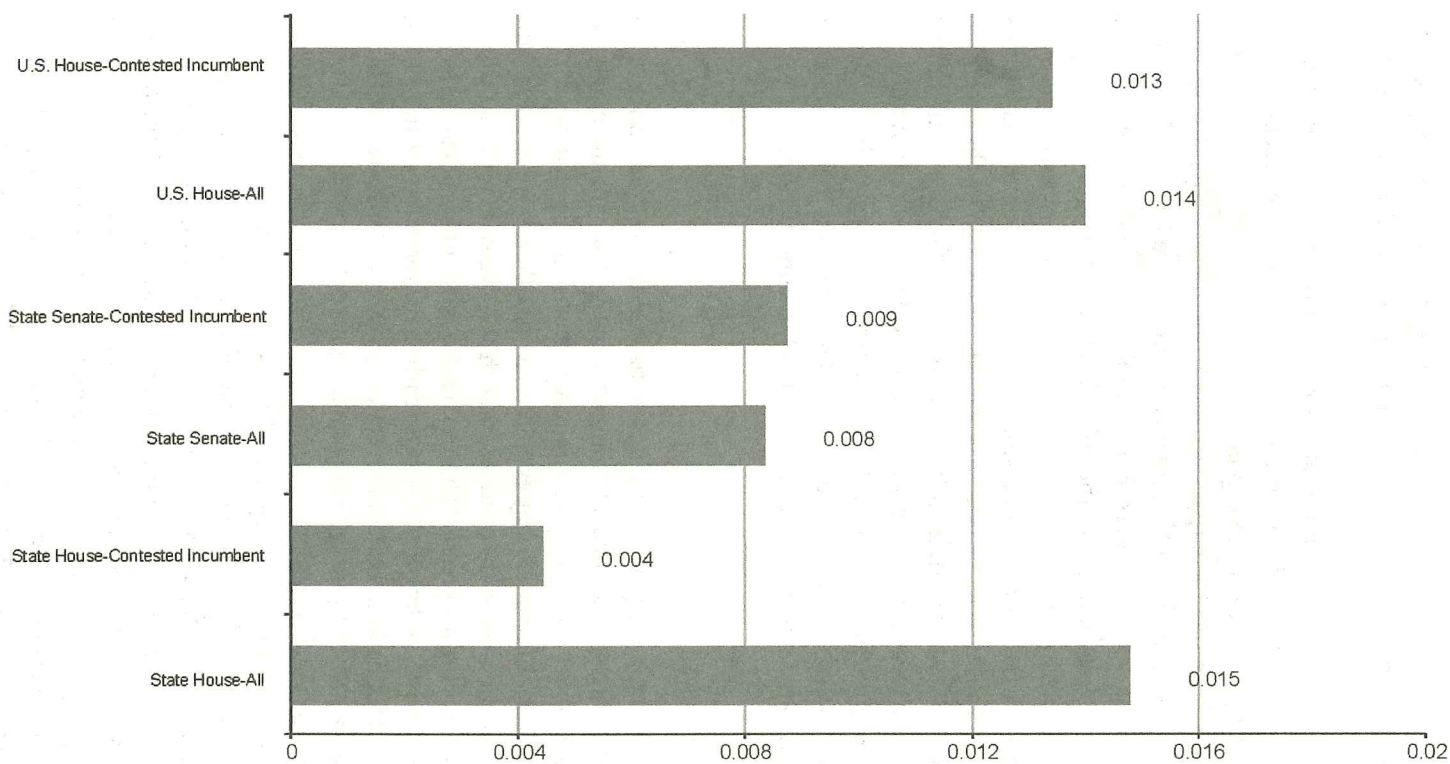


Figure 8.1. Estimated roll-off rate differentials, Florida 2012 general elections. The roll-off differential for contested incumbent races in the state house (0.4 percent) is not statistically significant.

voting (or increases their likelihood of voting), rather it affects the decision to vote for an office affected by redistricting once someone has decided to turn out to vote. Given the proper approach to measuring the effect of redistricting on voter roll-off, this chapter provides further evidence that constituents redrawn into districts with a new incumbent cast fewer votes for the office directly affected by a boundary change.

In a novel modification to the typical assessment of the influence of redistricting on voter roll-off, we were also able to determine whether chamber switching state legislators enjoyed less voter roll-off among the precincts they retained after redistricting that they represented previously, while serving in the opposite chamber. These cases are interesting because they lie somewhere between the traditional conception of incumbency and open seat contests. Given the likelihood that voters in precincts retained by these chamber switching state legislators are more familiar with these candidates, it was expected that roll-off would be less. In the multivariate analysis (see table 8.4), for the precincts retained by the ten chamber switching state legislators, there is only one instance where the coefficient is not negatively signed (a negative sign indicates less roll-off), and that is in one of the two state senate districts not contested by both major parties (Clemens in Senate District 27). For half of the chamber switching state legislators, among their retained precincts, we find that they had the negative and statistically significant effect of reducing voter roll-off, which comports nicely with our theoretical expectations.

As we stated at the outset of this chapter, the bulk of attention about redistricting concerns its expected, intended, and actual effects on election outcomes. It is only more recently that scholars have turned their focus to the possible and realized influence that redistricting has on the decision to vote for the office impacted by a boundary change. Consistent with our previous research on this topic, and for the first time extending such an analysis to district-based contests below the congressional level, we find that in the 2012 Florida elections for U.S. House, state senate, and state house, redrawn precincts exhibit a higher rate of voter roll-off than in those precincts incumbents retained after redistricting.

This finding is firmly grounded in what we know about the incumbent-constituent relationship. Incumbents typically expend a good deal of effort cultivating a relationship with their voters and especially among those whom they depend upon for reelection. Thus, it is little wonder that through this representational relationship many voters become familiar

with their incumbent, and even cross partisan lines to support their member in recognition of their impartial service to district inhabitants.

The home style that so many legislative members work diligently to maintain is directly and negatively impacted by redistricting, with many of their favored constituents being redrawn into another incumbent's domain. When this happens the electoral status quo is abruptly disrupted and in addition to potentially altering the prospects for winning another term, incumbents are anxious to establish new relationships with voters redrawn into their districts. As we have shown, the precincts that contain redrawn constituents are less likely to vote in the contest affected by redistricting. It is somewhat curious that the vast majority of studies focus strictly on how redistricting influences election outcomes when a fundamental component of redrawing political boundaries is tied directly to the altered relationship between representative and voter and, hence, not just how votes are cast in a given race, but whether they are cast at all.

9

Elections in a Brave New World

Reform, Redistricting, and the Battle for the 2012 Legislature

JONATHAN WINBURN

As the Florida Legislature set out to complete redrawing their legislative districts, they faced new constraints designed to limit their ability to offer partisan and incumbent protection in the process. As discussed throughout much of this book, the so-called Fair Districts constitutional reforms, contained in Amendment 5, were enacted by Florida voters during the 2010 state general election. These constitutional reforms altered the playing field for the state legislature when the body undertook its work to complete the redistricting process. The 2012 legislative elections would be the first test of these new reforms and provide the ultimate test for their effectiveness. In this chapter, I examine the 2012 legislative outcomes with a focus on the role of redistricting in these elections.

As the dust settled on all the political and legal maneuvering surrounding redistricting, two major questions emerged heading into the 2012 legislative elections: (1) Would the so-called Fair Districts reforms create a more competitive electoral landscape that proponents pushed for, and (2) Could the Republicans retain their supermajority in both chambers that essentially rendered the Democrats procedurally useless during the most recent legislative session? The answer to both of these questions partly revolved around the fate of incumbents in the first set of maps produced under the new rules of redistricting in the state.

Brief Background on Redistricting and Election Outcomes

The fundamental goal of redistricting is to equalize population among districts to help ensure fair representation in the electoral and legislative arenas. The political controversy emerges in exactly how to achieve that goal.