

# Redistricting in Georgia: A 20-Year History

**Town Hall – June 21, 2021**



**PRINCETON  
GERRYMANDERING  
PROJECT**

Fixing bugs in democracy



# We Are Asking For Three Big Changes



## 1. Listen

- Draw maps using community input
- Communities provide clear definitions
- Legislature responds to each defined community

## 2. Show your work

- More public and transparent process
- April 19 letter to Duncan, Ralston, committees signed by 20 organizations
- Requests waiver of secrecy
- Fifteen specific changes for public access



## 3. Check your work

- Commit to meeting independent, non-partisan benchmarks for districts



Hannah Wheelen



Sara Hodges



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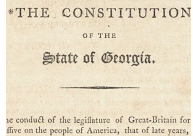


# Decennial Redistricting Process in Georgia



Public  
Listening  
Sessions

Redistricting  
Guidelines

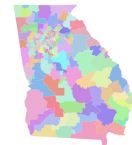
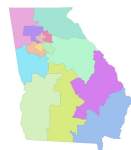
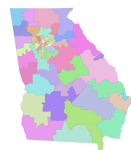
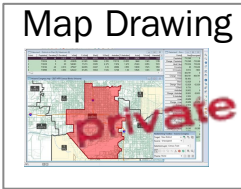


**PRIVATE**

General Assembly draws maps



Legislative and Congressional  
Redistricting Office (LCRO)  
& outside consultants



GA Special Session



Floor votes  
(Gentleman's Agreement)

Governor signs



**APPROVED**

# Public Participation Is Discouraged



- Public meetings are often scheduled at the last minute
- District maps often aren't released before public meetings
- Bills consist of a listing of census tracts or other incomprehensible unit
- Legislator communications with LCRO are legally privileged and confidential



## Text of actual redistricting bill

15 \*District 034  
16 Cobb County  
17 VTD: 067BG01 - BIG SHANTY 01  
18 VTD: 067BK01 - BAKER 01  
19 030226:  
20 1019 1022 1023  
21 030227: .  
22 1001  
23 VTD: 067CH02 - CHEATHAM HILL 02  
24 VTD: 067EL01 - ELIZABETH 01  
25 030506:  
26 1088 1090 1091 1093 1094 1095 1096 1098 1102 1103 1107 1123

- General Assembly is not subject to public comment, oversight, and participation are discouraged
- Open Records or Open Meetings Act

# Few Legally-Binding Redistricting Criteria



- Federal      District population must be **APPROXIMATELY EQUAL**  
**VOTING RIGHTS ACT** must be followed
- Georgia      Districts must be **CONTIGUOUS**

General Assembly 2011 **non-binding** guidelines considered:

**COMPACTNESS**

**COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST**

**EXISTING POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS**

**AVOID PAIRING INCUMBENTS**

**COMMITTEES MAY CONSIDER OTHER FACTORS**

# Legislators Draw Their Own Maps



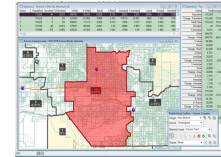
Legislators control the process

Each chamber draws its own maps

Chambers have “*Gentlemen’s Agreement*”  
to approve each other’s map

Politicians choose their own constituents  
with little oversight and vague rules

State House



State Senate



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# Mid-decade Redistricting Protects Incumbents



The Georgia General Assembly can redraw districts at every session; very few other states allow mid-decade redistricting without a court order

Mid-decade redistricting (2000 - 2021):

- 15 bills brought to the floor; 6 passed
- 97 proposed alterations; 64 districts changed

*"...objective was to make these districts ... better for these incumbents to get reelected."*

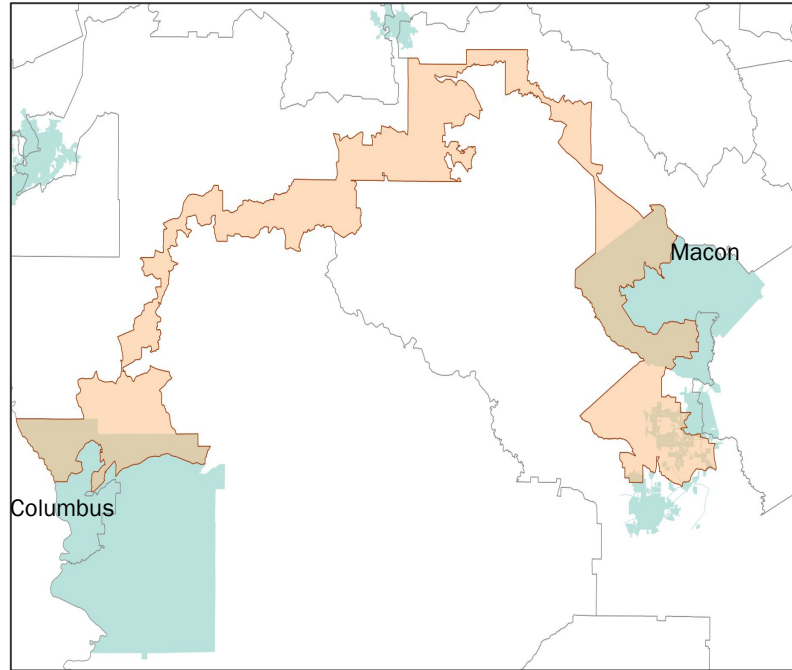
- Deposition of Gina Wright,  
Executive Director of LCRO



# Gerrymandered Maps Can Be Difficult To Detect



Historically, gerrymandered maps had extremely contrived boundaries



State Senate District 16, 2002

Now gerrymandered districts are hard to detect by looking at a map; detection today requires a more technical set of analysis tools

# Fair Districts GA / Princeton Gerrymandering Project Partnership



Purpose: Provide independent, non-partisan benchmarks / fairness tests

Phase 1: complete

20-year history

- Last 2 redistricting cycles
- Mid-cycle redistricting

Phase 2: begins August/September

Based on 2020 census

- Benchmarks / fairness tests
- Evaluation of proposed maps

	Partisan balance	Minority representation
State House	?	?
State Senate	?	?
Congress	?	?

# Key Questions For 20-year History Analysis



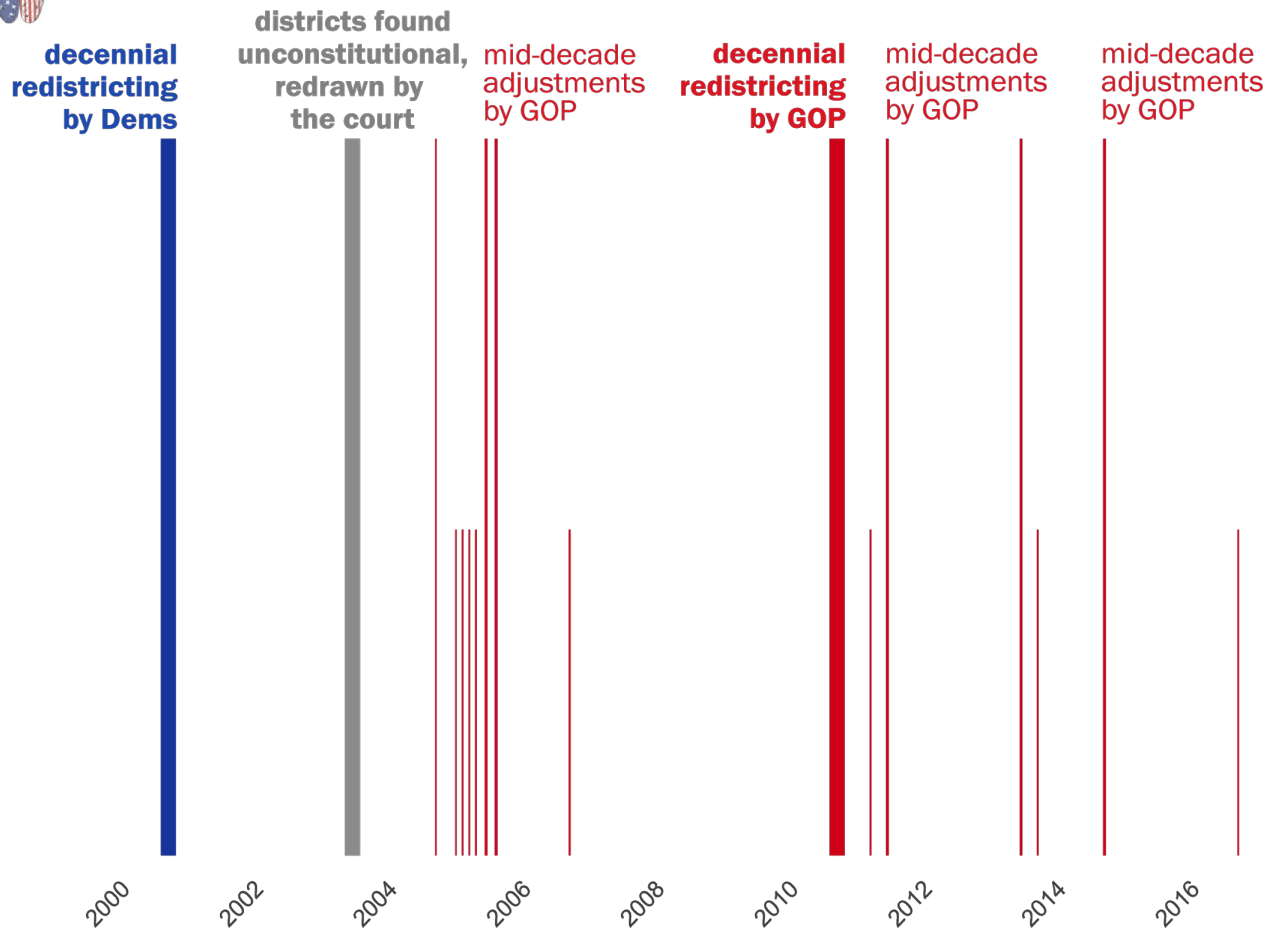
## Partisan fairness

- How well does the legislature represent voters' preferences?
- Do maps reflect voters' preferences?
- Do maps reflect their communities?
- Would maps drawn without partisan influence better reflect voters' preferences and communities?

## Minority representation

- Do maps provide adequate minority representation?

# Twenty Years of Decennial and Mid-decade Redistricting



- 2 decennial redistricting cycles
- 1 court-ordered adjustment of maps
- 6 successful mid-decade adjustments (64 districts changed)
- 9 failed mid-decade adjustments (33 attempted)

Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# Partisan Analysis 2000 – 2020



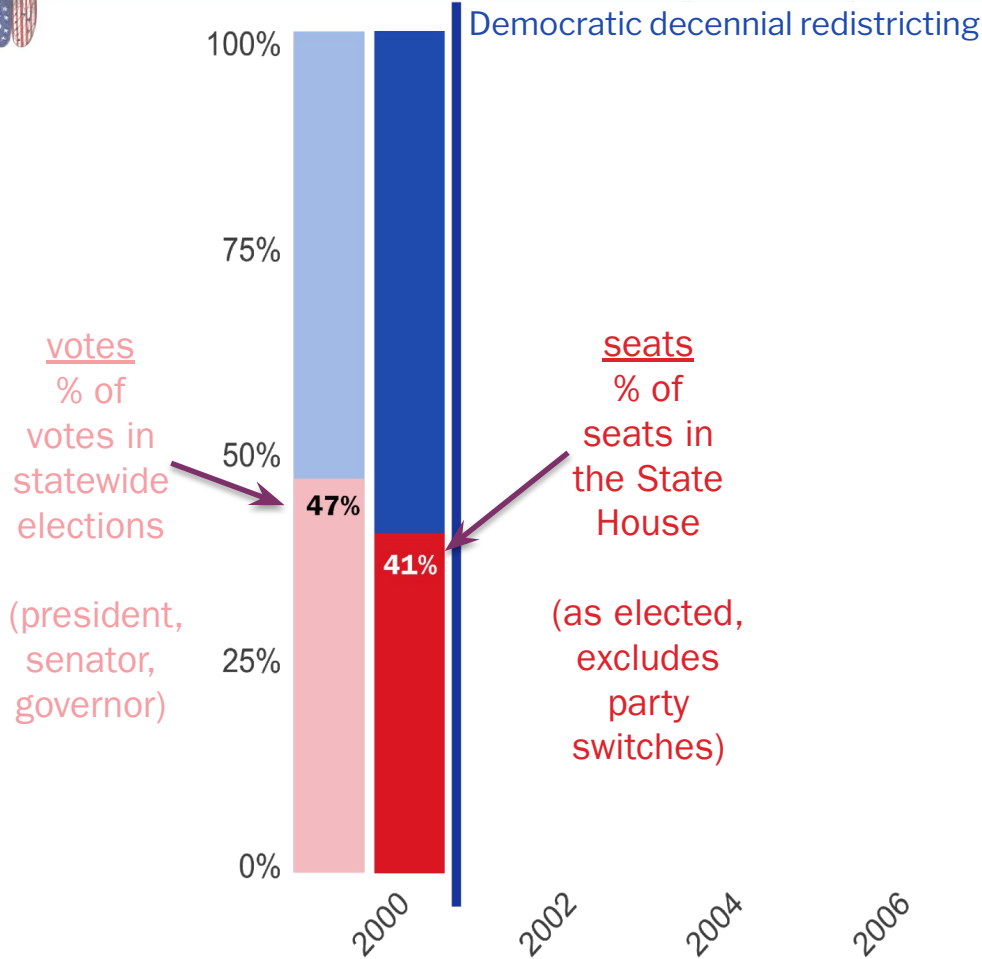
Analyzed General Assembly and statewide election results for 20 years

- every district map change
- statewide election results

Representation should respond to changes in voting patterns

more votes ▲ = more seats ▲  
fewer votes ▼ = fewer seats ▼

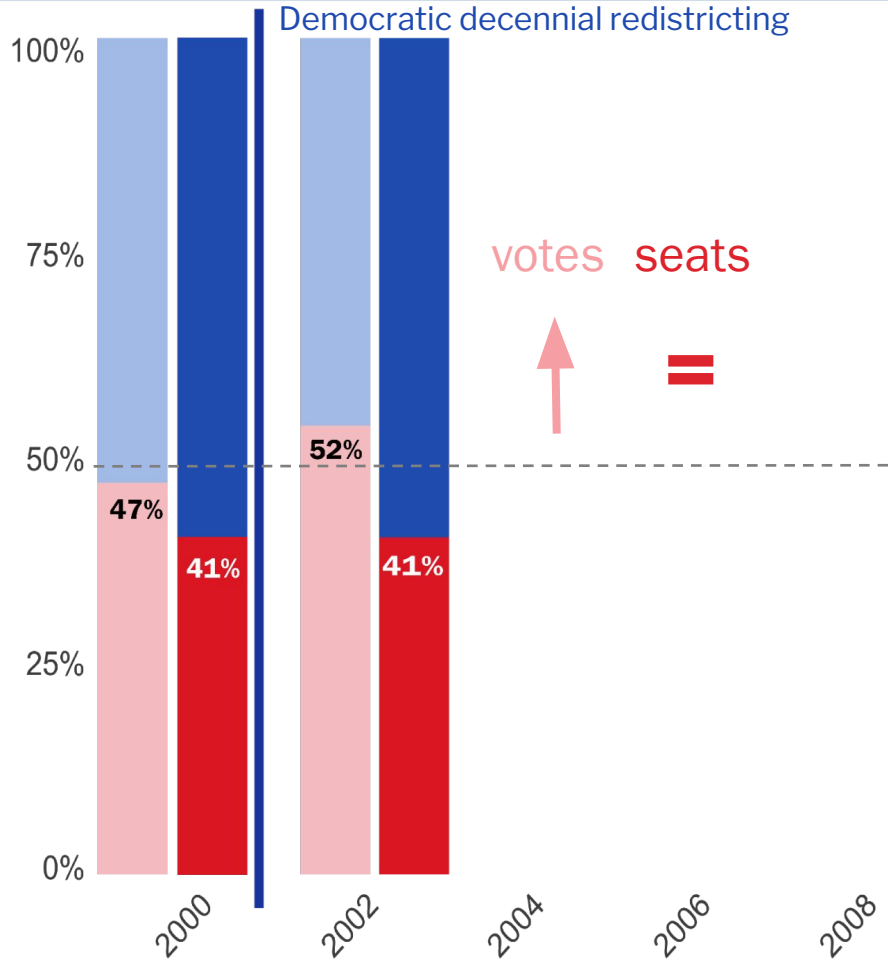
# State House Detailed Look at Partisan Gerrymandering



Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

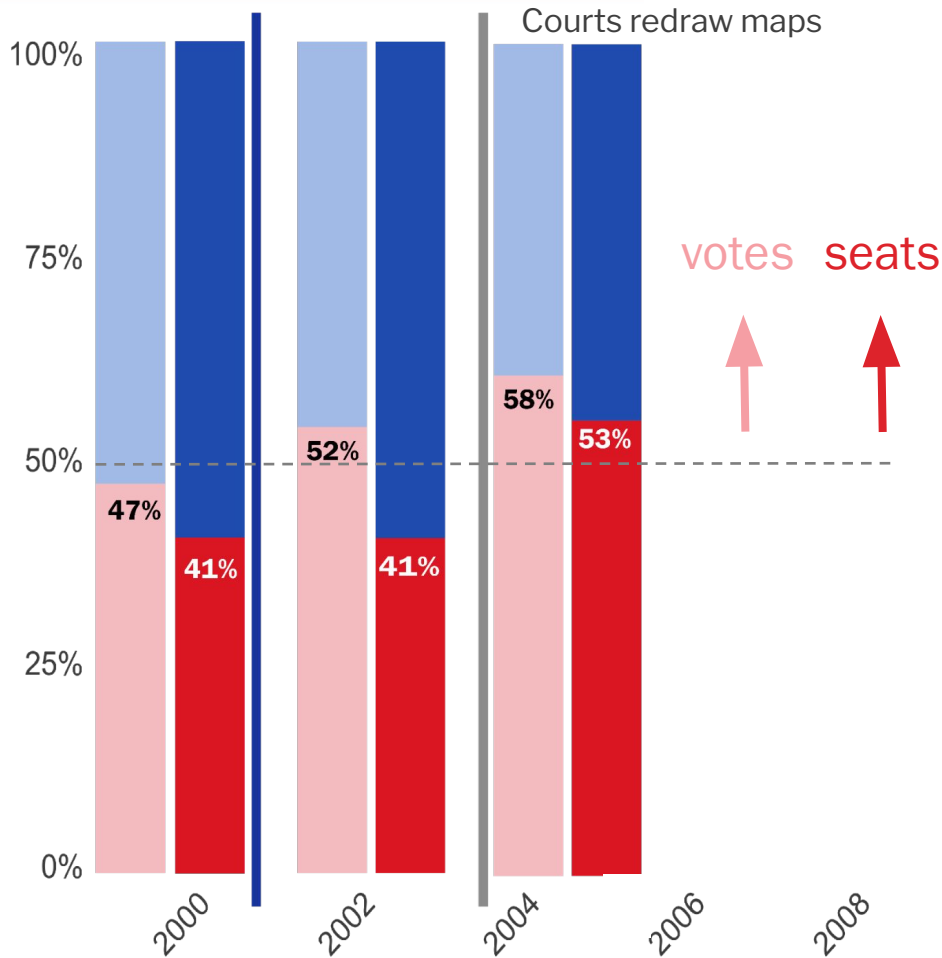
# State House After Decennial Redistricting by Democrats



Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

2002: GOP won majority of statewide vote, but didn't gain any seats.

# State House After Court Redrew District Map

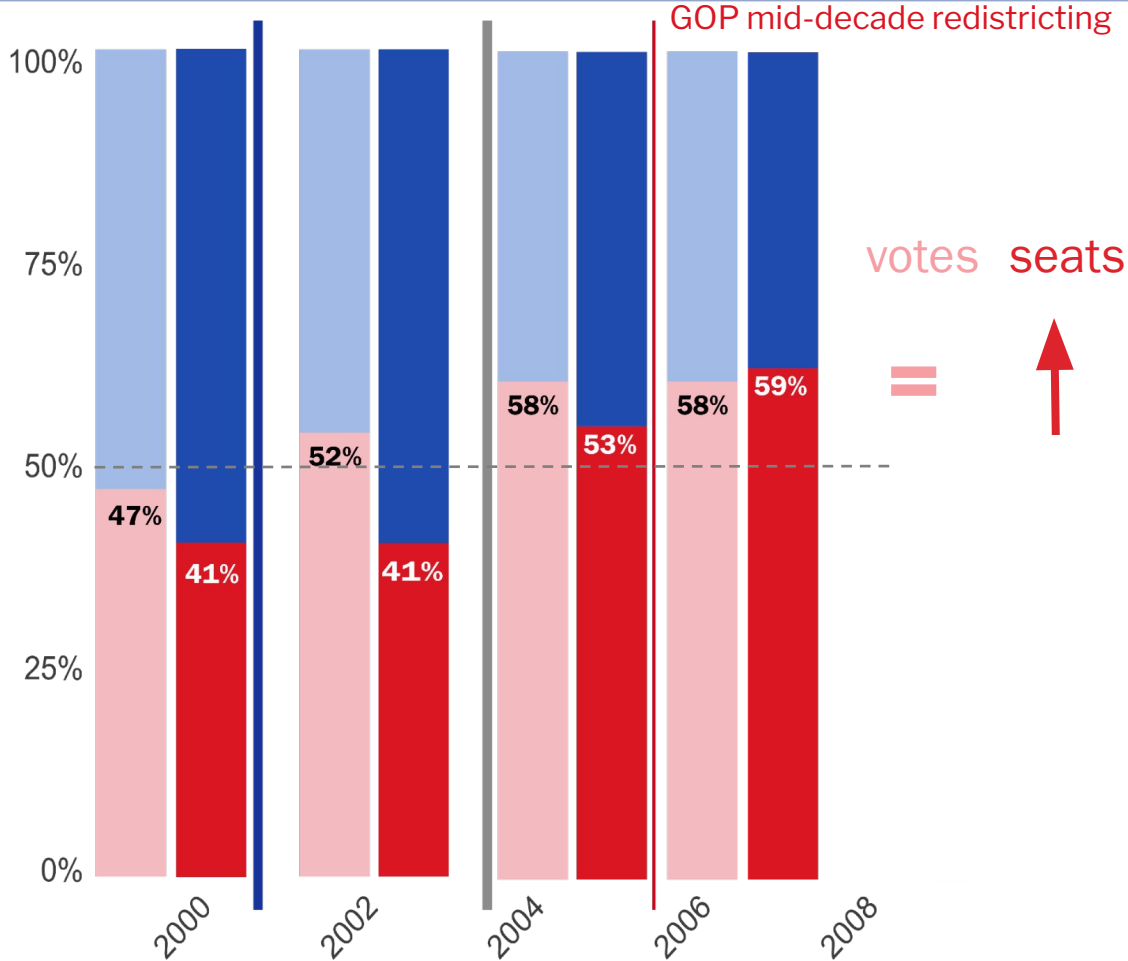


Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

2004: GOP won majority of seats as court-drawn maps restore the balance.

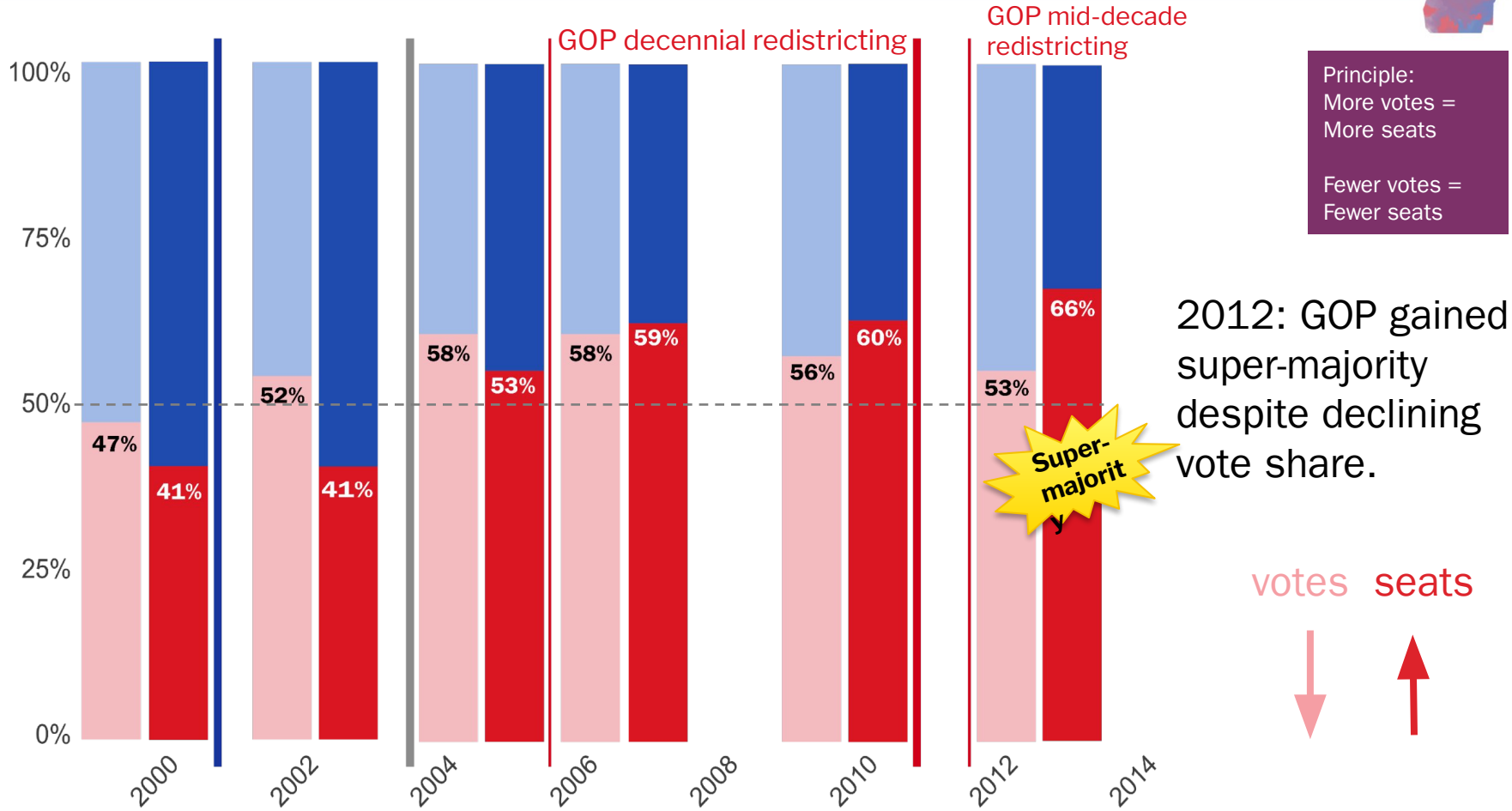


# State House After Mid-Decade Redistricting by GOP



Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

# State House After Decennial Redistricting by GOP

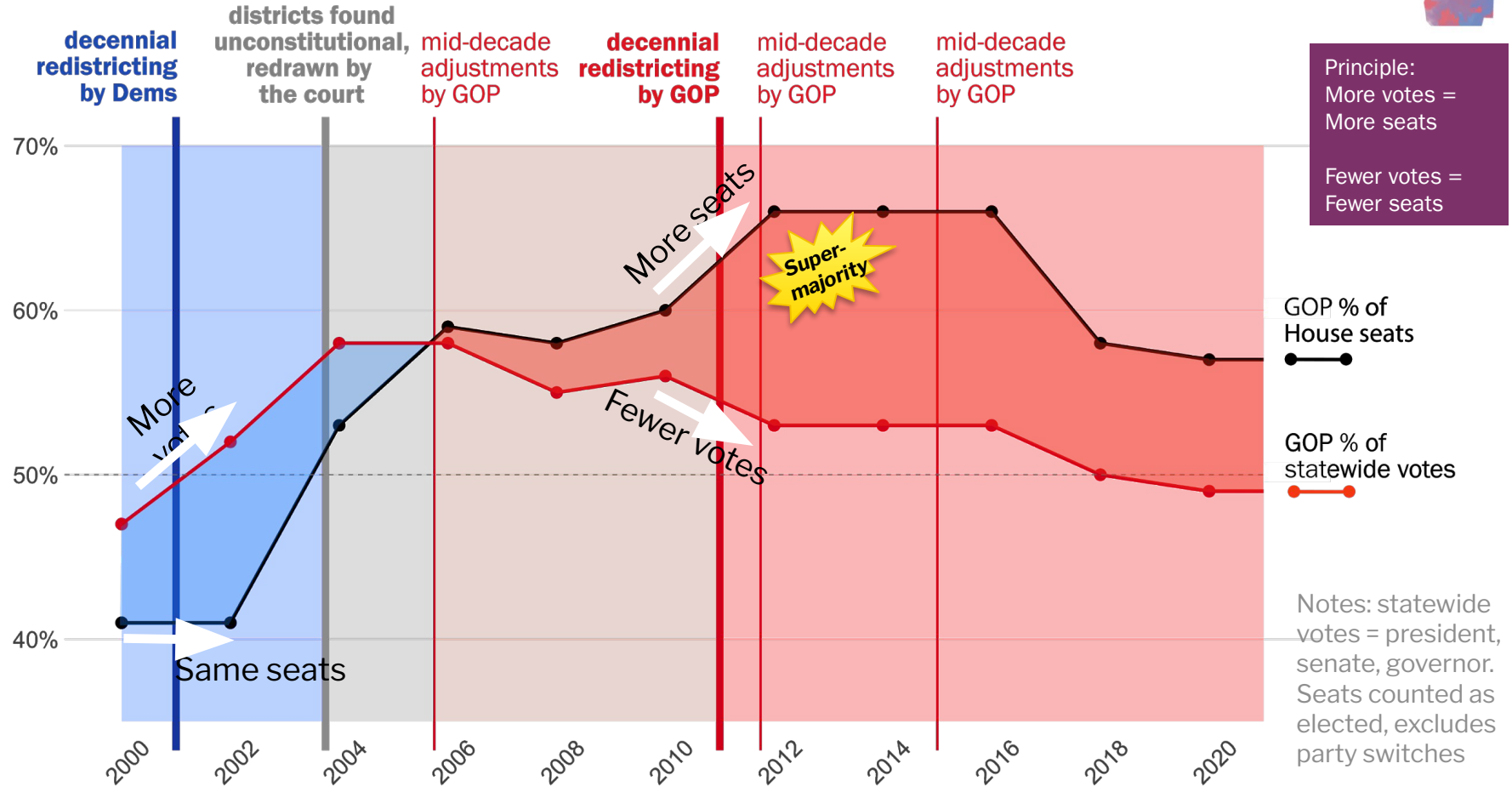


Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# State House: Gerrymandering Sustains Partisan Advantage



FairDistrictsGA



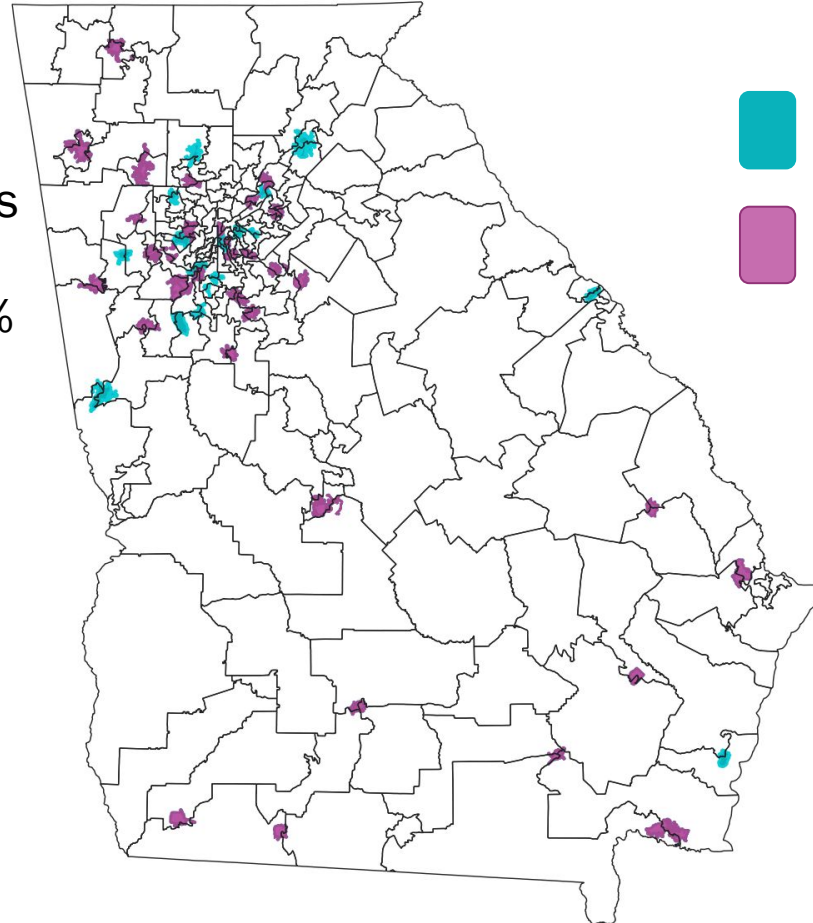
Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data



# The 2011/12 State House Map Cracked Small Cities



The number of small cities cracked into multiple districts increased by 44% in the 2011 decennial House redistricting

**Two-thirds** of small cities are cracked into multiple House districts



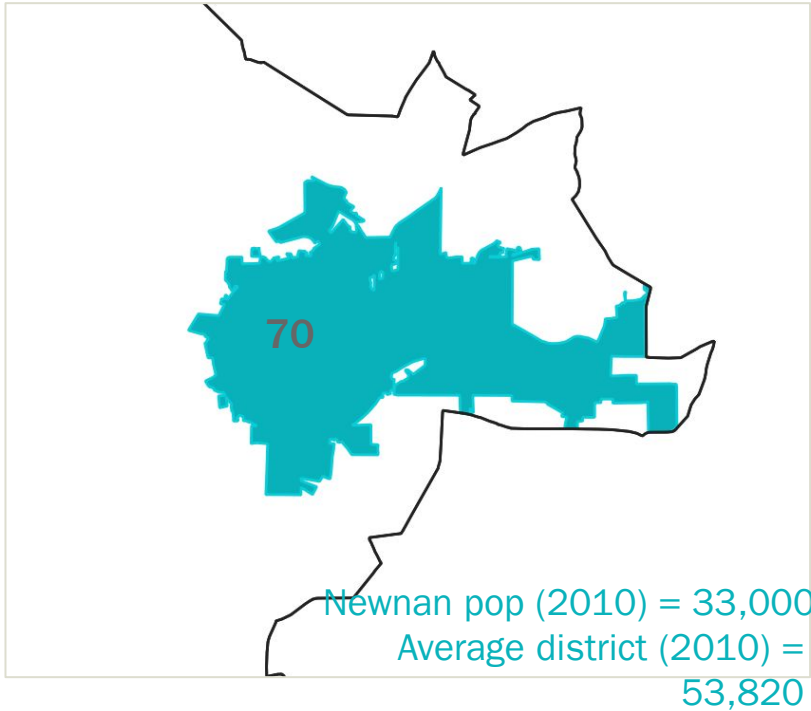
-  cities cracked before 2011
-  cities cracked in 2011 redistricting

Source: FDGA  
analysis

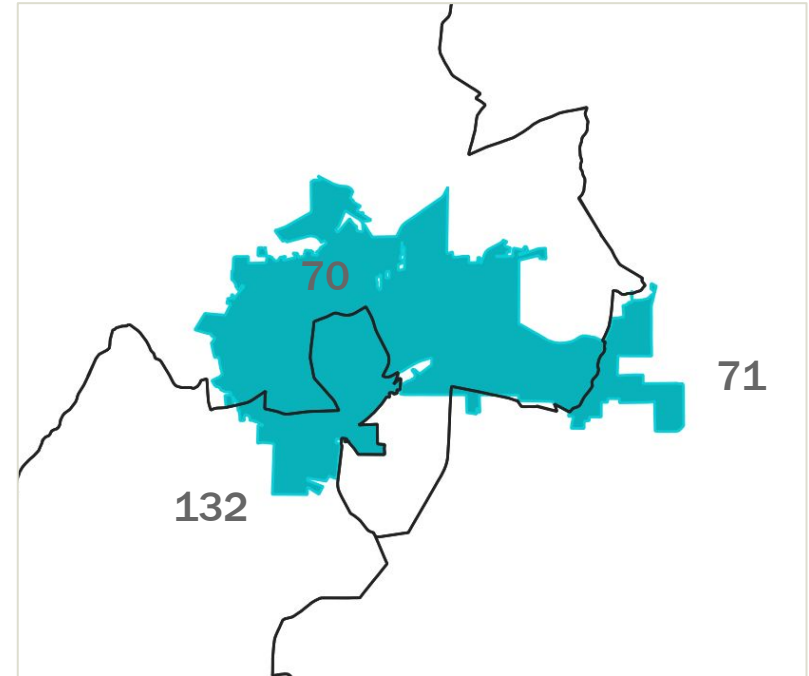
# Newnan Cracked into 3 House Districts



2010—before redistricting



2011—after redistricting

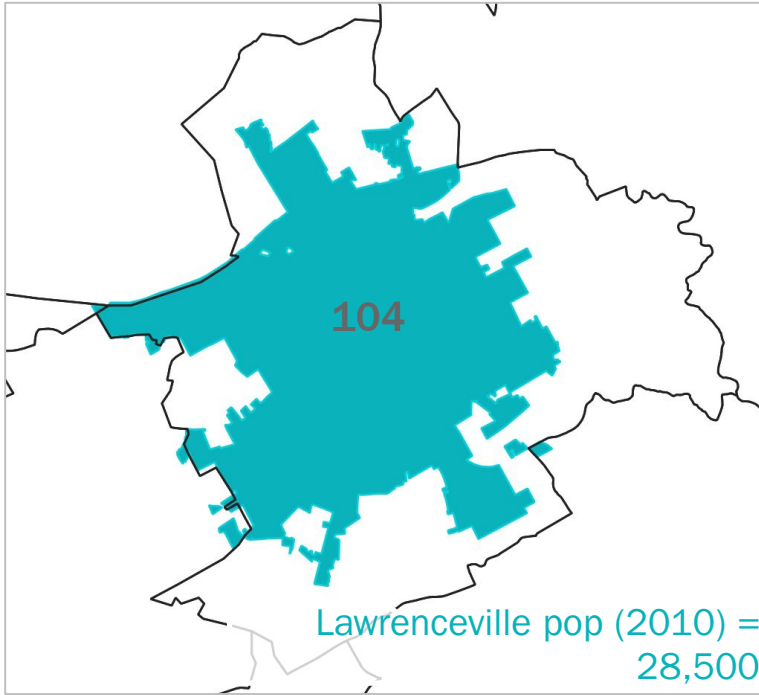


Source: FDGA analysis

# Lawrenceville Cracked into 6 House Districts



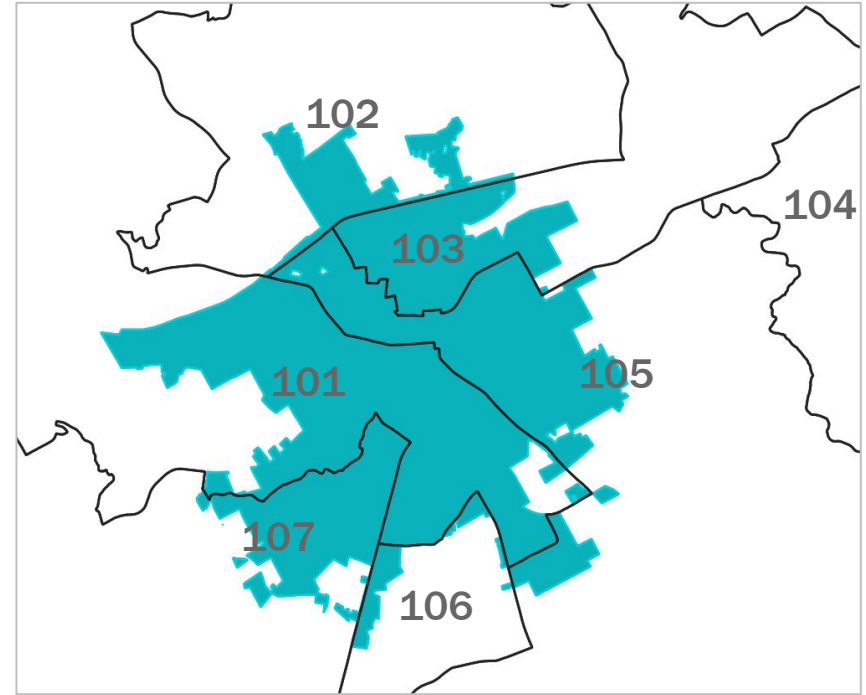
2010—before redistricting



Lawrenceville pop (2010) =  
28,500

Average district (2010) = 53,820

2011—after redistricting



Lawrenceville pop (2019) =

30,800

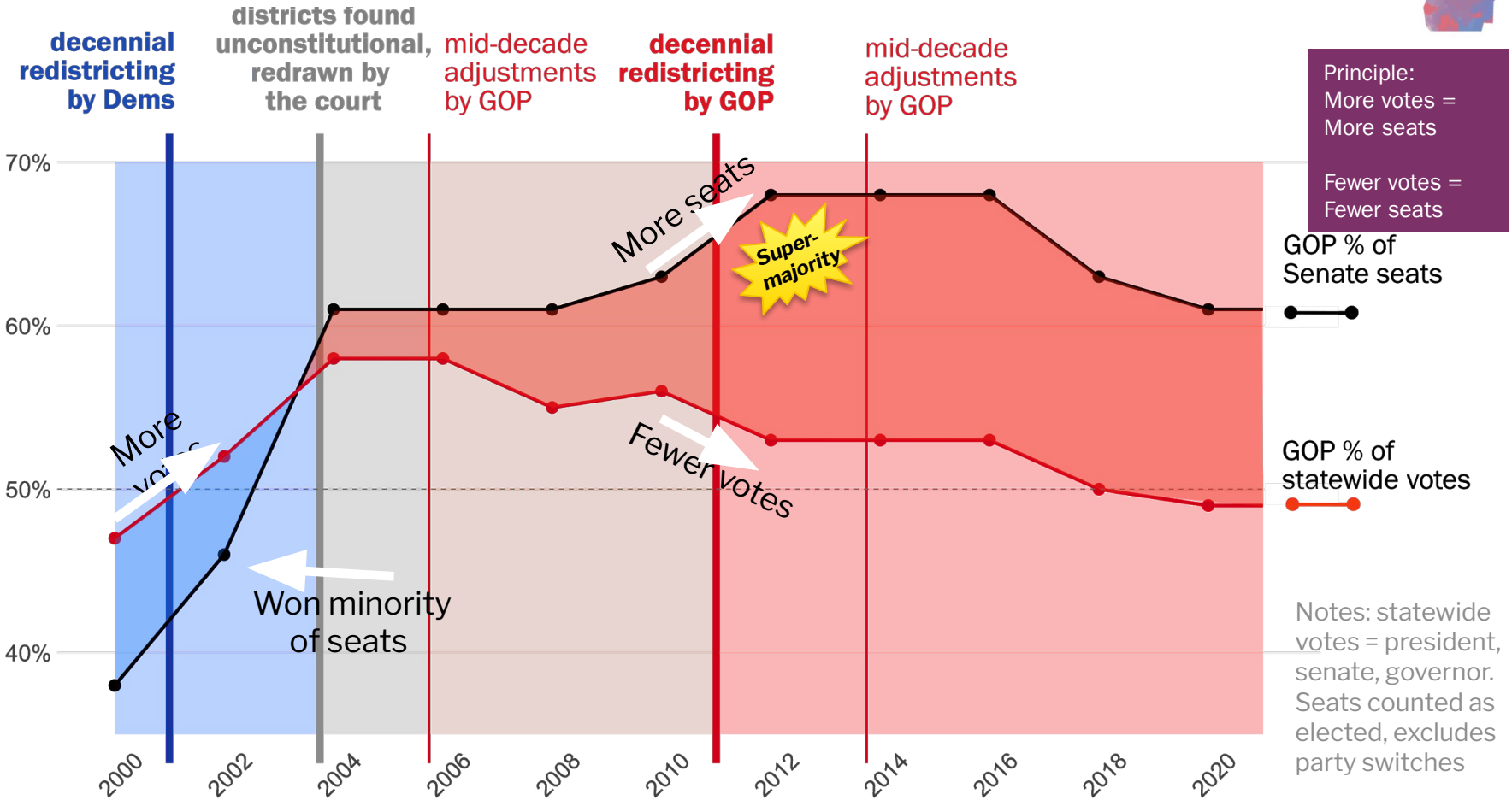
Average district (2021) = 59,500

Source: FDGA  
analysis

# State Senate - Gerrymandering Sustains Partisan Advantage



FairDistrictsGA

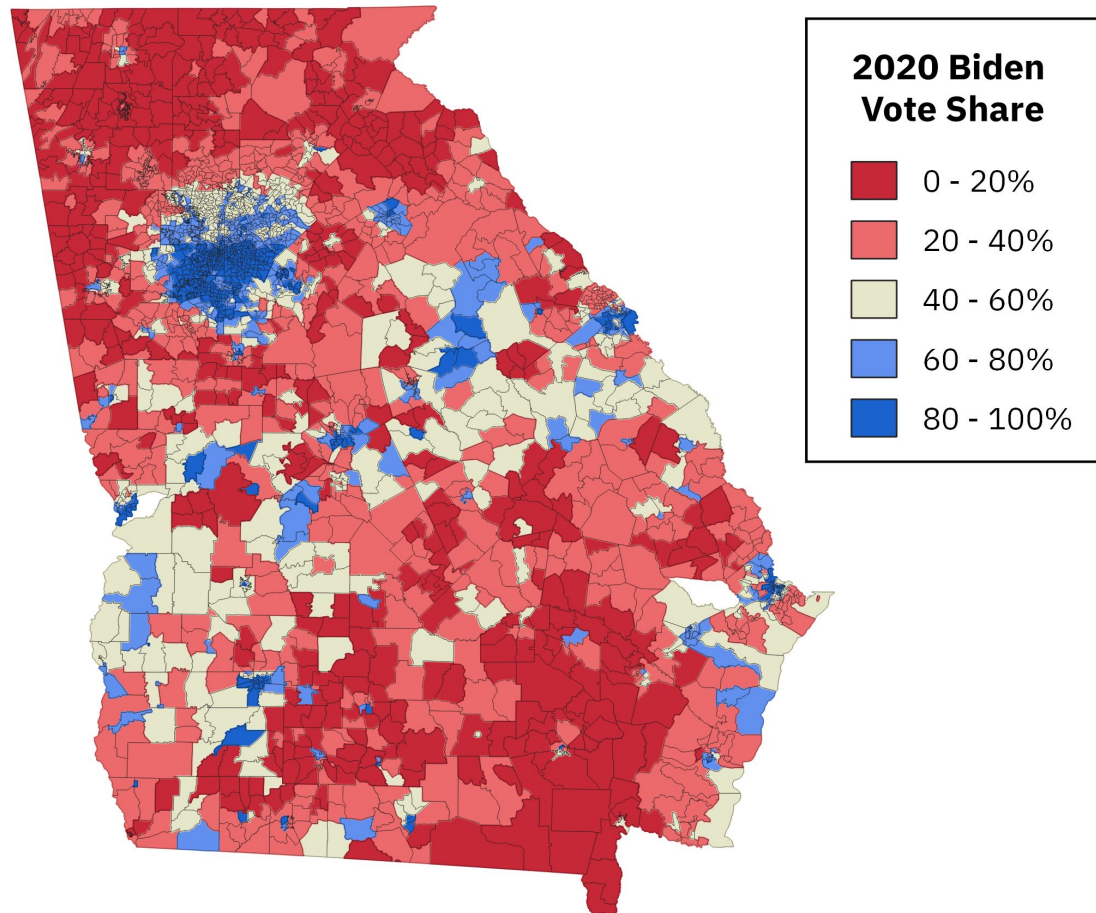


Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# Are the maps fair?



FairDistrictsGA



Source: The Voting and Election Science Team (VEST)



# State Senate: Fairness Benchmarks Using Randomly Drawn Maps



## Princeton Gerrymandering Project simulation

- Create 500,000 Senate maps at random based on 2010 census
- Comply with laws and traditional redistricting criteria
- Maintain current number of VRA-compliant districts



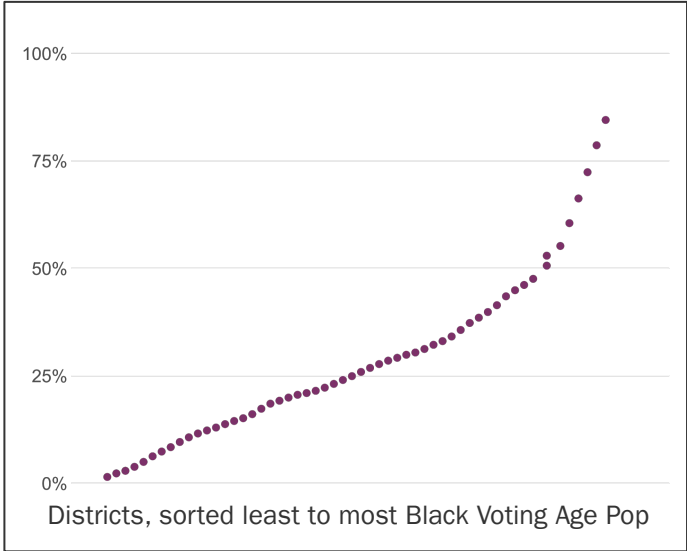
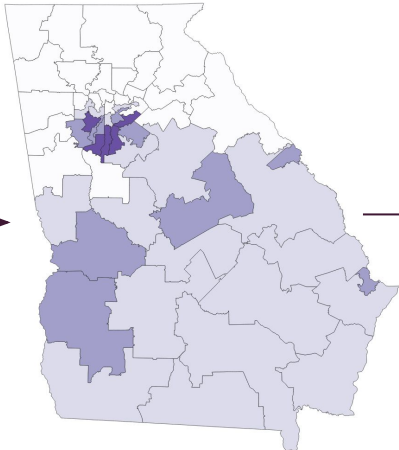
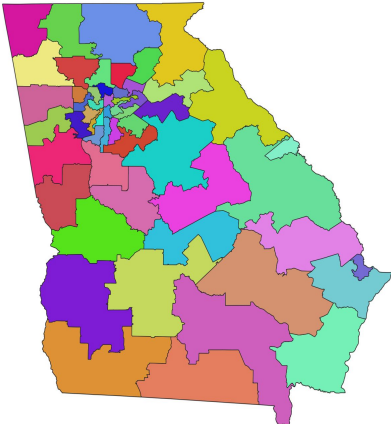
# State Senate: Minority Representation



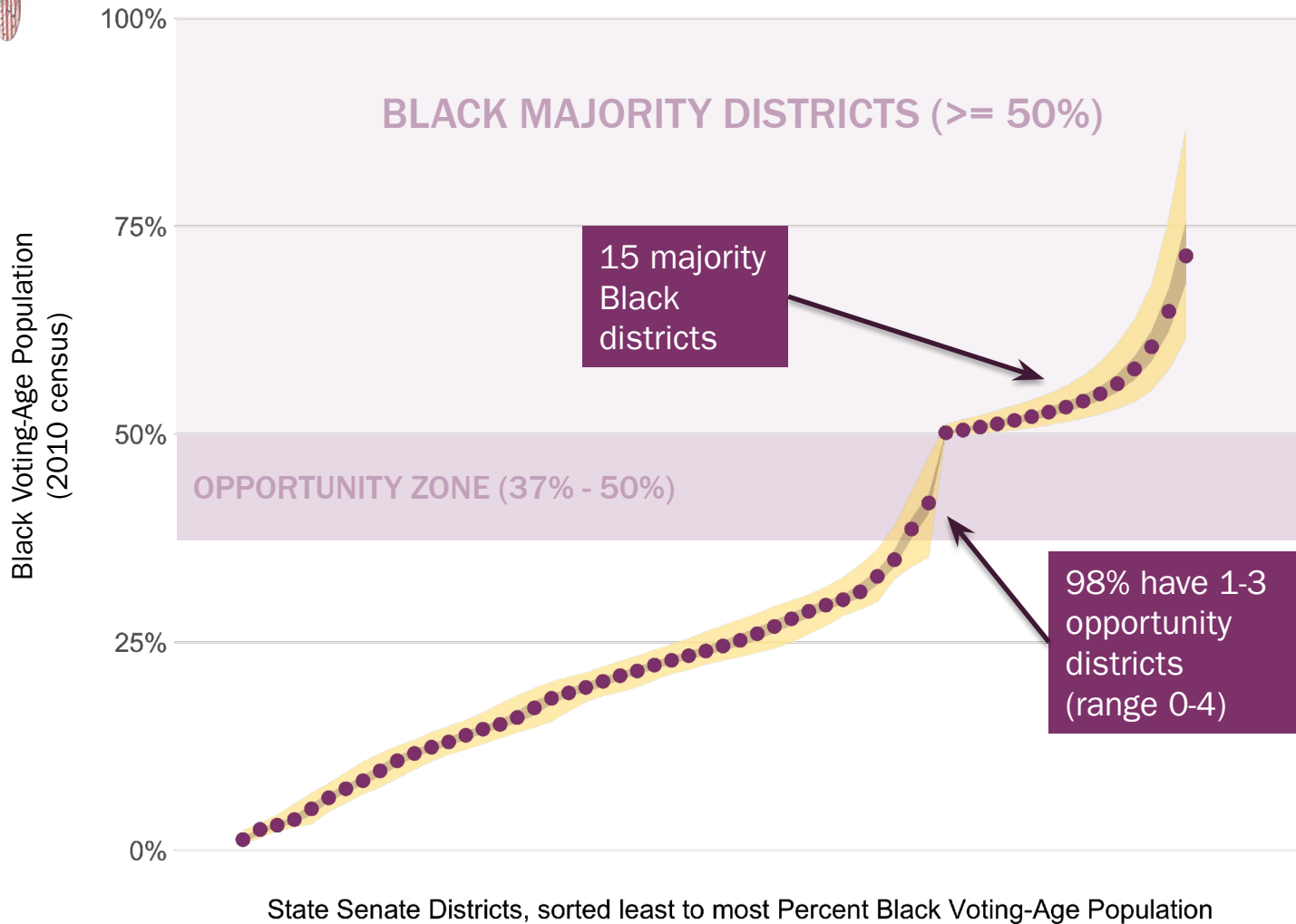
For each of 500,000 simulated maps...

...calculate percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) for each of 56 districts.

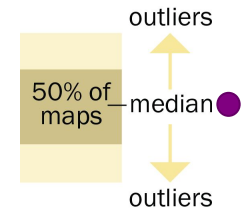
Percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) per district



# State Senate: Simulated Maps Expected Results



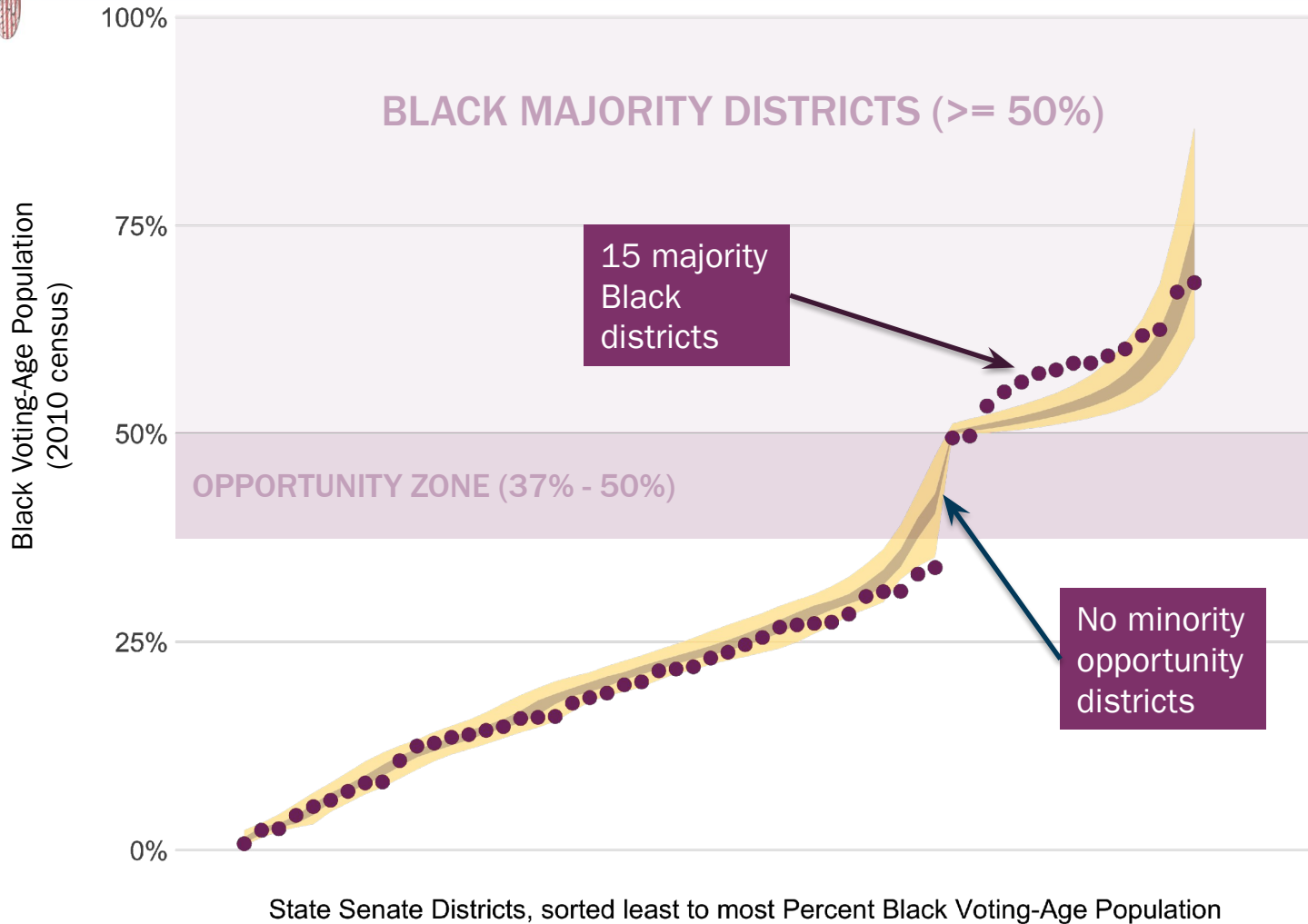
Range of Black Voting Age Population of 500,000 simulated maps



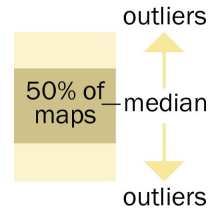
Each dot is a district with the 2010 Black Voting Age Population we would expect to see

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



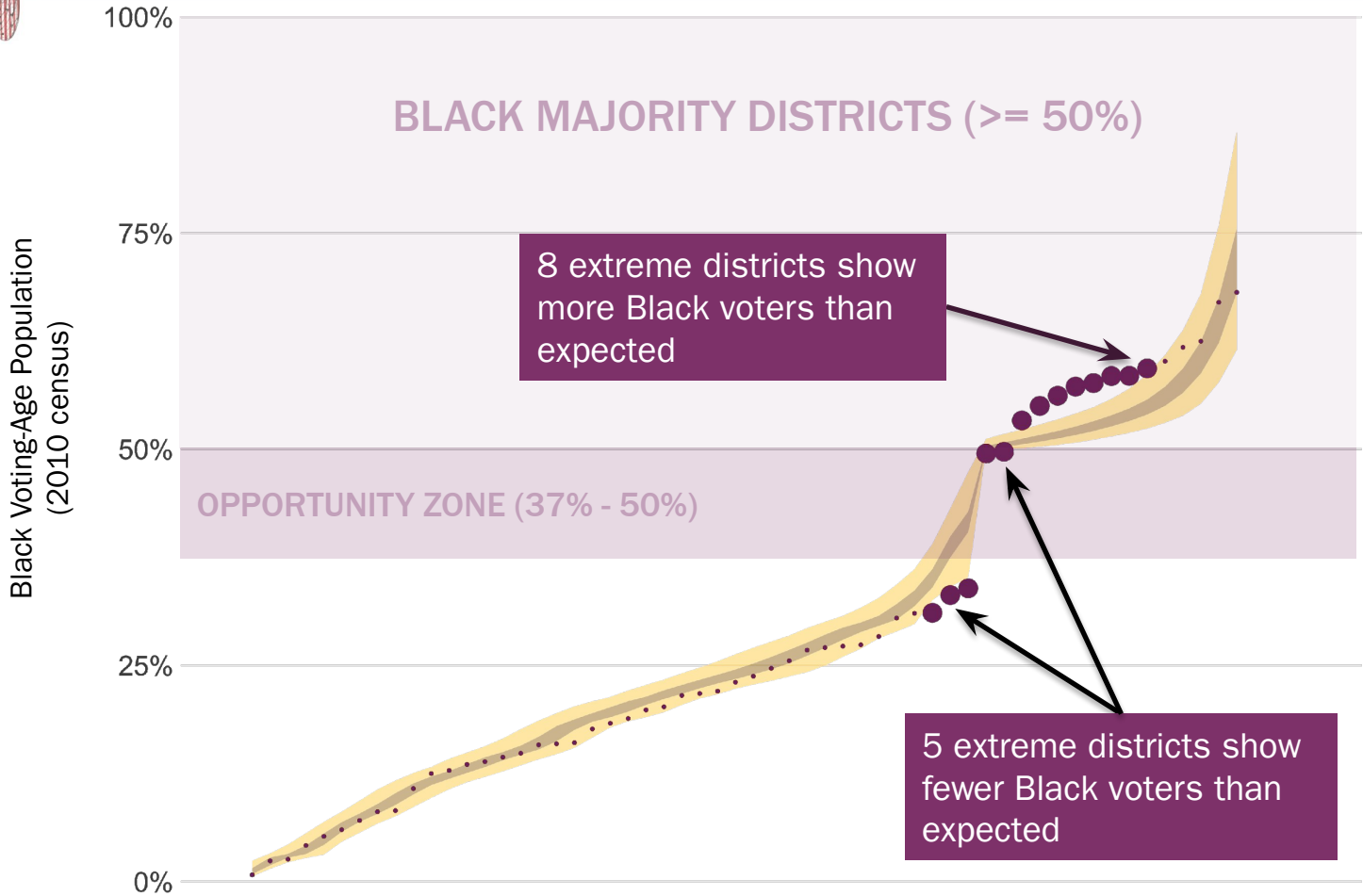
Range of Black Voting Age Population of 500,000 simulated maps



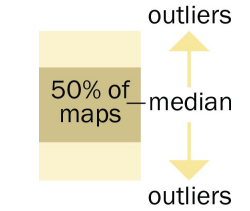
● Each dot is one district's actual 2010 Black Voting Age Population

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: 13 Extreme Districts



Range of Black Voting Age Population of 500,000 simulated maps

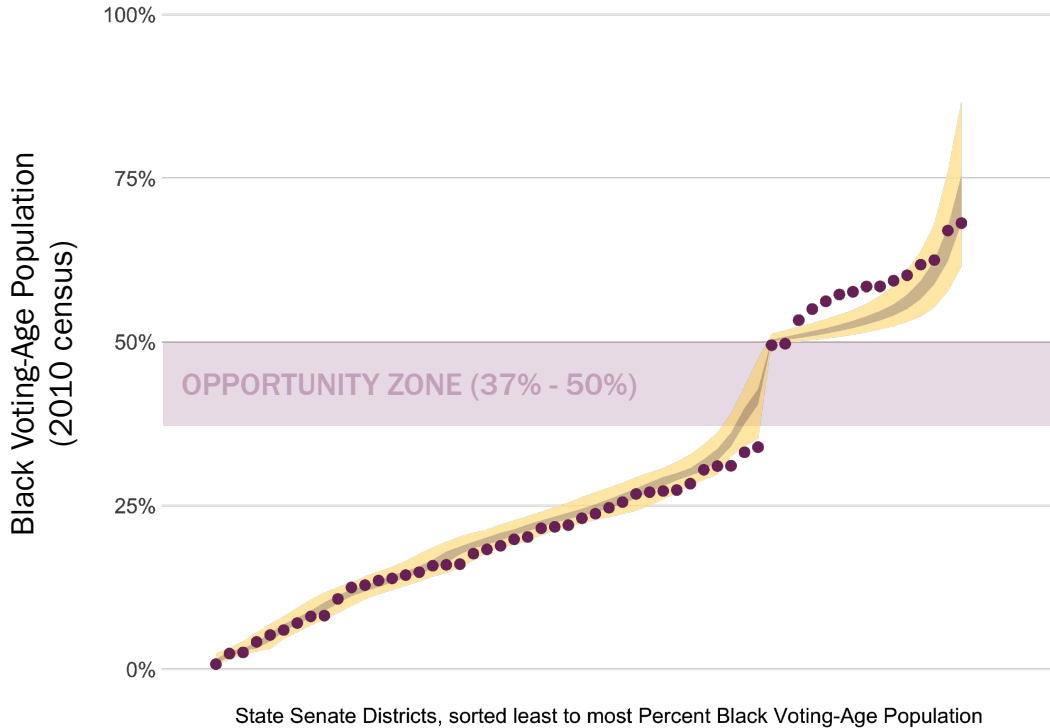


Each dot is one district's actual 2010 Black Voting Age Population

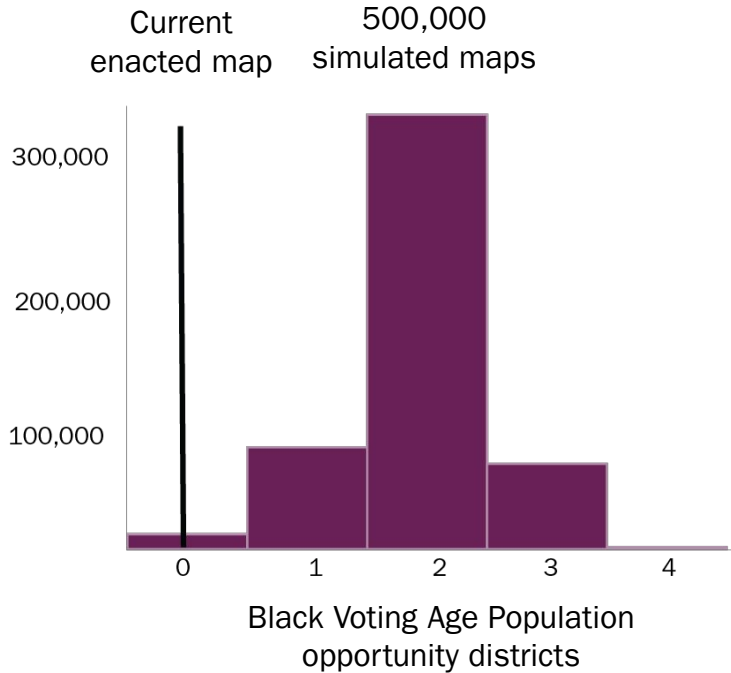
Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

State Senate Districts, sorted least to most Percent Black Voting-Age Population

# State Senate: No Opportunity Districts

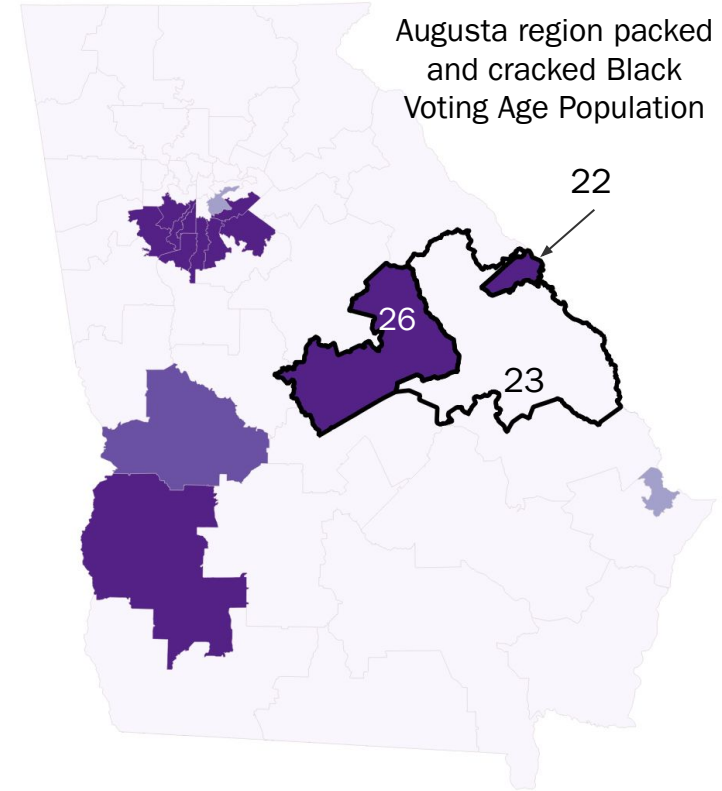
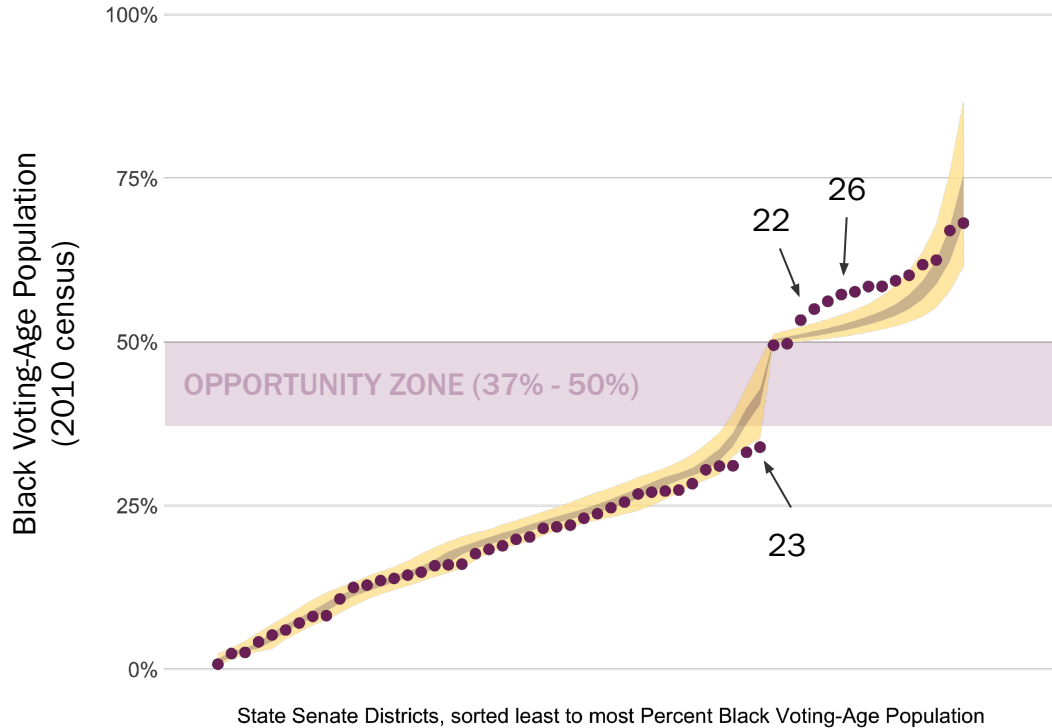


98% of simulated maps have more opportunity districts

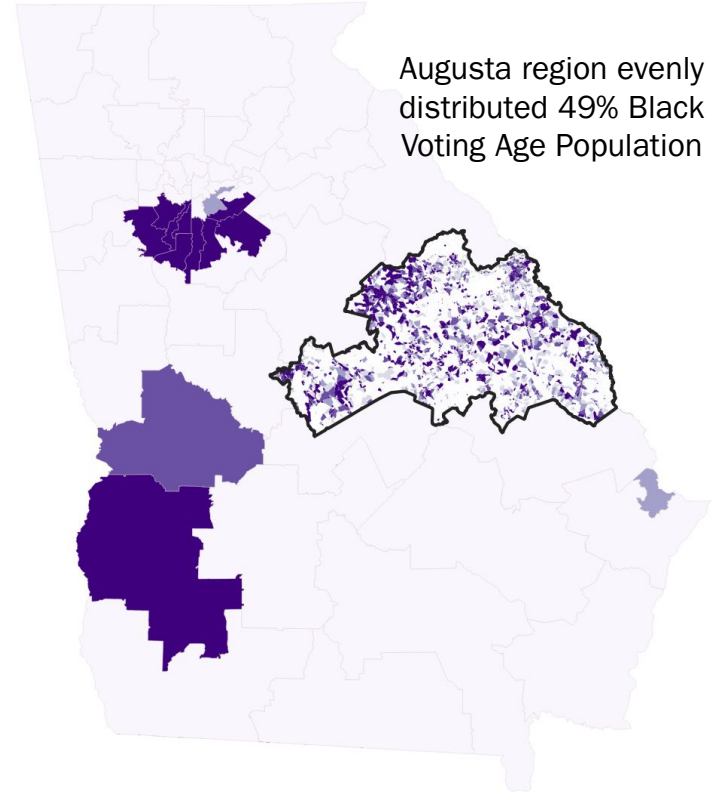
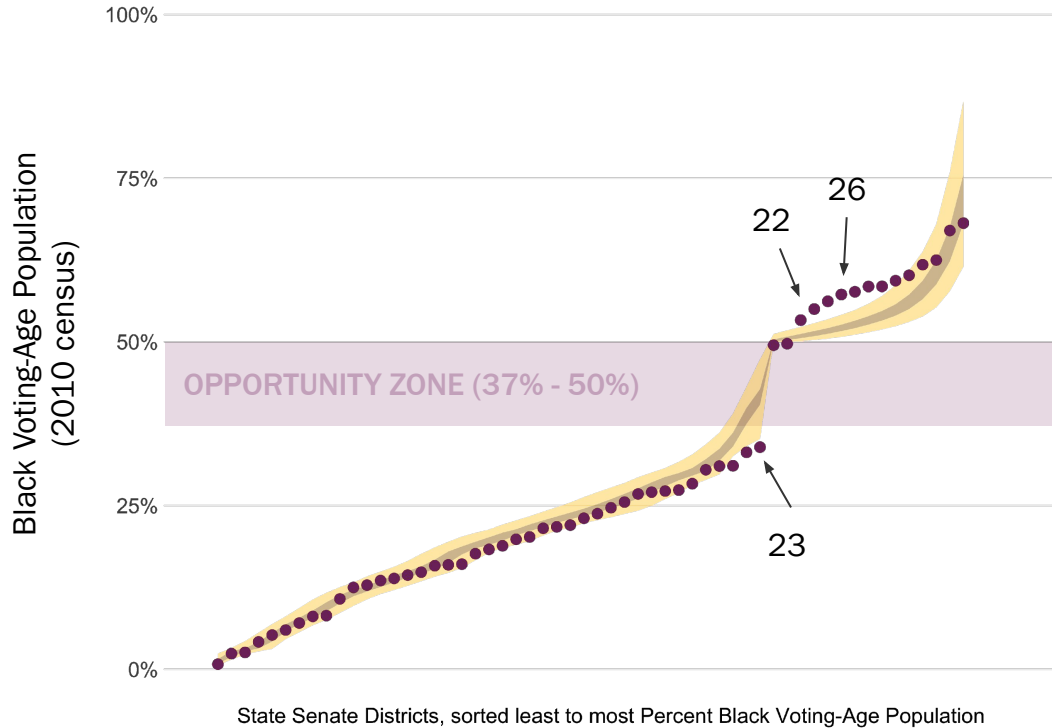


Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: Minority Packing and Cracking



# State Senate: Minority Packing and Cracking



Sources: PGP simulation & PGP/FDGA analysis using 2010 census



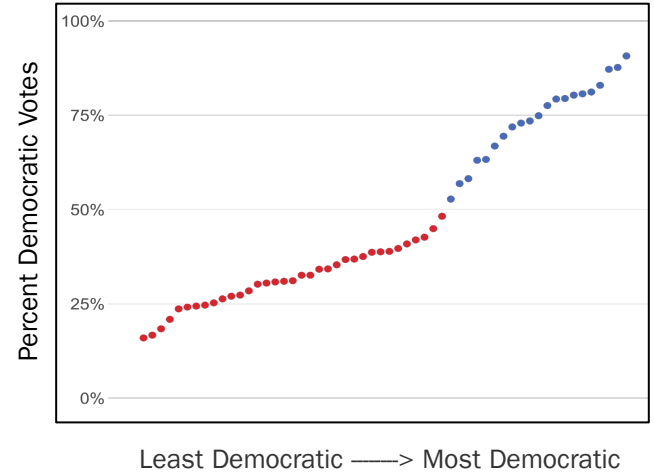
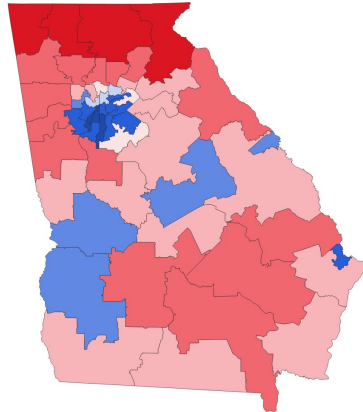
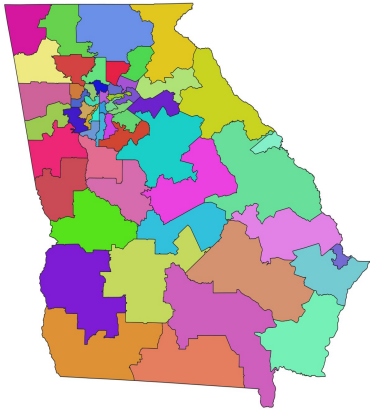
# State Senate: Fairness Benchmarks – Partisan Representation



For each of 500,000 simulated maps...

...estimate State Senate election results from 2016 presidential vote by precinct.

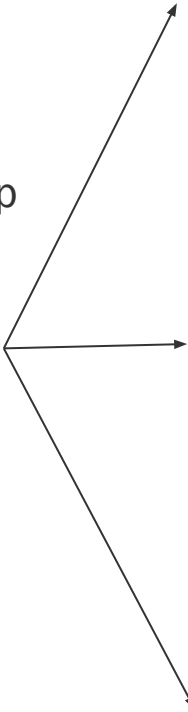
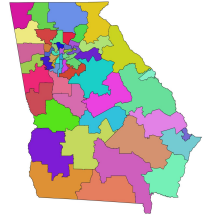
Simulated state Senate results



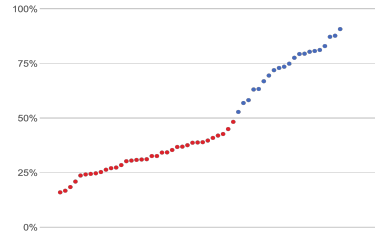
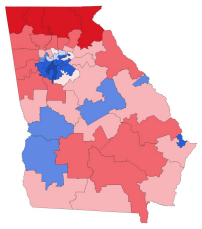
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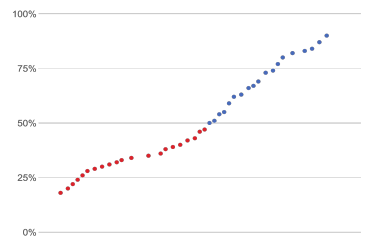
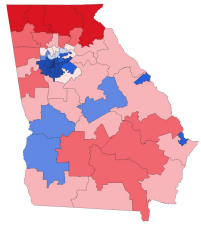
For each map



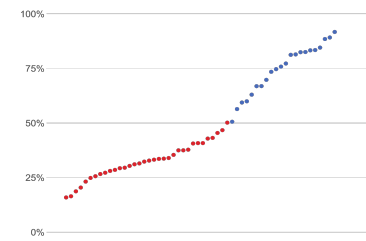
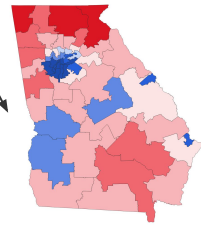
### President 2016



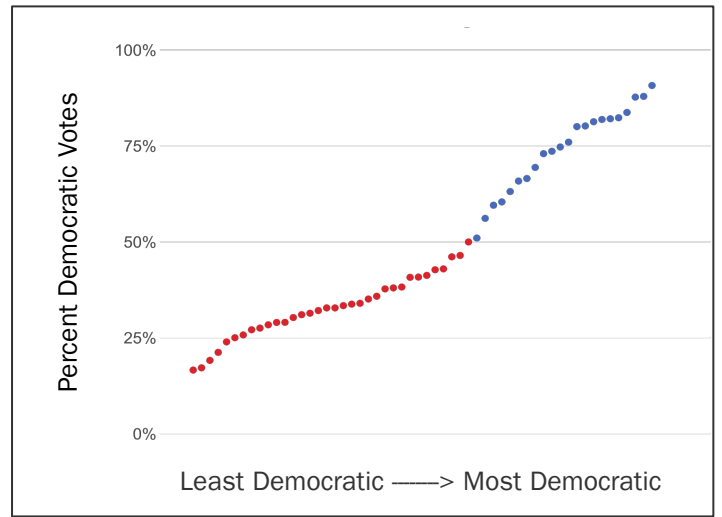
### Governor 2018



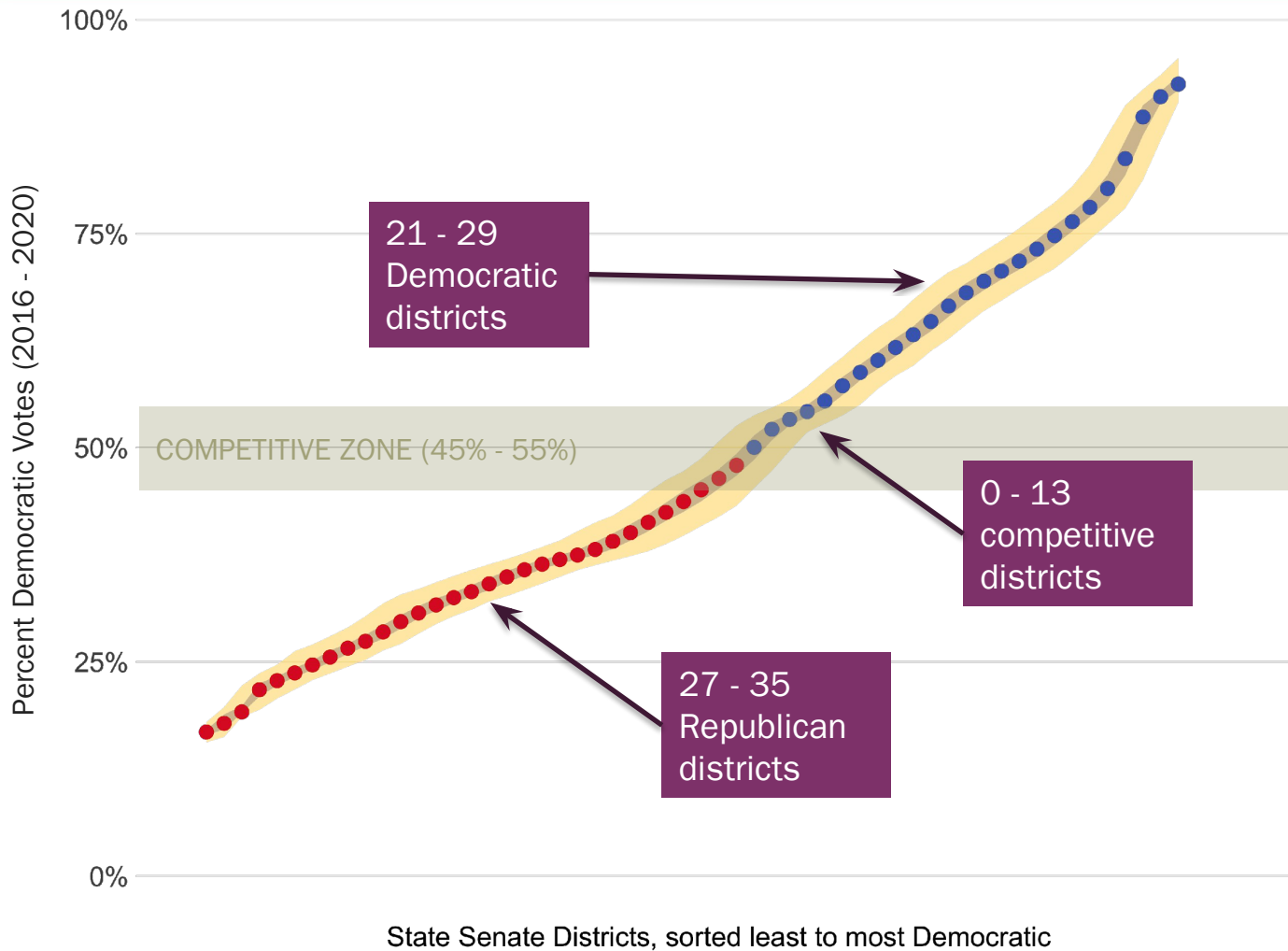
### President 2020



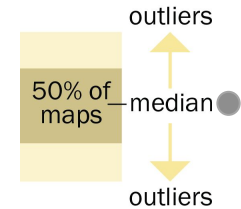
Outcome: average of three recent elections (2016-2020)



# State Senate: Simulated Maps Expected Results



Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps



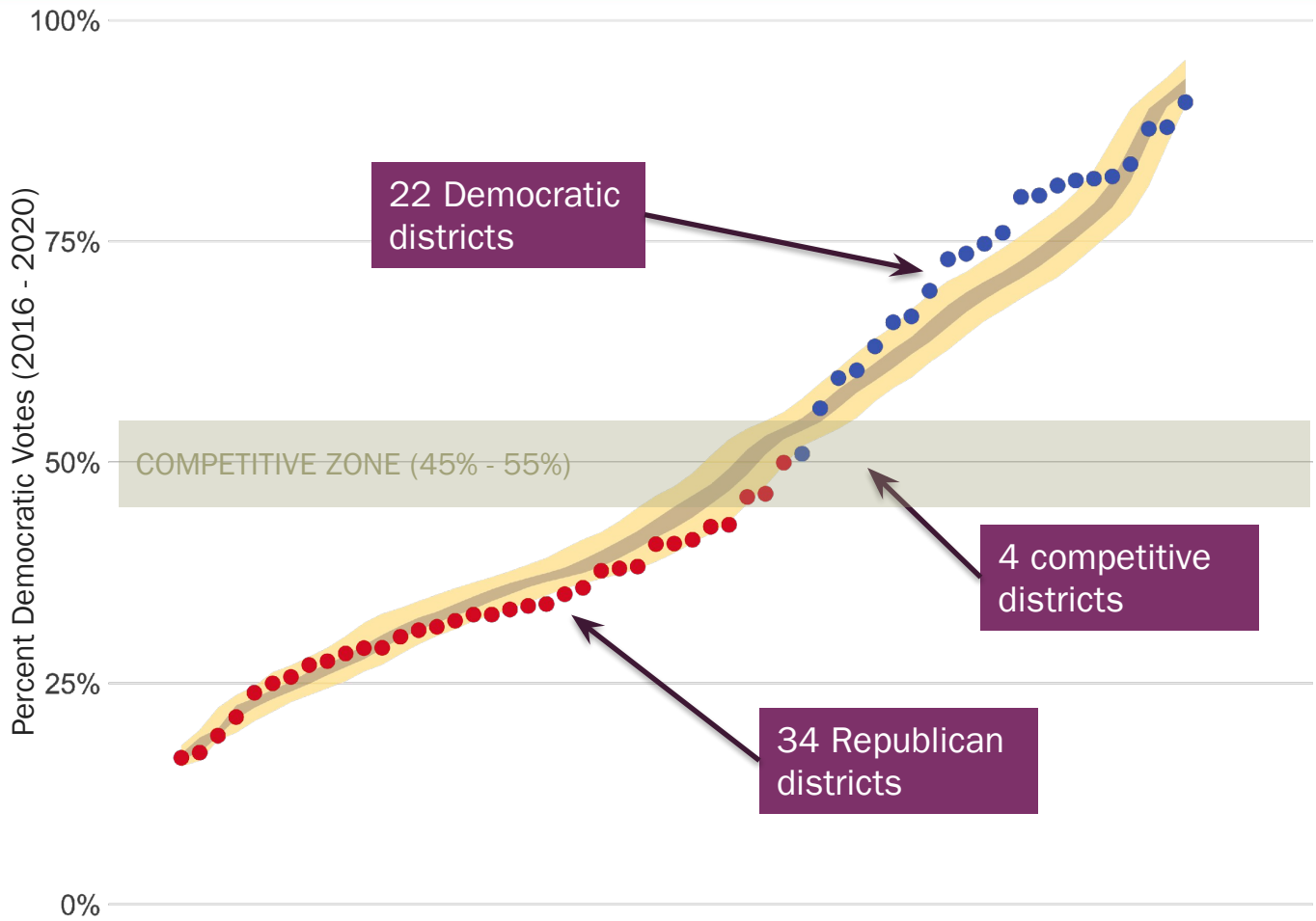
Each dot is a district with the percent of Democratic voters we would expect to see

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

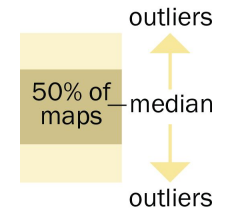
# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



FairDistrictsGA



Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps

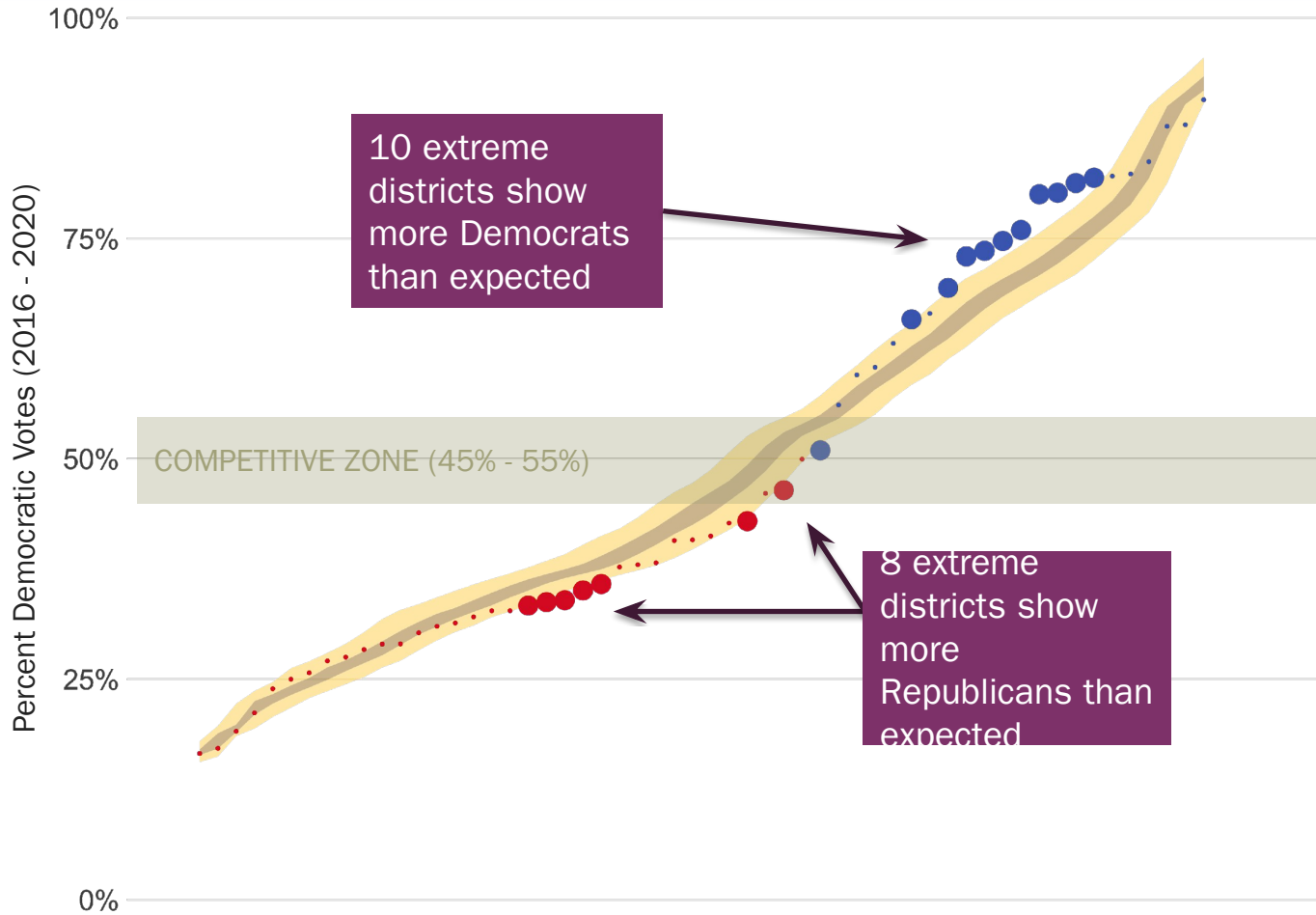


Each dot is one district's actual percent of Democratic voters

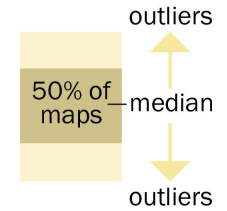
Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

State Senate Districts, sorted least to most Democratic

# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps



Each dot is one district's actual percent of Democratic voters

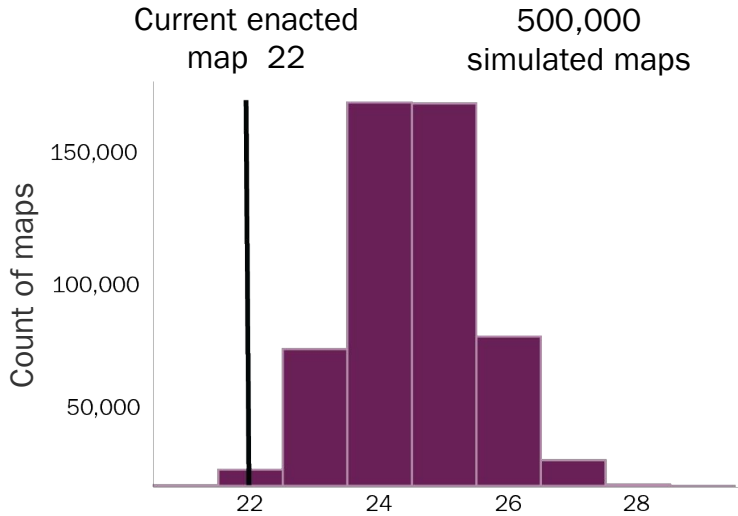
Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

# State Senate: Fewer Democratic and Competitive Seats

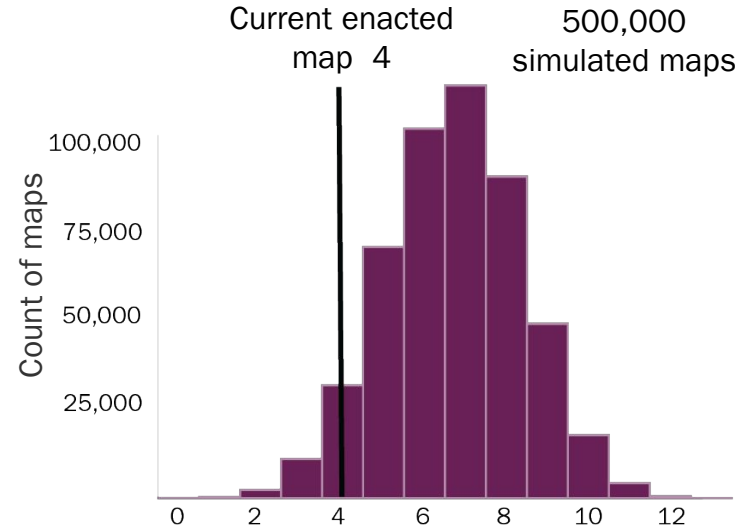


Democratic districts:  
98% of simulated maps have 1-6 more  
than enacted map

Competitive districts:  
91% of simulated maps have 1-9 more  
than enacted map



Estimated Democratic districts  
applying an average of three elections  
(2016-2020)



Estimated competitive districts  
applying an average of three  
elections (2016-2020)

# Gerrymandering Contributes to Political Polarization



## **Uncompetitive elections mean unresponsive politicians**

Opposition candidates don't run

Elections are decided in the primary

People don't turn out to vote

Worst case-scenario: uncontested elections

## **Uncontested elections limit voter choice**

50% of state Senate elections were uncontested (28)

52% of state House elections were uncontested (94)

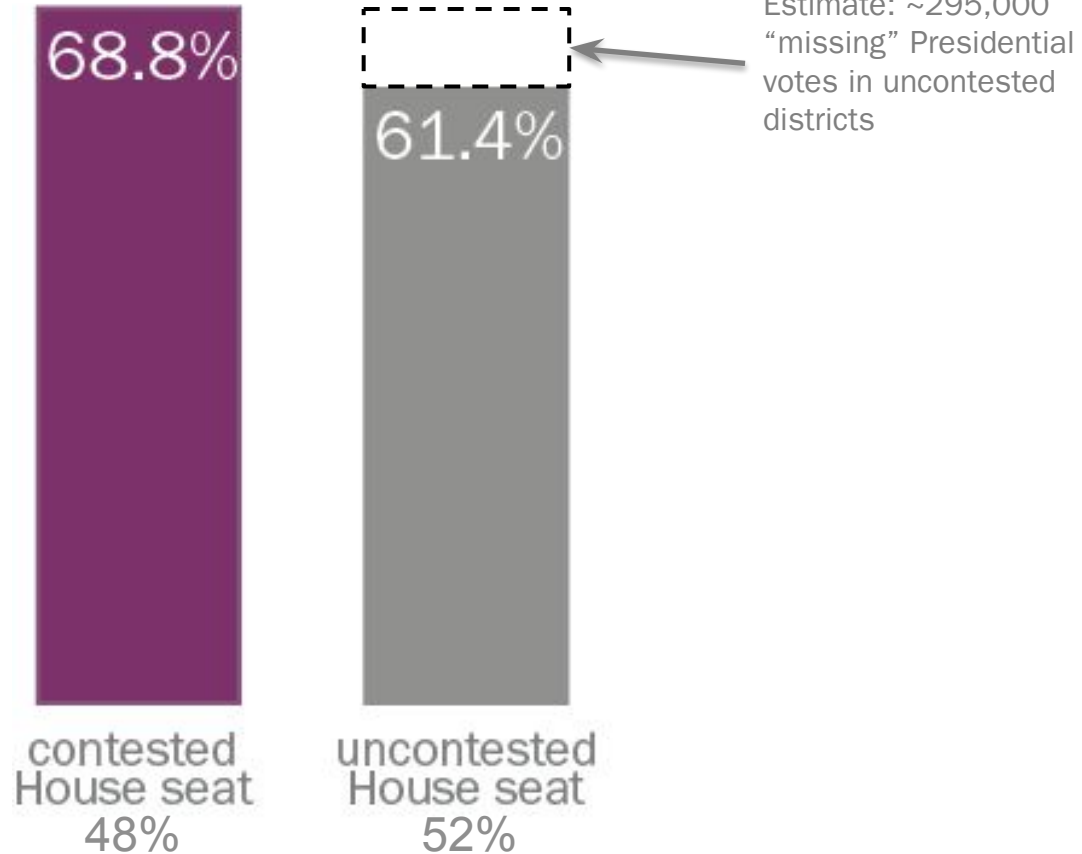
- National average is 35%

# Uncontested Elections Reduce Voter Turnout



## Voter turnout, 2020 Presidential election

Average voter turnout for President was **7.4 percentage-points lower** in uncontested House districts





# Summary of Phase 1 Findings



	Benchmarks / Fairness tests (compared to unbiased maps)			Observations
	Partisan balance	Competitive districts	Minority representation	
<b>State House</b>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-7 fewer Dem districts than 83% of unbiased maps</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>23 competitive districts, more than 81% of unbiased maps</p>	<p>✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• 8 opportunity districts (more than expected)</li> </ul>	<p>Decennial gerrymandering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dems – 2001</li> <li>• Reps – 2011</li> </ul> <p>Extensive mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>2/3 of small cities split</p> <p>Black voter packing and cracking</p>
<b>State Senate</b>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-6 fewer Dem districts than 98% of unbiased maps</p>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-9 fewer competitive districts than 91% of unbiased maps</p>	<p><b>X</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• Missing 1-3 opportunity districts compared to 98% of unbiased maps</li> </ul>	<p>Decennial gerrymandering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dems – 2001</li> <li>• Reps – 2011</li> </ul> <p>Extensive mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>Black voter packing and cracking eliminates opportunity districts</p>
<b>Congress</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>Balanced as of 2016-2020</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>2 competitive districts, 78% have 1-2</p>	<p>✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• Slight chance to create 1 opportunity district</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>Demographic shift has increased competitiveness of 2011 map</p>

# FDGA / PGP Producing Benchmarks for 2021 Maps



	Benchmarks / Fairness tests (range of values based on final 2020 census data)		
	Partisan balance	Competitive districts	Minority representation
<b>State House</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts
<b>State Senate</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts
<b>Congress</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts

Benchmarks pending release of full 2020 census data

- Use August 16th release if possible
- Full redistricting data released Sept. 30

Evaluation of maps pending release by legislature

# The Benefits of Independent Benchmarks



- Transparency – check by independent experts
- Restores public trust and confidence in the process
- Demonstrates compliance with Voting Rights Act
- May help avoid litigation
- Fairer districts

# It's Your Turn to Speak!



## Public hearings – watch & testify

- June 15 – kickoff – replay on General Assembly website
- June 28 – Atlanta - Georgia State Capitol, Room 341
- June 29 – Cumming - South Forsyth High School
- June 30 – Dalton - Dalton State College
- July 6 - Athens
- July 7 - Augusta
- July 26 - Brunswick
- July 27 - Albany
- July 28 - Columbus
- July 29 - Macon
- July 30 - Virtual



**tell your story**

Community input must shape redistricting in Georgia. Learn how to tell your story at redistricting public input meetings!

Tuesday, June 22nd  
5pm to 7pm  
Register @ [bit.ly/TellYourStory0622](https://bit.ly/TellYourStory0622)

**This is a nonpartisan event**





# Questions?



Princeton  
Gerrymandering Project



# Redistricting in Georgia: A 20-Year History

## Appendix



**Princeton  
Gerrymandering  
Project**

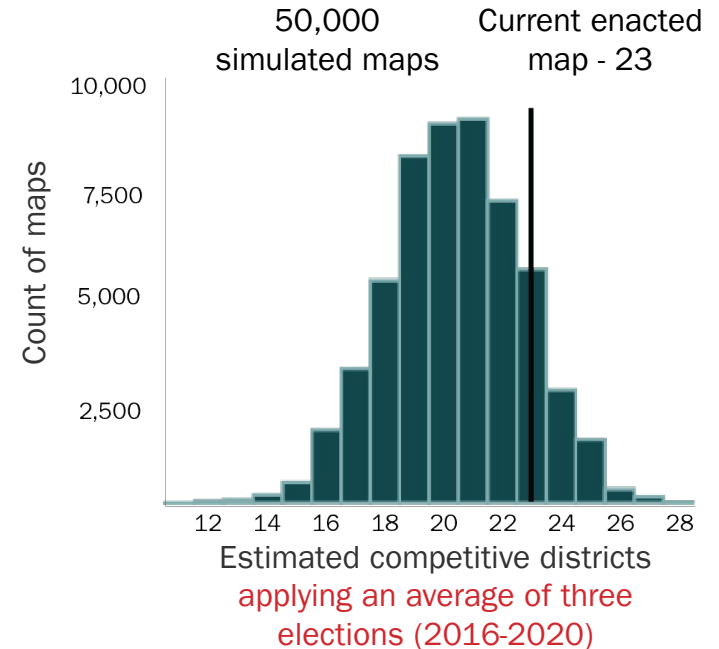
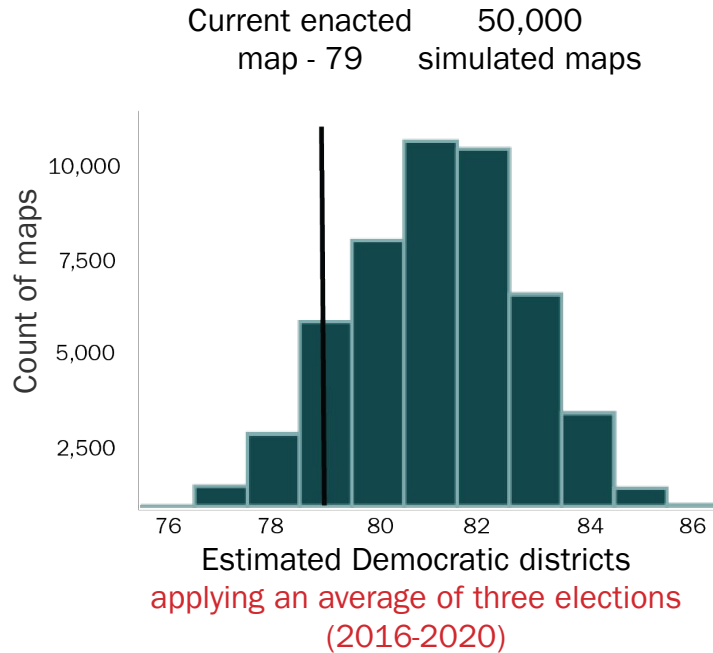


# State House: Fewer Democratic districts, but competitive

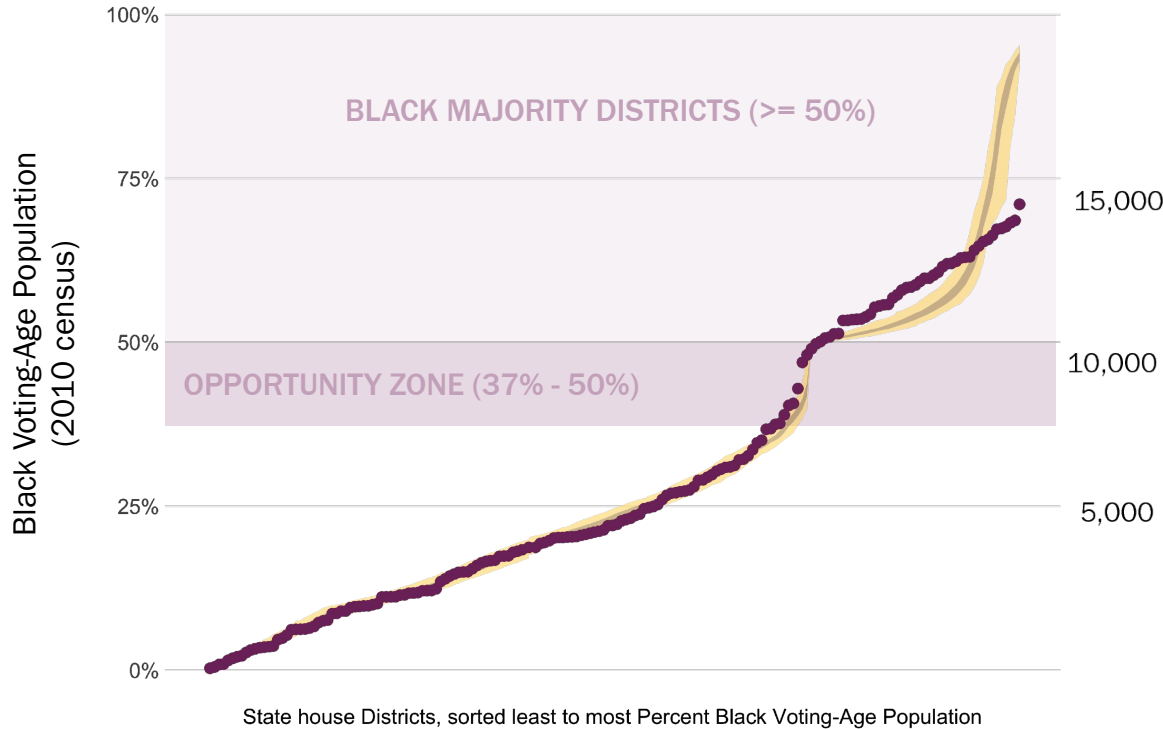


Democratic districts:  
83% of simulated maps have  
1-7 more than enacted map

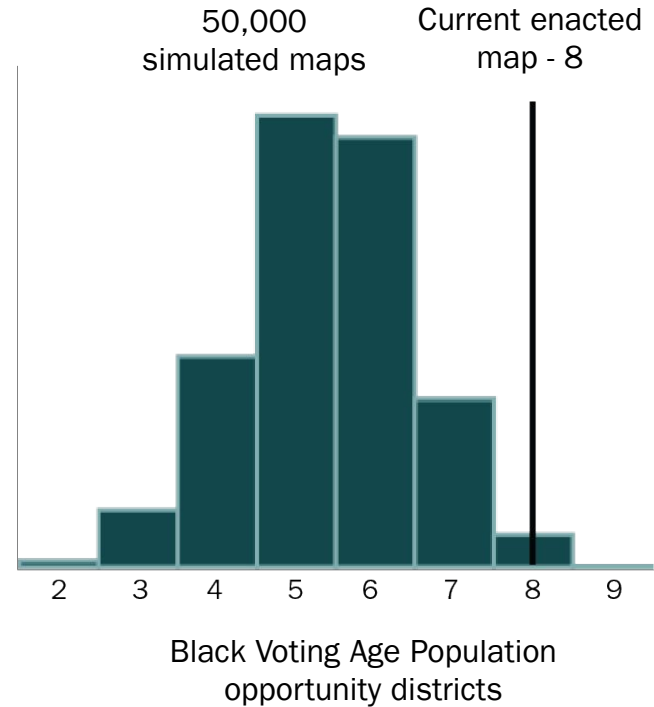
Competitive districts:  
Enacted map has 23, more  
than 81% of simulated maps



# State House: Minority Opportunity Districts



98% of simulated maps have fewer opportunity districts



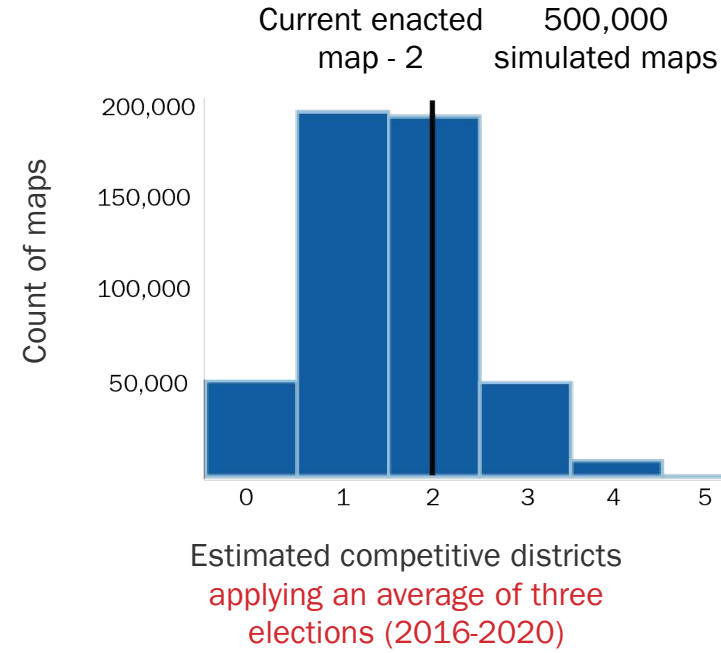
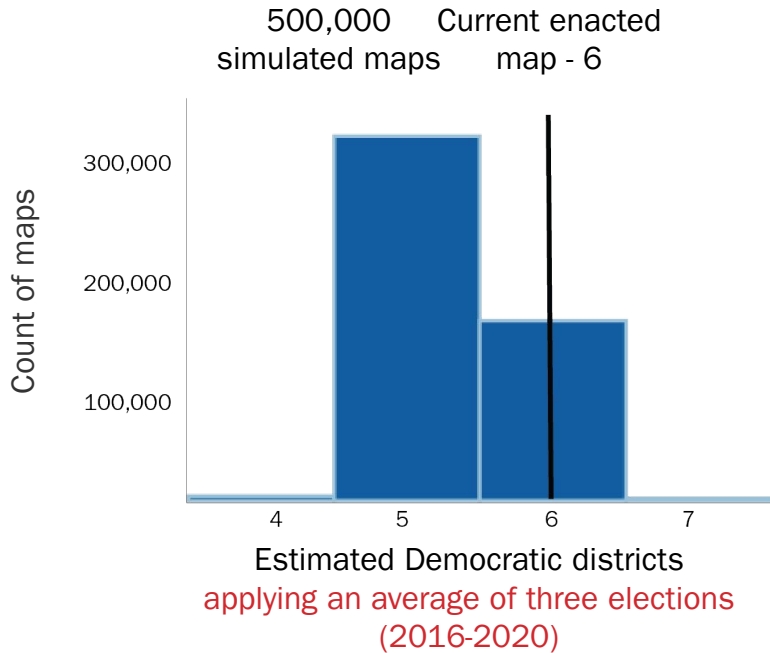


# Congress: Fair to both parties, reasonably competitive

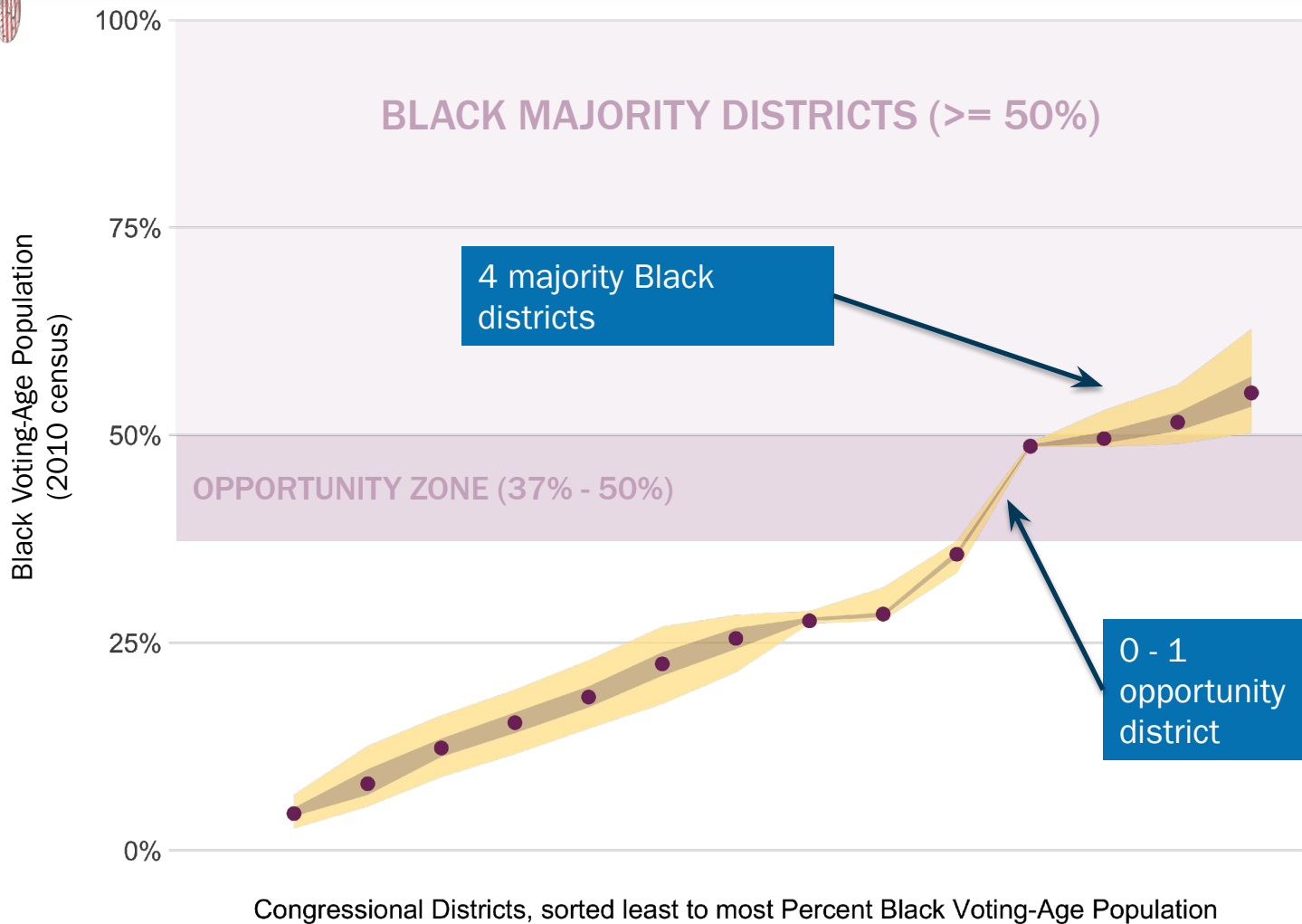


Democratic districts:  
99% of simulated maps have  
5 – 6, enacted map in range

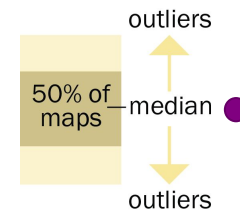
Competitive districts:  
78% of simulated maps have  
1 - 2 competitive seats



# Congress: Simulated Maps Expected Results

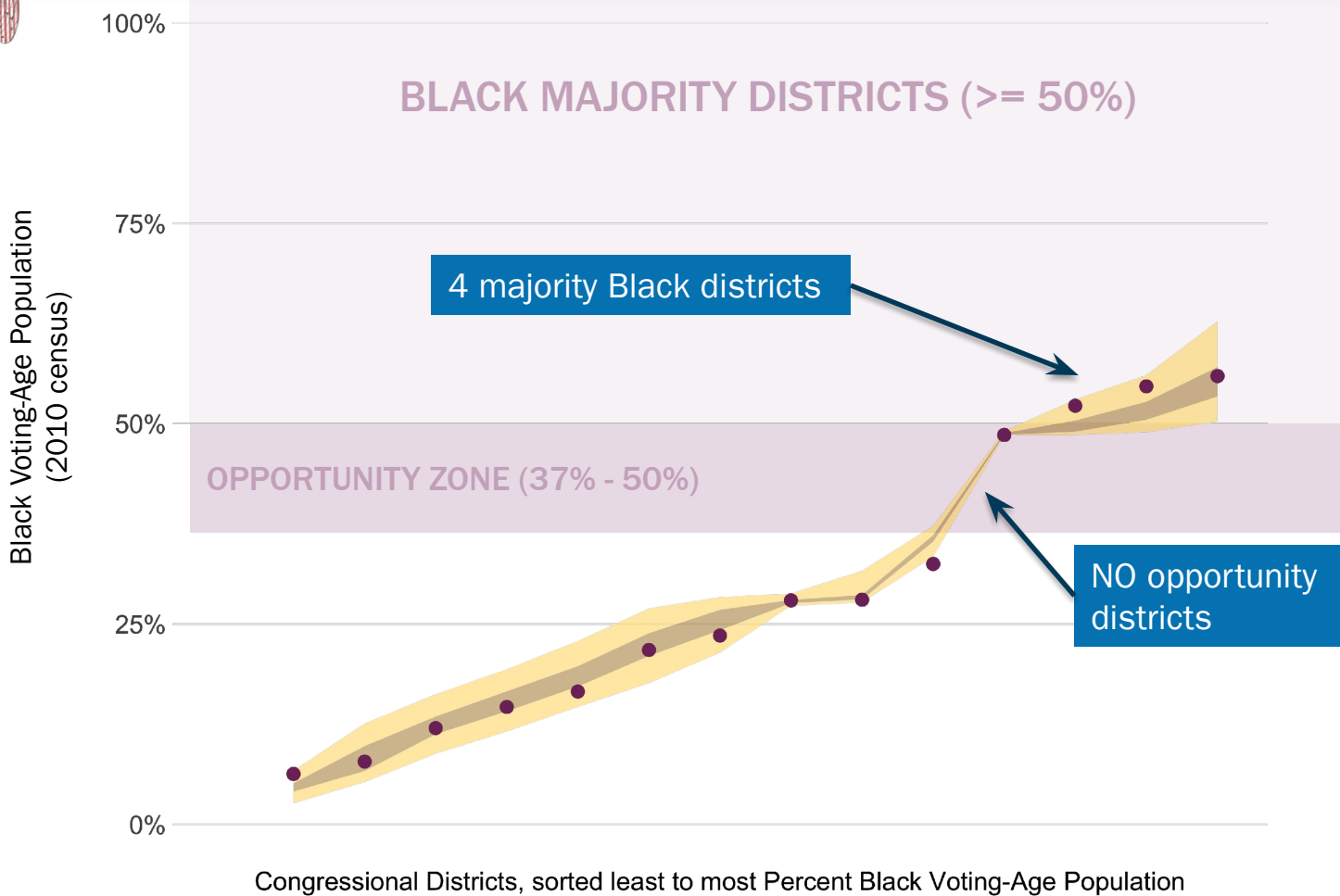


500,000  
Simulated maps  
Range of Black  
Voting Age  
Population

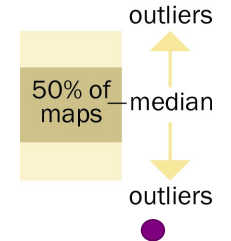


Each dot is a district with the 2010 Black Voting Age Population we would expect to see

# Congress: Enacted Map Results

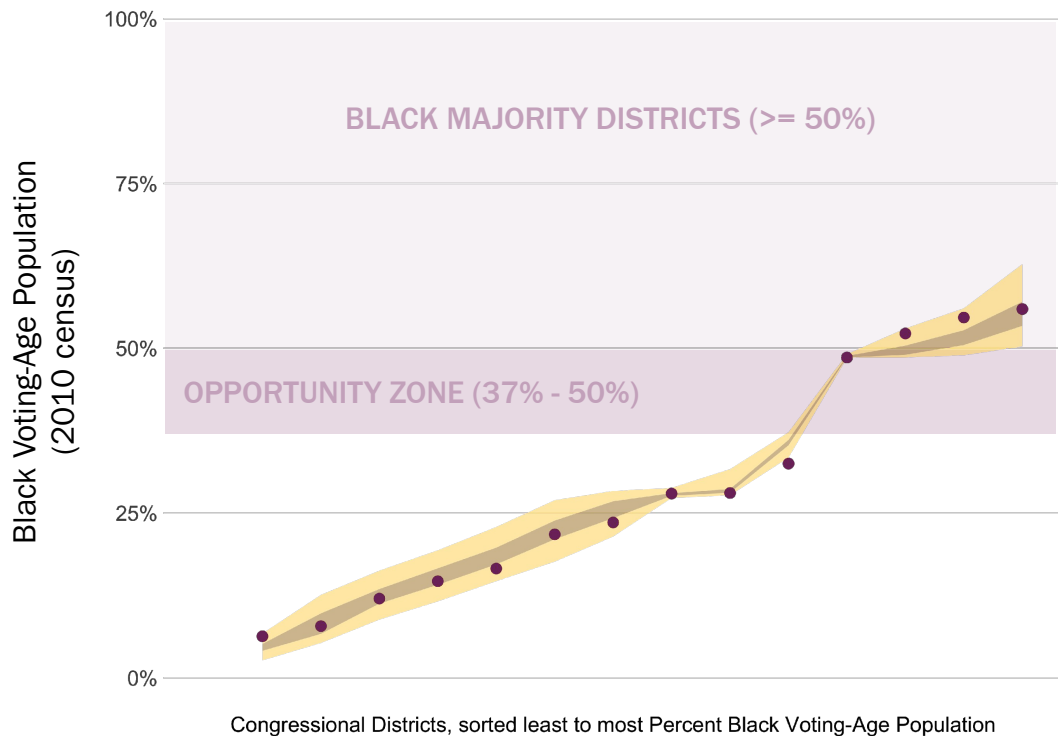


500,000  
Simulated maps  
Range of Black  
Voting Age  
Population

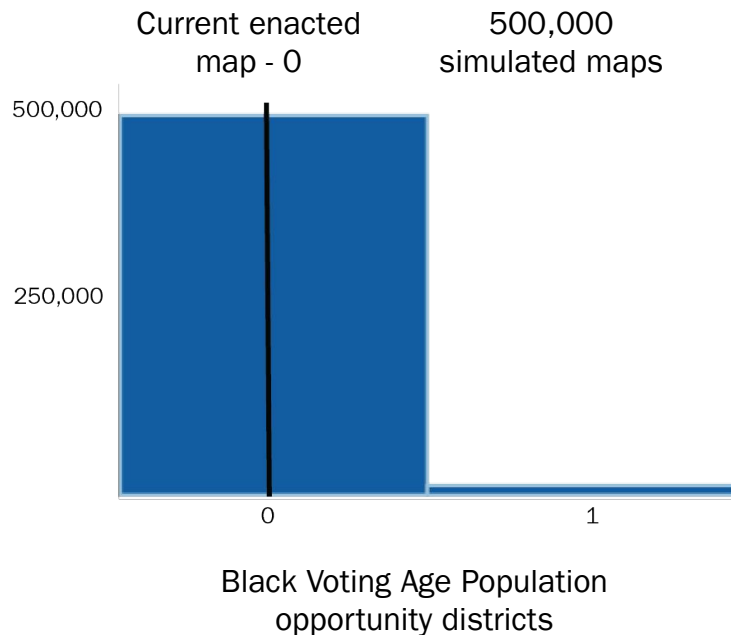


Each dot is one district's actual 2010 Black Voting Age Population

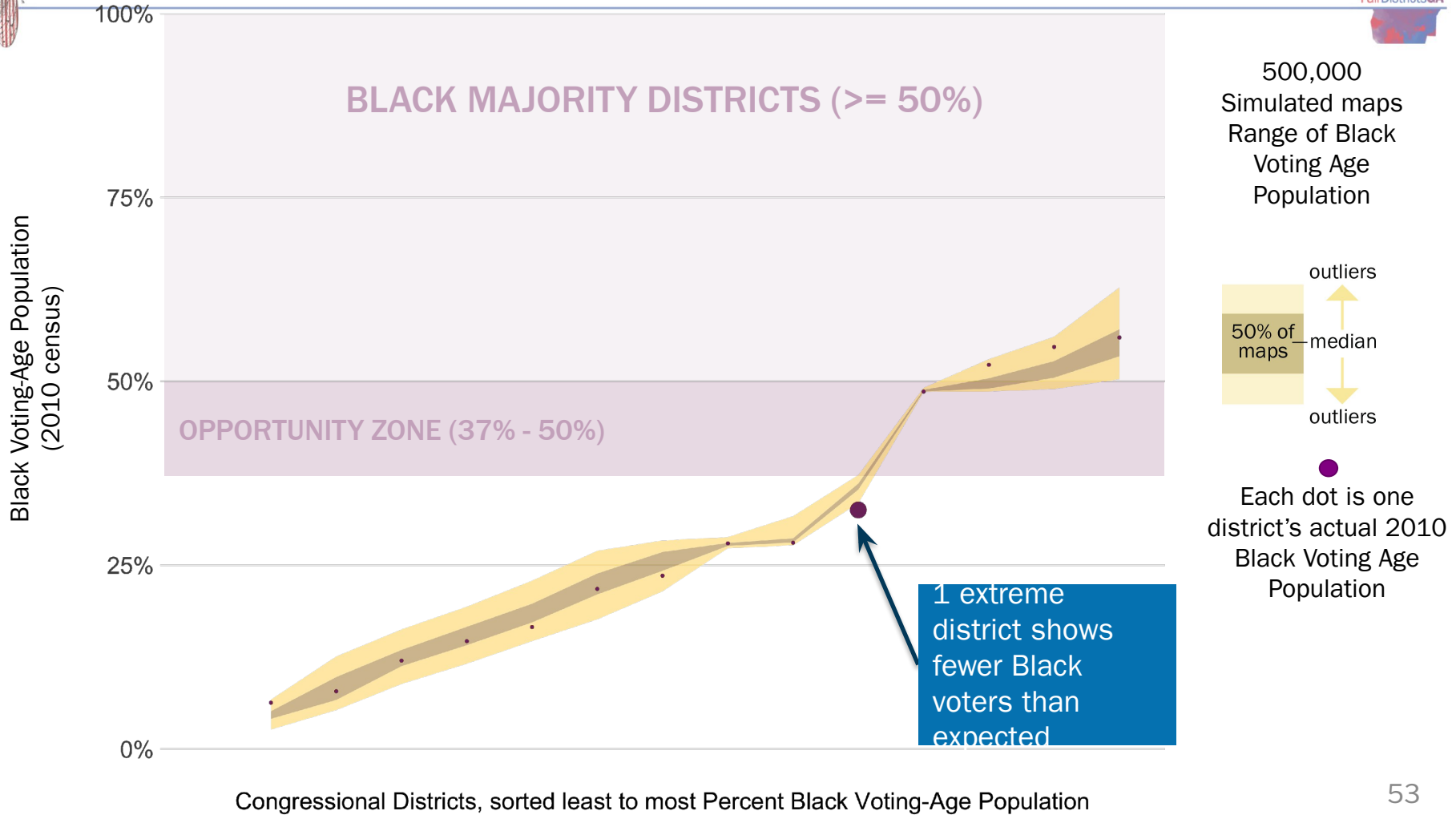
# Congress: Opportunity Districts



Simulated maps have 0 - 1 opportunity district



# Congress: 1 Extreme District



# State House: Fairness Benchmarks



The Princeton Gerrymandering Project used a computer to create 50,000 House maps at random that are based on the 2010 census and comply with redistricting laws as well as the current map does



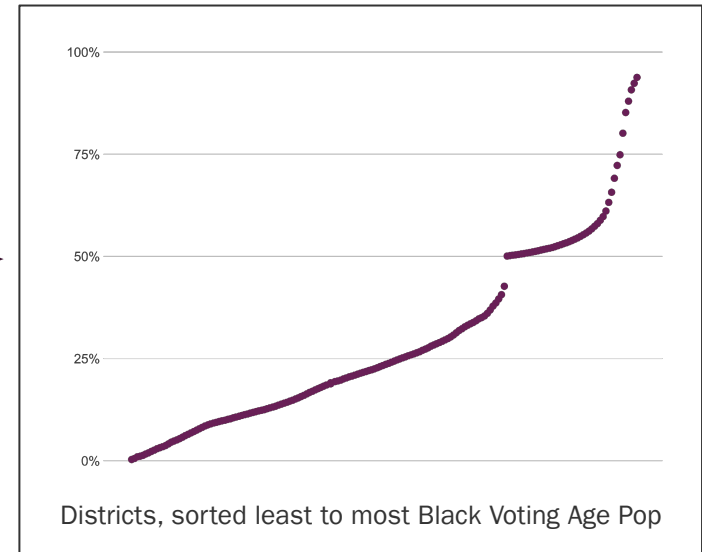
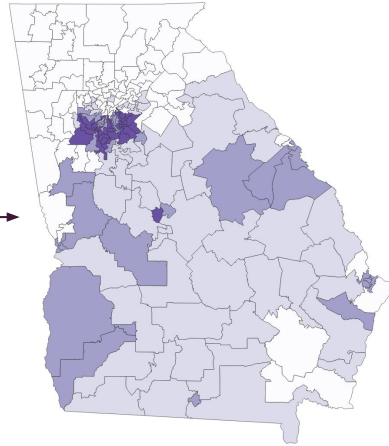
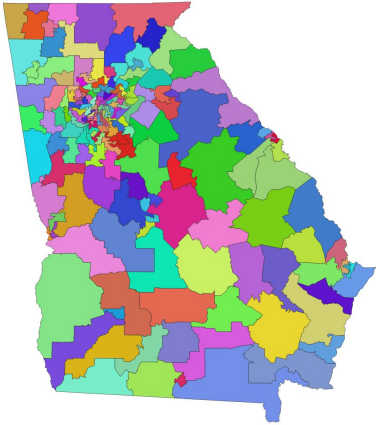
# State House: Minority Representation



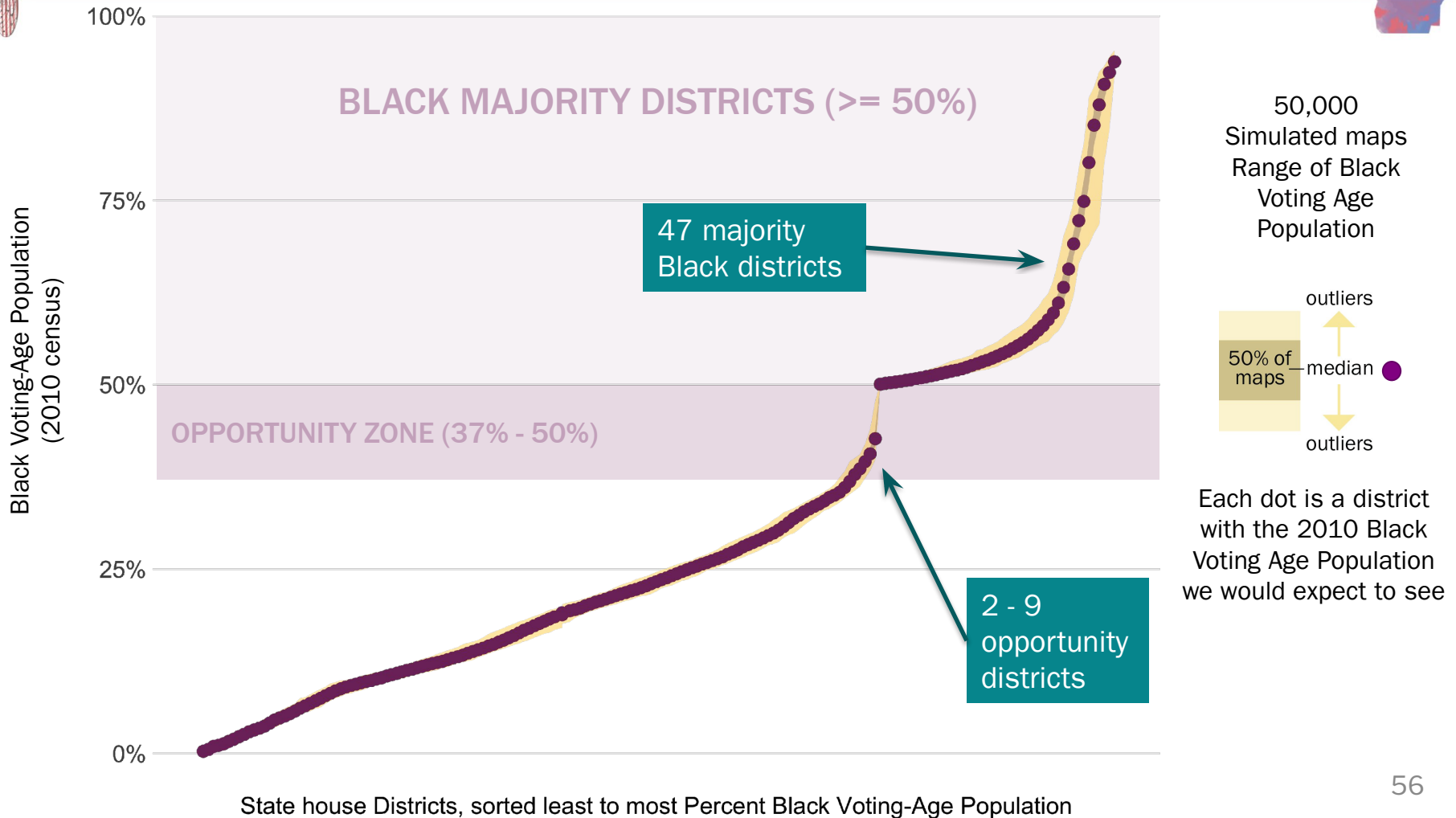
For each one of 50,000 simulated maps

Calculate percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) for each of 180 districts

Percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) per district

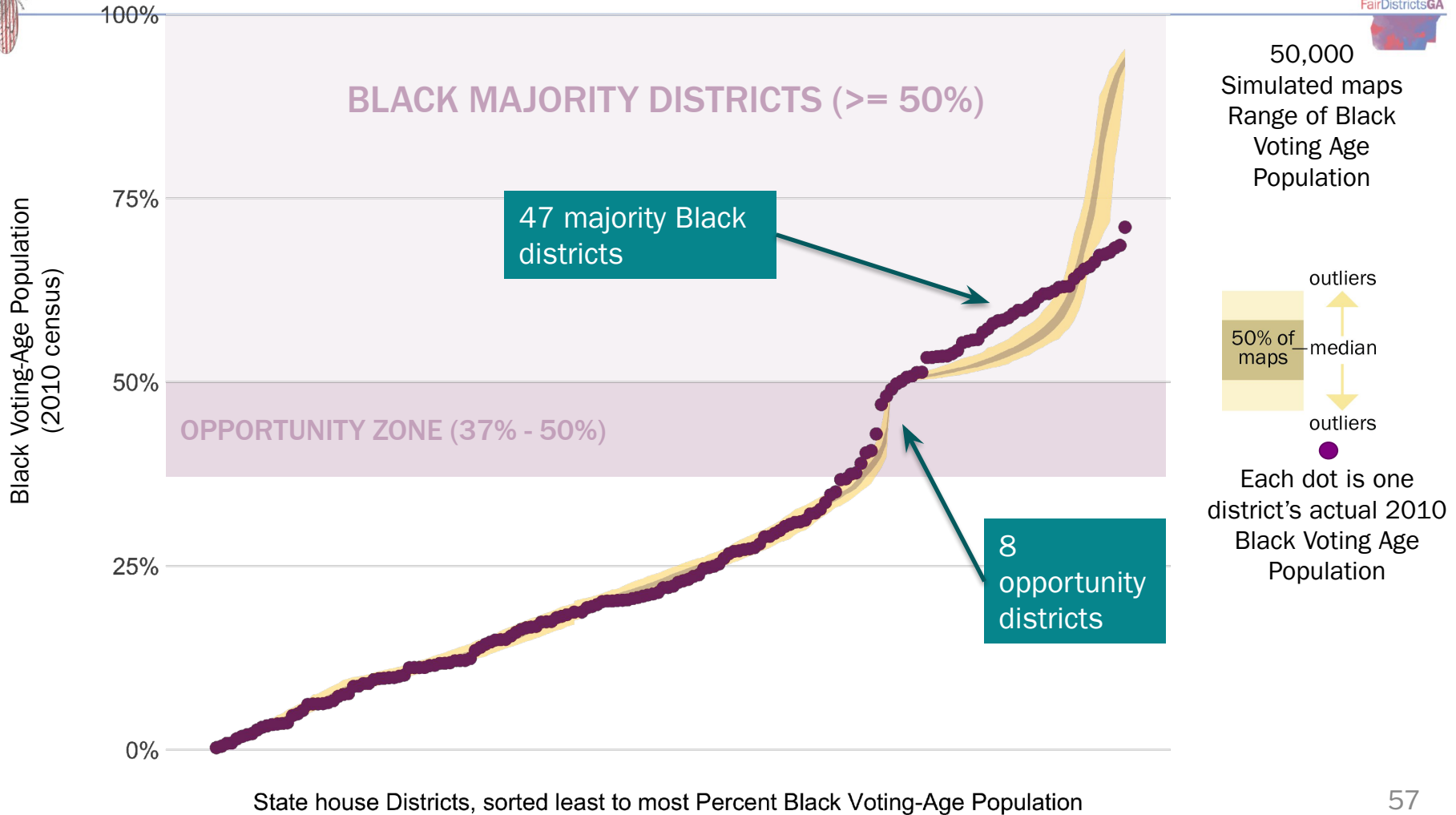


# State House: Simulated Maps Expected Results

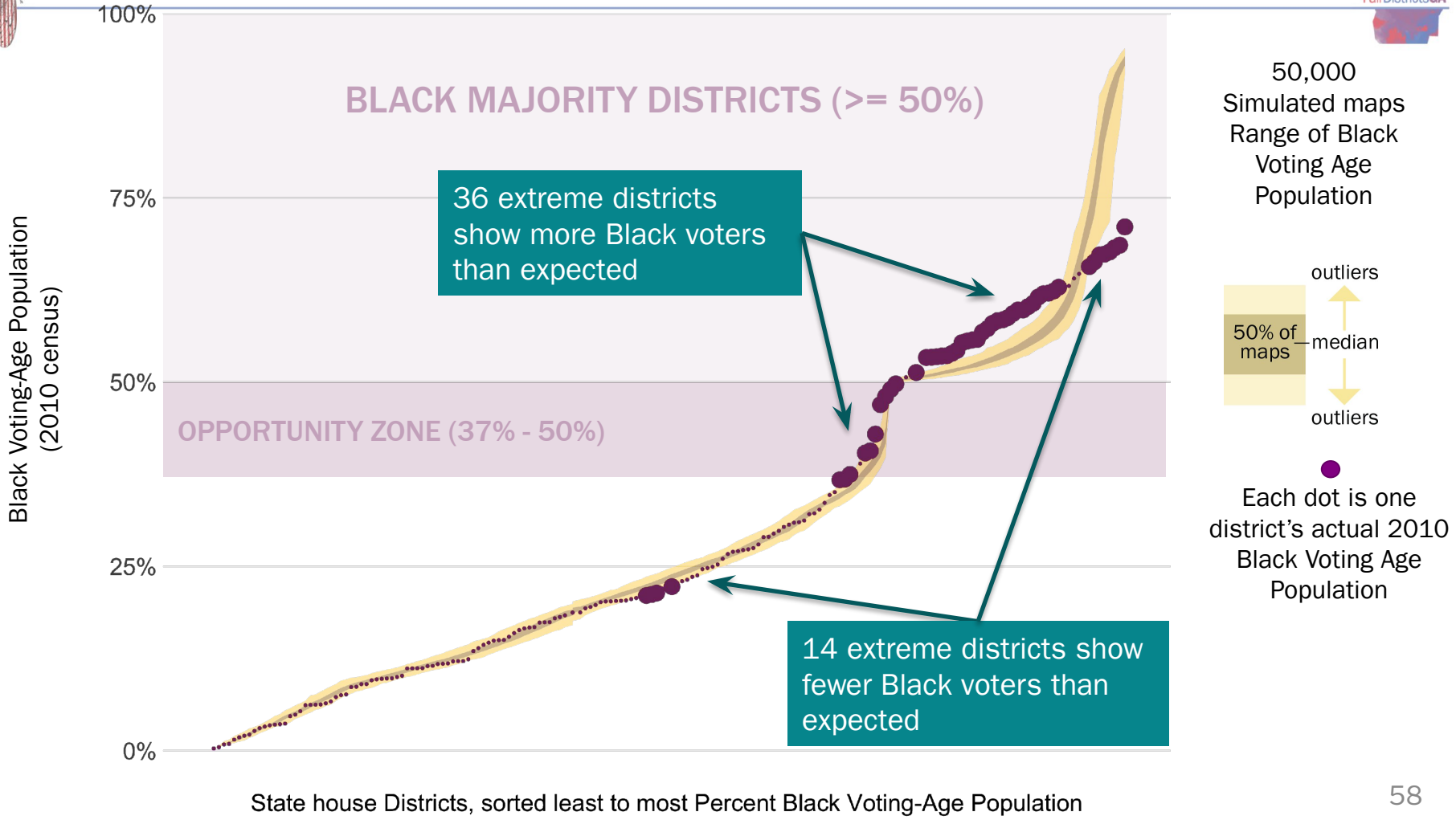




# State House : Enacted Map Results



# State House: 50 Extreme Districts



# State House: Fairness Benchmarks–Partisan Representation

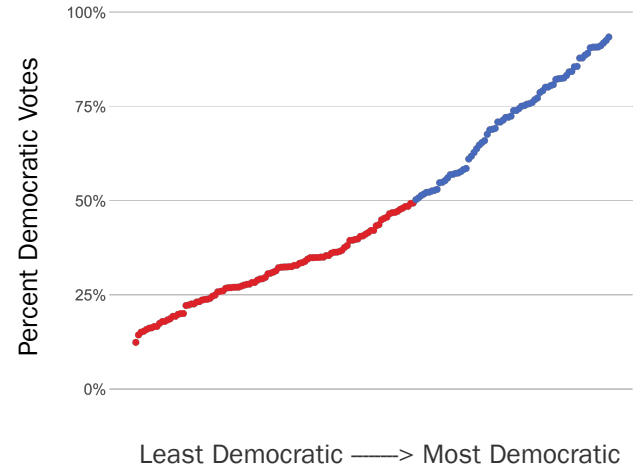
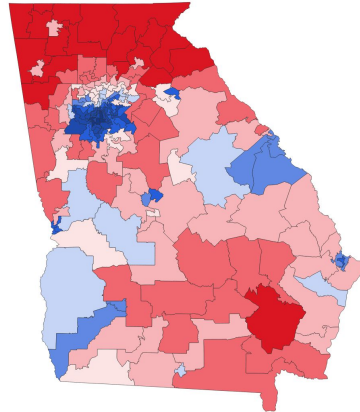
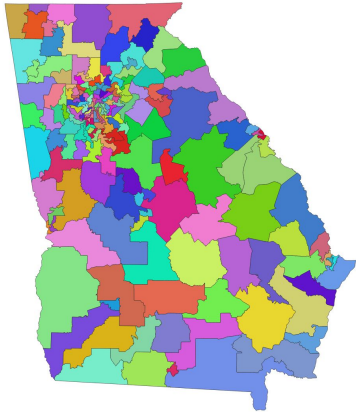


For each simulated map, we estimate state House election results based on 2016 presidential vote by precinct

For each map

President 2016

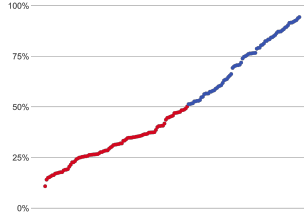
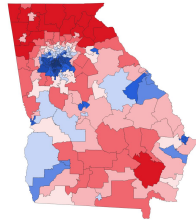
Simulated state House results



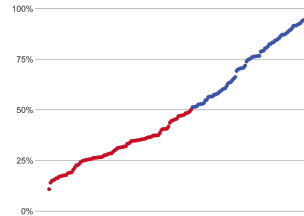
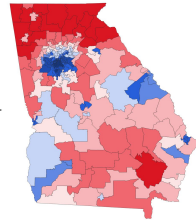
# State House: Fairness Benchmarks–Partisan Representation



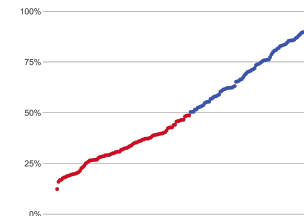
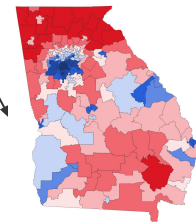
### President 2016



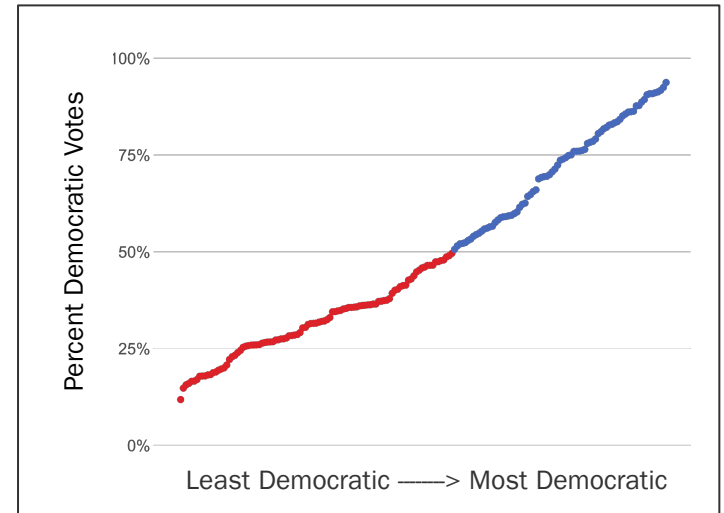
### Governor 2018



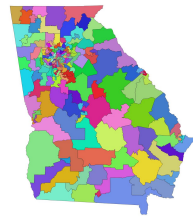
### President 2020



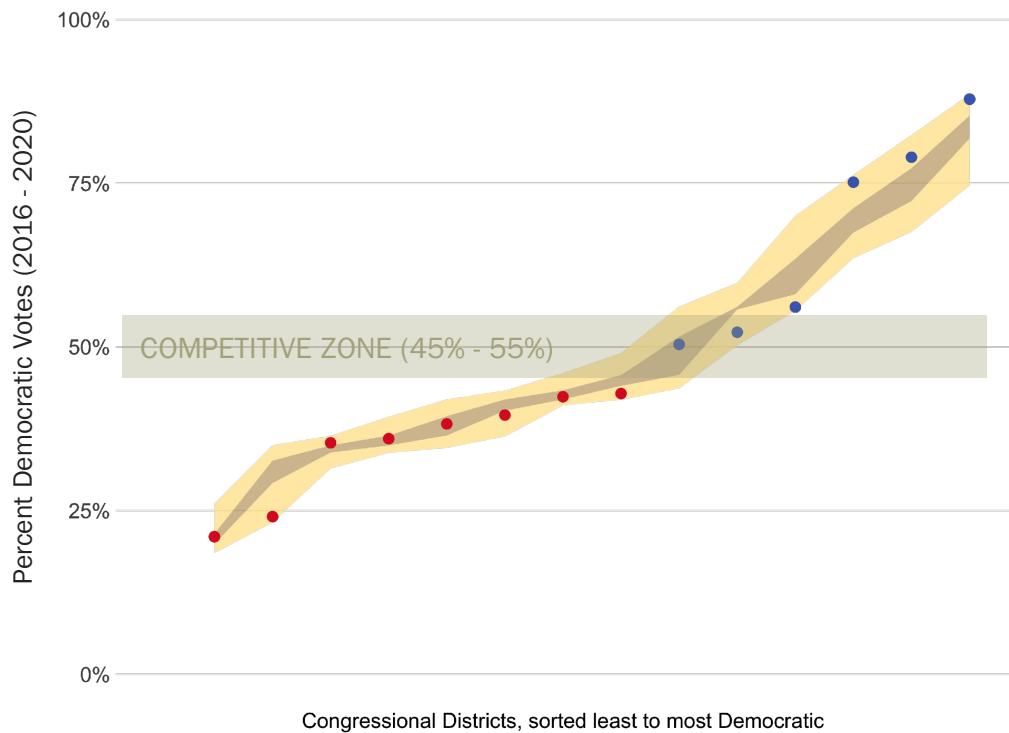
### Outcome—average of three recent elections (2016-2020)



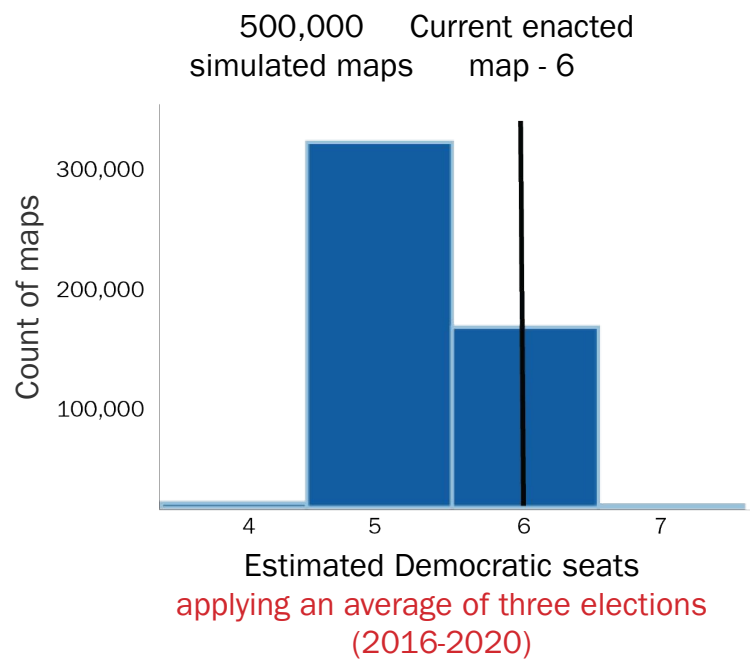
For each map



# Congress: Partisan Balance



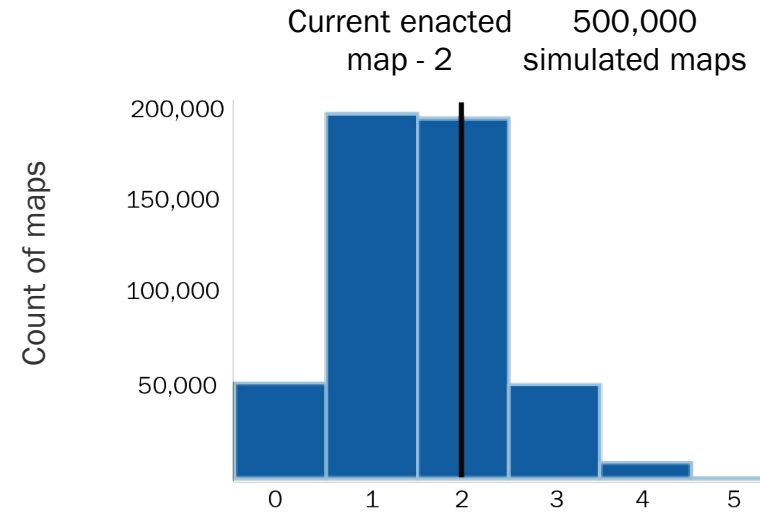
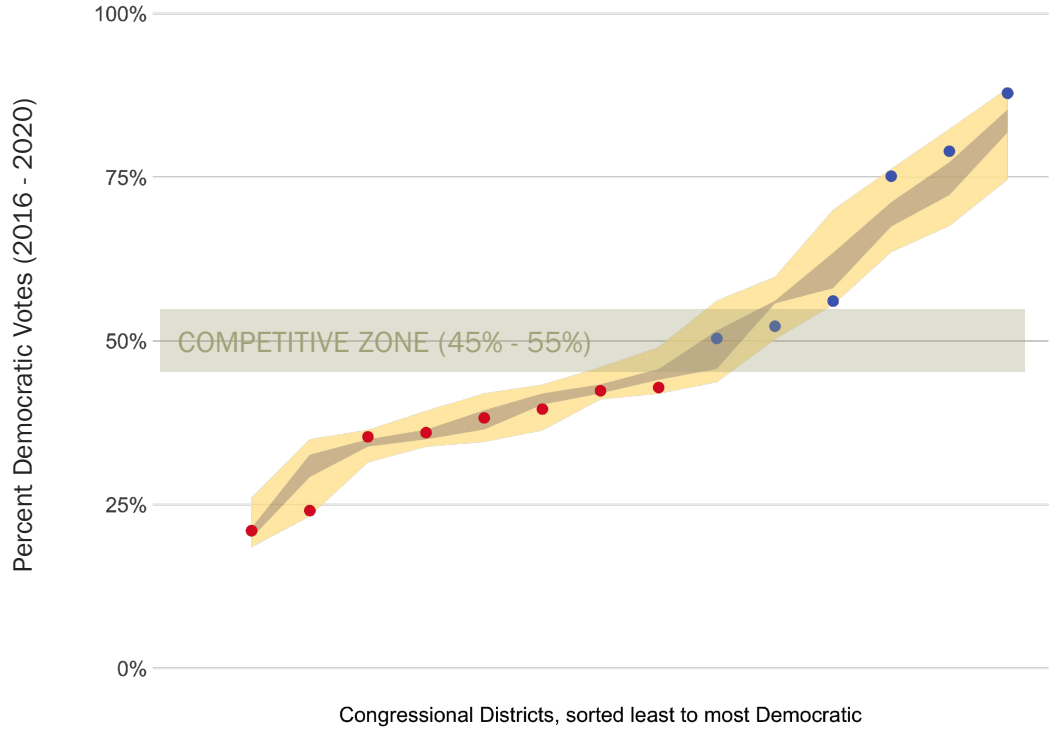
99% of simulated maps have 5 – 6 Democratic seats



# Congress: Competitive Seats

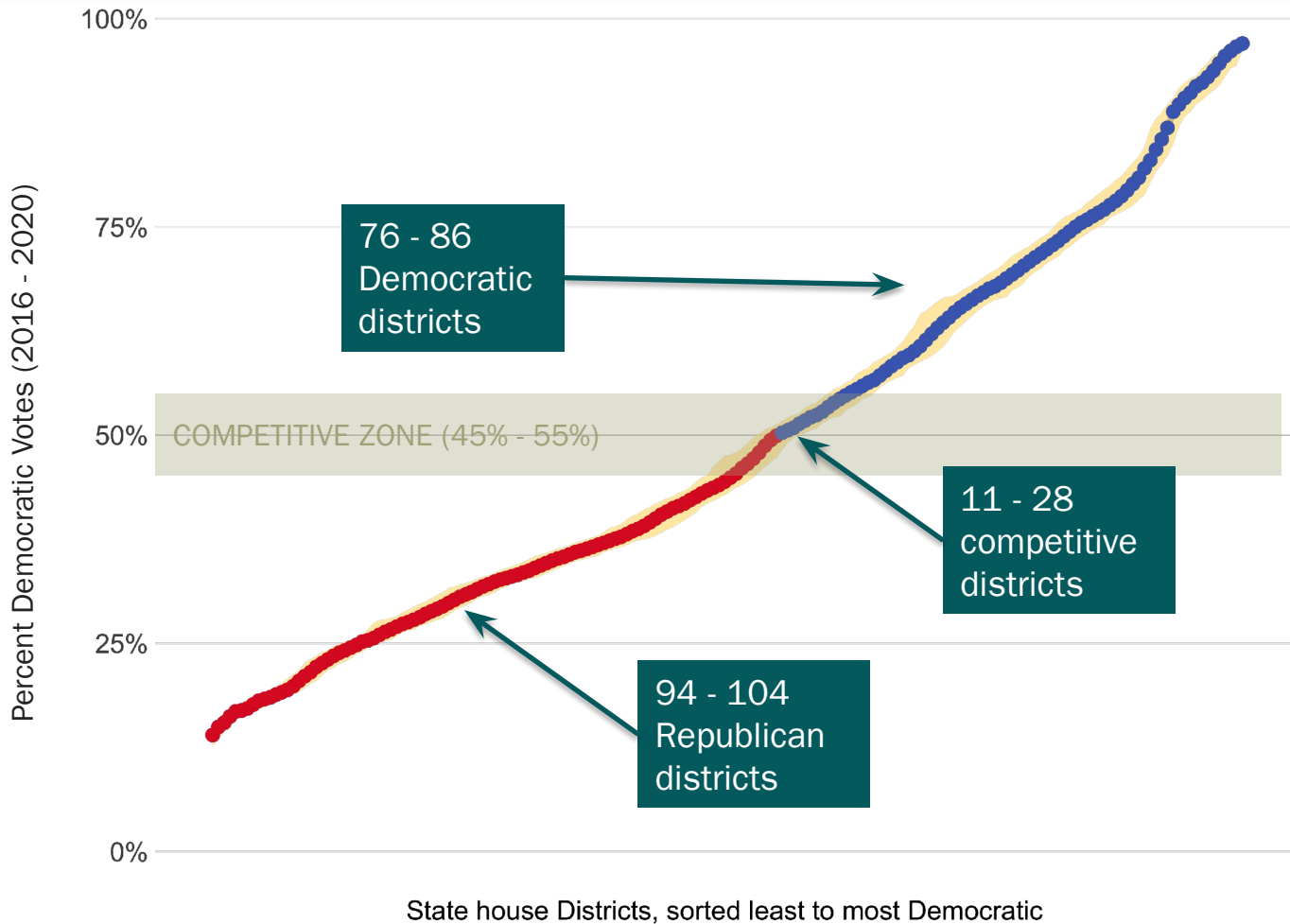


78% of simulated maps have 1 - 2 competitive seats

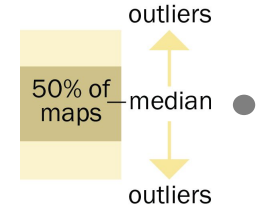


Estimated competitive districts applying an average of three elections (2016-2020)

# State House: Simulated Maps Expected Results



50,000 Simulated maps; range of estimated Democratic voters in each district

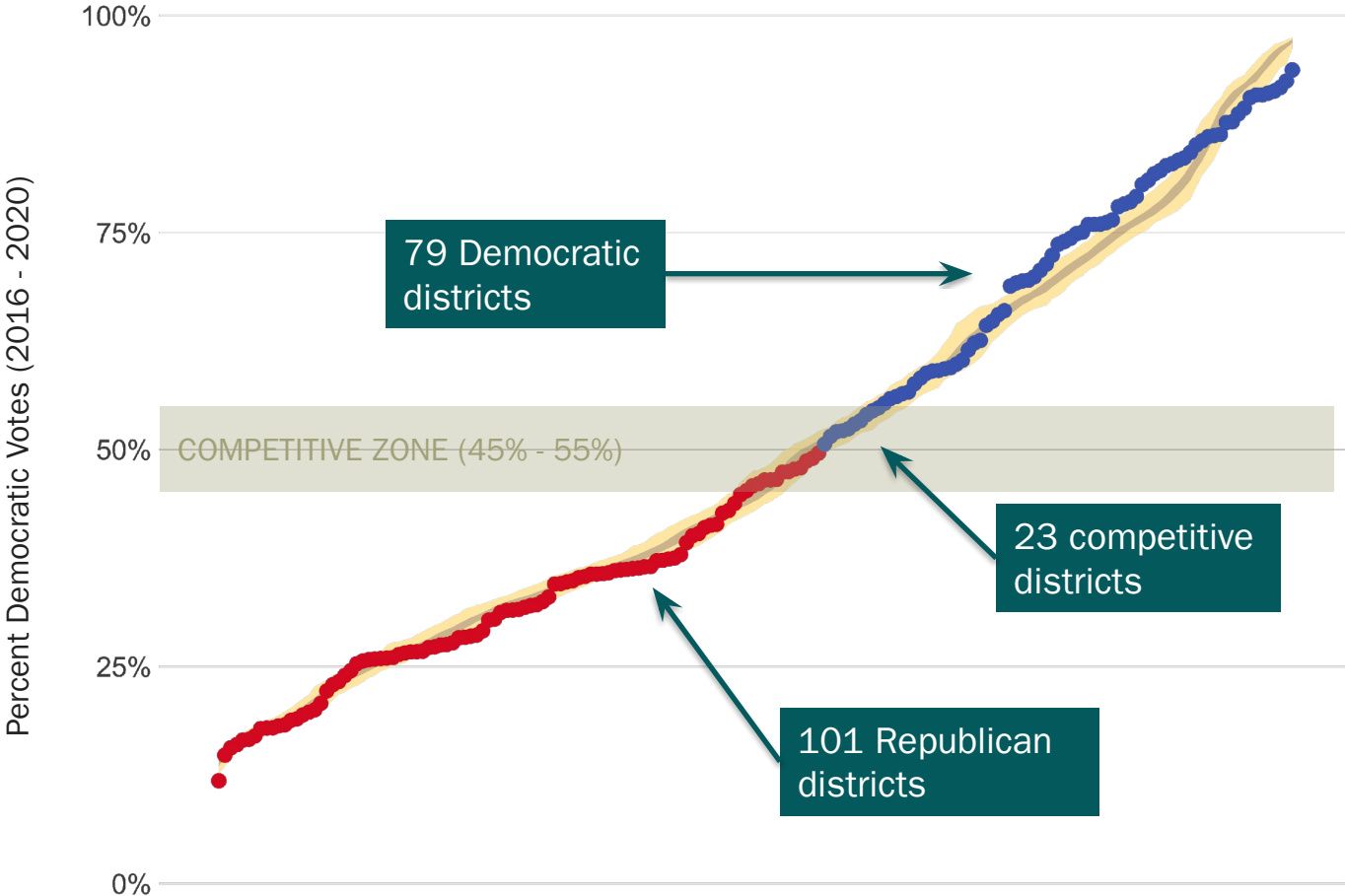


Each dot is a district with the percentage of Democratic voters we would expect to see

# State House: Enacted Map Results



FairDistrictsGA

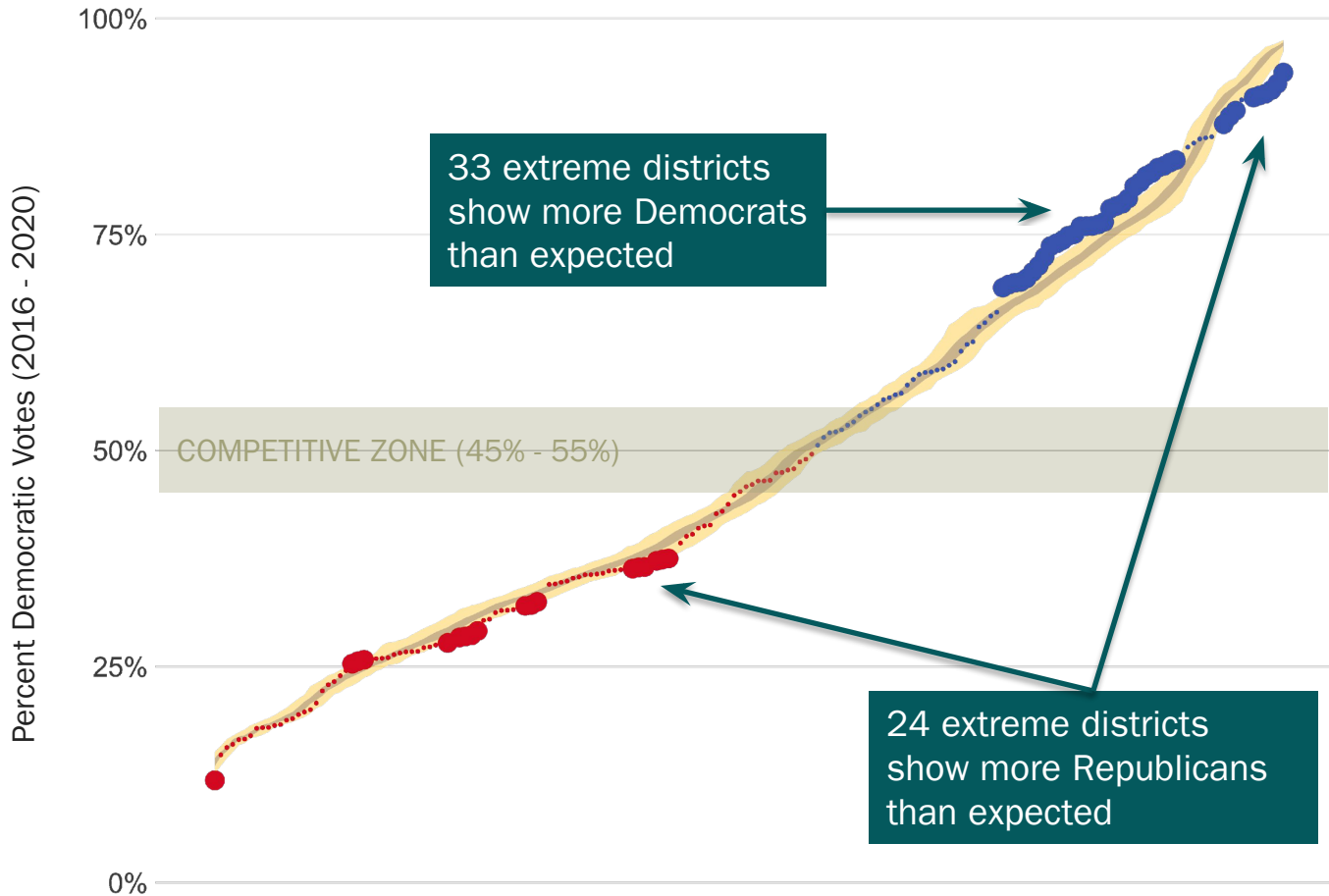


50,000 Simulated maps; range of estimated Democratic voters in each district

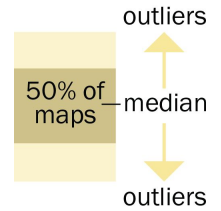
State house Districts, sorted least to most Democratic



# State House: 57 Extreme Districts

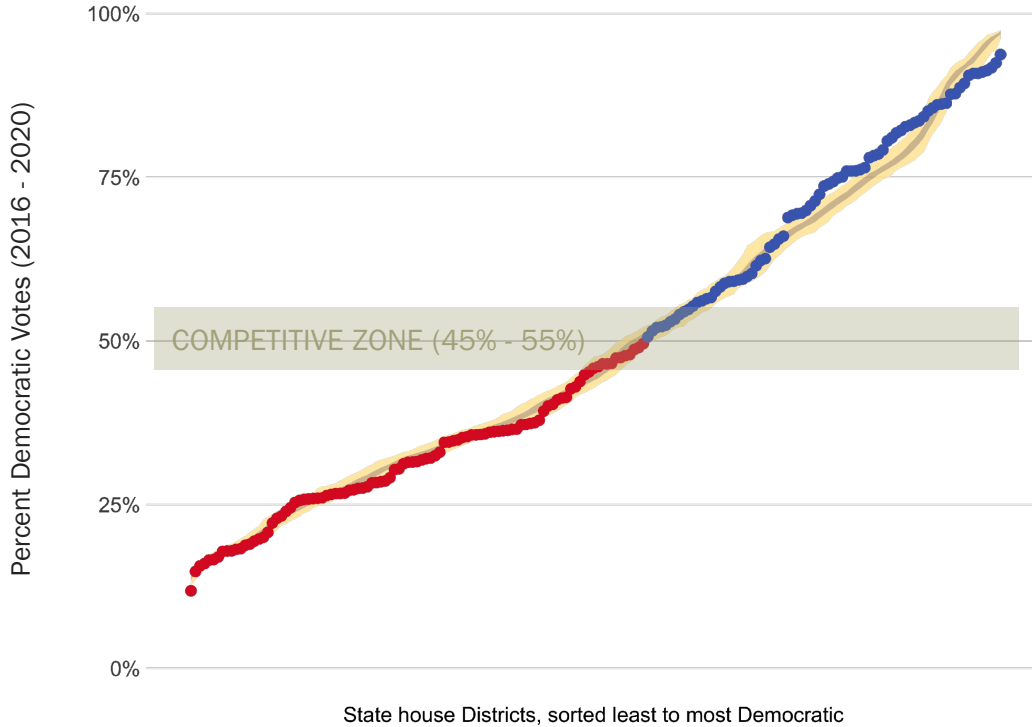


50,000 Simulated maps; range of estimated Democratic voters in each district



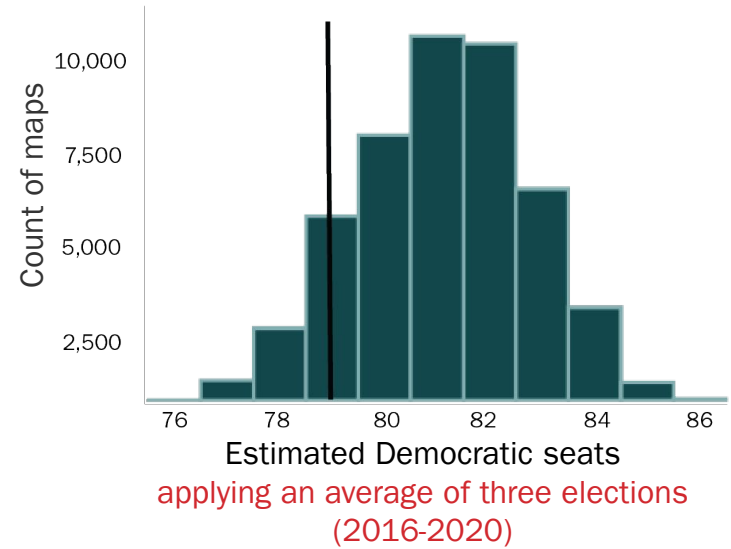
Each dot is one district's percentage of Democratic voters estimated by averaging three elections (2016-2020)

# State House: Partisan Balance



83% of simulated maps have more Democratic districts

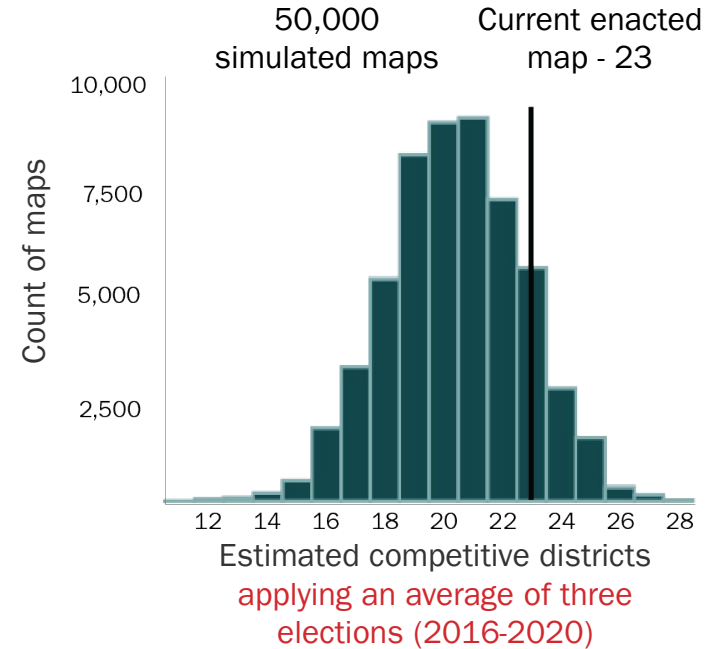
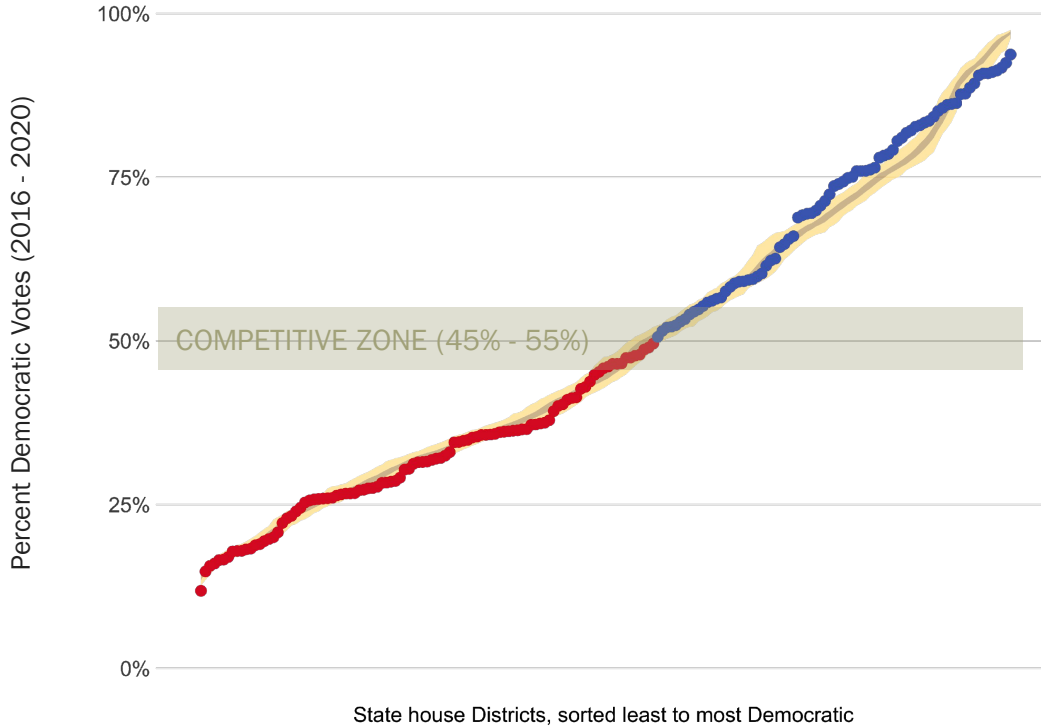
Current enacted map - 79      50,000 simulated maps



# State House: Competitive Seats



81% of simulated maps have fewer competitive seats



# Congress: fairness benchmarks



The Princeton Gerrymandering Project used a computer to create 500,000 Congressional maps at random that are based on the 2010 census and comply with redistricting laws as well as the current map does



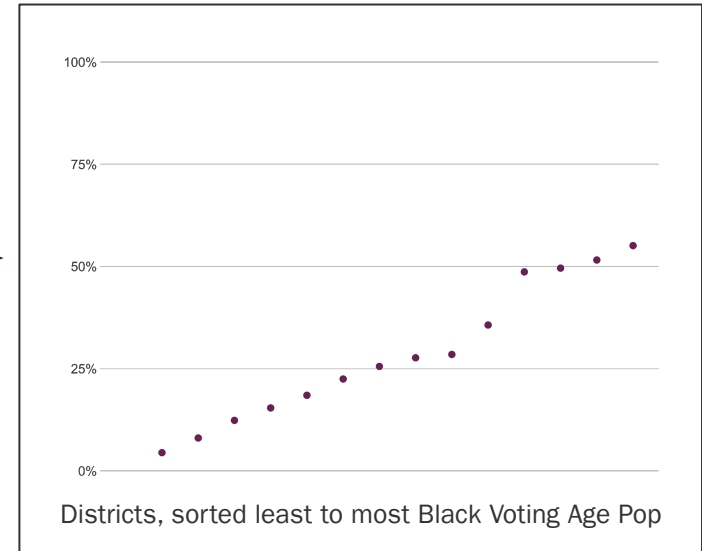
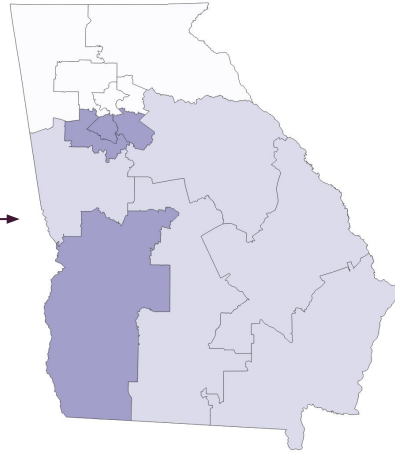
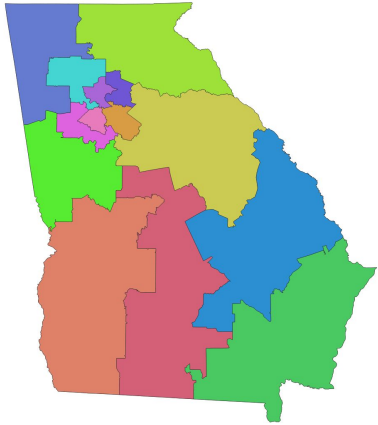
# Congress: Minority Representation



For each one of 500,000 simulated maps

Calculate percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) for each of 14 districts

Percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) per district



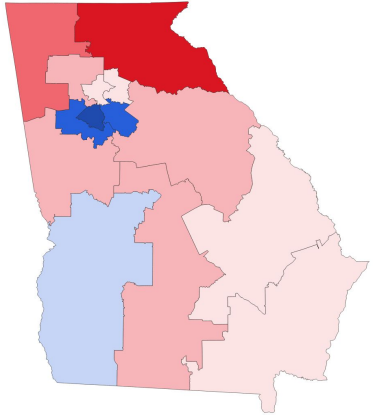
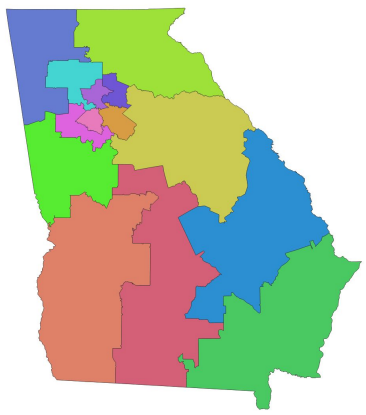
# Congress: Fairness Benchmarks—Partisan Representation



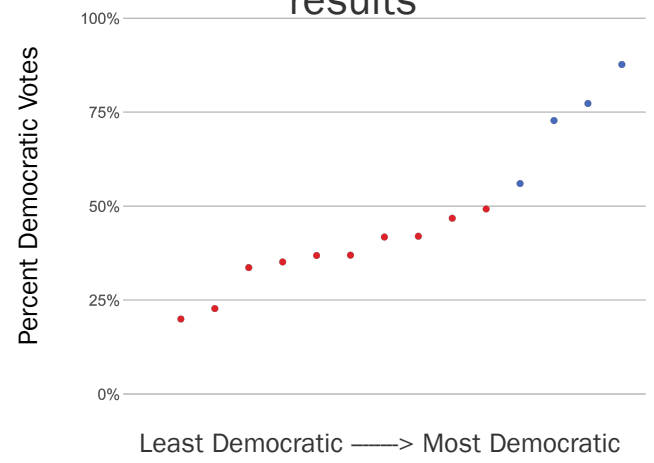
For each simulated map, we estimate **Congressional** election results based on 2016 presidential vote by precinct

For each map

President 2016



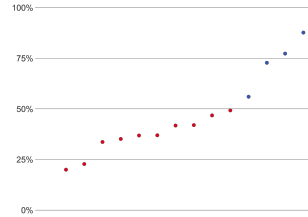
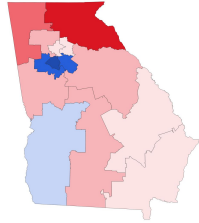
Simulated Congressional results



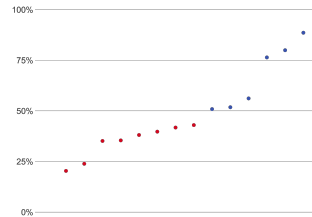
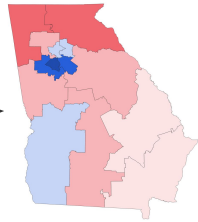
# Congress: Fairness Benchmarks–Partisan Representation



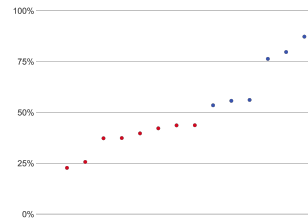
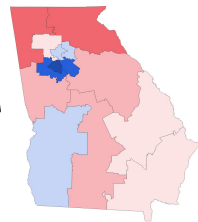
## President 2016



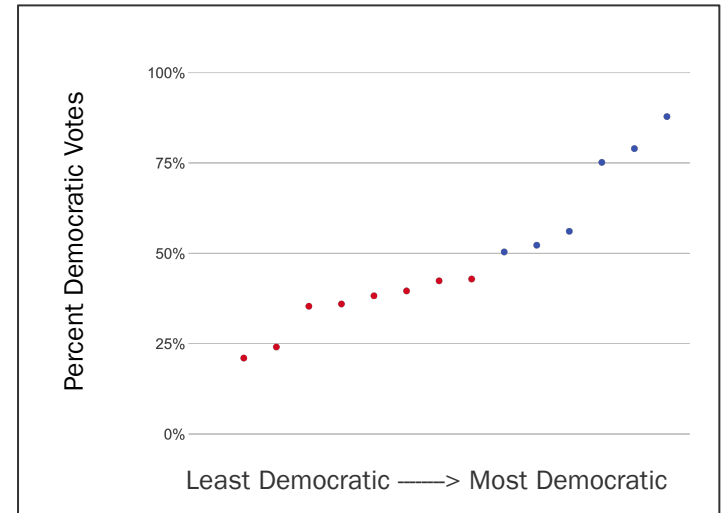
## Governor 2018



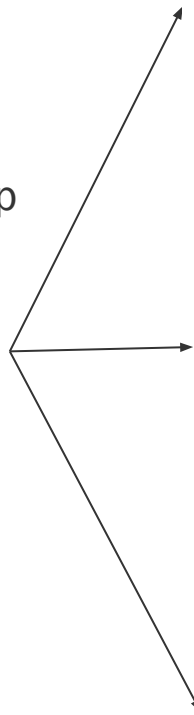
## President 2020



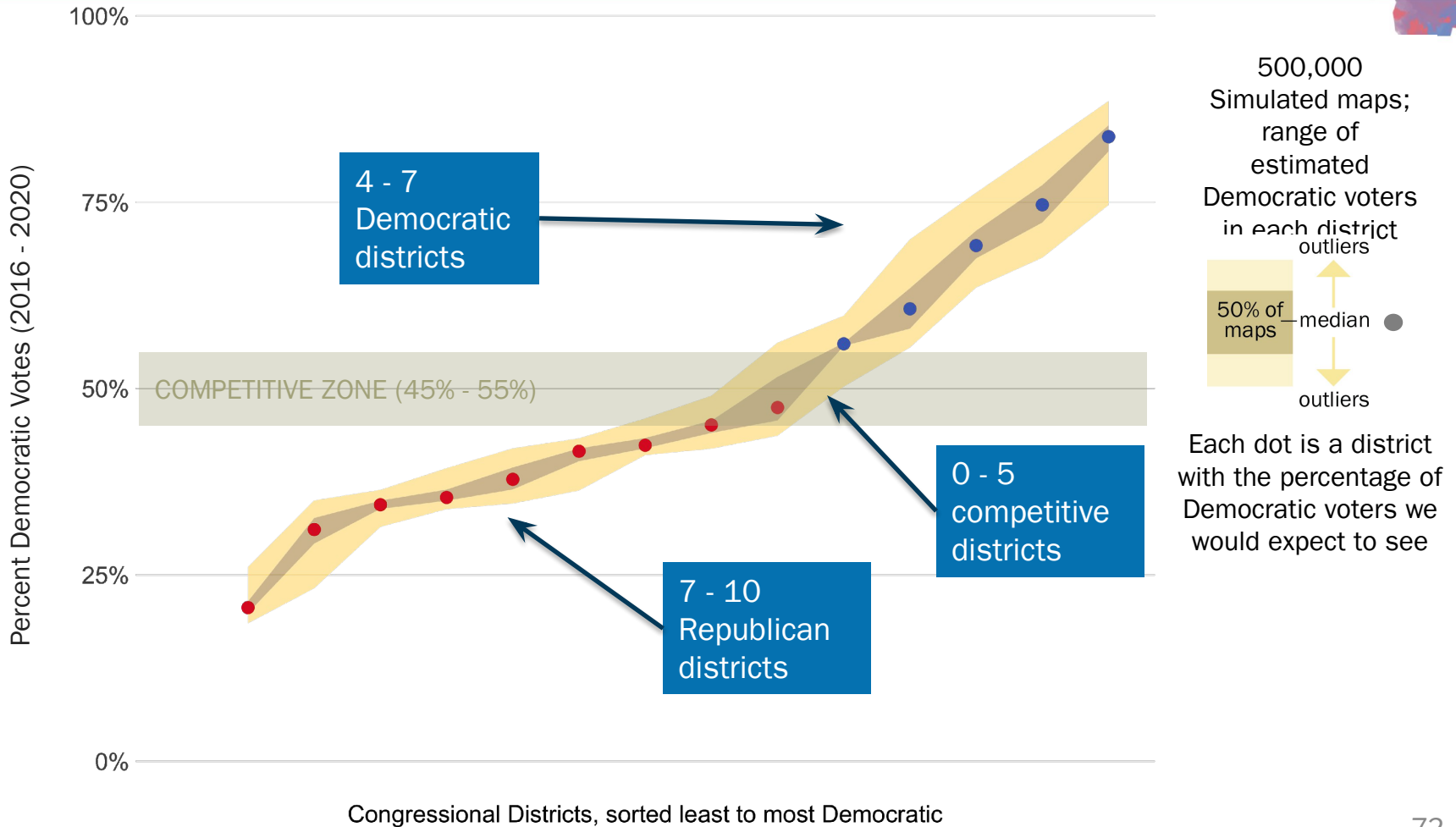
## Outcome—average of three recent elections (2016-2020)



For each map

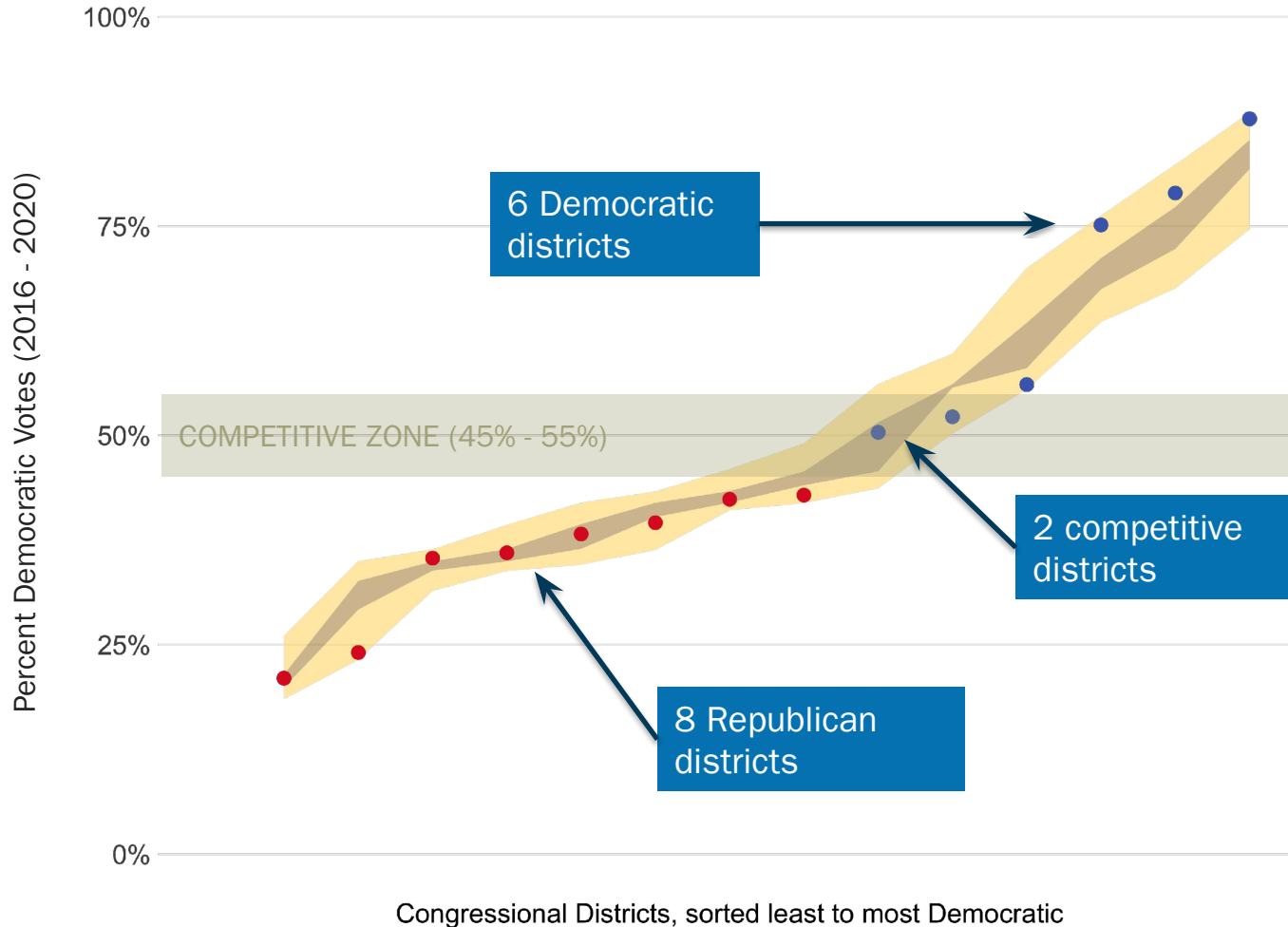


# Congress: Simulated Maps Expected Results

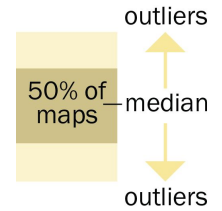




# Congress: Enacted Map Results

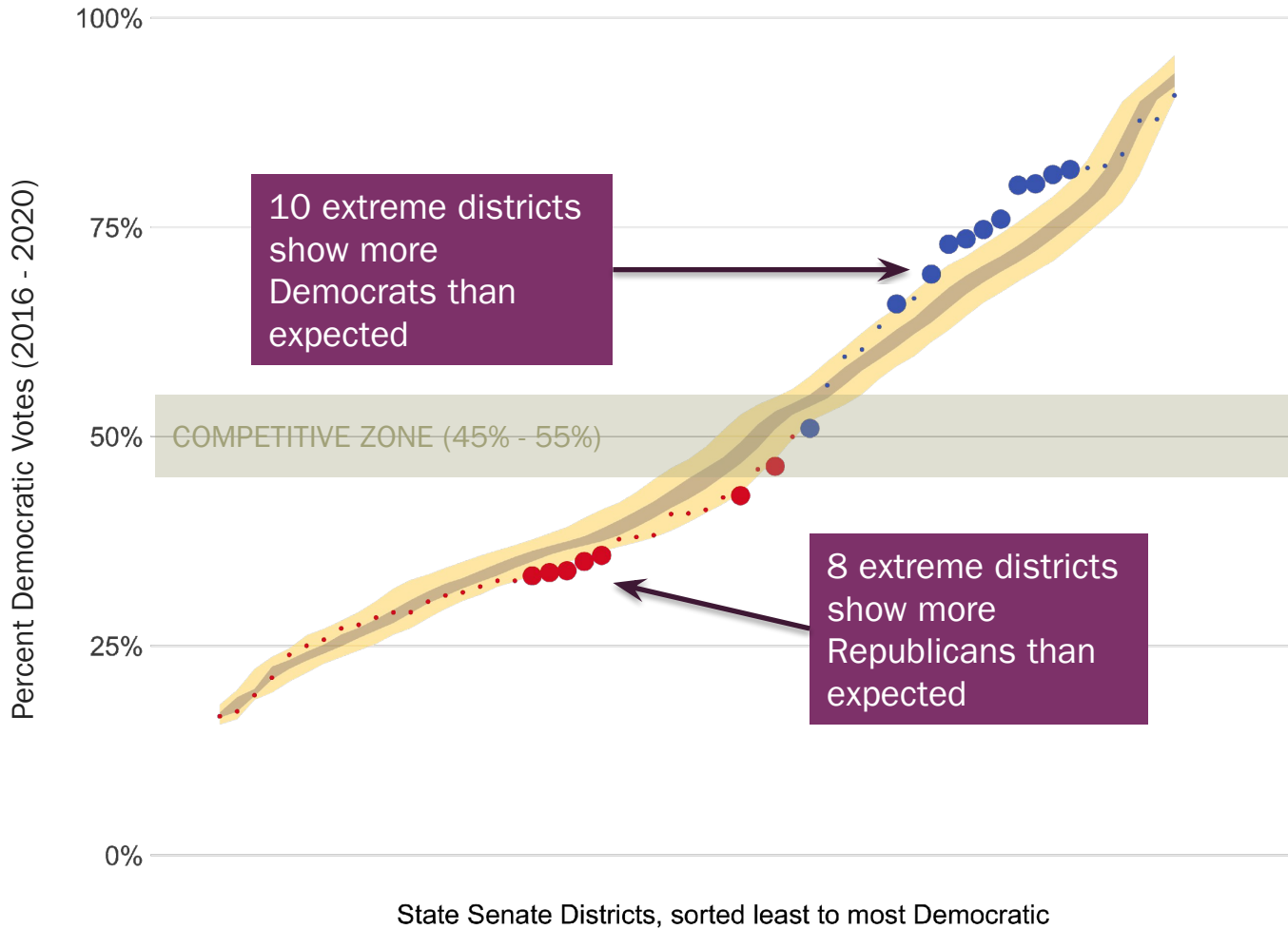


500,000 Simulated maps; range of estimated Democratic voters in each district

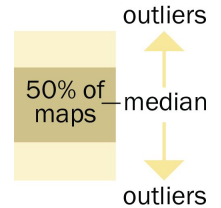


Each dot is one district's percentage of Democratic voters estimated by averaging three elections (2016-2020)

# State Senate: 18 Extreme Districts



500,000 Simulated maps; range of estimated Democratic voters in each district



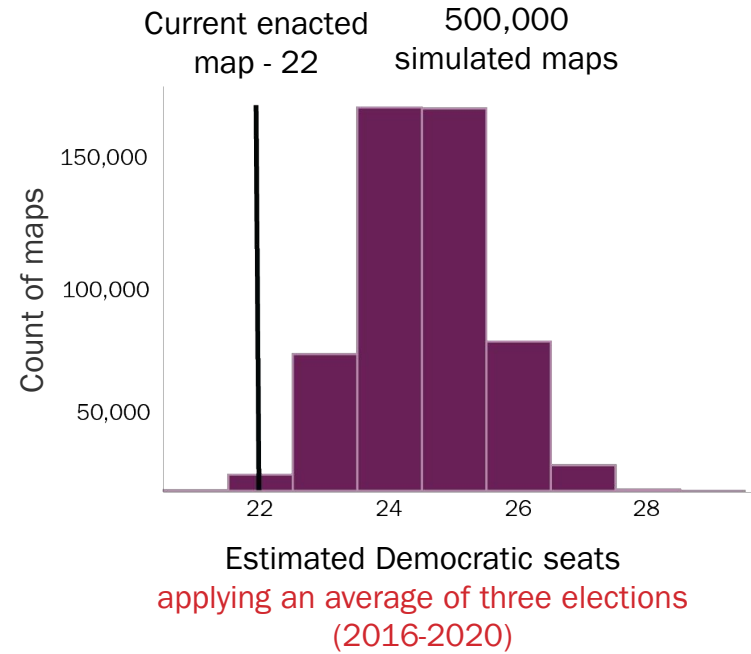
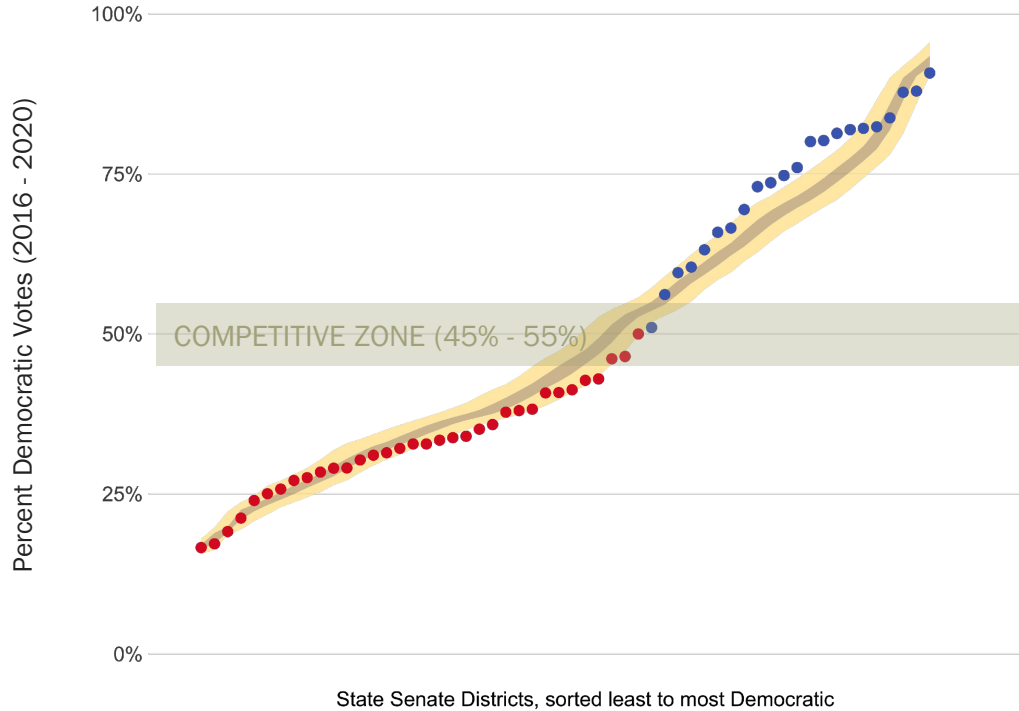
Each dot is one district's percentage of Democratic voters

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

# State Senate: Partisan Imbalance



98% of simulated maps have 1-6 more Democratic seats

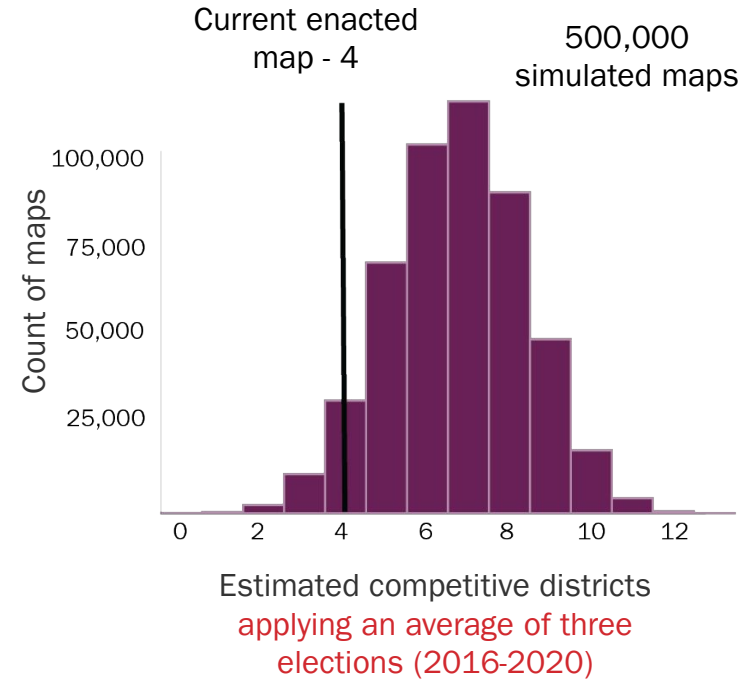
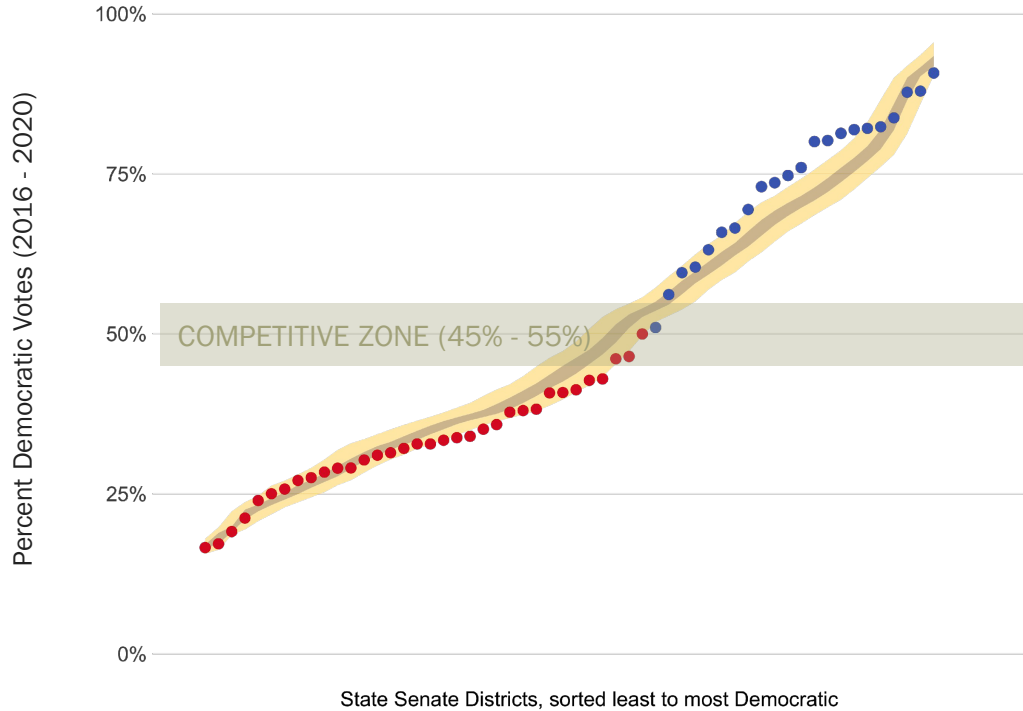


Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

# State Senate: Fewer Competitive Seats



91% of simulated maps have more competitive districts



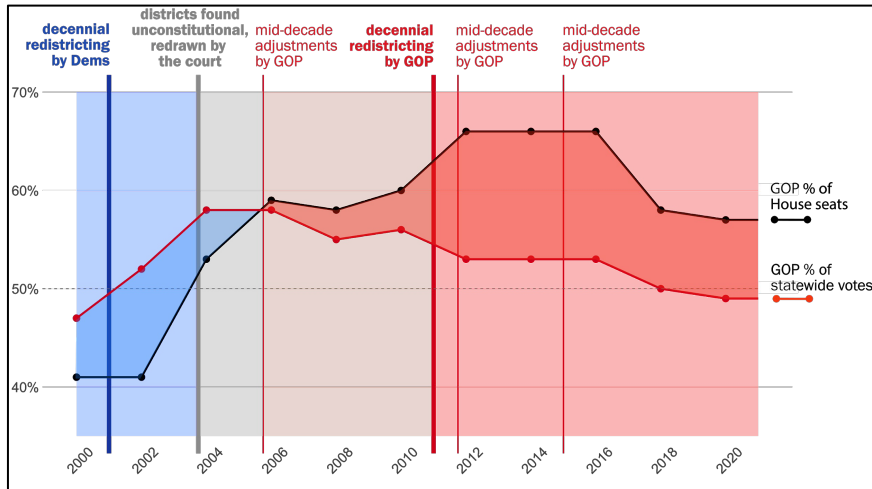
Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

# FDGA/PGP - Phase 1 findings

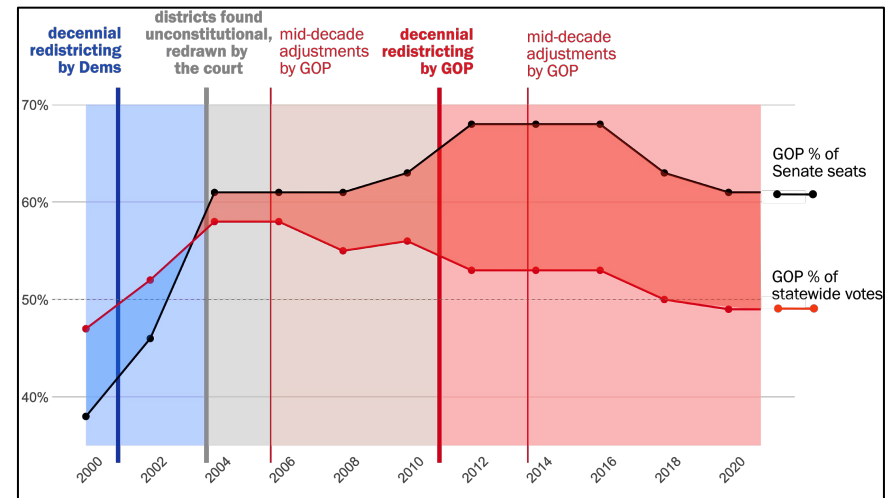


Politicians of both parties have used gerrymandering to maintain partisan control, despite voter preferences

## Georgia House



## Georgia Senate



# FDGA/PGP - Phase 1 findings



Senate map does not prioritize opportunity for Black voters

