



For more information about prison-based gerrymandering, see our website and weekly newsletter at <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

Prison-Based Gerrymandering in Ohio Cities

The Supreme Court requires cities to update their city council districts once per decade so that each district contains the same population, giving each resident equal representation in city government. The U.S. Census Bureau counts people where they are incarcerated, not where they are from, and when the Census figures do not reflect the city's actual population, democracy suffers.

The problem

The Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the prison, but people in prison can't vote and are not residents of the surrounding community. The practice of including prisons in local districting plans leads to serious distortions of political power in county governments.

For example, in the city of **Mansfield**, Ward 5 derives 60% of its population from two large prisons. This effectively gives every 4 residents of Ward 5 the same political clout as 10 residents elsewhere in the city.

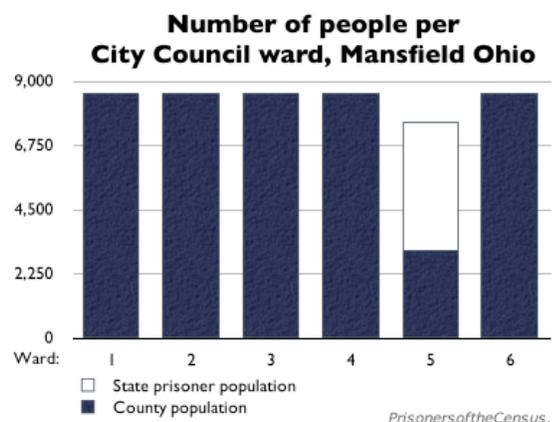
In **Marysville**, one ward is 55% prisoners, giving 5 people in that ward more say in city government than 10 people in any other ward of the city.

The cities of **Youngstown** and **Marion** also have wards with significant prisoner populations—Youngstown's Ward 3 is 10% prisoners, while 32% of Marion's Ward 1 is incarcerated there.

The City of Lima and hundreds of local governments elsewhere have a solution

Ideally, the Census Bureau would not include prison populations in local population counts. But cities can fix the problem themselves by removing the prison populations prior to redistricting. The city of **Lima**, which contains Lima Correctional Institute, already adjusts Census data when it redistricts. By removing the prison population before redistricting the city avoids vote dilution in its districts.

Ohio cities should follow the lead of Lima – and over 100 local governments around the country – and exclude the prison population when they next update their city council districts after this census.



Ohio law says a prison cell is not a residence:

Under Ohio law, a person resides “where he has his true, fixed, permanent home and principal establishment, and to which, whenever he is absent, he has the intention of returning.... It is not, however, necessary, that he should intend to remain there for all time. If he lives in a place, with the intention of remaining for an indefinite period of time, as a place of fixed present domicile, and not as a place of temporary establishment, or for mere transient objects, it is to all intents, and for all purposes, his residence...” *Wickham v. Coyer*, 20 Ohio C.D. 765 (1900) (citations omitted).