

## **New Mexico Residents Overwhelmingly Want An Independent Redistricting Committee** *54 percent of Residents Give Legislature a “D” or “F” on Redistricting*

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ALBUQUERQUE, NM – A scientific survey of New Mexico residents about the recent decennial redistricting process revealed a number important findings about how voters felt about the process. The survey conducted by Redistricting Partners focused on the Citizens Redistricting Committee (CRC), the district maps it provided to the legislature and the process the House and Senate used to update and ratify state and congressional boundaries. A full copy of the report, funded by the Arnold Foundation, can be found on the [New Mexico First website](#).

“One of the biggest takeaways was that 77% of respondents support creation of an independent New Mexico redistricting commission that would directly, without the legislature’s involvement, draw the lines of legislative and congressional maps,” says Dr. Gabriel Sanchez, who, along with Dr. David Cottrell, led different aspects of the report’s research.

### **New Mexico Voters Support Creation of an Independent Commission**

Support for moving to an independent commission to draw district lines directly is high across all sub-groups of New Mexico’s electorate, with a majority of New Mexican voters supporting this revision to the redistricting process, regardless of demographic or political identity. Below are some of these descriptive findings that emphasize consensus among the high likely voter population in New Mexico.

- 82% support among Democrats, 76% among Independents, and 69% among Republicans.
- 88% among self-identified liberals, 75% among moderates, and 69% among conservatives.
- There was no statistical difference between Hispanic or white highly likely voters, nor a statistical difference based on age.
- Over 70% of New Mexico’s electorate supports moving toward an independent commission regardless of their household income level or personal educational level.

“Fair Districts for New Mexico wants to thank the authors of this extensive evaluation of the 2021 redistricting process,” says Hannah Burling, President, League of Women Voters of NM and Project co-Leader, Fair Districts for NM. “The evaluation shows that there is an inherent conflict of interest when legislators are able to draw their own districts. The 41 national and statewide partner organizations of Fair Districts for New Mexico call upon the New Mexico Legislature to pass a joint resolution that would put the question of an independent redistricting commission on the 2024 ballot. It is time to let the people decide.”

### **Public Engagement, Transparency, Incumbent Addresses and Partisanship**

A majority, 51% of respondents, had a positive rating for the CRC regarding public engagement, either responding that the committee did either a “great job” or a “good job”. Conversely, only 26% of participants responded that the legislature either did a “great” or “good” job, with 57% indicating that they did a “poor” or “terrible” job. The CRC’s use of technology to solicit feedback from New Mexico residents, including Native American communities were cited as a best practice.

Sixty-six percent of respondents indicate that transparency in the redistricting process is “very important” and another 25% said that it is “somewhat important” that meetings be held publicly.

However, the survey suggests there is room for improvement regarding transparency. Only 29% of participants agreed that “the CRC process was open to the public, and public input was included in decisions,” versus only 20% who said the same for the New Mexico Senate.

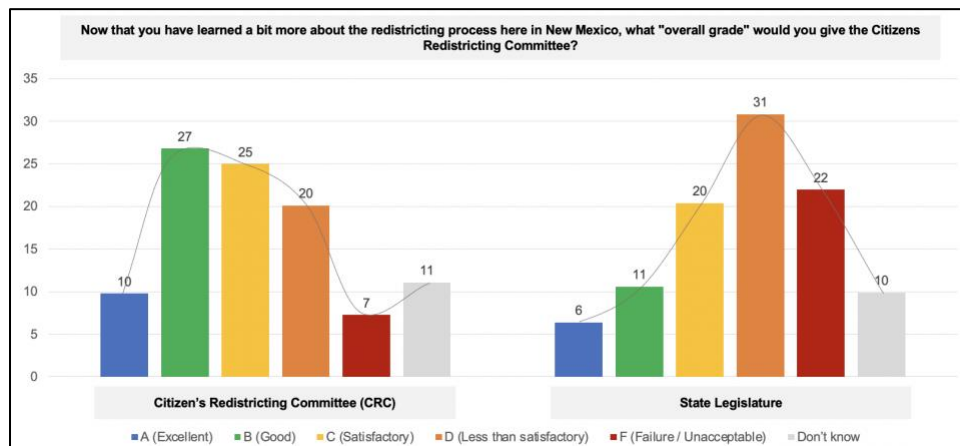
The CRC process didn’t consider where incumbent legislators resided or political composition when crating legislative districts. However, the legislature adopted both of these measures when developing their own draft district maps. New Mexico voters disagree with the legislative practice:

- 43% indicated that incumbent addresses should not be used in the decision-making process, while 40% believe it should be considered.
- 38% of respondents indicated that political party of districts’ populations should be considered when drawing district maps, while 48% directly opposed this proposition, and 15% were unsure.

“If we learned anything from this past redistricting effort it is that we have made some big improvements to the process here in NM,” says Mario O. Jimenez III, Executive Director, Common Cause New Mexico . “We also learned there is much improvement needed to the process we currently have. The report on redistricting clearly shows vast improvement is needed to educate the public about the importance of redistricting and why we do it.”

### **New Mexico Voters Give CRC “B” and “C” marks, Legislature earn “D” and “F”**

The survey closed by asking respondents to provide an “overall” grade for the performance of both the CRC and the legislature in New Mexico this cycle. Consistent with comparisons across the survey, respondents were much more favorable of the Citizen Redistricting Committee than the legislature during this cycle, indicating that many people found the work of the independent commission valuable. More specifically, 37% of respondents indicated that the CRC deserved either an A or B, and another 25% a satisfactory grade of C. Conversely, only 17% of respondents believed that the state legislature deserved an A or B, with a majority (56%) giving the legislature either a D or F.



“New Mexico First has the honor of convening the New Mexico Redistricting Task force, comprised of 22 statewide citizen experts,” says New Mexico First Executive Director Danielle Gonzales. “Task force members unanimously support the creation of an independent redistricting commission in New Mexico that incorporates many elements highlighted in the report. In addition, the organization supports the

report finding regarding the importance of removing barriers for public engagement in the redistricting process, which aligns with New Mexico First's organizational mission and core values.”

### **Recommendations**

The 60-page report provided recommendations for improving New Mexico's redistricting process which include:

1. Have a clear set of rules that govern community participation in the redistricting process.
2. Increase the time for the CRC to do their work with communities effectively.
3. Find paths to better engage New Mexico's African American and Asian American communities into the redistricting process.
4. Approaches should be explored to increase the likelihood that the state legislature will take the CRC maps into serious consideration if the state utilizes the same advisory committee approach next cycle.

### **About the Redistricting Partners Report**

Redistricting Partners, following extensive background research on government documents, news and media reports, as well as comparisons between New Mexico and other states, researchers conducted a statewide survey in the state of New Mexico of highly likely voters (n=500). The online survey allowed respondents to review key background information and media stories before answering questions. The online survey was fielded March 7, 2022 through March 17, 2022.

### **Media Note**

Fair Districts for New Mexico and New Mexico First will host a virtual public meeting 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, October 4 to discuss the results of Dr. Gabriel Sanchez' report. Dr. Sanchez will present his findings and answer questions. The public is encouraged to attend. Details available at [www.fairdistrictsnm.org](http://www.fairdistrictsnm.org)