by Danesh Prakash Chacko

With the implementation of Undi18, around 5.6 million new voters entered the electoral roll (of which 1.2 million new voters are ages of 18 to 20) and this significantly altered the electorate composition of Parliament and State (DUN) constituencies. In this two-part article, we will be examining the current state of constituencies and the key considerations for a fair redelineation process.

Did the malapportionment worsen?

One of the four criteria to ensure fair redelineation in Malaysia is to ensure that constituencies have nearly equal electorate sizes throughout the state. Since population distribution is nonuniform and local community ties have to be considered, it is impossible for a constituency to have an equal population to its neighbours. To prevent malapportionment, constitution ought to have clear limits on constituency's electorate size. Currently, our constitution does not define clear limits for constituency's electorate size (hence, allowing malapportionment). Since every constituency sends one elected representative each, uneven constituency sizes have resulted discrimination for Malaysians. Moreover, our Parliament has received complete control of Parliamentary constituency allocation since 1973. This resulted in constituencies being distributed to states arbitrarily, not on evolving state electorate/population sizes. Our Election Commission (EC) had the powers to add or remove constituencies among Peninsular Malaysian states before 1973 due to population/electorate sizes. This ability was stripped away due to the outcomes of 1960 and 1971-73 redelineation exercises and then political considerations.

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KEDAH

This article primarily focuses on studying intrastate malapportionment (unequal constituency sizes within a state) among parliamentary constituencies and its relationship with key demographic features. To find the Parliamentary constituencies that are malapportioned, a constituency that is not within +/-15% of State's Parliamentary Electoral Quota (EQ) (average size of Parliamentary constituency in each state) would be considered as oversized (too many electors) or undersized (too little electors) accordingly. We are referring to the 1957 constitutional principles. For Sabah and Sarawak, suggested limits for constituency's electorate size would be +/-25% of State's Parliamentary EQ. As Labuan and Putrajaya have one single parliamentary constituency each, intrastate malapportionment cannot be measured.

parliamentary constituency each, intrastate malapportionment cannot be measured.
Did the implementation of Undi18 worsen or at best retain existing malapportionment? With considerations in the above, let us examine the comparison of 2020 (pre Undi 18) and 2021 (post Undi18) electoral rolls.
STATE
RATIO BETWEEN LARGEST AND SMALLEST PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY (2020)
RATIO BETWEEN LARGEST AND SMALLES PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY (2021)
PERLIS*
1.23
1.24

2.72		
2.81		
KELANTAN		
2.34		
2.48		
TERENGGANU*		
1.49		
1.58		
PULAU PINANG		
1.97		
2.26		

PERAK			
3.77			
4.30			
PAHANG*			
2.74			
2.61			
SELANGOR			
4.69			
5.80			
WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN	KIJAI A I I IMPI IR		

1.45
1.55
WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN PUTRAJAYA
N/A
N/A
NEGERI SEMBILAN
2.40
2.62
MELAKA
2.43
2.37

JOHOR
3.58
4.38
WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN LABUAN
N/A
N/A
SABAH
2.27
2.63
SARAWAK
4.31

5.04

*This state practices simple multiple where number of DUN constituencies is a multiple of Parliamentary constituencies in a state

Source: Election Commission

Before Undi18, many of the current constituencies were in violation of the principle of equality. The implementation of Undi18 has widened the disparity between the largest and the smallest parliamentary constituencies for all states except Pahang. The widening was more pronounced in states that did not practice simple multiple. Majority of the oversized constituencies covers state capitals and major cities across Malaysia (with some exceptions like Baling, Bachok and Beruas). Half of the oversized constituencies are Malay Majority areas.

The implementation of Undi18 is not one of the three triggers for redelineation. The three triggers for redelineation are:

- 1. Change of state boundaries/Admission of new states
- 2. Any time after 8 years from the previous redelineation exercise
- 3. Change in the number of constituencies (Dewan Rakyat or DUN)

Before we clamour for solutions, we need to grasp the nature of constituencies and how it relates to malapportionment.

Malapportionment and Youth Voters

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Among all Parliamentary constituencies, 132 constituencies have 20 to 30% of their electorate coming from ages of between 18 and 30 (youth voter category). Within 164 Peninsular Malaysian (excluding Putrajaya) constituencies, constituencies with 20 – 30 % youth voters are largely classified as equal sized constituencies, followed by undersized constituencies. Within the 56 East Malaysian (excluding Labuan) constituencies, constituencies with 20 – 30% youth voters are largely classified as undersized constituencies, followed by equal sized constituencies.

AVERAGE PARLIAMENTARY	CONSTITUENCIES'	SIZE BY YOUTH	VOTER PROPORTION
(ALL 222 CONSTITUENCIES)			

AVERAGE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES' SIZE BY YOUTH VOTER PROPORTIO (ALL 222 CONSTITUENCIES)
Proportion of Youth Voters per given constituency
Average Electorate Size (2021)
Constituencies with less than 20% Youth Voters
91023
Constituencies with 20 to 25% Youth Voters

100115

Thursday, 05 May 2022 20:25 - Last Updated Friday, 06 May 2022 15:02 Constituencies with 25 to 30% Youth Voters 83606 Constituencies with 30 to 35% Youth Voters 101619 Constituencies with more than 35% Youth Voters 132043

Source: Election Commission

Youth voters found in constituencies with more than 35% of electorate coming from youth background have less voting value compared to youth in constituencies with low presence of youth voters (i.e., <20% of electorate are youth). Constituencies with low youth vote presence are generally Chinese majority or mixed urban constituencies which covers areas of older sections of George Town, Ipoh, KL, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.

Malapportionment and Ethnicity

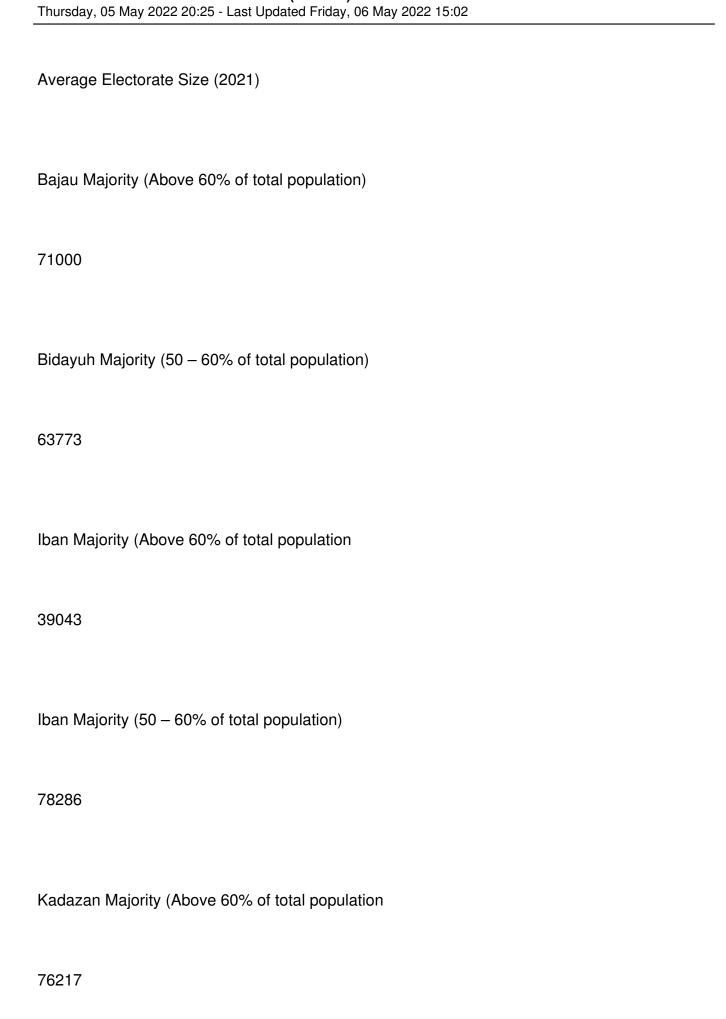
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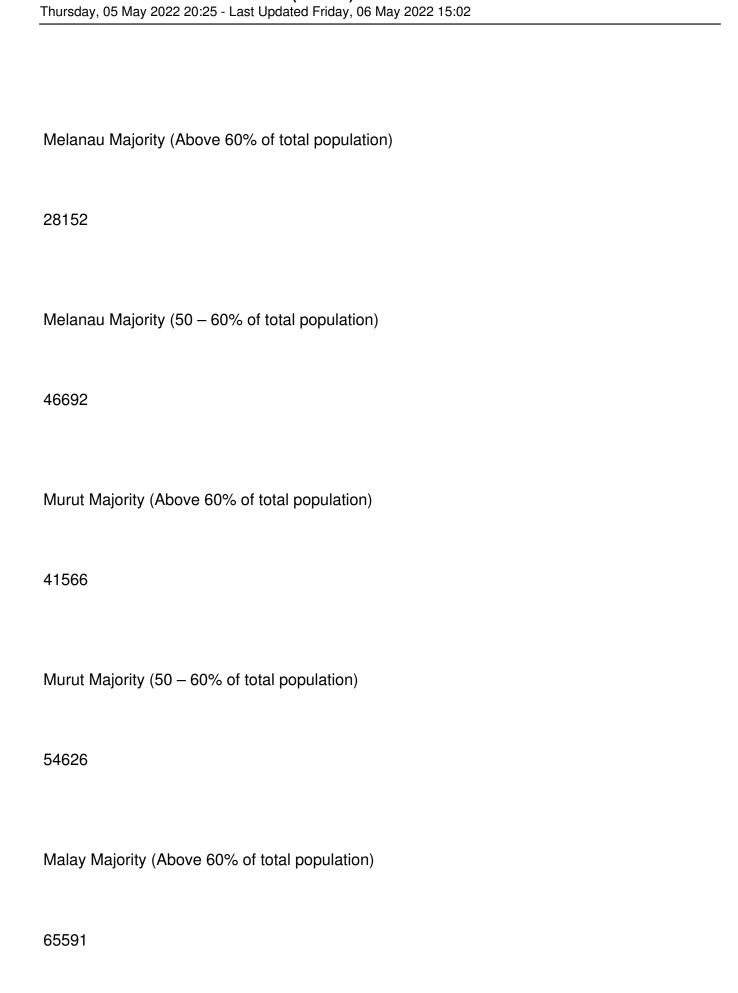
Unequal constituencies are inextricably linked to ethnic composition since our parliamentary constituencies were formed at the beginning. The 1960 redelineation exercise tried to rectify the imbalance using population and electorate sizes and this ended EC's independence. Since then, using urbanization and ethnicity factors, Malaysian voters are suffering discrimination through our regular redelineation exercises. The two tables below show the average Parliamentary electorate sizes by ethnic group classification (using 2020 population – not electors – data).

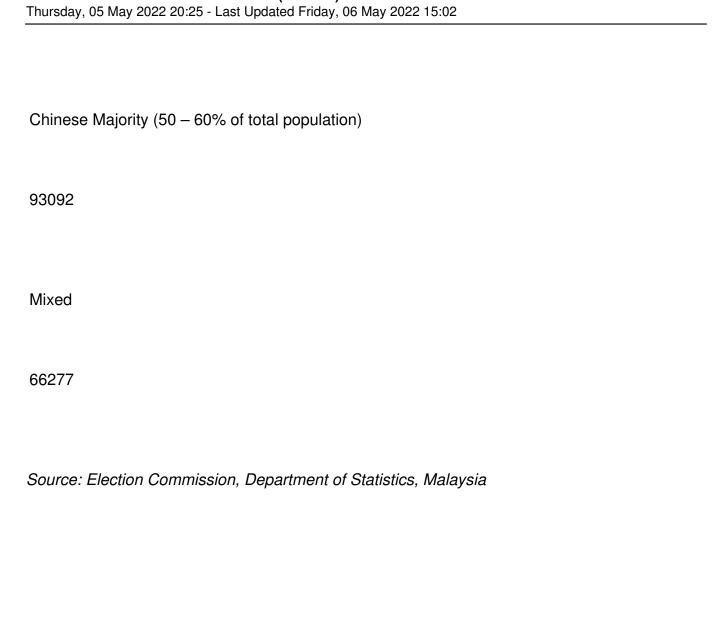
Constituency Ethnic Majority group
Average Electorate Size (2021)
Malay Majority (Above 60% of total population)
97771
Malay Majority (50 – 60% of total population)

120108

Chinese Majority (Above 60% of total population
94342
Chinese Majority (50 – 60% of total population)
127595
Mixed
131049
Source: Election Commission, Department of Statistics, Malaysia
FOR EAST MALAYSIA (INCLUDING LABUAN)
Constituency Ethnic Majority group







A common pattern emerges from the tables above. Average parliamentary constituency size which is ethnically more homogeneous (I.e., Malay Majority (Above 60%)) is smaller to the average parliamentary constituency that is mixed or less homogeneous (i.e., Malay Majority (50 – 60%)). Within Peninsular Malaysia (excluding Putrajaya), Malay Majority constituencies constitute 26 out of 42 oversized parliamentary constituencies. For East Malaysia, Chinese Majority constituencies are largely oversized, and this mirrors the urban nature of constituencies. Among Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak majority parliamentary constituencies, certain ethnic groups have greater voting powers compared to others within a state.

Malapportionment and Key Economic Indicators

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In this subsection, we will examine three economic features for parliamentary constituencies – inequality, poverty, and unemployment rate.

Malaysian inequality has been declining since 1980s but started to widen from 2016 to 2019. GINI coefficient measures degree of inequality in the distribution of income/wealth and values range from 0 to 1 (0 represents perfect equality and 1 represents perfect inequality). Malaysia's GINI coefficient stands around 0.407 in 2019 while United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

aspires a country in this region to have a GINI coefficient of 0.295. Only 15 parliamentary constituencies in Malaysia have attained this target (all in Peninsular Malaysia). Majority of these constituencies are equal sized or undersized constituencies. These constituencies are mixture of rural and urban areas outside the city core (I.e., Jelutong, Wangsa Maju and Pandan).

PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

Malapportionment Type

Attained UNESCAP Gini Coefficient

Did not attain the UNESCAP Gini Coefficient

Undersized Constituencies

6	
47	
Equal	
8	
61	
Oversized Constituencies	
1	
41	
Putrajaya	
1	

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EAST MALAYSIA
Malapportionment Type
Attained UNESCAP Gini Coefficient
Did not attain the UNESCAP Gini Coefficient
Undersized Constituencies
0
21
Equal Constituencies
0
21

Oversized Constituencies
0
14
Labuan
1
Source: Election Commission, Department of Statistics, Malaysia
While majority of constituencies fall within the Gini coefficient value between 0.3 and 0.4 (irrespective of electorate size), constituencies with larger electorate sizes are marginally more unequal compared to others. If we were to compare GINI coefficient of parliamentary constituencies with their own home state GINI coefficient value, majority of the constituencies Peninsular Malaysia (excluding Putrajaya) - 116 out 165 – have Gini coefficient values lower (hence more equal wealth distribution) than the state level. For the remaining constituencies in Peninsular Malaysia (48), 21 equal sized constituencies, 17 oversized constituencies and 10 undersized constituencies have GINI coefficient higher (greater inequality) than the state level. For East Malaysian (excluding Labuan) parliamentary constituencies, majority of them have lower GINI coefficient value than their state GINI coefficient value.

Moving from inequality to poverty levels, the revised Poverty Line Income in 2019 has shown that 5.6% of national households are living in absolute poverty figures. UNESCAP aspires a

country to keep their national poverty levels to 7% or lower. If we use this aspired target to assess parliamentary constituencies, around 126 parliamentary constituencies have kept their poverty levels lower than 7%.	
FOR PENINSULAR MALAYSIA	
Malapportionment Type	
Poverty Levels below UNESCAP target of 7%	
Poverty Levels above UNESCAP target of 7%	
Undersized constituencies	
34	
19	
Equal constituencies	
48	

21
Oversized constituencies
32
10
Putrajaya
1
Source: Election Commission, Department of Statistics, Malaysia
FOR EAST MALAYSIA

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Malapportionment Type
Poverty Levels below UNESCAP target of 7%
Poverty Levels above UNESCAP target of 7%
Undersized constituencies
2
19
Equal constituencies
2
19
Oversized constituencies

6

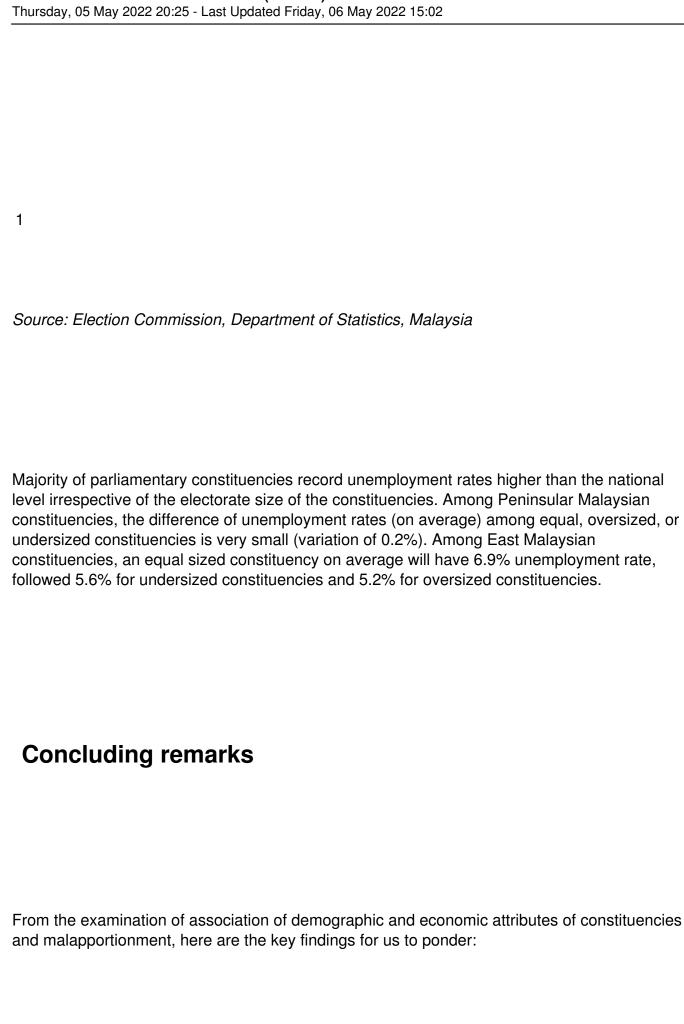
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8
Labuan
1
Source: Election Commission, Department of Statistics, Malaysia
Undersized constituencies have higher poverty levels in comparison to oversized constituencies. This difference is very stark in East Malaysia. In Peninsular Malaysia, average absolute poverty rate for undersized constituency is 6.12% while for oversized constituencies, it is 4.61%. In East Malaysia, average absolute poverty rate for undersized constituency is 18.71% while for oversized constituencies, it is 8.78%.
For unemployment rate, <u>UNESCAP</u> aspires of a rate of 2.6% and 17 (all in Peninsular Malaysia) constituencies nationally have kept the rates lower than 2.6%. These constituencies (i.e., Cameron Highlands, Kota Melaka) come from varied urbanization and economic backgrounds. Let us assess whether there is a pattern of unemployment rate among varied sizes of constituencies (using national level unemployment rate of 3.3% in 2019).

FOR PENINSULAR MALAYSIA		
Malapportionment Type		
Unemployment level below National Unemployment Rate		
Unemployment level equal to National Unemployment Rate		
Unemployment level above National Unemployment Rate		
Undersized constituencies		
17		
0		
36		
Equal constituencies		
13		

3	
53	
Oversized constituencies	
6	
1	
35	
Putrajaya	
1	

Source: Election Commission, Department of Statistics, Malaysia
FOR EAST MALAYSIA
Malapportionment Type
Unemployment level below National Unemployment Rate
Unemployment level equal to National Unemployment Rate
Unemployment level above National Unemployment Rate
Undersized constituencies
0
0

21
Equal constituencies
0
1
20
Oversized constituencies
1
1
12
Labuan



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1 2	Undi18 has worsened unaddressed malapportionment
3 4	Malapportionment has indirectly discriminated youth voters in younger constituencies
	Malapportionment has created unnecessary divide among Malaysians whether within or ng ethnic groups
	While most of the constituencies have a GINI coefficient value between 0.3 and 0.4, sized constituencies have marginally higher inequality
	Undersized constituencies generally have higher absolute poverty prevalence compared ner constituencies. The difference is very stark in East Malaysia
1 1	1. Unemployment rate should be a concern for all constituencies 2.
	all these in mind, we can focus on step-by-step process of realizing fair redelineation for all tituencies of the Dewan Rakyat and the DUN.

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