

Rhode Island and the Census

The U.S. Census Bureau's goal for the federal decennial census is to **count all the people** living in the United States, **count them only once and count them in the right place**. States care about the census because its data are used for the distribution of federal funding and political power, and is used by decision-makers in the private and public sectors at all levels.

The census is a **federal project** conducted with federal funding, although **some states, including Rhode Island, have allocated funding for census outreach**.

This profile includes: a) what census data means for Rhode Island in terms of political and economic power, b) key demographic data for Rhode Island, and c) what Rhode Island is doing to encourage a full count.

POLITICAL POWER

Every decade, the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are recalculated based on the latest census data. The new apportionment of congressional seats will be released on Dec. 31, 2020. According to Election Data Services, **Rhode Island is projected to lose a seat**, going from 2 to 1 congressional seat. That means Rhode Island also will lost an electoral college seat.

Census data is also the foundation for Rhode Island's General Assembly to draw congressional districts and legislative districts.

CORE RHODE ISLAND STATS

Rhode Island's total population was 1,052,567, according to the 2010 Census. **In 2018, the Census Bureau's estimate for Rhode Island's population was 1,057,315, a growth of 0.45% in nine years.** Rhode Island has the 44th largest population in the nation, and its growth rate is 46th.

HARD TO COUNT POPULATIONS AND UNDERCOUNTS

The Census Bureau estimates **22.3% of people in Rhode Island did not self-respond to the 2010 census**, representing what have come to be known as "hard to count" populations. Generally, the hard-to-count groups tend to be children younger than 5, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, rural residents, low-income people, homeless and Native Americans.

Nationwide, the Census Bureau estimated an overcount of 0.01% in 2010, though individual states could have either an overcount or an undercount. Both overcounts and undercounts can create inaccuracies and affect states' needs. **In Rhode Island the overcount was estimated at 8,100.** Undercounts affect a state's federal funding and potentially congressional representation if they are on the cusp of losing or gaining a seat.

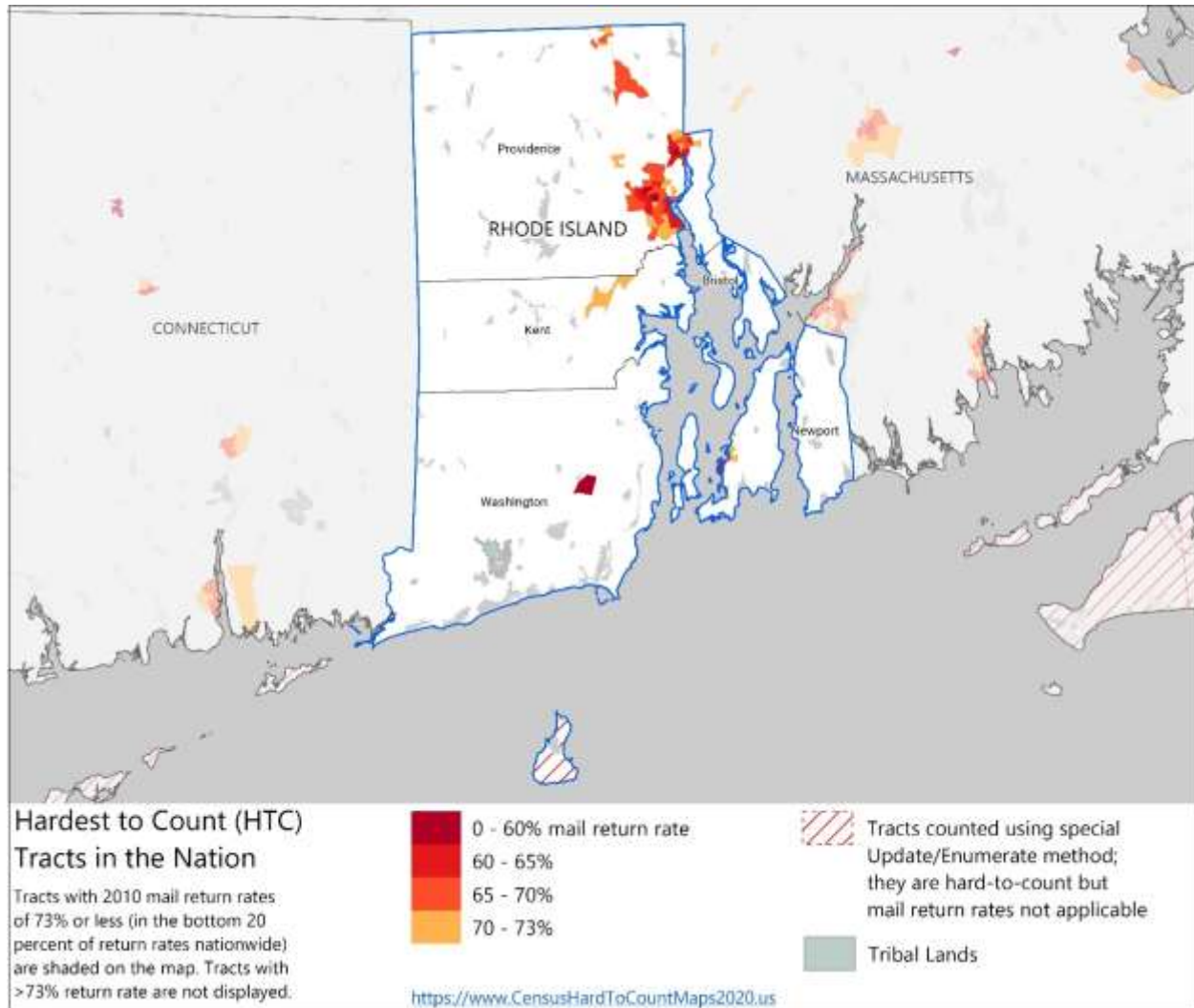
ECONOMIC POWER

Federal funding is distributed to states and localities based on formulas that rely on census data. Based on Counting for Dollars 2020 by Andrew Reamer of George Washington University, **Rhode Island received \$3,801,279,399 in FY2016** from federal funds distributed through 55 federal spending programs that are guided by data derived from the 2010 census. **That equals \$3,611.44 per Rhode Island resident**, on average, and every year in this decade.

Private and public sector decisionmakers often rely on census data as well. The Census Bureau has created several tools for public use, including the Economic Census and the

ENSURING A COMPLETE COUNT

Rhode Island has created the **Rhode Island Complete Count Committee**, and appropriated \$500,000 for outreach to ensure that Rhode Island residents are all counted.



CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- Rhode Island state census contact: Joseph Sacks, (401) 222-2173, joseph.sacks@governor.ri.gov
- [Rhode Island Complete Count Committee](#)
- [Census Bureau's Regional Offices](#)
- [Census Bureau's 2020 Census Toolkit for State and Local Officials](#)
- POGO Report on how five federal programs affect [Rhode Island](#) communities.
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [State Efforts to Support the Census](#)
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [What You Need to Know about the Census](#)
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [Everyone Needs to Be Counted, But How?](#)
- NCSL's [2020 Census Talking Points \(for Legislators and Others\)](#)
- NCSL's webpage, [2020 Census Resources and Legislation](#)
- NCSL contacts: Wendy Underhill (Wendy.underhill@ncsl.org) and Christi Zamarripa (Christi.zamarripa@ncsl.org)

Thank you to the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center for providing the map for this profile. An interactive version of the map is online at www.CensusHardtoCountMaps2020.us.