

Census Data Bulletin

Planning Information Center

Population Focus: Environmental Justice and Title VI Populations in Rhode Island

The Value of Data in Planning

Planners and practitioners evaluate several types of data to understand the composition of communities. Planners use demographic information, like decennial census data and American Community Survey estimates, to better understand the characteristics of a community. Demographic information can include data pertaining to population counts and trends, age, race and ethnicity, income data, residents with disabilities, residents with limited-English Proficiency (LEP), and more.

Planners routinely utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to visualize trends and patterns. Using Census and American Community Survey data, planners can take statistical estimates associated with a census geography, like a tract or block

group, and create maps to identify populations.

Environmental Justice and Title VI

As part of its overall transportation planning process, the Statewide Planning Program, working together with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, identifies and maps environmental justice and Title VI populations, including minority, low income and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations. This information is used to ensure that the benefits and burdens of the state's transportation investments are equitably distributed across the state. For an overview of Title VI and Environmental Justice, and how each relates to the transportation planning process, please visit the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) [website](#).¹

RHODE ISLAND RESIDENTS WITH LIMITED-ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

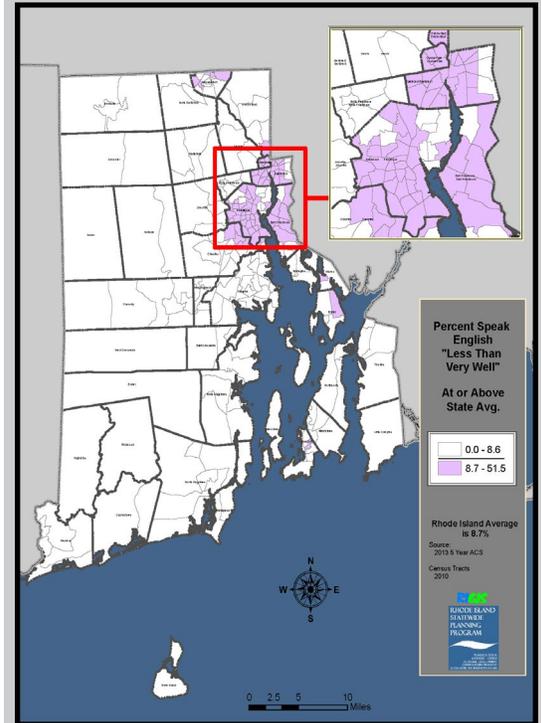


Figure 1: RI LEP Population

Figure 1 is a map identifying the limited-English proficiency population in the state. An American Community Survey dataset was utilized which estimates the population aged 5 and older who speak English “less than very well.” The geography is broken into census tracts. Tracts with a LEP population greater than or equal to the Rhode Island average of 8.7% are highlighted in color. Municipalities showing high concentrations of LEP populations are Providence, East Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and parts of Bristol, RI.

Per [FHWA](#):¹ there are three fundamental environmental justice principles:

Definitions

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

“Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifically states that ‘No person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.’ ”²

Mapping Rhode Island's EJ and Title VI Populations

Minority Population

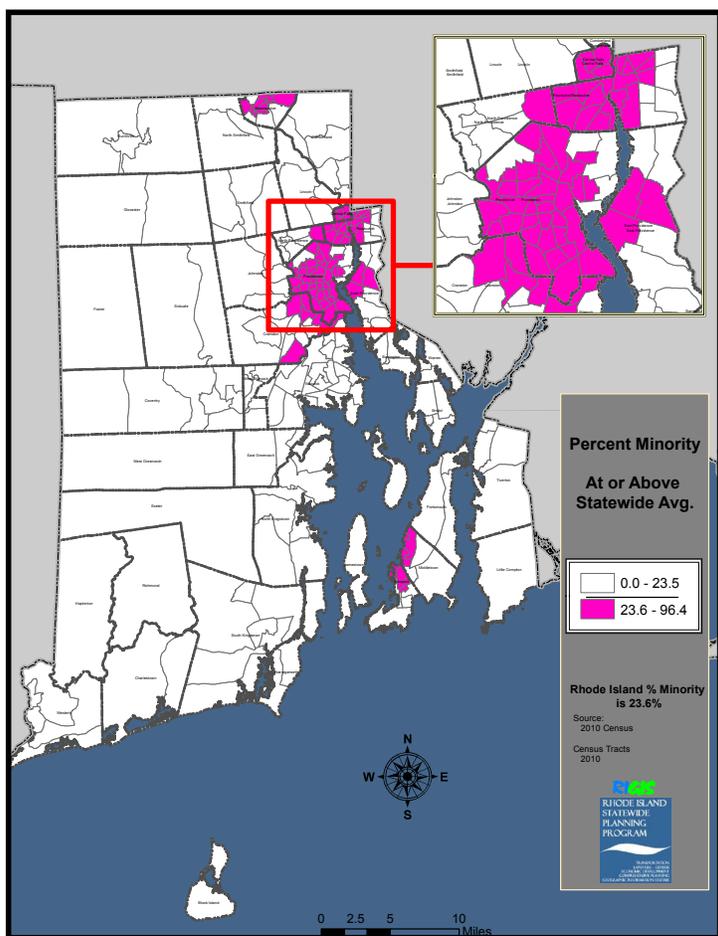


Figure 2 utilizes Census tract level demographic data and highlights tracts with a minority population greater than or equal to 23.6%, the statewide average. The Census Bureau defines “minority” as the population that reported their race and ethnicity as something other than non-Hispanic White alone. The largest concentration of minorities are located within the cities of Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, East Providence and Cranston. There are also high concentrations of minorities in Woonsocket, Newport and Middletown.

Figure 2: Percent Minority in RI

Low-income Population

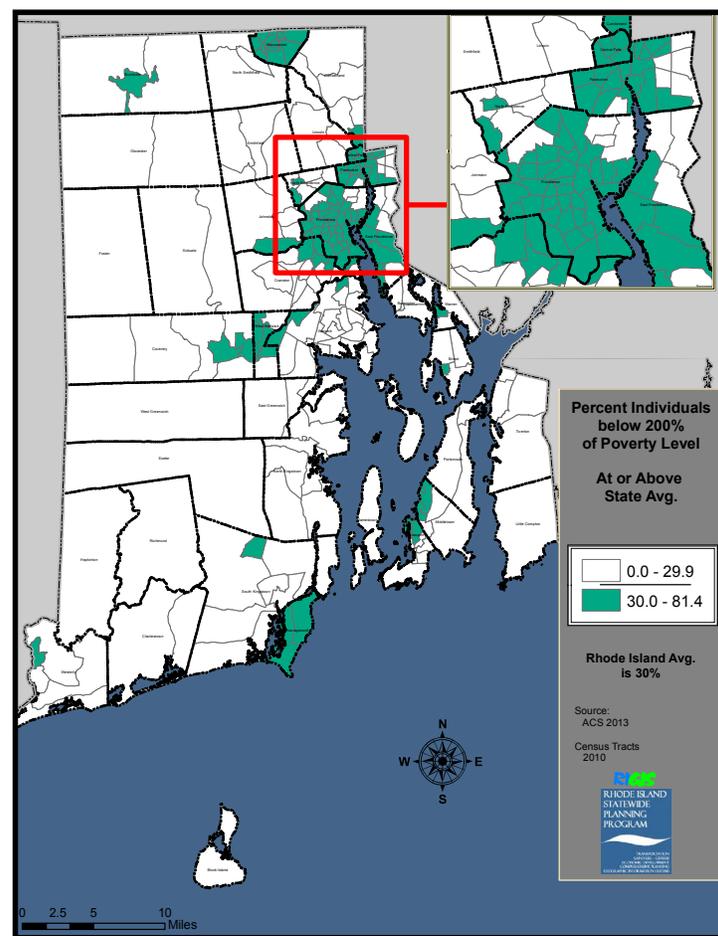


Figure 3 utilizes a dataset from the American Community Survey which estimates the percentage of individuals living below 200% of the poverty level and highlights those tracts which are at or above the statewide average of 30%. As of 2013, the 200% threshold represented an income of approximately \$23,800 per year for a single person living alone. The largest concentration of individuals living below the poverty level largely mirrors the concentration of the high-minority areas in the state. For more information on Census poverty definitions, please visit their [website](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/methods/definitions.html).³

Figure 3: Percent Below Poverty Level in RI

For further information about RI State Data Center resources, contact Vincent Flood at vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov or Kirsten Bryan at kirsten.bryan@doa.ri.gov.

Sources

¹ FHWA: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/overview/

² FHWA: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/tvi.cfm>

³ Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/methods/definitions.html>