

Rhode Island State Data Center

Census Data Bulletin

RHODE ISLAND
STATEWIDE
PLANNING
PROGRAM



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September 2013

Languages Spoken at Home

For hundreds of years, Rhode Island households have been a multi-lingual lot, from Native languages to English to the languages of immigrants from Europe, Africa, and Asia. Today, one in five Rhode Island residents* speaks a language other than English at home. Planners must know what languages their communities speak, especially for public outreach and communication.

In addition, in 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), which states that people with LEP should have meaningful access to federally funded programs and activities. To begin to comply with this executive order and its associated regulation, planners who receive federal funds (e.g. for transportation) must understand the size and demographics of their LEP population.

Why should planners focus on language *spoken at home*? Often this is the language that an individual feels most comfortable communicating, even if he or she also speaks English very well. This Census Data Bulletin explores American Community Survey (ACS) data on language spoken in Rhode Island homes, drawing comparisons to other states, and looking at how languages spoken at home differ across the state's five counties.

One in Five Residents

ACS data collected between 2007 and 2011 estimates that 21.0% of Ocean State residents speak a language other than English at home. Top languages spoken at home include Spanish/Spanish Creole, Portuguese/Portuguese Creole, French, French Creole, Chinese, and Mon-Khmer/Cambodian.

In order to make the data more manageable, the ACS

BY THE NUMBERS

1 in 5 Rhode Island residents speak a language other than English at home.

105,155 Rhode Island residents speak a Spanish or Spanish Creole at home, including **26,377** children ages 5-17.

11.2% of Bristol County residents speak an Indo-European language other than Spanish at home.

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011 5-yr data.

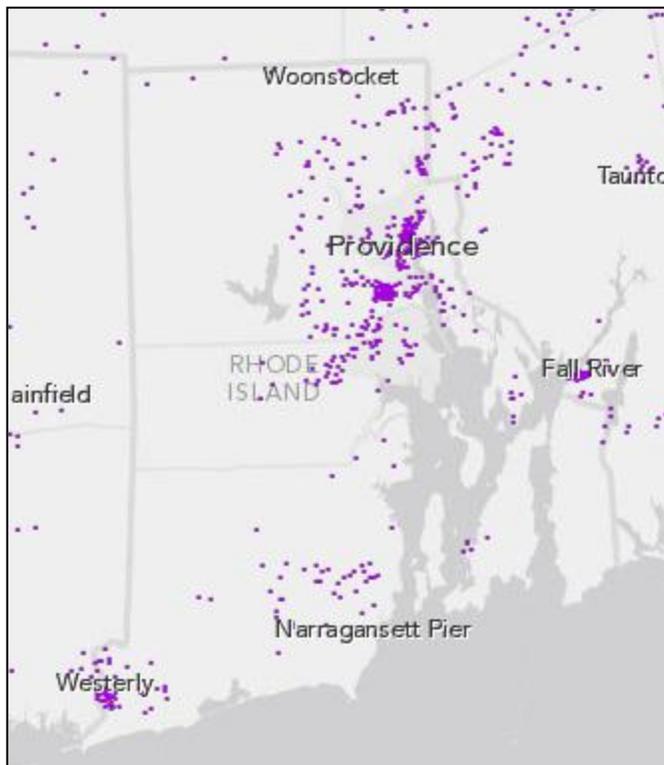
also groups languages into four major categories: Spanish and Spanish Creole, Other Indo-European Languages (e.g. Portuguese, Italian, Hindi), Asian or Pacific Island languages (e.g. Chinese, Hmong, Vietnamese), and Other Languages (e.g. Arabic and African languages). Of all Rhode Islanders, 10.6% speak Spanish at home, 7.6% speak other Indo-European languages, 2.1% speak Asian or Pacific Island languages, and 0.8% speak other languages, which includes African languages and Arabic.

Over half of the Rhode Island residents (57.5%) who speak a language other than English at home also speak English very well. This statistic varies among age group and language group. Younger residents who speak a language other than English at home are more likely to speak English at least very well. Residents who speak Indo-European languages other than Spanish/Spanish Creole are most likely to speak English at least very well (67.3%) while those who speak Asian and Pacific Island languages at home are least likely (48.7%).

ABOUT THE DATA

Data in this Bulletin are drawn primarily from the American Community Survey's 2007-2011 5-year Dataset. A 5-Year Dataset is used because populations discussed are small and thus, margins of error for 1- and 3-year datasets are high. In the past, these data were collected by the Census Long Form and reported through the SF3 dataset, so if you want to look at trends over time, you will need to look at current ACS data and past Census data.

* The data in this bulletin all refer to residents over the age of five.



Residents Who Speak Chinese At Home

1 dot = 10 residents

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011 Language Mapper

Compared with Our Neighbors

Rhode Island is quite consistent with its neighboring states, Massachusetts, where 21.4% of residents speak a language other than English at home, and Connecticut, where 20.8% of residents speak a language other than English at home. While all three states have increased their percentage of such residents since 2000, Rhode Island was already at 20.0% in 2000, while Massachusetts and Connecticut were at 18.7% and 18.3%, respectively. All three states are slightly above the equivalent 2007-2011 national share, 20.3%.

Regional Differences within Rhode Island

Rhode Island communities vary in the specific languages that residents speak at home, the share of residents who speak a language other than English at home, and the share of residents who speak English less than very well. Bristol County has the highest share of residents who speak a language at home in the “Other Indo-European” language group (11.2%), while Providence County has the greatest share of residents who speak Spanish/Spanish Creole at home (16.3%) or Asian and Pacific Island languages (2.8%). Overall, 29.8%, or nearly one in three, Providence residents speaks a language other than English at home.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

	Bristol	Kent	Newport	Prov.	Wash.
Speak a language other than English	13.5%	8.0%	8.6%	29.8%	6.3%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	1.5%	2.5%	3.1%	16.3%	1.7%
Other Indo-European languages	11.2%	3.9%	4.2%	9.7%	3.0%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	0.5%	1.3%	1.0%	2.8%	1.4%
Other languages	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	1.1%	0.2%
Speak English very well	67.2%	67.4%	73.2%	55.2%	71.3%

Visualizing Language Spoken at Home

The U.S. Census has developed a simple, interactive online mapping tool that will allow you to visualize the geographic concentration of residents who speak a handful of different individual languages at home. The languages available on in the map tool include several, but not all, of the most common languages spoken in Rhode Island households. This tool is available at http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html.

TO LEARN MORE...

To explore Census and ACS data on language spoken at home, visit the U.S. Census website, [American FactFinder](http://www.census.gov). You may want to search for the tables S1601 and B16001 which provide estimates on language spoken at home.

The U.S. Census released an issue brief using the most recent data available (2011) on Language Use in the United States. It is available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf>

To visit the Census online language mapper, visit http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html.

For further information about RI State Data Center resources, contact Vincent Flood at vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov or Amanda Martin at amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov and visit the website at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/geodeminfo/data/index.php>.