

METHODS

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1 per 529,820 have just one House member; Rhode Island has slightly more people (1,059,639), but that's FL enough to give it two Note: Data as of July 1, 2017. Representation ratio calculated as the ratio of voting representatives – one for members of the U.S. House of Representatives to resident population estimates of every 529,820 Rhode represented states. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Islanders. PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The U.S. findings in this post are based on Pew Research Center analyses of House membership changes since 1789 and historical population data (actual when available, estimated when not). They exclude territories, the District of Columbia and other U.S. possessions that don't have voting

representation in the House. The analysis was complicated somewhat by the fact that new states often were admitted after a decennial census but before the apportionment law based on that census took effect (usually about three years afterward). In such cases, the new states were analyzed as if they had been states at the time of the census. How the House reached 435

The first Congress (1789-91) had 65 House members, the number provided for in the Constitution until the first census could be held. Based on an estimated population for the 13 states of 3.7 million, there was one representative for every 57,169 people. (At the time, Kentucky was part of Virginia, Maine was part of Massachusetts, and Tennessee was part of North Carolina. Vermont governed itself as an independent republic, despite territorial claims by New York.) By the time the first apportionment bill took effect in March 1793, Vermont and Kentucky

already had joined the Union; the 15 states had a total population of 3.89 million. Since

the apportionment law provided for 105 House members, there was one representative for every 37,081 people. (According to the Constitution at the time, only three-fifths of the nation's 694,280 slaves were counted for apportionment purposes; using that method, the ratio was approximately one representative for every 34,436.) For more than a century thereafter, as the U.S. population grew and new states were admitted, the House's membership grew too (except for two short-lived contractions in the mid-1800s). The expansion generally was managed in such a way that, even as the

representation ratio steadily rose, states seldom lost seats from one apportionment to the

next. That process ran aground in The number of people per representative has grown the 1920s. The 1920 census dramatically since nation's founding revealed a "major and Number of people represented by one U.S. House member continuing shift" of the U.S. population from rural to 747,184 urban areas; when the time 645,638 came to reapportion the

344,587

1950

2000 '17

193,283

1900

98,495

1850

House, as a Census Bureau

representatives "worked to

derail the process, fearful of

losing political power to the

cities." In fact, the House

wasn't reapportioned until

after the 1930 census; the

1929 law authorizing that

of the House at 435. And

mainly from Democrats.

How the U.S. compares globally

developed, democratic states.

Mexico

247,965

census also capped the size

summary puts it, rural

Note: States admitted in close time proximity to each other are analyzed together. there it has remained, except Although a slave was considered three-fifths of a person for apportionment until 1868, figures above are based on an equal count of total population in all for a brief period from 1959 represented states. Source: Decennial census (for years in which census-based reapportionment took to 1963 when the chamber effect, typically third year after each census); Census Bureau intercensal population temporarily added two estimates (for 1907 and 1959); Pew Research Center estimates (all other years). PEW RESEARCH CENTER members to represent the newly admitted states of Alaska and Hawaii. There have been occasional <u>proposals</u> to <u>add more seats</u> to the House to reflect population growth. One is the so-called <u>"Wyoming Rule,"</u> which would make the population of the smallest state (currently Wyoming) the basis for the representation ratio. Depending on which variant of that rule were adopted, the House would have had 545 to 547 members following the 2010 census.

However, a recent Pew Research Center survey found limited public support for adding

who said it should remain at 435 members. When historical context was added to the

question, support for expansion rose a bit, to 34%, with the additional support coming

new House seats. Only 28% of Americans said the House should be expanded, versus 51%

The House's hefty representation ratio makes the United States an outlier among its peers.

Our research finds that the U.S. ratio is the highest among the 35 nations in the

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, most of them highly

The U.S. has the largest representation ratio among OECD nations

Luxembourg

10,033

Portugal

Deputies has 630 lawmakers.

with 2,980 members.)

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Number of people represented per lawmaker in lower chamber of national legislature

57,169

1789

10,000 Iceland 5,533 25,000 Sweden Norway 50,000 Finland UK Ireland 100,000 Canada Estonia 13,056 Denmark Latvia 19,247 250,000 Poland Netherlands Germany U.S. South Korea Belgium 747,184

Austria

Italy

Czech Republic

Slovenia

22,965

Slovakia

Hungary

Greece

Turkey

172,118

Japan

272,108

New Chile Switzerland Israel Zealand Australia 164,686 Note: Representation ratio calculated as the ratio of current number of seats of the lower chamber of a country's legislature to the country's latest resident or equivalent population estimate. Population estimates are from national statistics offices of all 35 member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Source: Pew Research Center analysis. PEW RESEARCH CENTER We took the most recent population estimate for each OECD nation and divided it by the current number of seats in the lower chamber of each national legislature (or, in the case of unicameral bodies, the single chamber). After the U.S., the two countries with the highest representation ratios are Japan (one lawmaker for every 272,108 Japanese) and Mexico (one for every 247,965 Mexicans). Iceland had the lowest ratio: one member of the Althing for every 5,500 or so Icelanders. While much of the cross-national disparity in representation ratios can be explained by the big population of the U.S. (with more than 325 million people it's the largest country in the OECD), that's not the only reason. Eight OECD countries have larger lower chambers than the U.S. House, with Germany's Bundestag topping the league table with 709 members.

The British House of Commons has 650 MPs (Members of Parliament); Italy's Chamber of

Even if Congress decided to expand the size of the House, the large U.S. population puts

representative per 458,428 people. In order to reduce the ratio to where it was after the

1930 census, the House would need to have 1,156 members. (That would still be smaller

than China's National People's Congress, the largest national legislature in the world

Drew DeSilver is a senior writer at Pew Research Center.

were to grow as large as the Bundestag, for instance, the ratio would fall only to one

some practical limits on how much the representation ratio could be lowered. If the House

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