

Average Number of Residents *per Representative* Relative to Thirteen State Legislatures circa 1787

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When the Constitution was proposed on September 17, 1787, it specified that the “*Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand...*” which simply means that any federal congressional district must contain at least 30,000 inhabitants.

In order to provide some context to *thirty thousand*, we should consider the district sizes which then prevailed relative to the *states’ legislatures*. For any given state, this can be calculated by dividing its total number of representatives¹ (in the state legislature) by the state’s total population.

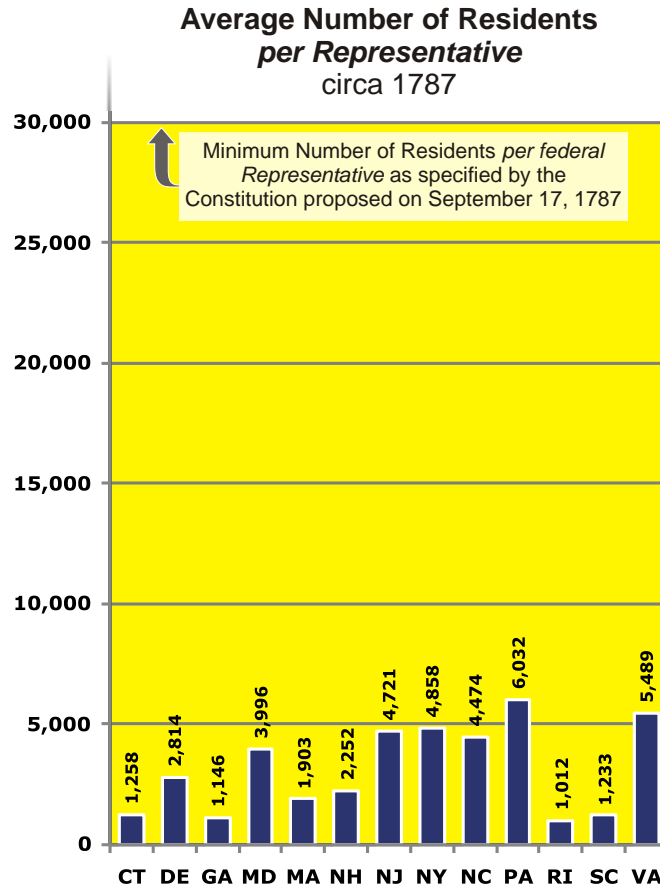
For this analysis, the total number of legislators was obtained from “Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures”.² The total population of each state is provided by the 1790 census which is available from a variety of sources.³ The resulting analysis, shown in the table below, provides a reliable estimation of the *average number of people per state legislator* around the time that the Constitution was proposed.

State Legislatures circa 1787						
State	Total State Population (1790)	Legislators in the Lower House	Number of People per State Representative	Type of Legislature	Source Reference ⁴	
					Year	Page
Connecticut	237,946	189	1,258	Bi	1800	33
Delaware	59,096	21	2,814	Bi	1797	38
Georgia	82,548	72	1,146	Uni	1787	47-48
Maryland	319,728	80	3,996	Bi	1787	85
Massachusetts	378,787	199	1,903	Bi	1797	91
New Hampshire	141,885	63	2,252	Bi	1787	120
New Jersey	184,139	39	4,721	Bi	1787	125
New York	340,120	70	4,858	Bi	1788	133-134
North Carolina	393,751	88	4,474	Bi	1777	140
Pennsylvania	434,373	72	6,032	Uni	1776	156
Rhode Island	68,825	68	1,012	Bi	1776	163
South Carolina	249,073	202	1,233	Bi	1778	170
Virginia	691,737	126	5,489	Bi	1776	191
Average Size ⁵			2,778			

As indicated in the table above, the *average* district sizes range from Rhode Island's 1,012 to Pennsylvania's 6,032, with a nationwide average of 2,778. This average provides a benchmark relative to the implementation of *representative democracy* at that time.

It is worth noting that, within any state, the number of people actually represented by the legislators may have varied widely from the state's average due to the fact that they were elected from variously-sized towns and counties (rather than from equally-sized voting districts as is currently done).

The chart to the right compares the states' average district sizes to the *minimum size* of 30,000 mandated for the *federal* congressional districts. It is easy to imagine the citizens' concern about how well represented they would be in Congress given that these new federal districts would be *ten times larger* than the states' average voting district at that time.



Today, the average population size of Congressional districts is over 700,000 and growing.

¹ For this analysis, the total number of legislators in the *lower house* is used if the state's legislature is *bicameral*; if its legislature is *unicameral*, then the total number of legislators is used.

² Dubin, Michael J.; "Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures, A Year By Year Summary"; McFarland & Company, Inc.; 2007

³ For example this TTO report: "Historical Annual Population of the United States" which can be downloaded from this webpage: <http://www.thirty-thousand.org/pages/QHA-01.htm>

⁴ "Source Reference" refers to *Dubin*. The year is the one for which the number of legislators is indicated, which can be found on the page referenced.

⁵ This is the *weighted average*. The simple average is 3,168.