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Membership of the 115th Congress: A Profile

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Summary

This report presents a profile of the membership of the 115th Congress (2017-2018) as of July 11, 2018. Statistical information is included on selected characteristics of Members, including data on party affiliation, average age, occupation, education, length of congressional service, religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, foreign births, and military service.

In the House of Representatives, there are 238 Republicans (including 1 Delegate and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico), 197 Democrats (including 4 Delegates), and 6 vacant seats. The Senate has 51 Republicans, 47 Democrats, and 2 Independents, who both caucus with the Democrats.

The average age of Members of the House at the beginning of the 115th Congress was 57.8 years; of Senators, 61.8 years, among the oldest in U.S. history. The overwhelming majority of Members of Congress have a college education. The dominant professions of Members are public service/politics, business, and law. Most Members identify as Christians, and Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation. Roman Catholics account for the largest single religious denomination, and numerous other affiliations are represented, including Jewish, Mormon, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal Christian, Unitarian Universalist, and Christian Science.

The average length of service for Representatives at the beginning of the 115th Congress was 9.4 years (4.7 House terms); for Senators, 10.1 years (1.7 Senate terms).

One hundred twelve women (a record number) serve in the 115th Congress: 89 in the House, including 5 Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, and 23 in the Senate. There are 48 African American Members of the House and 3 in the Senate. This House number includes two Delegates. There are 46 Hispanic or Latino Members (a record number) serving: 41 in the House, including 1 Delegate and the Resident Commissioner, and 5 in the Senate. Eighteen Members (13 Representatives, 2 Delegates, and 3 Senators) are Asian Americans, Indian Americans, or Pacific Islander Americans. This is also a record number. Two American Indians (Native Americans) serve in the House.

The portions of this report covering political party affiliation, gender, ethnicity, and vacant seats will be updated as events warrant. The remainder of the report will not be updated.

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Overview and Total Members in History

Congress is composed of 541 individuals from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.[1] This count assumes that no seat is temporarily vacant.[2]

Since 1789, 12,251 individuals have served in Congress,[3] 10,949 in the House and 1,974 in the Senate.[4] Of these Members, 672 have served in both chambers. These numbers do not include an additional 177 individuals who have served only as territorial Delegates or as Resident Commissioners from Puerto Rico or the Philippines in the House.

The following is a profile of the 115th Congress (2017-2018).[5]

Party Breakdown

In the 115th Congress, the current party alignments as of July 11, 2018, are as follows:

- House of Representatives: 238 Republicans (including 1 Delegate and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico), 197 Democrats (including 4 Delegates), and 6 vacant seats.
- Senate: 51 Republicans, 47 Democrats, and 2 Independents, who both caucus with the Democrats.

Age

The average age of Members of the 115th Congress is among the highest of any Congress in recent U.S. history.[6]

Table 1 shows the average ages at the beginning of the 115th and three previous Congresses.

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[1] This figure includes 100 Senators, 435 Representatives, 5 Delegates (from the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands), and 1 Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico.

[2] As of July 11, 2018, there are six House vacancies.

[3] U.S. Congress, House, Office of the Historian, "Total Members of the House and State Representation," http://history.house.gov/Institution/Total-Members/Total-Members/, updated December 6, 2017, and CRS calculations.

Information about all individuals who have served in Congress is available in the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, a website maintained by the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate, at http://bioguide.congress.gov.

[4] A cumulative chronological list of all U.S. Senators is available on the Senate website at http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/senators_chronological.htm. Information about all House Members is available on the House website at http://history.house.gov/Institution/Total-Members/Total-Members/.

[5] Information on the five Delegates and the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico is included where relevant. References to the term "Representative(s)" includes information on the 435 Members of the House but not Delegates or the Resident Commissioner. For background information on the previous Congress, refer to CRS Report R43869, *Membership of the 114th Congress: A Profile*, by Jennifer E. Manning. See also CRS Report R42365, *Representatives and Senators: Trends in Member Characteristics Since 1945*, coordinated by R. Eric Petersen, and CRS Report RL30261, *Women in Congress, 1917-2018: Service Dates and Committee Assignments by Member, and Lists by State and Congress*, by Jennifer E. Manning and Ida A. Brudnick.

[6] For average ages of Members at the beginning of each Congress from 1949 to 2011, see an online feature of the *Wall Street Journal*, "The Capitol's Age Pyramid: A Graying Congress," at http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/CONGRESS_AGES_1009.html.

Table 1. Average Age of Members, 112th-115th Congresses

Average (mean) age at the beginning of the Congress

Congress	Representatives	Newly Elected Representatives	Senators	Newly Elected Senators
115th	57.8 years	50.8 years	61.8 years	54.8 years
114th	57.0 years	52.3 years	61.0 years	50.7 years
113th	57.0 years	49.2 years	62.0 years	53.0 years
112th	56.7 years	48.2 years	62.2 years	52.1 years

Source: CRS calculations based on CQ, "115th Congress: Birthdays," http://www.cq.com/members/factfilereport.do?report=mff-birthdays.

Notes: Representatives' age data do not include the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner. Newly elected Members data do not include those returning to the House or Senate for a second time.

The U.S. Constitution requires Representatives to be at least 25 years old when they take office.[7] The youngest Representative at the beginning of the 115th Congress was 32-year-old Elise Stefanik (R-NY), born July 2, 1984. The oldest Representative was John Conyers (D-MI), born May 16, 1929, who was 87 at the beginning of the 115th Congress.[8]

Senators must be at least 30 years old when they take office. The oldest Senator in the 115th Congress is Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), born June 22, 1933, who was 83 at the beginning of the Congress. The youngest Senator is Tom Cotton (R-AR), born May 13, 1977, who was 39.

Occupations

According to the *CQ Guide to the New Congress*, in the 115th Congress, law predominates as the declared profession of Senators, followed by public service/politics, then business; for Representatives, business is first, followed by public service/politics, then law.[9]

In contrast to the single declared profession of the Members, **Table 2** uses data from the *CQ Member Profiles* to show the broader range of occupational experiences over the careers of the Members by presenting the occupations most frequently listed as prior careers.

[7] Article I, Section 2, clause 2, of the U.S. Constitution.

[8] Rep. Conyers resigned from the House on December 5, 2017. The oldest Representative in the 115th Congress then became Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), born August 14, 1929. Rep. Slaughter died on March 16, 2018; the oldest Representative then became Rep. Sam Johnson (R-TX), born October 11, 1930.

[9] "Demographics: Congress by the Numbers," in *CQ Guide to the New Congress*, November 10, 2016, p. 60, available on the CQ.com subscription database at http://www.cq.com/pdf/govdoc-4986237. CQ.com is available in all House and Senate offices.

Table 2. Most Frequently Listed Occupational Categories by Members, 115th Congress

At the beginning of the 115th Congress

Occupation	Representatives	Senators
Public Service/Politics	194	44
Business	179	29
Law	168	50
Education	79	20

Source: *CQ Guide to the New Congress* and the *CQ Member Profiles*.

Notes: Most Members list more than one profession when surveyed by *CQ Roll Call*, and the professions listed are not necessarily the ones Members practice immediately prior to entering Congress.

A closer look at the range of prior occupations and previously held public offices of Members of the House and Senate at the beginning of the 115th Congress, as listed in their *CQ Member Profiles*,[10] also shows the following:

- 50 Senators with previous House service;
- 101 Members have worked in education, including teachers, professors, instructors, school fundraisers, counselors, administrators, or coaches (85 in the House, 16 in the Senate);
- 3 physicians in the Senate, 11 physicians in the House, plus 4 dentists and 3 veterinarians;[11]
- three psychologists (all in the House),[12] an optometrist (in the Senate), a pharmacist (in the House), and two nurses (in the House);
- eight ordained ministers, all in the House;
- 43 former mayors (35 in the House, 8 in the Senate);
- 12 former state governors (10 in the Senate, 2 in the House) and 7 lieutenant governors (3 in the Senate, 4 in the House, including 1 Delegate);[13]
- 15 former judges (all but 1 in the House) and 47 prosecutors (12 in the Senate, 35 in the House) who have served in city, county, state, federal, or military capacities;
- one former Cabinet Secretary (in the Senate), and three Ambassadors (all in the House);[14]

[10] *CQ Member Profiles* are available on the CQ.com subscription database at http://www.cq.com/members/home.do. The CQ.com database is available in all House and Senate offices. The profiles are also available in print form in the CQ publication *Politics in America*. The professions listed here are not exhaustive and are not necessarily the ones practiced by Members immediately prior to entering Congress. Most Members list more than one profession in their *CQ Member Profiles*.

[11] One of the medical doctors in the Senate is an ophthalmologist, and one of the medical doctors in the House is also a veterinarian. One of the medical doctors in the House, counted here, resigned from Congress in February 2017.

[12] One of the psychologists, counted here, resigned from Congress in October 2017.

[13] In addition, one former lieutenant governor was appointed to the Senate in December 2017.

[14] In addition, one Senator previously served as the U.S. Trade Representative, a position carrying the rank and title of Ambassador.

- 266 former state or territorial legislators (44 in the Senate, 222 in the House);[15]
- at least 96 former congressional staffers (18 in the Senate, 78 in the House; including 3 Delegates), as well as 6 congressional pages (3 in the House and 3 in the Senate);[16]
- three sheriffs, one police chief and five other police officers, one firefighter, one CIA agent, and one FBI agent (all in the House);
- two Peace Corps volunteers, all in the House;
- one physicist, one microbiologist, and one chemist, all in the House;
- eight engineers (seven in the House and one in the Senate);
- 21 public relations or communications professionals (3 in the Senate, 18 in the House), and 11 accountants (2 in the Senate and 9 in the House);
- six software company executives in the House and two in the Senate;
- 18 management consultants (4 in the Senate, 14 in the House), 6 car dealership owners (all in the House), and 3 venture capitalists (2 in the House, 1 in the Senate);
- 18 bankers or bank executives (4 in the Senate, 14 in the House), 36 veterans of the real estate industry (5 in the Senate, 31 in the House), and 14 Members who have worked in the construction industry (2 in the Senate, 12 in the House);
- nine social workers (one in the Senate, eight in the House) and three union representatives (all in the House);
- seven radio talk show hosts (one Senate, six House); seven radio or television broadcasters, managers, or owners (two Senate, five House); eight reporters or journalists (one Senate, seven House), a public television producer in the House, and a newspapers publisher in the House;
- 21 insurance agents or executives (4 Senate, 17 House) and 3 Members who have worked with stocks or bonds (1 Senate, 2 House);
- one screenwriter and comedian and one documentary filmmaker (both in the Senate), and one artist and two speechwriters (all in the House);
- 26 farmers, ranchers, or cattle farm owners (4 in the Senate, 22 in the House);
- two almond orchard owners in the House as well as one vintner; and
- 10 current members of the military reserves (9 House, 1 Senate) and 6 current members of the National Guard (all in the House).

Other occupations listed in the *CQ Member Profiles* include emergency dispatcher, letter carrier, urban planner, astronaut, pilot, flight attendant, electrician, museum director, rodeo announcer, carpenter, computer systems analyst, software engineer, R&D lab executive, and explosives expert.

[15] National Conference of State Legislators, "Former State Legislators in the 115th Congress" (as of December 13, 2016), http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/statefed/Former_State_Legislators_115th_Congress.pdf.

[16] Michael L. Koempel and Judy Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook*, 6th ed. (Washington: The Capitol.Net, 2012), Figure 5.22, supplemented by data from *CQ Member Profiles* and House and Senate payroll documents. Another former staffer joined the Senate in January 2018.

Education

As has been true in recent Congresses, the vast majority of Members (94.1% of House Members and 100% of Senators) at the beginning of the 115th Congress hold bachelor's degrees. Sixty percent of House Members and 76% of Senators hold educational degrees beyond a bachelor's.[17] The *CQ Member Profiles* at the beginning of the 115th Congress indicate the following:

- 18 Members of the House have no educational degree beyond a high school diploma;
- eight Members of the House have associate's degrees as their highest degrees;
- 100 Members of the House and 21 Senators earned a master's degree as their highest attained degrees;
- 167 Members of the House (37.8% of the House) and 55 Senators (55% of the Senate) hold law degrees;
- 22 Representatives[18] and 2 Senators have doctoral (Ph.D., D.Phil., Ed.D., or D. Min) degrees; and
- 18 Members of the House and 3 Senators have medical degrees.[19]

By comparison, approximately 35 years ago in the 97th Congress (1981-1982), 84% of House Members and 88% of Senators held bachelor's degrees. Approximately 45 years ago, in the 92nd Congress (1971-1972), 77% of House Members and 87% of Senators held bachelor's degrees. Sixty years ago, in the 85th Congress (1957-1958), 68% of House Members and 77% of Senators held bachelor's degrees.[20]

Four Representatives[21] and one Senator in the 115th Congress are graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, two Senators graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, and one Representative graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy. One Senator and two Representatives were Rhodes Scholars, two Representatives were Fulbright Scholars, two Representatives were Marshall Scholars, and one Senator and one Representative were Truman Scholars.[22]

Congressional Service

The average length of service for Representatives at the beginning of the 115th Congress was 9.4 years (4.7 House terms); for Senators, 10.1 years (1.7 Senate terms).

[17] *CQ*, "115th Congress: Education," http://www.cq.com/members/factfilereport.do?report=mff-education.

[18] One of the Representatives counted here resigned from Congress in October 2017.

[19] Three Senators and 11 Representatives have M.D. degrees, 1 Senator has an O.D. (doctor of optometry) degree, 4 Representatives have D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery) degrees, and 3 Representatives have D.V.M. (doctor of veterinary medicine) degrees. One of the Representatives has both an M.D. and a D.V.M. degree. One of the Representatives counted here resigned from Congress in February 2017.

[20] CRS Report R42365, *Representatives and Senators: Trends in Member Characteristics Since 1945*, coordinated by R. Eric Petersen.

[21] One of the Representatives counted here resigned from Congress in January 2017.

[22] Rhodes and Marshall scholarships fund study at British universities; Fulbright scholarships fund international exchange programs; Truman scholarships fund graduate study toward public service.

Table 3. Average Length of Service for Members of Congress, 115th-111th Congresses

Average (mean) at the beginning of the Congress, in years and numbers of terms

Congress	Representatives	Senators
115th	9.4 years (4.6 terms)	10.1 years (1.7 terms)
114th	8.8 years (4.4 terms)	9.7 years (1.6 terms)
113th	9.1 years (4.6 terms)	10.2 years (1.7 terms)
112th	9.8 years (4.9 terms)	11.4 years (1.9 terms)
111th	10.3 years (5.2 terms)	13.4 years (2.2 terms)

Source: CRS Report R41545, *Congressional Careers: Service Tenure and Patterns of Member Service, 1789-2017*, by Matthew E. Glassman and Amber Hope Wilhelm.

Notes: Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Note that 50 Senators in the 115th Congress have previously served in the House. Their House service is not included in this average, nor is the House service of Senators included in previous Congresses.

At the beginning of the 115th Congress, 52 of the House Members, including the Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico (11.8% of the total House Membership), had first been elected to the House in November 2016, and 7 of the Senators (7% of the total Senate membership) had first been elected to the Senate in November 2016. These numbers are lower than at the beginning of the 114th Congress, when 13.8% of the House and 13% of the Senate were newly elected "freshmen."

At the beginning of the 115th Congress, 116 House Members, including 2 Delegates and the Resident Commissioner (26% of House Members), had no more than two years of House experience, and 21 Senators (21% of Senators) had no more than two years of Senate experience.

For more historical information on the tenure of Members of Congress, see CRS Report R41545, *Congressional Careers: Service Tenure and Patterns of Member Service, 1789-2017*, by Matthew E. Glassman and Amber Hope Wilhelm.

Religion

Ninety-eight percent of the Members of the 115th Congress are reported to be affiliated with a specific religion.[23] Of the 98%, the vast majority (90.7%) are Christian.

Statistics gathered by the Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, which studies the religious affiliation of Members, and *CQ* at the beginning of the 115th Congress showed the following:

- 55.9% of the Members (241 in the House, 58 in the Senate) are Protestant, with Baptist as the most represented denomination, followed by Methodist;
- 31.4% of the Members (144 in the House, 24 in the Senate) are Catholic;
- 5.6% of the Members (22 in the House, 8 in the Senate) are Jewish;
- 2.4% of the Members (7 in the House, 6 in the Senate) are Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints);

[23] Eleven Members of the 115th Congress do not specify a religious affiliation, or report themselves as unaffiliated. Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life Project, "Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 115th Congress," http://www.pewforum.org/2017/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-115/.

- three Members (two in the House, one in the Senate) are Buddhist, two House Members are Muslim, and three House Members are Hindu; and
- other religious affiliations represented include Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal Christian, Unitarian Universalist, and Christian Science.[24]

Gender and Ethnicity

Female Members

A record 112 female Members (20.7% of the total membership) serve in the 115th Congress, 4 more than at the beginning of the 114th Congress.[25] Eighty-nine women, including 4 Delegates as well as the Resident Commissioner, serve in the House and 23 in the Senate. Of the 89 women in the House, 64 are Democrats, including 3 of the Delegates, and 25 are Republicans, including 1 Delegate as well as the Resident Commissioner. Of the 23 women in the Senate, 17 are Democrats and 6 are Republicans.

African American Members

There are a record 51 African American Members (9.4% of the total membership) in the 115th Congress, 3 more than at the beginning of the 114th Congress.[26] Forty-eight serve in the House, including 2 Delegates, and 3 serve in the Senate. This number includes one Representative, as well as one Senator, who are of African American and Asian ancestry, and one Representative who is of African American and Hispanic ancestry. In this report, each of these three Members is counted as belonging to two ethnic groups. Forty-six of the African American House Members, including 2 Delegates, are Democrats, and 2 are Republicans. Two Senators are Democrats and one is Republican. Twenty African American women, including two Delegates, serve in the House, and one serves in the Senate.

Hispanic/Latino American Members

There are 46 Hispanic or Latino Members in the 115th Congress, 8.5% of the total membership and a record number.[27] Forty-one serve in the House and 5 in the Senate. These numbers include one House Member who is also of Asian descent, and one House Member of African ancestry;

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[24] Detailed religious affiliation information for the Members of the 115th Congress, and comparisons to the U.S. general public, are available at http://www.pewforum.org/2017/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-115/.

[25] One female House Member arrived in a June 2017 special election, one female House Member died in March 2018, and another arrived in May 2018. One female Senator was appointed in December 2017 and another was appointed in March 2018. For more information, see CRS Report RL30261, *Women in Congress, 1917-2018: Service Dates and Committee Assignments by Member, and Lists by State and Congress*, by Jennifer E. Manning and Ida A. Brudnick, and the Office of the House Historian's Women in Congress website at http://history.house.gov/Exhibition-and-Publications/WIC/Women-in-Congress/.

[26] One African American House Member resigned in December 2017. For more information, see the Office of the House Historian's *Black Americans in Congress* website at http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Black-Americans-in-Congress/.

[27] One Hispanic House Member departed in January 2017, and another arrived via special election in June 2017. This number includes three House Members and one Senator who are of Portuguese ancestry and belong, or have belonged, to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus or the Congressional Hispanic Conference. For more information, see the Office of the House Historian's *Hispanic Americans in Congress* website at http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Hispanic-Americans-in-Congress/.

these Members are counted in both ethnic categories in this report. Of the Members of the House, 30 are Democrats (including 1 Delegate) and 11 are Republicans (including the Resident Commissioner). Ten are women, including the Resident Commissioner. Of the five Hispanic Senators (three Republicans, two Democrats), one is a woman.

Asian/Pacific Islander American Members

Eighteen Members of the 115th Congress (3.3% of the total membership) are of Asian, South Asian, or Pacific Islander ancestry.[28] Fifteen of them (14 Democrats, 1 Republican) serve in the House, and 3 (all Democrats) serve in the Senate. These numbers include one House Member and one Senator who are also of African American ancestry, and another House Member of Hispanic ancestry; these Members are counted in both ethnic categories in this report. Of those serving in the House, two are Delegates. Eleven of the Asian, Pacific Islander, or South Asian American Members are female: 8 in the House and all 3 in the Senate.

American Indian Members

There are two American Indian (Native American) Members of the 115th Congress; both are Republican Members of the House.[29]

Foreign Birth

Eighteen Representatives and 5 Senators (4.2% of the 115th Congress) were born outside the United States. Their places of birth include Canada, Cuba, Guatemala, Japan, Peru, and India. Some of these Members were born to American citizens working or serving abroad. The U.S. Constitution requires that Representatives be citizens for seven years and Senators be citizens for nine years before they take office.[30]

Military Service

At the beginning of the 115th Congress, there were 102 Members (18.8% of the total membership) who had served or were serving in the military, 1 more than at the beginning of the 114th Congress (101 Members), but 6 fewer than at the beginning of the 113th Congress (108 Members). According to lists compiled by *CQ,* the House as of May 2018 has 78 veterans (including 2 female Members, as well as 1 Delegate); the Senate has 18 veterans, including 2 women.[31] These Members served in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and

[28] For more information, see the Office of the House Historian's *Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Congress* website at http://history.house.gov/apa/.

[29] This number includes only Members who are enrolled members of federally recognized tribes. For more information, see CRS congressional distribution memorandum, *Members of Congress of American Indian Descent*, by Jennifer Manning, available to congressional offices upon request.

[30] Article I, Section 2, clause 2, and Article I, Section 3, clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution.

[31] *CQ*, "115th Congress: House Military Veterans," http://www.cq.com/members/factfilereport.do?report=mff-house-veterans, and "115th Congress: Senate Military Veterans," http://www.cq.com/members/factfilereport.do?report=mff-senate-veterans. Both lists are frequently updated to reflect changes since the 115th Congress convened.

A publicly available list of House veterans as of the beginning of the 115th Congress is available on the House Library's website at http://library.clerk.house.gov/documents/Military_Vets.pdf. A comparable Senate list was not identified.

combat or peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, as well as during times of peace. Eight House Members and one Senator are still serving in the reserves, and six House Members are still serving in the National Guard. All of the female veterans are combat veterans.

The number of veterans in the 115th Congress reflects the trend of steady decline in recent decades in the number of Members who have served in the military. For example, 64% of the Members of the 97th Congress (1981-1982) were veterans, and in the 92nd Congress (1971-1972), 73% of the Members were veterans.

For summary information on the demographics of Members in selected past Congresses, including age trends, occupational backgrounds, military veteran status, and educational attainment, see CRS Report R42365, *Representatives and Senators: Trends in Member Characteristics Since 1945*, coordinated by R. Eric Petersen.[32]

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[32] Because of differences in data sources used, some demographic information may differ between CRS Report R42365, *Representatives and Senators: Trends in Member Characteristics Since 1945*, coordinated by R. Eric Petersen, this report, and other demographic studies of Congress.

In addition to the *CQ Member Profiles*, other sources of demographic information for the 115th Congress include *Vital Statistics on Congress* at https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/vital-statistics-on-congress/, a joint project of the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution, and the Library of the House of Representatives' "Membership Profile" web page at http://library.clerk.house.gov/membership-profile.aspx, which features lists of House Members such as "115th Congress—Lawyers" and "115th Congress—Former Mayors."