



2022 RHODE ISLAND CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

The 2022 Rhode Island Civic Health Index serves as the state's first-ever Civic Health Index, an initiative led by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) and the Rhode Island Department of State with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities through the "A More Perfect Union" initiative and from the Rhode Island Foundation. The Index draws upon data-driven indicators and information about diverse connections to civic life to join the 30 other states that have examined their own civic well-being. The report provides a baseline to help communities, leaders, and policy makers understand what challenges and opportunities Rhode Islanders share.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 Rhode Island Civic Health Index examines five areas of civic health in Rhode Island in terms of **where we are now** (the current status of that area), **where we can go from here** (steps to strengthen that area), and **how we can move forward, together** (questions for every Rhode Islander to consider). The report draws upon a number of governmental and private data sources for this assessment.

The Index includes an overview of the 2022 Rhode Island Civic Health Index project; an introduction to Rhode Island; regional and national context for the state's civic health; and in-depth discussions of the five areas of civic health in Rhode Island, summarized below.

Community Well-Being

- » **Where are we now?** Geographic and racial disparities in community well-being pose barriers to civic health across the state.
- » **Where can we go from here?** Strengthening community well-being calls for greater investment in rectifying racial inequities across Rhode Island.
- » **How can we move forward, together?** How would Rhode Island, your city, or neighborhood look, feel, and operate if addressing racial inequities were a priority? What investments would be required to do this in meaningful ways?

Community Participation: Social Connection

- » **Where are we now?** Rhode Islanders stand out nationally for the strength of their connections to family and friends. Race and age can impact those connections across different groups, limiting thoughtful dialogue about politics and local issues, and leading to concerns about social insularity and partisan polarization.
- » **Where can we go from here?** Strengthening social connection calls for tools and venues for civic dialogue.
- » **How can we move forward, together?** What tools or spaces have proven useful or accessible for starting dialogues with Rhode Islanders unlike yourself? If you have not found these tools or spaces yet, what do you feel would be most helpful?

Community Participation: Public Participation

- » **Where are we now?** Rhode Islanders' public participation lags compared to other states, according to US Census indicators. But, expanding how we measure participation reveals strength in community groups and non-governmental civic institutions. Rhode Islanders maintained public participation even during the pandemic, but many factors act as barriers, including social insularity.
- » **Where can we go from here?** Strengthening public participation calls for greater acknowledgement of Rhode Island's non-governmental civic institutions.
- » **How can we move forward, together?** Think about the non-governmental civic institutions that have been most impactful in your life—for example, local heritage societies, parks, and independent corner stores. What resources would allow those institutions to impact even more Rhode Islanders? What would it require to provide those resources?

Community Participation: Collective Understanding

- » **Where are we now?** Rhode Islanders' collective understanding of civics, history, and media all have significant room for improvement. Race and age may also affect Rhode Islanders' perceptions of the state's public history, including monuments in city squares and neighborhoods. Many Rhode Islanders feel frustrated by the lack of relevant information and local coverage from the state's media outlets.
- » **Where can we go from here?** Strengthening collective understanding calls for greater attention to civics, history, and media literacy education; inclusive public history; and local independent media.
- » **How can we move forward, together?** What ripple effects can you envision in your community from improvements in civics, history, and media literacy education? What impact would more inclusive monuments and historic sites have in your neighborhood? And, what will it take to achieve greater investment in local independent media? How could this transform the state's civic landscape?

Community Participation: Engagement with Government

- » **Where are we now?** Rhode Islanders engage with government at high rates compared to the rest of the nation, but many are concerned about nepotism and corruption in government.
- » **Where can we go from here?** Strengthening engagement with government calls for continued emphasis on government transparency.
- » **How can we move forward, together?** What do you see working well in Rhode Island when it comes to government transparency on the state, city, or neighborhood levels? What needs improvement, and how could that improvement be made?

Full Index available online at: rihumanities.org/program/ri-civic-health-index

Questions? Contact civichealthindex@rihumanities.org