

The Rhode Island Survey Initiative, 2024

The Rhode Island Survey Initiative is led by the University of Rhode Island’s Harrington School for Communication and Media; the Social Science Institute for Research, Education, and Policy; and the Department of Political Science. URI faculty and students identified issue areas, formulated survey questions, and analyzed results. The second annual edition (2024) of the Rhode Island survey was administered by YouGov, an international internet-based market research and data analytics firm, from August 15th to September 8th, 2024. The survey has a representative sample size of 500 Rhode Island residents who are 18 years old or above. Respondents were selected from YouGov’s opt-in panel using sample matching. Matched cases were weighted using propensity scores based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and home ownership, and then the weights were post-stratified on 2020 presidential vote choice as well as a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (2-categories), and education (4-categories), a two-way stratification of age (4-categories) and education (4-categories), and a three-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight. YouGov’s update to their weighting approach from last year’s survey provides more accuracy that aligns with their overall election polling. The margin of error is +/- 6.02%. The election section was completed first, the demographics section was completed last, and all other sections were randomized. Questions within the elections section, policy section, and trust section were randomized. Order of question statements and response options were randomized or flipped as appropriate. Not all questions in the 2024 RI Survey Initiative are included in this report.

Note: The following results are based on percentages. Asterisks indicate that the question wording or response options changed from 2023 survey.

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Section 1: 2024 Election

Below is a list of election-related proposals that were introduced recently in the Rhode Island General Assembly. To what extent do you approve of each proposal?

	Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Neither approve nor disapprove	Somewhat disapprove	Strongly disapprove
Legislation that establishes ranked-choice voting for Rhode Island presidential primaries.	22	23	41	7	8
Amendment to the state constitution that would remove the thirty day state and local residency requirements to vote and require that a voter be registered by, or on election day.	23	24	26	14	13
Legislation that would allow citizens who are at least 16 years of age to vote in school committee elections.	25	27	23	12	14
Legislation that increases the responsibilities of the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in preventing noncitizens from registering to vote.	35	27	24	8	6
Legislation that mandates that no person can mail another person's mail ballot except for a spouse, court-appointed guardian, cohabitant, or any adult person related by blood or marriage to the voter.	40	20	25	9	7
Legislation that bans artificial intelligence (AI) generated political media that includes fake images, video, or audio recordings within ninety (90) days of an election.	61	19	14	3	3

How much do you trust each of the following election authorities:

	Not at all	Not very much	Fair amount	Great deal
Rhode Island Department of State	9	19	44	29
Rhode Island Board of Elections	10	18	44	28
Your local board of canvassers	9	17	47	26
Rhode Island poll workers	8	13	44	35

How much do you trust each of the following Rhode Island election systems:

	Not at all	Not very much	Fair amount	Great deal
Rhode Island voting machines	6	12	43	39
Rhode Island mail ballot drop boxes	17	20	30	34
Vote check-in requirement to show a valid photo ID in Rhode Island	6	9	32	52
Mailing a ballot using the U.S Postal Services in Rhode Island	15	21	35	29

Civics education prepares students to become informed participants in democratic processes like voting. To what extent do you think it is important for Rhode Island K-12 public schools to provide high-quality civics education?

Very important	65
Somewhat important	31
Not too important	3
Not at all important	2

Where do you get information about how to vote in Rhode Island? Select all that apply.

Print publications (e.g., newspapers, voter guides)	27
Town/city hall websites	38
State government websites	43
Social media posts	32
Local television news	41
Search through Google or other search engines	31
Friends and family	37
Other	6

In your view, how often do the following things occur in Rhode Island elections and campaigns?

	Not at all often	Not often	Somewhat often	Very often
Votes are counted accurately.	8	13	29	51
Journalists provide fair coverage of elections.	16	22	42	21
Election officials are fair.	7	20	36	36
Wealthy donors unfairly influence election outcomes.	10	24	38	28
Voters are offered a genuine choice on the ballot.	10	18	37	35
Rhode Islanders are exposed to inaccurate information about elections.	15	33	35	17

To what extent are you concerned about the following types of voter fraud occurring in the 2024 election in Rhode Island:

	Not at all concerned	Not too concerned	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned
Citizens voting more than once	24	28	27	21
Noncitizens voting	24	27	22	27
Someone claiming to be another person in order to vote	19	28	29	25
Votes being tampered with	20	25	25	30

To what extent are you concerned about the following issues in the 2024 election in Rhode Island:

	Not at all concerned	Not too concerned	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned
Local election officials experiencing safety issues	16	37	35	12
Interference from election observers	18	27	40	15
Voter intimidation	17	33	36	15
Civil unrest after election day	16	26	37	21
Interference from foreign entities	16	26	35	24
Use of artificial intelligence (AI) generated political media that includes fake images, video, or audio recordings	6	17	38	39

To what extent do you agree that the following groups of voters have equal voting accessibility in Rhode Island?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Voters with disabilities	4	10	15	16	49	5
Voters who require assistance in languages other than English	7	10	22	22	32	8

How important to you are the following reasons to vote in the 2024 election?

	Not at all important	Not too important	Somewhat important	Very important
To support policies or issues.	3	7	26	64
To support my political party.	17	20	30	34
To support a candidate.	6	13	33	49
It is my civic duty.	6	10	30	54
I am participating in something larger than myself	7	12	31	50

Rhode Island is often labeled a "one-party state" due to the Democratic supermajority in the general assembly, Democratic governor, and all other state offices being held by Democrats. To what extent are you concerned that Rhode Island is a "one-party state"?

Very concerned	29
Somewhat concerned	23
Not too concerned	28
Not at all concerned	19

How satisfied are you with the way democracy is working in Rhode Island?

Very satisfied	21
Somewhat satisfied	46
Not too satisfied	22
Not at all satisfied	12

Do you think Joe Biden leaving the presidential race helps or hurts the Democrats?

Greatly helps the Democrats	48
Somewhat helps the Democrats	25
Neither helps nor hurts the Democrats	21
Somewhat hurts the Democrats	4
Greatly hurts the Democrats	3

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I understand the elections process in Rhode Island.

Strongly agree	38
Somewhat agree	40
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	2

Section 2: Policy

How satisfied are you with the overall quality of life in Rhode Island?

Very satisfied	12
Somewhat satisfied	40
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18
Somewhat dissatisfied	22
Very dissatisfied	8

What do you think about the state of the Rhode Island economy these days? Would you say the state of the Rhode Island economy is:

Very strong	3
Somewhat strong	19
Neither strong nor weak	29
Somewhat weak	33
Very weak	15

***Below is a list of state programs. For each one, indicate whether you would like to see state-level spending increase, decrease, or stay about the same.**

	Greatly increase	Slightly increase	Stay about the same	Slightly decrease	Greatly decrease
Education	44	28	19	5	4
Housing	46	22	20	5	6
Dealing with crime	26	32	32	5	5
Clean energy	31	26	26	7	10
Building and repairing roads and bridges	45	30	16	4	4
Aid to the poor	33	33	23	6	5
Protecting the environment	38	21	32	5	5
Health care	41	29	20	6	4

What do you think are the MOST IMPORTANT priorities for the governor and general assembly to address this year? Select your top three priorities.

Education	38
Housing	52
Dealing with crime	27
Clean energy	15
Building and repairing roads and bridges	42
Aid to the poor	24
Protecting the environment	17
Health care	42

Other

4

***Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?**

Legal under any circumstances 48

Legal only under certain circumstances 46

Illegal in all circumstances 6

***Do you think the Rhode Island government is doing too much, about enough, or too little to address climate change?**

Too much 15

About enough 43

Too little 42

What is the most important problem facing Rhode Island K-12 public school leaders today?

Chronic student absenteeism 9

Inappropriate use of cellphones/technology 10

In-school substance use 3

Insufficient funding 29

Teacher/staff shortage 28

If not listed above (write-in) 9

Don't know 11

***Rhode Island's blue economy is defined as the economic sectors that are linked to the state's ocean and coasts. To what extent do you think Rhode Island should invest money in the following blue economy initiatives?**

0 to 100 with numeric slider to show value (left="Less investment" right="More investment")

Means are reported

- Commercial fishing/aquaculture 56
- Offshore wind energy 53
- Marine tourism and recreation 55
- Maritime defense 47
- Ports and shipping 55

***Do you think discrimination against people based on the following categories in Rhode Island is a very serious problem, somewhat serious problem, not too serious problem, or not a problem at all?**

	Very serious problem	Somewhat serious problem	Not too serious problem	No problem at all	Unsure
Sexual orientation	13	30	33	18	7
Race or ethnicity	19	29	30	14	7
Disability	11	27	38	17	6
Religion	9	18	38	27	8
Age	10	21	38	25	6
Gender	12	23	33	24	7

How big of a problem do you think political violence is in the U.S. today?

A very big problem	35
Somewhat of a problem	46
Not very much of a problem	10
Not a problem	3
Not sure	6

Section 3: Media & Politics

***How often do you get political and election news from...**

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Television	23	31	24	13	9
Print publications (e.g., newspapers, magazines)	8	13	25	25	28
Radio	8	18	26	20	28
News websites or apps	16	39	26	12	7
Social media websites, such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok	19	25	24	15	18
Search through Google or other search engines	16	26	29	17	12
Podcasts	9	12	18	22	39

***During a typical week, which social media site(s) do you most frequently use to get political and election news?
Select all that apply.**

Facebook	44
YouTube	40
Instagram	33
TikTok	23
I do not use social media platforms for political and election news	21
X (formerly Twitter)	21
Snapchat	11
Reddit	11
LinkedIn	6
Pinterest	6
WhatsApp	5
Nextdoor	5
Other	3
Twitch	3
Tumblr	2

Note: Respondents were asked to select all social media channels they have frequently used to get political and election news.

***How often do you engage in the following political activities on social media?**

	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
View content about political and election news on social media	16	26	26	13	19
Post content (e.g., video, text, image) about political and election news on social media	7	11	15	20	46
Discuss political and election news with others on social media (e.g., comments, quote retweets)	7	9	23	18	43
Share political and election news with others on social media	8	13	20	17	43

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding credibility and trust in the political and election news on social media?**

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I cannot trust the news stories people share on social media.	3	5	24	38	30
Too often credible news information is mixed up with misinformation on social media	4	4	14	35	44
I should not rely on social media for news information.	7	7	22	33	31

***Some news organizations are frequently characterized as favoring liberal or conservative positions. When consuming political and election news, which type of news sources do you use the most?**

Both liberal and conservative news organizations.	26
Politically liberal news organizations, such as The New York Times, MSNBC, or Daily Beast.	24
Neither liberal nor conservative news organizations.	13
Politically conservative news organizations, such as The Wall Street Journal, FOX News, or Breitbart News.	13
Don't know	12
I do not consume political and election news.	12

To what extent is it important to you to support the freedom of the press?

Not at all important	1
Somewhat not important	3
Neutral	19
Somewhat important	25
Very important	52

Imagine you had to choose one media source to get recent political and election news. Which national or local source would you select below?

Fox News	14
CNN	13
WPRI (Channel 12)	12
NBC Nightly News	8
I prefer to learn from social media sites, Google News, Apple News, online influencers, friends, or families	7
MSNBC	6
The New York Times	5
NPR, such as The Public's Radio, GBH, or WBUR	5
WJAR (Channel 10)	5
Other	4
ABC World News Tonight	3
CBS Evening News	3
Associated Press News (AP)	2
BBC	2
The Providence Journal	2
ABC6 (Channel 6)	2
Newsmax	1
One America News Network (OAN)	1
The Washington Post	1
WPRO	1
Reuters	1
The Boston Globe	1
The Wall Street Journal	1

Note: Respondents were asked to select one primary political news consumption channel from the list above. The table does not show news sources below 1%.

Section 4: Artificial Intelligence (AI)

How much, if anything, have you heard about artificial intelligence (AI)?

A lot	44
A little	49
Nothing at all	7

As you think about the upcoming election, how do you think that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) will help or hurt the election process?

Greatly HELP the election process	3
Somewhat HELP the election process	9
Not much of an effect on the election process	15
Somewhat HURT the election process	31
Greatly HURT the election process	28
Not sure	14

How likely, if at all, do you think it is that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in these ways will affect the outcome of the presidential election in November?

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Neutral	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Not sure
Using AI to generate fake information, videos, or audio	5	3	9	24	55	4
Using AI to target some voters to convince them NOT to vote	5	11	16	27	36	5
Using AI to manipulate social media (e.g., generating information from fake accounts or bots)	6	4	11	25	51	3

Section 5: Trust

***How much trust do you have in each of the following levels of government?**

Trust, Levels of Govt.	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	None at all
The local government where you currently live	15	53	24	8
The Rhode Island state government	14	47	26	12
The United States federal government	12	42	31	15

***How much trust do you have in each branch of the Rhode Island government?**

Trust, Branch of State Govt.	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	None at all
The state executive branch headed by the Rhode Island Governor	12	45	29	14
The state judicial branch headed by the Rhode Island Supreme Court	13	60	22	5
The state legislative branch, consisting of the members of the Rhode Island General Assembly	10	50	31	9

***How many of the people running the Rhode Island state government are corrupt?**

All	5
Most	22
About half	23
A few	42
None	8

Section 6: Belonging & Participation

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel connected to my community.	12	38	27	15	8
I feel empowered to make changes within my community.	12	29	36	15	7
I spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds from my own.	33	36	21	5	4
I am similar to my neighbors in terms of values and beliefs.	12	36	39	7	6
I am similar to my neighbors in terms of political views.	12	28	43	11	6
I trust my neighbors.	20	37	25	9	8
I am comfortable discussing local and state issues with community members who have different political beliefs than I do.	15	34	27	15	8

***To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel I understand the most important political issues of _____.**

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My local community	24	40	24	9	3
Rhode Island	24	42	25	5	4
the United States	33	42	17	4	4

***Here's a list of activities some people do and others do not. Please indicate if you have done each of the following activities in the past 12 months. Select all that apply.**

Type of Activity	
Attended a political rally, speech, protests, boycotts, or campaign event	10
Attended government meetings in your community, such as city or town council meetings	11
Contacted an elected official	17
Contacted a local newspaper, television station, or radio station	6
Contributed money to a candidate running for public office or to a group working to elect a candidate	16
Publicly expressed your support for a political candidate on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), or other social media	26
Worked or volunteered for a political party, candidate, or campaign	7
Donated blood, food, or clothing to local organizations	43
Displayed a poster, flag, sign, or bumper sticker or worn clothing or a button related to a political campaign	16
None of the above	33

***Do you approve or disapprove of the way Dan McKee is handling his job as Rhode Island Governor?**

- Approve, **55**
- Disapprove, **45**

You indicated that you approve of the way Dan McKee is handling his job as Rhode Island Governor. Do you approve strongly or not strongly?

- Strongly, **42**
- Not strongly, **58**

You indicated that you disapprove of the way Dan McKee is handling his job as Rhode Island Governor. Do you disapprove strongly or not strongly?

- Strongly, **56**
- Not strongly, **44**

This is a question about Rhode Island political leaders. Many people don't know the answers to these types of questions, so if you don't know just indicate that. Do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Joe Shekarchi?

- Correct (House Speaker), **23**
- "I do not recall" or incorrect, **77**

If the election for president were being held today, and the candidates were Kamala Harris the Democrat, Donald Trump the Republican, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. running as an Independent candidate, for whom would you vote?

[Data below are among registered voters in the sample.]

Response	
Kamala Harris, the Democrat	53
Donald Trump, the Republican	27
Robert F. Kennedy, an Independent	9
Another candidate	1
I would not vote	2

Not sure	8
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[Respondents who indicated whom they would vote for in the previous question were asked the following question, below. Data below refer only to registered voters in the sample.]

How do you intend to vote in the 2024 presidential election:

- Election day, in person, **63**
- By mail/absentee ballot, **17**
- Early, in person, **20**

If the election for the U.S. Senator from Rhode Island were held today, who would you vote for?

[Data below refer only to registered voters in the sample.]

Response	
U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, the likely Democratic nominee	52
State Representative Patricia Morgan, the likely Republican nominee	24
Another candidate	3
I would not vote	4
Not sure	17

Section 7: Demographics

2024 Demographic Breakdown of Respondents	
Registration Status	
Registered to vote	88
Party Identification	
Democrats/Independent leaning Democrats	54
Independents	18
Republicans/Independent leaning Republicans	23
Ideology	
Liberal	36
Moderate	35
Conservative	17
Gender	
Men	47
Women	51
Age	
18-29	22
30-54	38
>55	40
Education	
HS or less	38
Some college	16
College Degree	32
Postgrad	14
Income	
<40K	31
\$40-100K	39
>\$100K	24
Race/Ethnicity	
White	74
African American	7
Hispanic	9
Asian	3
Two or more races	4
Religion	
Roman Catholic	33
Protestant	16
Jewish	2
Atheist	5
Agnostic	8
Religion - Nothing in Particular	29
Sexual Orientation	
Straight/heterosexual	83
Gay or Lesbian	6
Bisexual	6
Parent/Guardian	
Parent/Guardian with child under 18	20

We do not report every category of response or the percentage of respondents that skipped each question, so percentages may not add up to 100.