

# Community Wellness Packet

Topics covered:

1. Community wellness indexes
2. Community assets
3. Safety

Important vocabulary:

- Community
- Livability
- Public Life

Grade level(s):

- 6-8
- 9-10
- 11-12

Description of activities:

- Reading on community assets, featuring a dataset
- Do Now
- Practice Using Evidence (Housing Conditions and Neighborhood Assets & Neighborhood Assets in Rural Connecticut)
- Road Safety Memo
- Inquiry Mini Project

Teacher tips:

- After using these materials, students will be overall more well versed in using DataHaven's indexes. This can open up possibilities for other inquiry activities or interest in the full reports.

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# Reading

## What is a Community Asset?

*Adapted from DataHaven's 2023 Greater Hartford Community Wellbeing Index*

Residents rely on their governments to distribute taxes in the form of services and amenities, from road repair and waste collection to school and library funding. Wealthier towns with higher levels of homeownership and fewer tax-exempt properties have greater grand list revenue, and are more likely to spend more per person on these services, facilities, and programs.

In towns that serve as employment centers, expenditure per daytime population, including workers who commute into the town, reveal the extent to which those areas bear the brunt of infrastructure services like road maintenance, as well as safety services such as police and fire departments. Libraries provide a wide variety of programs in addition to lending books, such as literacy, language, and skills training

### Views of local community assets

SHARE OF ADULTS, GREATER HARTFORD, 2021

LOCATION	GOOD PARKS	HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	SAFE BIKING	STORES IN WALKING DISTANCE	AFFORDABLE, HIGH QUALITY PRODUCE
Connecticut	78%	74%	68%	56%	76%
Greater Hartford	81%	79%	77%	56%	77%
Hartford	47%	73%	63%	81%	48%
BY DEMOGRAPHIC WITHIN GREATER HARTFORD					
Male	82%	83%	79%	58%	80%
Female	81%	75%	77%	54%	76%
Ages 18-34	74%	79%	78%	68%	69%
Ages 35-49	80%	79%	77%	54%	74%
Ages 50-64	82%	79%	78%	52%	83%
Ages 65+	89%	75%	76%	46%	87%
White	87%	78%	79%	48%	84%
Black	67%	81%	74%	76%	67%
Latino	68%	74%	77%	65%	63%
High school or less	76%	78%	72%	64%	71%
Some college or Associate's	81%	78%	77%	61%	76%
Bachelor's or higher	84%	78%	81%	49%	82%
<\$30K	74%	81%	74%	69%	71%
\$30K-\$100K	78%	79%	75%	63%	72%
\$100K+	87%	79%	85%	46%	87%
No kids	82%	77%	76%	56%	79%
Kids in home	80%	80%	80%	57%	76%

programs that serve the public by improving economic and educational outcomes, particularly for low-income residents.

Urban residents enjoy more stores within walking distance as well as greater sidewalk connectivity and walkability. For example, more than 80 percent of Hartford adults say they have stores within walking distance in their neighborhoods, but fewer than half rate

the quality of available produce as good, suggesting the quality of those stores matters as well as walkability. Municipal dollars are also used to fund recreational facilities like parks, community centers, and off-street walking and biking trails. Towns with higher per capita grand lists often have higher levels of satisfaction with those facilities in their area.

# Activities

## **Do Now**

1. What does your community have that you enjoy? For example, the library.
2. What is it missing that you wish was there? For example, more sidewalks.

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# Practice Using Evidence

## Focus: Housing Conditions and Neighborhood Assets

Source: DataHaven Towards Health Equity in Connecticut (June 2020)

Neighborhood amenities (assets, resources, things that people have access to) can have a direct impact on residents' health and well-being. In 2018 about two-thirds of Connecticut adults reported having recreational facilities and safe bicycling facilities in their area; on both measures, however, residents of rural areas were less likely to report access to these resources. Overall, the most privileged groups—white adults, residents of suburban or wealthy towns, and adults with more income and education—were more likely to report that nearby parks and other public facilities were in good condition, but less likely to report that their neighborhood had safe sidewalks and crosswalks. Black and Latino adults were less likely than other groups to feel that parks in their neighborhood were well-maintained. Access to recreational facilities and quality parks create opportunities to improve physical and mental health, and can improve residents' perception of their neighborhood and sense of belonging.

Safe and well-connected streets also improve access to transportation and recreation. In urbanized areas, well-maintained sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure can promote economic opportunity. These amenities contribute to greater social cohesion, and even modest improvements to the built environment provide measurable health benefits to residents. In a time of extended home-isolation and social distancing, neighborhood amenities are important assets for improving mental health and allowing room for many people to safely engage in physical activity. Cities around the country, including New Haven, have closed some streets to motor vehicle traffic to create more space for outdoor recreation. When planning if and where to close streets, officials should consider which neighbors stand to benefit and who may be underserved.

TABLE 4

### Select housing conditions and neighborhood assets

†SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS; ‡ SHARE OF ADULTS; CONNECTICUT, 2018

GROUP	OVERCROWDED HOUSEHOLDS	GOOD CONDITION OF PARKS	SAFE SIDEWALKS	SAFE BIKING	PARKS AND REC. FACILITIES NEARBY
Total	2%	75%	61%	63%	70%
White	<1%	79%	56%	62%	68%
Black	3%	59%	79%	66%	72%
Latino	6%	64%	73%	64%	75%
High school or less	N/A	66%	67%	61%	66%
Some college/Associates	N/A	71%	61%	63%	70%
Bachelors or higher	N/A	80%	56%	63%	71%
Under \$30K	N/A	64%	68%	61%	64%
\$30K–\$100K	N/A	74%	63%	63%	71%
\$100K+	N/A	82%	52%	65%	72%
Wealthy	<1%	89%	48%	56%	73%
Suburban	<1%	88%	46%	65%	70%
Rural	<1%	76%	37%	56%	58%
Urban Periphery	2%	72%	73%	66%	72%
Urban Core	4%	52%	77%	61%	70%

**Directions:** After reading and annotating above, use what you learned about housing conditions and neighborhood assets in Connecticut to draft a letter style statement. This could be a letter to a local newspaper to spread awareness, to a lawmaker to encourage them to try to encourage more resources, or a letter to a friend that expresses your feelings about this topic. In your letter, practice using evidence to support your claims. Make sure you also cite your source (in this case, DataHaven).

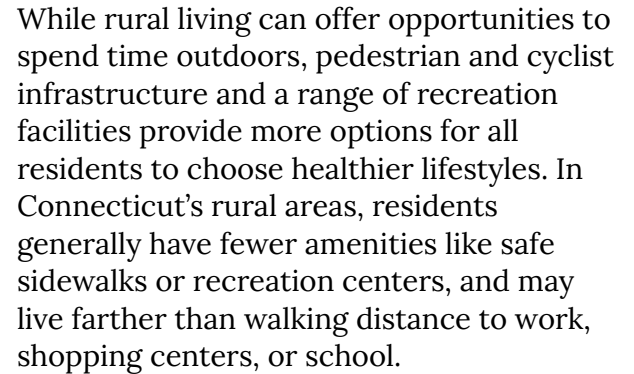
*Examples: According to DataHaven's survey on... The rate of safe biking access in... is...*

Your letter's recipient (who is it going to?):

Your letter:

**Focus: Neighborhood Assets in Rural Connecticut**  
Source: DataHaven Rural Health in Connecticut (June 2022)

### Rural town clusters



In Type One Towns, there are more adults with a maximum education of high school or less and lower median household incomes.

residents aged 65 and over. In Type Three Towns, there are very high median household incomes.

### Share of adults with access to community resources, 2015–2021 pooled data

DataHaven, 2023

**Directions:** After reading and annotating above, use what you learned about neighborhood assets in rural Connecticut to draft a letter style statement. This could be a letter to a local newspaper to spread awareness, to a lawmaker to encourage them to try to encourage more resources, or a letter to a friend that expresses your feelings about this topic. In your letter, practice using evidence to support your claims. Make sure you also cite your source (in this case, DataHaven).

*Examples: According to DataHaven's survey on... The rate of safe biking access in... is...*

Your letter's recipient (who is it going to?):

Your letter:

## Road Safety and Transportation in Connecticut

Improving mass transit and active transportation options, such as walking or biking, while reducing reliance on motor vehicles can greatly improve health outcomes for individuals and communities. Crash-related injuries and fatalities are substantially lower on transit than other modes of travel.

People who walk or bike to transit or their final destination are more likely to achieve 30 minutes of exercise per day, improving cardiovascular fitness and reducing chances of diabetes or obesity. Active modes of transportation are far more environmentally friendly than driving, and transit contributes far less pollution to the environment, providing health benefits to all.

Connecticut enjoys relatively good rail service provided by New York MTA, CT Rail, and Amtrak, with stops along nearly every town in coastal Fairfield County. Due in large part to employees working from home, rail ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, CT Transit buses and Greater Bridgeport Transit have improved ridership over pre-pandemic levels thanks to a fare holiday that has extended from April 2022 through March 2023.

Safety improvements are needed to ensure road users who walk or cycle are protected from crashes involving cars. In Connecticut, when drivers of vehicles collide with pedestrians and cyclists, the chance of injury or death is nearly six times higher than when vehicles collide with each other. In urban areas, the rates of injuries and fatalities are even higher (SEE TABLE 7K). Sixty-six percent of adults in Fairfield County and just 57 percent in Bridgeport say there are safe biking options in their area. Similarly, 71 percent of adults in Fairfield County and 49 percent in Bridgeport say they feel safe walking alone at night.

TABLE 7K

### Traffic crashes

TRAFFIC CRASHES BY PERSON TYPE AND INJURY TYPE, 2018-2021

AREA OF OCCURRENCE	PEDESTRIAN			CYCLIST			DRIVER		
	NUMBER	NUMBER FATAL	PERCENT WITH FATALITY OR POSSIBLE INJURY	NUMBER	NUMBER FATAL	PERCENT WITH FATALITY OR POSSIBLE INJURY	NUMBER	NUMBER FATAL	PERCENT WITH FATALITY OR POSSIBLE INJURY
Connecticut	5,758	237	85%	1,740	12	82%	950,098	911	14%
Fairfield County	1,702	45	91%	437	1	80%	278,032	131	12%
Bridgeport	531	11	93%	94	0	82%	55,791	24	17%
Stamford	385	4	93%	67	1	78%	39,464	10	10%

Using the information provided above, create a 4-5 sentence memo that could be displayed and sent out to Connecticut residents that'll encourage safe driving. Try to make it both informative and catchy.

Your memo:



## Inquiry Mini Project

**Background:** Civic life is made of the attitudes, activities, and investments that build on the collective resources for a community. It is the skills, expertise, and knowledge of the citizens that improve the quality of life in communities. It is a powerful part of our overall health and well-being. Higher levels of public resources, trust, participation, and engagement are connected with more equitable economic outcomes and positive health outcomes. This includes lower mortality rates, improved mental and physical health, and lower crime rates. Towns and cities each have a unique sense of community, with varying traditions, public resources, and physical spaces. What is yours like?

### Public Resources

Residents rely on their local governments to provide a wide range of resources. While public education, social and health services, public safety, and infrastructure may come to mind as key municipal responsibilities, local governments offer many additional programs and services. These can include public libraries, transportation assistance, and adult education. These resources help support underserved or at-risk populations as well as the broader community. These resources are truly a *cornerstone* of civic life, helping to lessen socioeconomic inequalities, bridging social divides, fostering trust in the government by the community. Local government revenue comes from taxes and fees (almost exclusively property tax in Connecticut), as well as state and federal grants. This means that the wealthier towns and cities, able to draw on stronger tax bases, are able to be big spenders on their community.

**Examples of resources:** libraries, schools, public transportation.

### Community Trust and Appreciation

Civic trust helps to bridge divides and encourage cooperation. These are conditions necessary for both people to get involved and for economic development. Higher levels of civic trust also lead to healthier communities, encouraging the growth of social organizations, some of which promote equitable access to much-needed local programs and services in education, transportation, community health, and recreation. Confidence in organizations serving the area is another important aspect of community trust. Community *philanthropy groups* that support the community needs, strengthen community abilities and voices, build on local resources, and increase residents' trust in their community institutions. Cycling, walking, and access to nature and green spaces are all connected to civic trust and participation; urban parks are particularly important.

**Indicators of trust and appreciation:** satisfied with the area, feeling safe walking at night, trust of neighbors.

### Participation in Public Life

Community and civic engagement can take many forms, like volunteering and voting. It can also be opportunities provided by arts and cultural events, community and school meetings, and religious organizations. As different as they may be, these forms of participation in public life arise from a shared sense of responsibility and belonging, as well as investment and ownership in the local, regional, national, and international communities to which residents belong. The quality of our communities, and our democracy, depend on participation and citizen engagement across the various dimensions of public life.

**Examples of participation:** volunteering, utilization of arts/cultural resources, involvement with improving area, voting.

**Your Task:** Now that you have an idea of what components of civic life are and how they can impact an individual and a community, you are going to look into your own community. Conduct online or in-person research in your town or city on the three components to civic life: public resources, community trust and appreciation, and participation in public life. Check off the boxes as you complete them! Your report will consist of the following:

- ☐ **Resources:** What public resources are available to your community and what they can do for your community
- ☐ **Trust and Appreciation:** The levels of community trust and appreciation, and efforts to increase this trust and appreciation
- ☐ **Public Participation:** The extent of participation in public life, including what public spaces are available and what they can do for your community and figures like voter turnout and volunteering opportunities
- ☐ **Reflection:** A reflection on how your community is succeeding in serving its members in these three realms of civic life, and where your community is failing to serve its members in these three realms of civic life
- ☐ **You in the Community:** Your experience with your communities efforts to serve its members in these three realms of civic life; what have you personally benefitted from and what opportunities do you wish you had more available?
- ☐ **Action Plan:** Your plan should be on how to better your community and how it can serve its members in these three realms of civic life better. Come up with a plan on how these changes can be implemented. What do you need to do? Who do you contact? What do *they* have to do?

This report should be reflective, honest, and original. It should be typed, formally structured, and include your best research. You should cite your research in MLA style on the last page of your report. This report is based on your research, your desires, your observations, and what is generally best for your community. This is your opportunity to propose ways for your community to improve based on attainable goals and research. Once you are complete with your report, put your action plan into action!

**Grading Rubric**

<b>Research</b>	Inquiry project does not include any content from the readings or other research. <b>0-10</b>	Inquiry project includes minimal content from the readings or other research. <b>15</b>	Inquiry project includes some content from the readings or other research, but is unclear or unfinished. <b>20</b>	Inquiry project includes enough content from the readings or other research for the reader to understand. <b>25</b>
<b>Accuracy</b>	Inquiry project does not include accurate information on the community or related information. <b>0-10</b>	Inquiry project includes content with many errors or inaccuracies. <b>15</b>	Inquiry project includes content with few errors or inaccuracies. <b>20</b>	Inquiry project includes content that is accurate based on the given information. <b>25</b>
<b>Uses Time Wisely</b>	Student(s) did not use class time wisely and did not turn in the inquiry project by the assigned due date. <b>0-10</b>	Student(s) did not use class time wisely or did not turn in the inquiry project by the assigned due date. <b>15</b>	Student(s) were off task at times, but handed in the inquiry project on time. <b>20</b>	Student(s) were on task and completed the inquiry project on time. <b>25</b>
<b>Creativity</b>	Inquiry project does not include creative proposals or observations. <b>0-10</b>	Inquiry project shows some creativity but is repetitive or not their own original ideas. <b>15</b>	Inquiry project shows some creativity and is somewhat appealing or unique. <b>20</b>	Inquiry project is creative and is appealing to look at while also being unique and original. <b>25</b>

**Total Points for Inquiry Project:**

**/100**