



UTAH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

UTAH SOCIAL CAPITAL SERIES

PART VIII: **THE FULL PICTURE**



THE NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIP

Utah's Social Capital Index

JULY 2022

THE NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIP

Thanks to the following for providing grant support to make this project possible:

GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES

F O U N D A T I O N

LAWRENCE T. & JANET T.

DEE FOUNDATION

Board of Trustees

Executive Board

Art Turner, *Chair*
Annalisa Holcombe, *Vice Chair*
Scott Parson, *Treasurer*
Kelly Mendenhall, *Secretary*
Chad Westover, *Immediate Past Chair*
Lloyd Allen
Ian Billingsley
Jonathan Campbell
Carlton Christensen
Denise Dragoo
Alexandra Eaton
Michael Gregory
Andrew Gruber
Dave Kallas
Catherine Kanter
Richard Lambert
Linda Makin

Charles Anderson
Nathan Anderson
Scott Barlow
Craig Broussard
Benjamin Brown
Mark Buchi
Dirk Burton
Mike Caldwell
Brad Cook
J. Philip Cook
Cameron Cowan
Bill Crim
Angela Dean
Cameron Diehl
Richard Ellis
Mike Fuller

Bryson Garbett
David Gessel
Julie Hatchett
Brandon Hendrickson
Melanie Jenkins
Brent Jensen
Ben Kolendar
Dennis Lloyd
Drew Maggelet
Peter Mann
Dustin Matsumori
Brad Mortensen
Rich Nye
Angie Osguthorpe
Wayne Pyle

Jennifer Lynn Robinson
Stan Rosenzweig
Tim Sheehan
Harris Simmons
Dominic Spaethling
Nick Starn
Dave Thayer
Amy Tieu
Heidi Walker
Henrie Walton
LaVarr Webb
Mike Weichers
David Woolstenhulme
Thomas Young
Monica Zoltanski

Utah Foundation Project Staff

Peter Reichard, *President, Principal Author*
Christopher Collard, *Senior Analyst, Lead Data Researcher*
Shawn Teigen, *Vice President/Director of Research*
Megan Keating, *Outreach Coordinator*
Erin Hernandez, *Research Intern*
Logan Loftis, *Research Intern*
Mason Moore, *Research Intern*
Jared Staheli, *Research Intern*

About the Utah Foundation

The Utah Foundation's mission is to produce objective, thorough and well-reasoned research and analysis that promotes the effective use of public resources, a thriving economy, a well-prepared workforce and a high quality of life for Utahns. The Utah Foundation seeks to help decision-makers and citizens understand and address complex issues. The Utah Foundation also offers constructive guidance to improve governmental policies, programs and structures.

The Utah Foundation is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization.

Research Report 803

Support Our Work

The Utah Foundation relies on the support of business and civic leaders and average citizens to produce the high-quality, independent research for which we're known. To become a member or sponsor one of our projects or programs, contact us at 801-355-1400.



UTAH FOUNDATION
RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

P.O. Box 387
Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
utahfoundation.org

INTRODUCTION

Social capital stands in the shadows of a wide variety of public policy and economic concerns. Low social capital levels often lead to poor economic and social outcomes, both for individuals and for populations. Policymakers seek to ameliorate these poor outcomes through endeavors that span educational efforts, election reforms, public assistance programs and law enforcement interventions. As social capital declines, the challenges become more acute – and social scientists across the political spectrum affirm that social capital in the U.S. is in long-term decline. But in places where social capital is comparatively robust, it can translate into heightened economic prospects and lower demands on the public sector. Despite the importance of social capital, the factors affecting social capital may receive inadequate attention from the public and policymakers.

Economists often measure physical capital (things that are used to make other things) and human capital (the skills and labor of employees). Social capital refers to the bonds between people and among networks, which they can use to benefit themselves and the group as a whole.

Social capital can provide individual benefits, such as helping an individual find a job, obtain resources from friends or family in the face of hardship, or participate in a group to learn new skills or advance existing ones. Social capital can also be leveraged to improve a community. This can occur directly through volunteering in a project that benefits the community, or indirectly by encouraging your network to influence a legislator.

While social connections can be negative (think of the criminal bonds and networks among gangs and organized crime), the Utah Social Capital Series focuses primarily on positive social capital that benefits societies and participating individuals.

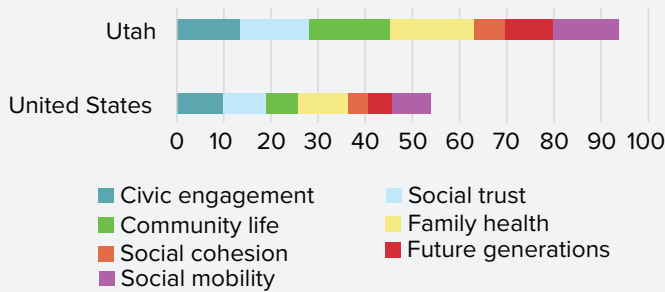


KEY FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT

- In 2021, Utah had the **highest level of social capital in the nation**, and has consistently been among the top states during the previous eight years. North Dakota and Minnesota also consistently rank high.
- Utah's Social Capital Index score stands at 94, **higher than 2013 and 2017** when the index stood at 84 and 79, respectively; this score is based off a combination of the seven social-capital categories.
- Utah is in the top third of states in terms of **civic engagement**.
- Utah ranks third in the nation when it comes to **social trust**.
- Utah's robust **community life** is one of the biggest differentiators compared to other states, with high levels of charitable donations, volunteerism, religious service attendance and participation in community projects. It ranks second in the nation in this category.
- Utah performs best in the nation on the factors related to **family life** – driven primarily by its high levels of marriage and children in married families.
- Utah is in the middle of the pack when it comes to **social cohesion**.
- While Utah is fifth in the nation when it comes to the **focus on future generations**, it has seen a substantial decline since 2013.
- Utah is fifth in the nation when it comes to **social mobility**.

The Utah Social Capital Index shows that Utah is far above the national average in its composite social capital performance.

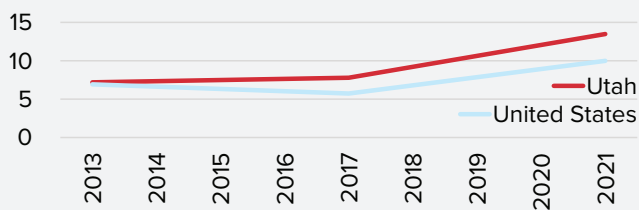
Figure 1: Utah Social Capital Index with Subindices,* Utah and the United States, 2021



* Each subindex has the average of states set at just over 7 points for the base year. For notes on all figures see the methodology in Appendix B.

Utah has seen an increase in civic engagement as it diverges from the national average.

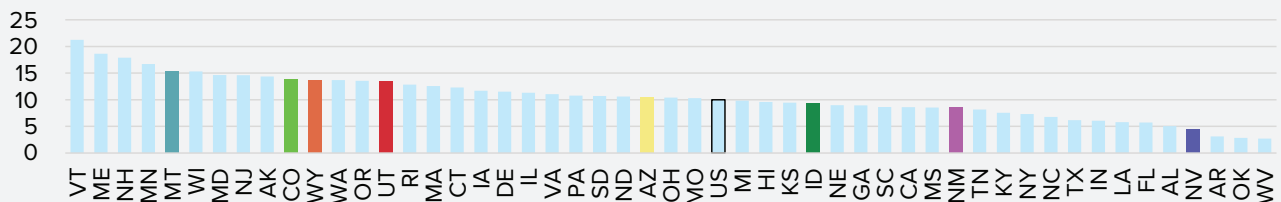
Figure 2: Civic Engagement Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



these areas than much of the rest of the nation. Utah ranks 14th in terms of civic engagement. (See Figure 3.)

Utah is in the top third of states in terms of civic engagement.

Figure 3: Civic Engagement Subindex by State, 2021



This installment in the Utah Social Capital Series combines the data from the Utah Foundation’s previous seven reports to rank states over time, beginning in 2013. (The metrics in those reports are listed in Appendix A.) The Beehive State compares remarkably well. (See Figure 1.)

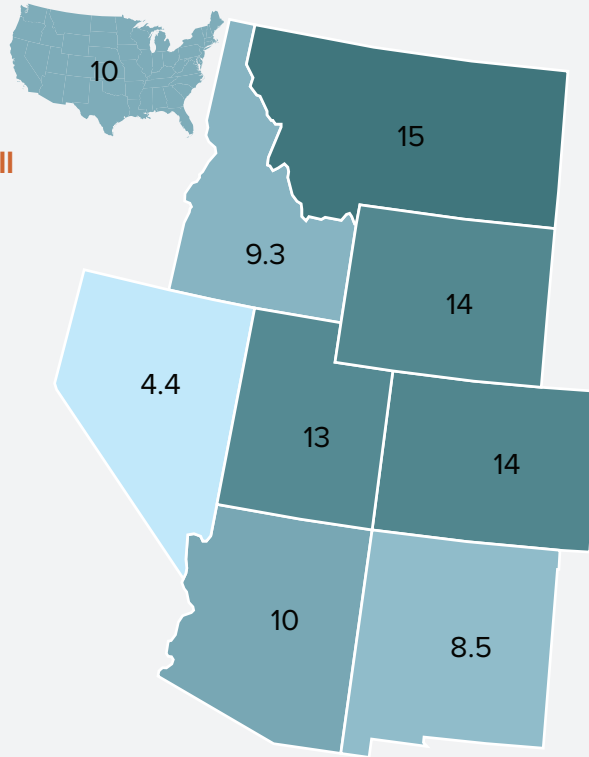
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Robust citizen engagement in the democratic process and in civic improvement has long been seen as a barometer of the vitality of the American republic. At the state and local levels, civic engagement has significant implications for the effectiveness and efficiency of government, the quality of the services that government delivers, and the responsiveness of elected officials to the priorities of the public. Citizens displaying a high degree of civic engagement also tend to be accustomed to collaborating to achieve common goals. A decline in civic engagement, by contrast, can reduce the accountability of the public sector and produce a negative public spirit.¹ To measure civic engagement, this section uses voter participation, public meeting attendance and advocacy organizations per capita. See the report, *The Measure of a Citizen: Civic Engagement in Utah* (September 2021), for an analysis of those metrics.

Utah has made modest gains in its level of civic engagement over the past eight years, from just above the national average in 2013 to the top third of states in the 2021 Index. (See Figure 2.) This increase was driven by higher levels of voter participation and public meeting attendance; Utah saw larger gains in

Several Mountain States perform well on civic engagement.

Figure 4: Civic Engagement Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



Among the eight Mountain States, Utah ranks fourth; Montana is among the very top in the nation. While Montana, Colorado, Wyoming and Utah all rank substantially higher than the national average, the other Mountain States are near or below the average.

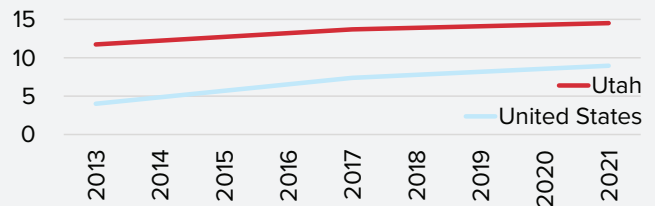
SOCIAL TRUST

Social trust can be described as the extent to which people believe that others in their community will do the right thing most of the time. When such trust is high, people will more easily work together, collaborate in a crisis and reach productive political outcomes.

In this section, the Utah Foundation does not explore social trust in terms of attitudes of the sort that one would glean from population surveys. Rather, we look at social trust in terms of factors that would generally promote

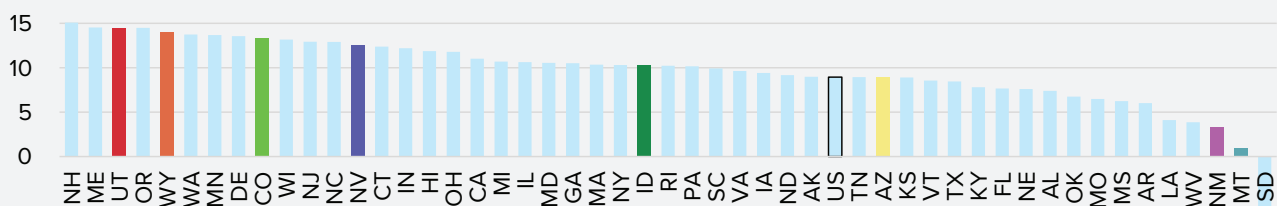
Utah outperforms the nation and is seeing an upward trend on social trust measures.

Figure 5: Social Trust Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



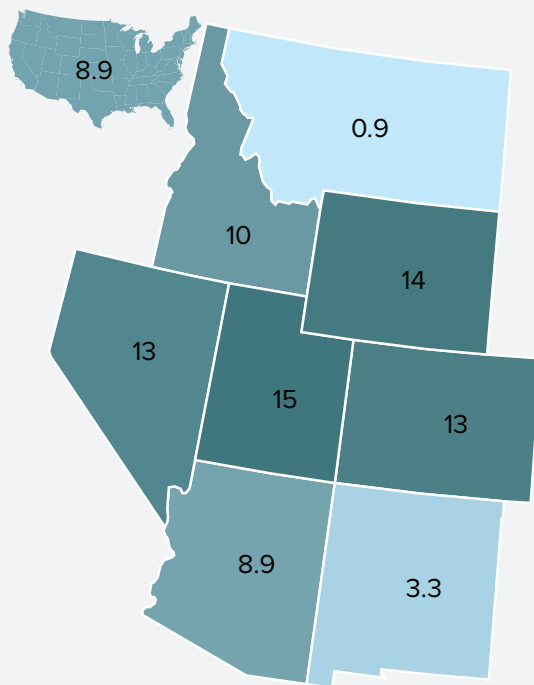
Utah ranks third in the nation when it comes to social trust.

Figure 6: Social Trust Subindex by State, 2021



Utah is outperforming all other Mountain States on social trust.

Figure 7: Social Trust Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



social trust. We look at fraud convictions to get a sense of the trustworthiness of transactions; we look at penalties for breach of trust to understand how often people used their trusted positions to a nefarious advantage; we look at corruption convictions to explore how trustworthy public officials may be; and we look at violent crime rates as a proxy for neighborhood-level trust. We took this approach because those data points are easier to track over time and compare across geographies. For the purposes of this series, social trust attitude surveys do not occur with sufficient consistency over time or geography. At any rate, some social capital scholars argue that social trust attitudes reflect realities and vice-versa.² See the November 2021 report, *The Kindness of Strangers: Social Trust in Utah*, for an analysis of the metrics.

Ad hoc national attitude surveys in recent times show that trust in institutions has been rapidly declining. However, the measures of social trust used in this series show an upward trend, both nationally and in Utah. This may reflect a dichotomy seen in surveys wherein neighbors may trust each other and institutions closer to home, but distrust more distant government entities (like the federal government), the media and cultural institutions.

On a composite basis, Utah's performance on the social trust metrics is third in the nation. (See Figure 6 on the previous page.) Among the Mountain States, Montana and New Mexico rank in the bottom five nationally.

FORMAT OF THE UTAH SOCIAL CAPITAL SERIES

Social capital refers to the bonds between neighbors and among networks, which they can use to benefit themselves and the group as a whole. Social capital takes many forms. With this series, the Utah Foundation seeks to be comprehensive, gathering data on roughly 30 metrics. We sorted them into seven categories:

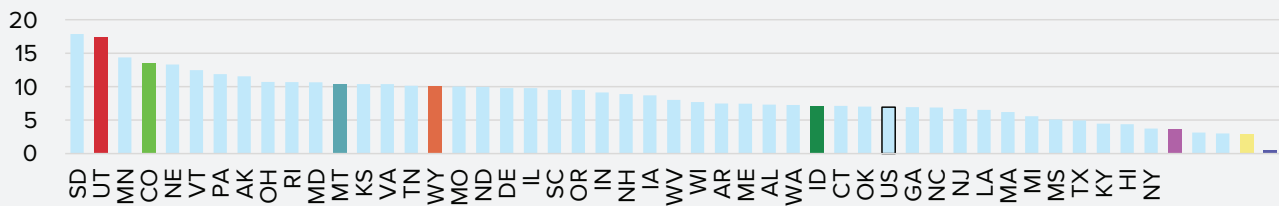
- Civic Engagement
- Social Trust
- Community Life
- Family Life
- Social Cohesion
- Future Focus
- Social Mobility

In determining the metrics, we explored other social capital analyses, including the indices created by Joint Economic Council and by Harvard University political scientist Robert Putnam. From these, we culled certain metrics that are not reproduced at regular intervals, which could inhibit comparisons over time. We also added a number of factors either because they would be of particular interest to Utah or because they allow us to flesh out our analysis of certain topic areas. Our analysis compares Utah to the U.S. at large and to the other Mountain States (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico and Wyoming). It also examines trends over time.

There is no absolute consensus on how to measure social capital. Many of these factors may correlate closely with one another. Some factors may be more closely linked to social capital than other factors. However, this study represents the best methodologies of Utah Foundation to create a balanced and comprehensive index to estimate levels of social capital across the nation and over time. See the appendices for more details on individual factors and the overall methodology.

Utah is second only to South Dakota in community life.

Figure 8: Community Life Subindex by State, 2021



COMMUNITY LIFE

One of the most influential works on social capital documented the long-term decline in associational life. Robert Putnam’s 2000 landmark work *Bowling Alone* draws from the example of the decline of bowling leagues as emblematic of the disintegration of community participation.³ This disintegration not only undermines our social fabric, it can also diminish our mental and physical health.⁴ Recent developments, such as the increasing time spent on personal technology devices and the lockdowns in response to the coronavirus, may only be encouraging these trends. Still, some are hopeful that the movement during the past 60 years from a “we” society to an “I” society can be arrested.⁵

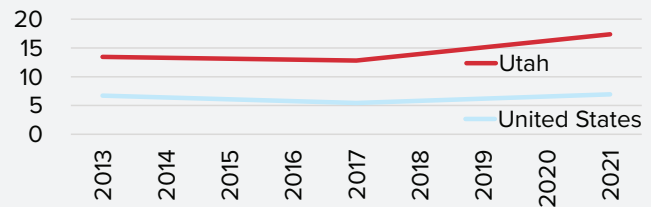
For the purposes of this series, the Utah Foundation defines participation in community life as the ways in which people participate in and financially support non-governmental community endeavors. To gauge community life in Utah, we measured charitable donations; volunteering; attendance at religious services; participation in neighborhood groups; the number of non-professional organizations; and the number of professional organizations. See the report, *The Art of Association: Community Life in Utah* (December 2021), for an analysis of those metrics.

Utah far outpaces the nation at large on the composite community life measure. (See Figure 9.) Though Utah saw a small decline from 2013 to 2017, there was a notable increase in the subsequent years.

Utah’s strong performance on the measures of community life places it second in the nation, behind only South Dakota. Utah’s leadership in this section of the Social Capital Index is driven by its high levels of charitable donations, volunteerism, religious service attendance and participation in community projects – with Utah in first or second place nationally on these metrics.

Utah has seen significant growth in community life since 2017.

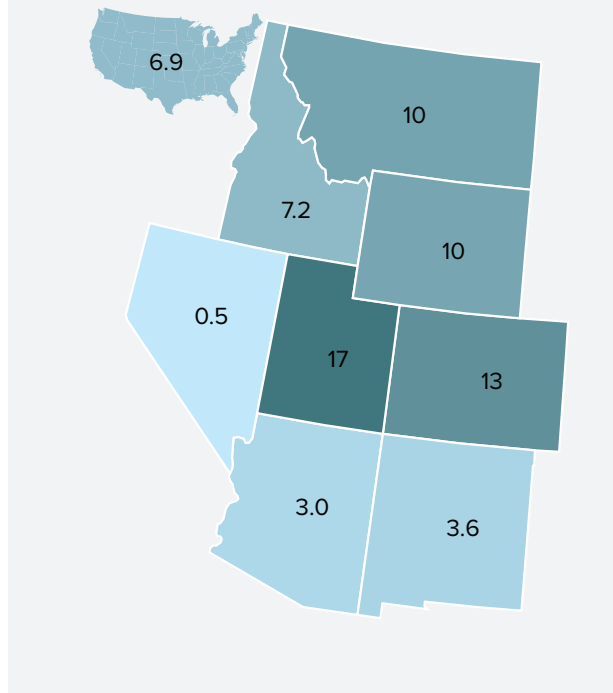
Figure 9: Community Life Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



Utah far outpaces the nation at large on the composite community life measure.

Utah's community life score far exceeds those of its Mountain State neighbors.

Figure 10: Community Life Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



Utah is joined in the top five nationally by one other Mountain State, Colorado. The remaining Mountain States are scattered throughout the rankings, with Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico landing in the bottom five nationally.

Utah's community life score is one of the two largest contributors to its high performance on the Social Capital Index. And because Utah performs so much higher than most other states in this category, it is the factor that gives Utah the biggest boost over other states.⁶

FAMILY LIFE

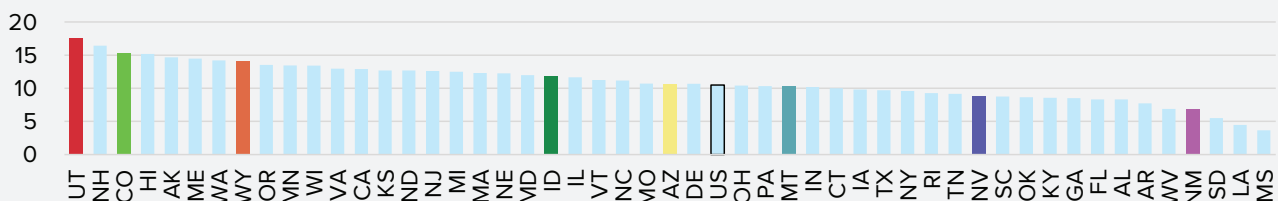
Strong family life is inextricably linked with a network of interrelated and self-perpetuating benefits. For instance, families with two parents are far less likely to live in poverty, and the children of those families are more likely to do well in educational attainment.⁷ The data are so stark that

it is impossible to honestly examine economic or educational outcomes without considering family structure.

In addition to the poor economic and educational outcomes that come with single-parent households, researchers have connected fatherlessness with a litany of repercussions, including increased risk of substance use, depression, obesity, child abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy and contact with the criminal justice system.⁸ Weak family structures also result in weaker connections to aid young adults as they seek employment and important social opportunities. And the importance of family structure to social capital starts early. For instance, a recent study found a strong association between two-parent families and youth participation in extracurricular activities.⁹

Utah leads the nation in family life.

Figure 11: Family Life Subindex by State, 2021



Beyond structure, there is increasing concern about how families spend time together, and how children spend their time. As seen in the February report, *The Comforts of Home: Family Life in Utah*, children’s screentime for entertainment purposes has been increasing at an alarming rate.

The pandemic has had significant impacts on family life, both positive and negative. On the one hand, families spent more time together having dinner and parents read more often to children.¹⁰ But we found a remarkable upsurge in recreational electronic device usage among children that was only accelerated by the pandemic.

Over time, Utah has consistently outperformed the nation on the combined measures of family life. However, the gap has narrowed. The improvement in family life nationally was driven in part by the pandemic, which improved the way families spend time together – increasing family meals and time spent reading to children. Screentime also increased, but that was offset in the overall measure by improvements in meals and reading.

Due in large part to its strong family structure, Utah is the No. 1 state when it comes to the combined measures of family life. (See Figure 11 on the previous page.)

At the regional level, Utah leads, though Colorado and Wyoming both land in the national top 10 as well. Only New Mexico lands in the bottom 10.

Strong family life is one of the main contributors to Utah’s strong overall Social Capital Index score.

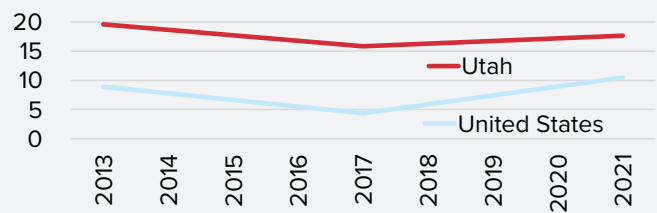
SOCIAL COHESION

For the purposes of this series, the Utah Foundation defines social cohesion as the foundational commonalities that allow a population to function effectively as a group and open the way for individuals to participate in that whole. A variety of factors could be selected to suggest the relative level of social cohesion. For instance, tribal allegiances like a common ethnicity or political outlook could suggest relative cohesion in one place or another, although in widely varying degrees. One the other hand, an emphasis on them may actually create fragmentation, rather than cohesion. In the Social Capital Series, we focus on more practical indicators of broad-based cohesion. We do this through the lenses of economic stratification, language and the extent to which the population is homegrown. (For a detailed discussion of the metrics, see the March 2022 report, *The Soil of Common Ground: Social Cohesion in Utah*.)

In contrast to the ongoing decline in the nation at large, Utah saw a rebound in social cohesion beginning after 2017.

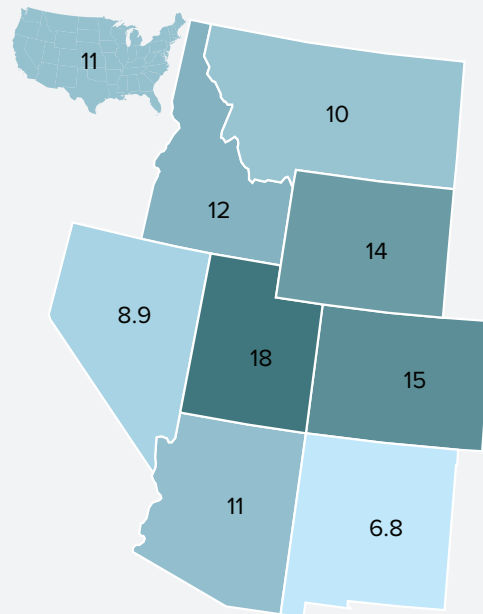
Utah has consistently outperformed the national average when it comes to family life.

Figure 12: Family Life Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



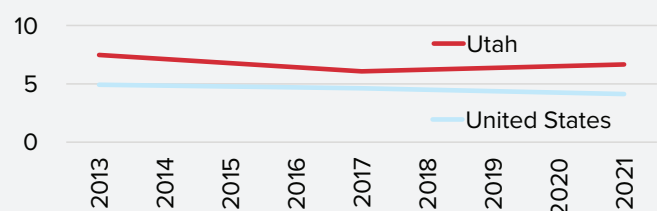
Utah, Colorado and Wyoming stand above the rest of the region on family life.

Figure 13: Family Life Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



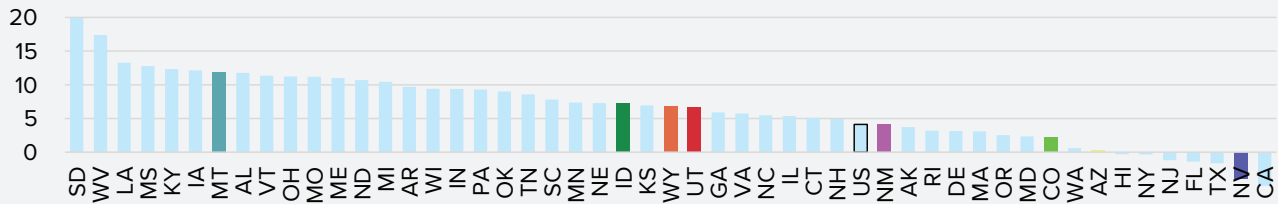
Utah has consistently outperformed the national average when it comes to social cohesion.

Figure 14: Social Cohesion Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



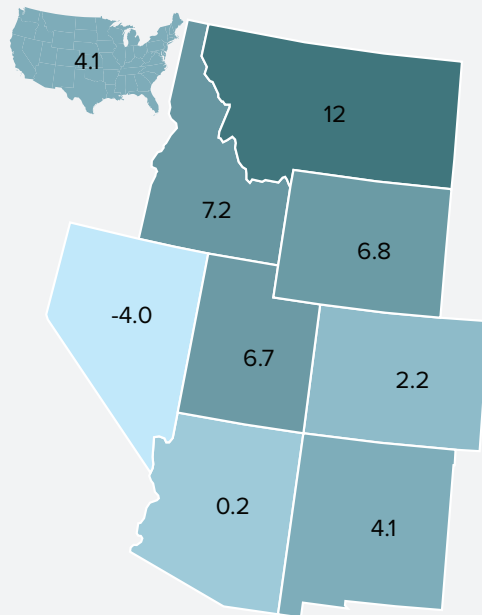
Utah was in the middle of the pack in 2021 when it comes to social cohesion.

Figure 15: Social Cohesion Subindex by State, 2021



Utah stands in the middle of the region when it comes to social cohesion.

Figure 16: Social Cohesion Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



While Utah’s social cohesion is higher than the national average, it is near the median of states. (The nation’s four largest states pull down the national average by taking four of the six bottom spots.) It is also in the middle of the pack at the regional level. Notably, Nevada (and a handful of other states nationally) has a negative score – primarily because it was substantially below the social cohesion average in all four metrics.

That said, Utah has low economic stratification and a remarkably strong middle class. As of 2019, Utah’s middle class was Utah No. 1 in the nation.

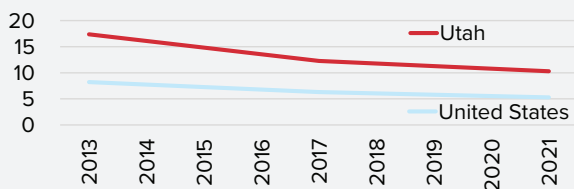
But Utah’s overall performance on social cohesion is tempered by the other metrics. Utah’s percentage of children with limited English proficiency is in the bottom half of all states, but this contrasts somewhat with the adult population: Utah has the 22nd highest share of adults with limited English proficiency.

Furthermore, the share of Utah residents born in the state ranks 19th highest in 2019. However, Utah is unique among Mountain States in its robust population of state natives; most states in the region are well below average on this count, and some rank among the very lowest. Utah’s proportion of state natives is more than double that of neighboring Nevada.

FOCUS ON FUTURE GENERATIONS

Utah bests the nation in its focus on future generations, but it is slipping.

Figure 17: Future Generations Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021

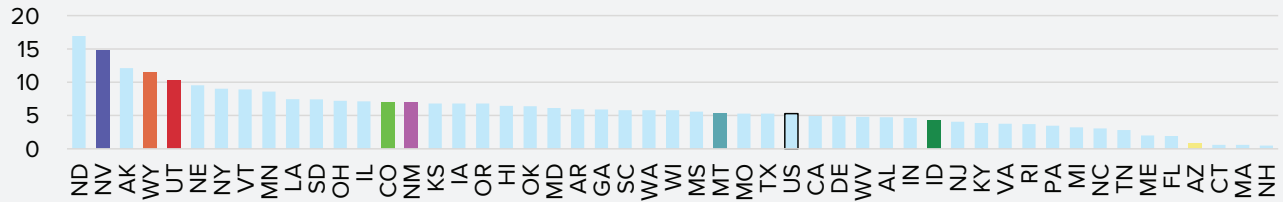


In 2019, the Utah Foundation hosted Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam to keynote its annual luncheon. He is widely viewed as one of the most influential scholars on the topic of social capital. The topic of Putnam’s address focused on the widening opportunity gap among American children, with declining interactions between social classes and growing disparity in educational and recreational offerings. The consequences project into adulthood.¹¹

For instance, Putnam noted that team sports were once wide open to all children, whereas today lower-income children cannot afford the hefty fees and travel they entail. Participation in youth sports now requires significant investments, and

Utah is among the best-performing states when it comes to the focus on future generations.

Figure 18: Future Generations Subindex by State, 2021



youth participation in sports generally has plummeted since 2008.¹² This means many children are missing out on the chance to build soft skills like grit and teamwork. It also means reduced opportunities to build social capital. But public investments in recreation have been in relative decline, as have investments in education. That’s among the findings of our May 2022 report, *The Flowering of Youth: The Next Generation in Utah*.

Though Utah’s public investments in parks and recreation (relative to income) have generally been in decline, the state remains in the top five nationally. Utah’s state and local expenditures on primary and secondary education per \$1,000 of personal income also declined by a notable amount from 2008 to 2019, falling more than one-fifth. Utah is now below the national average on this metric. Utah and neighboring Arizona are last in the nation when it comes to the number of youth organizations per 1,000 children aged 5 to 17. This is not typical of the region: Wyoming and Montana are the nation’s most prolific.

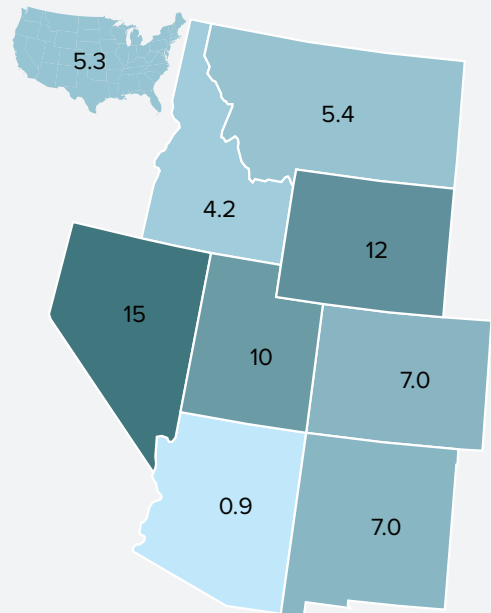
Meanwhile, Utah’s birth rate has been in precipitous decline – though the Beehive State still leads the nation on this metric.

Taken together, the trends suggest Utah’s focus on the next generation has become less sharp. Utah’s focus on future generations is unique in that it is the one category of concern that has seen a continuous decrease since 2013.

Yet the Beehive State continues to strongly outperform the nation at large in its focus on the next generation (relative state and local government spending on recreation and schools, the birth-rate, and youth organizations per youth capita). In fact, Utah remains one of the top five states overall, along with neighbors Nevada and Wyoming. (See Figures 18 and 19.)

Nevada, Wyoming and Utah stand above the rest of the region in their focus on future generations.

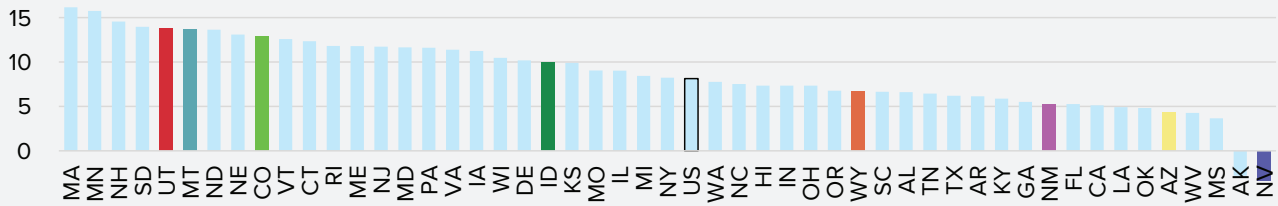
Figure 19: Future Generations Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



Utah’s birth rate has been in precipitous decline – though the Beehive State still leads the nation on this metric.

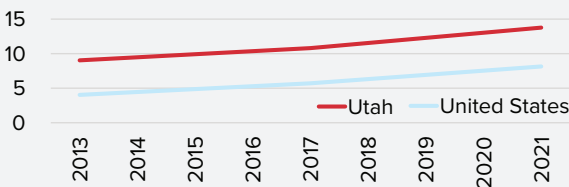
Utah is among the best-performing states when it comes to social mobility.

Figure 20: Social Mobility Subindex by State, 2021



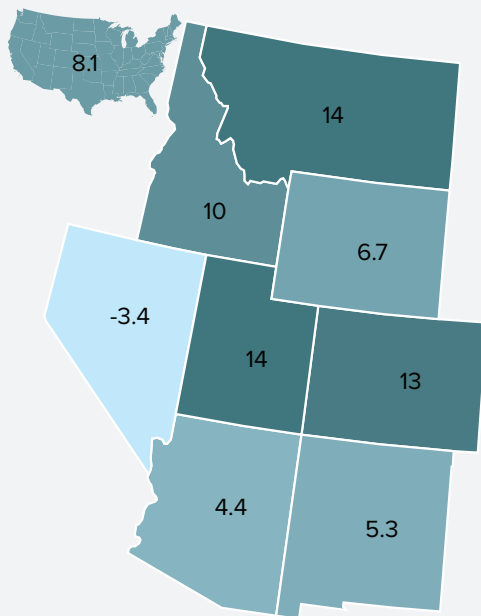
Utah has consistently outperformed the national average on social mobility.

Figure 21: Social Mobility Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



Utah, Montana and Colorado lead the region in social mobility.

Figure 22: Social Mobility Subindex in the Mountain States, 2021



SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility has received significant attention in recent years, with some economists suggesting that where children grow up has major implications for their economic outlook. Significant differences may be detectable both at the state and local levels.

For the purposes of this series, the Utah Foundation defines social mobility as the potential for people to move into higher economic strata from one generation to the next or within an individual lifetime. It should be noted that there may be factors beyond those identified in this report – such as economic pre-conditions, cultural tendencies or historical circumstances – that promote or correlate with social mobility. However, those may be either conjectural or difficult to measure. The factors we selected for measurement (share of college graduates, homeownership rates, economic mobility and unengaged youth) in this section do not suffer from those challenges. For a detailed discussion of these factors, see the June 2022 report, *The Ladder of Success: Social Mobility in Utah*.

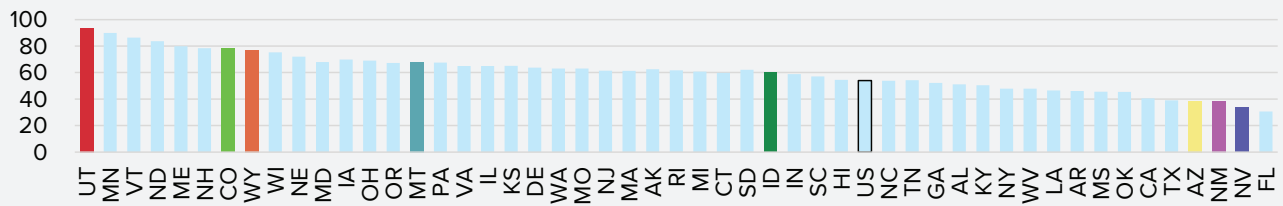
Utah is in the top third of states when it comes to four-year degree attainment. Among the Mountain States, only the highly-educated Colorado outperforms Utah in the percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree or higher. As to homeownership, Utah outperforms all of the other seven Mountain States – and indeed ranks sixth nationally on this metric. When it comes to youth engagement in education, training or the work force, Utah performs among the top 10 nationally (with Colorado) and has generally been headed in the right direction. When it comes to intergenerational economic mobility, Utah ranks in the top third of the U.S. Among the Mountain States, only Montana outperforms Utah.

In the composite view, social mobility has been rising both in Utah and nationally, though Utah strongly outperforms the national average. The Beehive State ranks fifth in the nation, just ahead of Montana. Colorado is also in the national top 10. Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico are in the bottom 10, with Nevada last in the nation.

Utah and Montana are the most consistent Mountain State performers across all four metrics, implying that they may be the most socially mobile states in the region. By contrast, Nevada performed worst on all four metrics.

Utah is the best-performing state when it comes to social capital.

Figure 23: Utah Foundation Social Capital Index by State, 2021



TOTAL INDEX

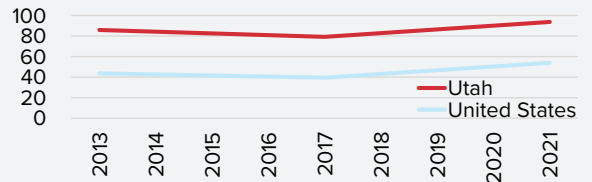
Based on the Utah Foundation’s composite score, social capital nationally and in Utah was in decline from 2013 to 2017, at which point it began to rise. During the past four years, the gains actually moved the social capital scores above the 2013 level. Utah has consistently outpaced the nation at large by a wide lead.

Not only does Utah’s score best the national average, it is also higher than any other state’s. Three of the next five best-performing states are in New England. Two other neighbors in another region – Minnesota and North Dakota – round out that group.

Among the Mountain States, strong social capital cannot be considered a regional feature. While Colorado and Wyoming both join Utah in the top 10, Idaho is close to the national average and three states (Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona) fall in the bottom five.

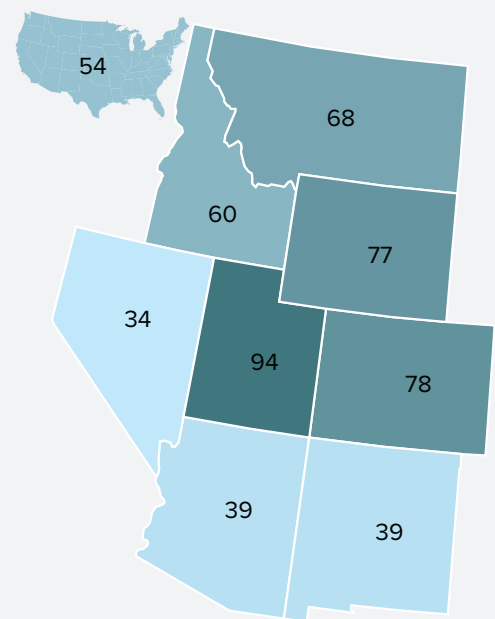
Utah has consistently outperformed the nation on social capital.

Figure 24: Utah Foundation Social Capital Index, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



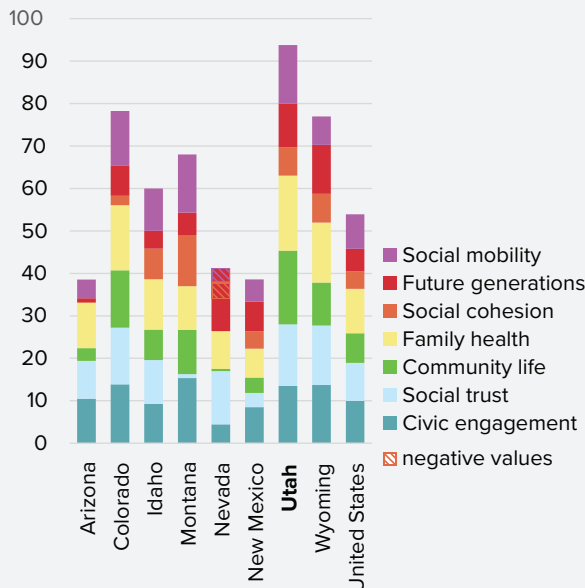
Utah stands far above the rest of the region on social capital.

Figure 25: Social Capital Index in the Mountain States, 2021



Utah’s strong performance in multiple categories help to make it the leader on social capital.

Figure 26: Social Capital Index, Mountain States, by Category, 2021



CONCLUSION

As noted, high levels of social capital can confer individual benefits and drive improvements in a community. Utah is well-positioned in this regard, with the highest level of social capital in the nation. The strongest contributors to its standing are the factors related to family life and community life.

In conducting this study, Utah Foundation researchers suspected that Utah would perform well on social capital. However, we did not complete this final study until all the subject-matter reports had been released. We were surprised at how strongly Utah performed from the composite perspective, especially compared to the national score.

Utah's 2021 social capital index score – 94 – is the highest the state has seen over the eight years included in this study. By this measure, Utah had the highest level of social capital in 2021 among the 50 states. It stands alone in the region, although Wyoming and Colorado are also among the top 10 states. By contrast, Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona have among the lowest levels of social capital in the nation.

While Utah stands out as the No.1 state on the Utah Foundation's composite measure of social capital, our study of roughly 30 metrics found areas of possible concern. We discovered across several metrics that Utah has low levels of organizations per capita, whether they are professional, non-professional, advocacy or youth organizations. We also found that while Utah has strong family structure, it saw an alarming decline in parents spending quality time with children. That changed substantially in 2020 due to the pandemic, but unless families fight to hold on to those gains, electronic entertainment devices will continue to consume a growing share of childhood. Finally, in terms of future generations, Utah has seen a decline in three of its four metrics: the birth rate; relative investments in recreation; and relative investments in public schools. While Utah nearly tops the nation in the future-generations subindex, its decline in those metrics deserves a closer look from policymakers and civic leaders.

The Beehive State is thriving relative to the nation in terms of social capital, and the overall trend since 2017 is positive. But over the longer term, social capital has been in decline nationally, so the state should avoid resting on its laurels. Rather, it should examine weaknesses and look to lead the nation in continuing its recent upward trend to restore social capital.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF METRICS BY SUBINDEX

- Civic Engagement
 1. Voter turnout
 2. Share of citizens reporting attending public meeting
 3. Number of advocacy organizations per 100,000 people
- Social Trust
 1. Fraud convictions per capita
 2. Convictions with breach of trust penalties per capita
 3. Federal corruption convictions per capita
 4. Violent crimes per 1,000
- Community Life
 1. Share of residents reporting a donation of at least \$25 to a charitable group
 2. Share of adults who report volunteering
 3. Weekly church/religious service attendance
 4. Participation in neighborhood projects
 5. Non-professional associations per 100,000 people
 6. Professional organizations per 100,000
- Family Life
 1. Share of births to unmarried women
 2. Share of adults 35-64 currently married
 3. Share of children living in a single-parent family
 4. Share of children 5 and under read to every day in the past week
 5. Share of children watching 4+ hours of TV in the past week, up to 17
 6. Share of children who spend 4+ hours on electronic devices, up to 17
 7. Share of families eating a meal together daily
- Social Cohesion
 1. Share of population in middle class households
 2. Share of Adults with limited English proficiency
 3. Share of students with limited English proficiency
 4. Share of population born in the state of current residence
- Future Focus
 1. Investments in public parks/playgrounds per \$1,000 of personal income
 2. Investments in public schools per \$1,000 of personal income
 3. Birth rates
 4. Youth organizations per 1,000 youth aged 5-17
- Social Mobility
 1. Share of population that are college graduates
 2. Homeownership rates
 3. Economic mobility
 4. Share of 16- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education, or training

APPENDIX B: TECHNICAL DATA SECTION

Standardization

Each metric was standardized based on its z-score (which measures how far a data point is from the mean). Metrics were standardized across time by using the 2016 mean and variance. Where data from 2016 were not available, data from the closest previous year were used. When metrics were not comparable across time, the mean and variance from the most recent previous year to the index year were used. This only applies to the following metrics.

1. Time spent in front of a computer and time spent in front of a television were used for the 2013 and 2017 index, while time spent in front of a television, computer, or digital device was used for 2021.
2. Changes made to the question regarding participation in neighborhood projects were also different for the 2013 and 2017 index when compared to the 2021 index.

Timeliness of Data

This report uses the phrase “2021 Index.” This is because 2021 is the most recent year for multiple metrics. For other metrics, the Utah Foundation used the most recent available data.

Weighting

While there are many arguments for weighing specific factors as more accurate measures of social capital over other less accurate measures, the Utah Foundation decided to weight all the factors in the most straightforward manner suggested by the overall design of the project: Each standardized score has equal weight in its subcategory, and each subcategory had equal weight in the total index score.

Transformation to 100-Point Scale

After averaging the z-score, states showed a strong tendency to fall between -1 and 1. This scale was transformed to a 0-to-100 point scale to provide a more intuitive way of comparing differences among states and across time. Each of the seven subcategories were similarly transformed, but also divided by 7 so that each subcategory sums into its total index score. Because a z-score does not have bounds (although larger values become increasingly unlikely), some of the sub-scores may fall outside the -1 to 1 range and subsequently fall outside the transformed 0-to-14 (approximately) point range. However, once all subcategories are summed, states will generally fall within the 0-to-100-point scale.

ENDNOTES

1 When looking at differences across regions in Italy, Robert Putnam, a social scientist who has studied social capital extensively, has concluded, “Citizens in civic communities demand more effective public services ... and they are prepared to act collectively to achieve their shared goals. Their counterparts in less civic regions more commonly assume the role of alienated and cynical supplicants.” Putnam, R., Leonardi, R., and Nanetti, R., *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 182.

2 Putnam, Robert, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Schuster (2000), p. 138.

3 Ibid.

4 Brigham Young University professor of psychology and neuroscience Julianne Holt-Lunstad has authored a significant body of work on this topic. See, for instance, Holt-Lunstad, Julianne, “Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors: The Power of Social Connection in Prevention,” *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, May 2021.

5 See Putnam, Robert D., and Romney-Garrett, Shaylyn, *The Upswing: How American Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can do it Again*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020.

6 While the subindex for family life is technically larger than community life, their margins of error overlap.

7 Butler, Stuart M., William W. Beach, and Paul L. Winfree, “Pathways to Economic Mobility: Key Indicators,” Pew Charitable Trusts, Economic Mobility Project, 2008, p. 8. See also, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Information on Poverty and Income Statistics: A Summary of 2012 Current Population Survey Data*, Sept. 11, 2012; it found that “Children living in female-headed families with no spouse present had a poverty rate of 47.6 percent, over 4 times the rate in married-couple families.”

8 Brown, Jerrod, “Father-Absent Homes: Implications for Criminal Justice and Mental Health Professionals,” Minnesota Psychological Association, August 4, 2021.

9 An, Weihua, and Western, Bruce, “Social capital in the creation of cultural capital: Family structure, neighborhood cohesion, and extracurricular participation,” *Social Science Research*, Vol. 81, July 2019, p. 192.

10 Mayol-García, Yerís, “Pandemic Brought Parents and Children Closer: More Family Dinners, More Reading to Young Children,” U.S. Census Bureau, January 03, 2022, www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/01/parents-and-children-interacted-more-during-covid-19.html.

11 For a full discussion, see Putnam, Robert D., *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.

12 Project Play, “Survey: Most Kids Quit Sports by Age 11,” Aspen Institute, August 1, 2019, www.aspenprojectplay.org/national-youth-sport-survey/kids-quit-most-sports-by-age-11.



UTAH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

PLATINUM MEMBERS



GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES
FOUNDATION



WellQuest Living

RioTinto



BUILDING AMERICA®



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
FOUNDATION

The Brent and Bonnie
Jean Beesley Foundation



GOLD MEMBERS



LAWRENCE T. & JANET T.
DEE FOUNDATION



ZIONS BANK®



SILVER MEMBERS

AMD Architecture
American-Pacific Corp.
CBRE
Deloitte

HNTB
Molina Healthcare
Northrop Grumman
Staker Parson Companies

WCF Insurance
Wells Fargo
Western Governors University
Wheeler Machinery

BRONZE MEMBERS

Brigham Young University
Cottonwood Heights
Community Foundation of Utah
Davis County Chamber
Denise Dragoo
Fidelity Investments
Granite School District
HDR Engineering
Holland & Hart
J Philip Cook, LLC
Key Bank

Lighthouse Research
Magnum Development
my529
Ogden City
Revere Health
Ronna Cohen & Stan Rosenzweig
Salt Lake Chamber
Salt Lake Community College
Sandy City
Snow College
Thatcher Chemical

University of Utah
United Way of Salt Lake
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Utah Hospital Association
Utah State University
Utah Tech University
Utah Policy
Utah Valley University
Weber State University
West Jordan
West Valley City



UTAH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

P.O. Box 387
Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
utahfoundation.org

THE NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIP

Thanks to the following for providing grant support to make this project possible:

GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES

F O U N D A T I O N

LAWRENCE T. & JANET T.

DEE FOUNDATION
