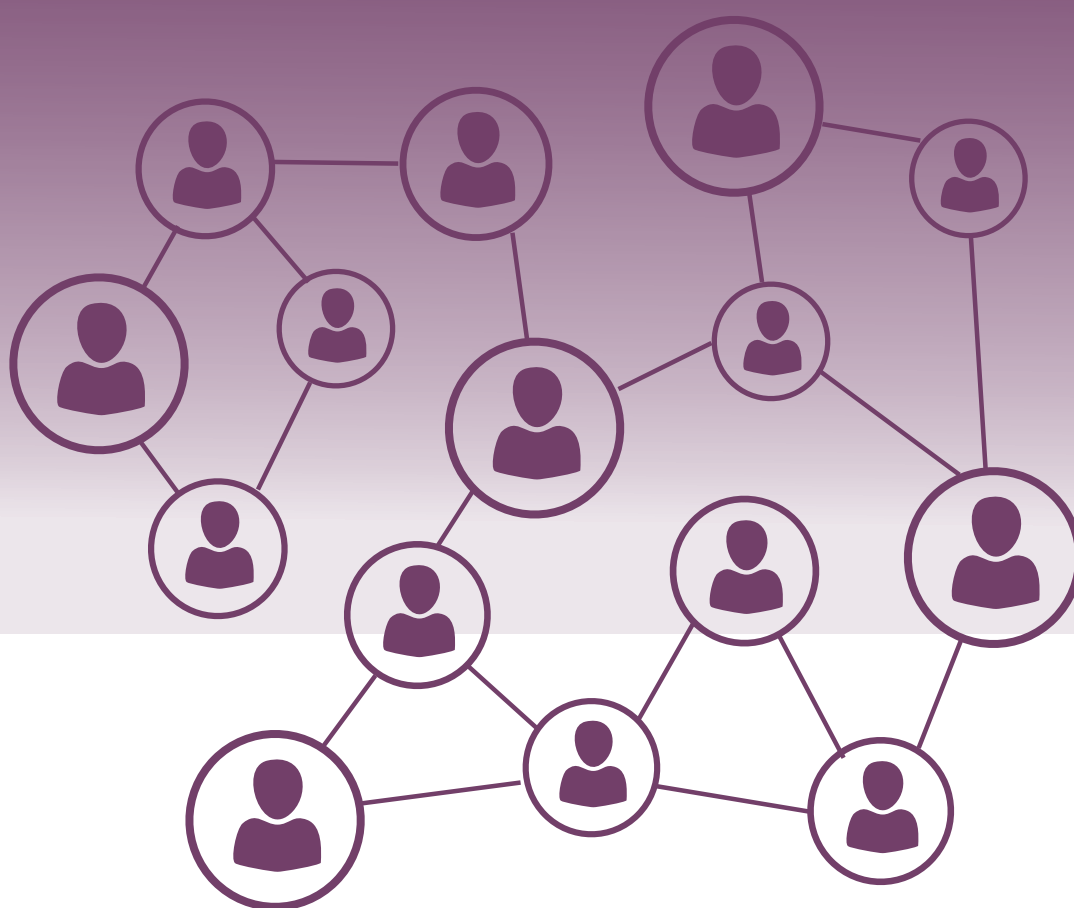


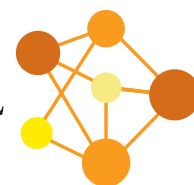
Neighborhoods and Networks

How Community Life Links with Social Capital



UTAH FOUNDATION
RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

**SOCIAL
CAPITAL
INDEX**



NEIGHBORHOODS AND NETWORKS

HOW COMMUNITY LIFE LINKS WITH SOCIAL CAPITAL

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About the Utah Foundation

Since 1945, leaders, legislators, and community members have relied upon the **illuminating, independent, and nonpartisan public-policy research** produced by the Utah Foundation to support informed decision-making on topics that matter most. As a 501(c)3 with broad community support and a 60-member board, the Utah Foundation exists to empower **civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life for Utahns.**

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most influential book ever produced in the study of the American character is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. The Frenchman explored the U.S. in the 1830s with the eyes of an outsider. One particular interest was his observation of Americans' vibrant "art" of association. He wrote that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, all minds constantly unite... In America I encountered sorts of associations of which, I confess, I had no idea, and I often admired the infinite art with which the inhabitants of the United States managed to fix a common goal to the efforts of many men and to get them to advance to it freely."¹

One and one-half centuries later, that art was on display in Utah. The flood of 1983, when City Creek overflowed, sent water into downtown Salt Lake City. Utahns from outside of city and county boundaries, 10,000 people total, came together to fill sandbags, sending the water down State Street and then to the Jordan River.²

Another example is the Utah Foundation itself. This very report emanates from an organization formed in 1945 and maintained by an association of Utahns who seek to bring dispassionate facts and analysis to the challenges of our day.

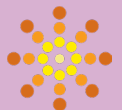
The art of association opens the way not only for communities to come together to address those challenges, but also to form social capital through their participation in community life.

This installment in the Social Capital Index project seeks to measure participation in community life. It does so using eight indicators, from charitable donations and volunteering to time spent with friends and neighbors.

1 de Tocqueville, Alexis, 2000, "Democracy in America", Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 289, <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/D/bo3612682.html>.

2 Lee Benson, 2023 "Hell or High Water," *Deseret News*, <https://www.deseret.com/fair/2023/4/12/23680668/1983-salt-lake-city-flood-anniversary/>.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS REPORT



- Utah's community life index score fell by over 40% from 2013 to 2025.
- Utah still leads the nation in terms of community life – and it isn't even close. Utah is almost twice that of the next nearest state.
- Utah is first or second in the nation on five of the eight indicators that make up community life.
- The nation has a community life index of 0 – a sign that the nation has seen significant decreases since its 2016 baseline. This is driven by large declines in religious participation and time spent with friends and neighbors, and an increase in time spent alone.

BACKGROUND

One of the most influential works ever produced on social capital documented a decline in associational life, with a title that says it all. Robert Putnam's 2000 landmark work, *Bowling Alone*, draws from the example of the decline of bowling leagues to emblemize the disintegration of community participation.³ This disintegration not only tears at our social fabric, but 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 over the past 60 years from a "we" society to an "I" society can be arrested.⁵

Researchers have highlighted the importance of community networks to benefit those in need. Communities, whether residential, religious, or ethnic, can provide information needed to build social support. Providing these circles of information and network channels enables people from different social and economic backgrounds to access opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. For example, such communities can help students from disadvantaged backgrounds pursue higher education by connecting them with mentors or scholarships.⁶ Community-based involvement provides the tools necessary to build resilience and social ties for all.⁷

3 Putnam, Robert, 2000, "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community," *Touchstone Books/Simon and Schuster*, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Bowling-Alone-Revised-and-Updated/Robert-D-Putnam/9781982130848>.

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, 2021, "Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors: The Power of Social Connection in Prevention," *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8504333/>.

5 Putnam, Robert D., and Romney-Garrett, Shaylyn, 2020, "The Upswing: How American Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can do it Again," *New York: Simon & Schuster*, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Upswing/Robert-D-Putnam/9781982129156>.

6 Mishra, Shweta, 2020, "Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A Systematic review with a special focus on 'underrepresented' students," *Educational Research Review Vol. 29*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100307>.

7 Cline, Sarah, 2023, "Volunteering Builds Social Capital for Older Adults," *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Government, nclIMPACT Initiative*, <https://ncimpact.sog.unc.edu/2023/03/volunteering-builds-social-capital-for-older-adults/>; Gerolemou, Rosie V., James C. Russell, Margaret C. Stanley, 2022, "Social capital in the context of volunteer conservation initiatives," *Conservation Science and Practice Vol. 4, No. 9*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.12765>.

Social Capital: Simply put, social capital refers to the ways in which people utilize networks and social connections to benefit themselves and their communities. Social capital has numerous direct and indirect benefits, as highlighted in the introductory report of the Utah Foundation's Social Capital Index project: *Foundations and Frameworks: A Primer on Social Capital and Why It's Important*.

Community building in Utah takes many forms. For example, the United Board Room of United Way of Salt Lake is an initiative that enables community members to develop the skills necessary to become board members for local organizations. At the end of these workshops, participants meet with various nonprofits to explore opportunities to serve on a board or give back to their communities.⁸

Another prominent example of community building through volunteerism is My Hometown initiative. This service-oriented program operates in Ogden, Orem, Provo, Salt Lake City, and West Valley City, aiming to bring residents from diverse backgrounds together to participate in projects that strengthen community unity and purpose.⁹

For 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. It looks at the following indicators:

- Charitable donations (1st in the nation)
- Volunteerism (1st in the nation)
- Religious participation (2nd in the nation)
- Neighborhood participation (1st in the nation)
- Non-professional organizations funding effort (47th in the nation)
- Professional associations funding effort (39th in the nation)
- Spending time with friends and neighbors (38th in the nation)
- Spending time alone (2nd lowest in the nation)

8 Utah Foundation talks with United Way of Salt Lake Chief Equity Officer, Christinia-Mai Just.

9 myHometown Utah, 2025, "What we do," <https://www.myhometownut.com/what-we-do>.



Salt Lake City, Utah, 1983, Photo credit: Tom Smart, Desert News

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Many activities linked to social capital, such as participation in community organizations, significantly increase rates of charitable donation.¹⁰ To the degree social capital increases charitable donations, then those donations can consequently be assumed to offer a significant measure of participation in community life.

One way of measuring charitable giving is by looking at charitable deductions. However, it is not very useful to look at trends over time, since tax reform in recent years has reshaped the deductions landscape. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) increased the standard deduction and reduced marginal tax rates, leading to a major reduction in the number of taxpayers claiming charitable deductions because most households would gain no tax benefit. The tax bill capped the deductions for state and local taxes at \$10,000 and eliminated other itemized deductions.

The Tax Foundation, an independent nonprofit focused on tax policy, reports that high-income Americans disproportionately benefit from charitable deductions, as this income group tends to itemize their deductions.¹¹ This skews donation deductions as an indicator for participation in community life. As a result, state-by-state comparisons can also be skewed. Rather than measuring the generosity of a state, it may simply be measuring how much its residents are in a position to take a deduction – or the proportion of a state's residents that are wealthy.

As a result, the Utah Foundation examines the share of Americans who report making donations to charitable groups. Specifically, what share reports donating at least \$25 to a non-political group or organization, such as a charity, school, or religious organization, as reported by respondents to the American Community Survey. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

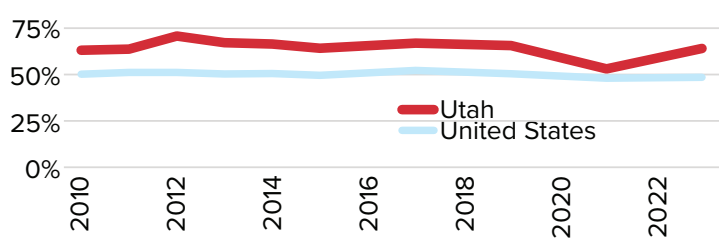
10 Brooks, Arthur C., 2005, "Does Social Capital Make You Generous?" *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42956046>.

11 York, E., 2018, "Charitable Deductions by State," *Tax Foundation*, <https://taxfoundation.org/charitable-deductions-by-state/>.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS DASHBOARD

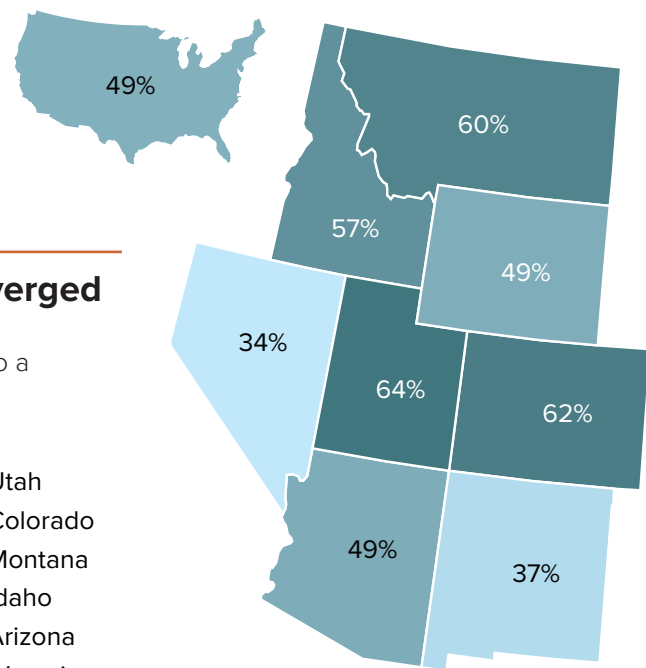
Utah has seen an overall increase in reported donor activity over time.

Figure 1.1: Share of Residents Reporting a Donation of at Least \$25 to a Charitable Group, Utah and the U.S.: 2010-2023



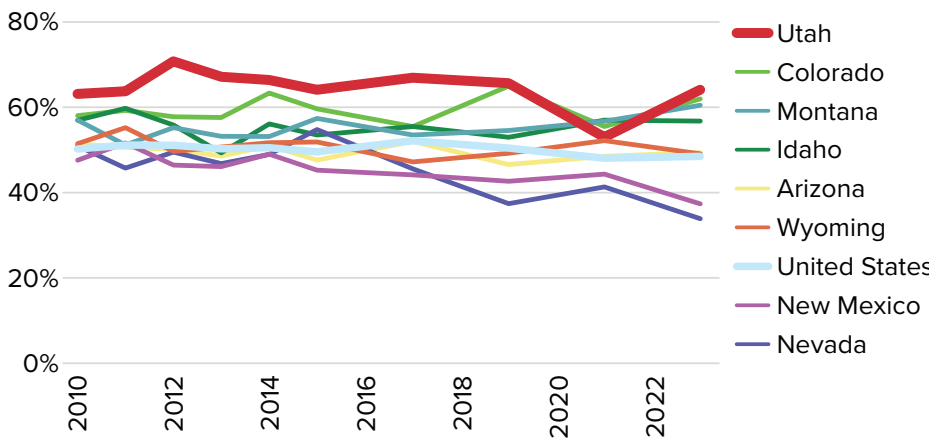
In 2023, Utah, Colorado, and Montana were by far the most generous of the Mountain States.

Figure 1.2: Share of Residents Reporting a Donation of at Least \$25 to a Charitable Group, Mountain States: 2023



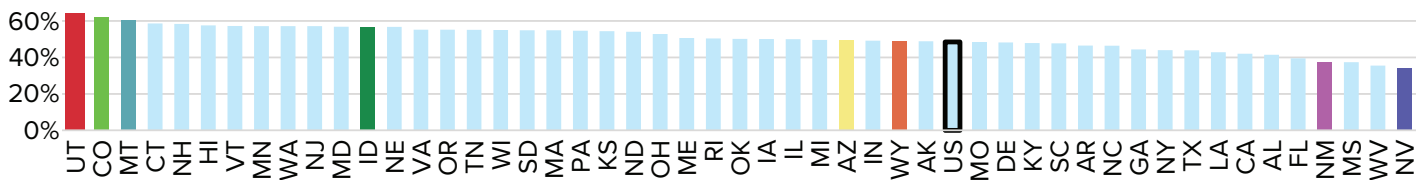
Mountain States' charitable donations have diverged in recent years.

Figure 1.3: Share of Residents Reporting a Donation of at Least \$25 to a Charitable Group, Utah and the Mountain States: 2010-2023



Utah was the top state in terms of charitable giving.

Figure 1.4: Share of Residents Reporting a Donation of at Least \$25 to a Charitable Group by State, 2023



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utah's Charitable Donations Over Time

In 2023, 64% of Utahns reported making a charitable donation. This is right at Utah's 13-year average. Over time, the trend in the share of Utahns reporting a donation of at least \$25 to a charitable group has been fairly stable. However, there was a dip in 2021 when only 53% of Utahns reported a charitable donation. Since then, Utah has reverted to its average rate.

Charitable Donations in the Mountain States

Most of the Mountain States perform better than the national rate. Moreover, the three top states in the nation are all Mountain States. Behind Utah, Colorado and Montana follow in second and third place. However, two of the Mountain States, New Mexico and Nevada, fall under the national share. They both are among the bottom five states. This illustrates that the Mountain States vary significantly in their patterns of charitable donations, and puts the Mountain States as a whole score near the national share.

Utah and the Nation

Utah's charitable giving has consistently outpaced the U.S. by a wide margin. In 2023, 64% of Utahns made donations, compared to only 49% of Americans overall, making it the top state in the nation. However, in 2021, rates of charitable donations in Utah were much more similar to those of the nation at large.

THE SHARE OF ADULTS WHO REPORT VOLUNTEERING

One of the most traditional indicators used to measure the level of social capital in a community is the rate at which people volunteer. There are few better indicators of participation in one's community than the willingness to expend effort to make the community a better place without expecting any form of compensation.¹² Moreover, higher levels of volunteering, particularly in communities where social capital rates are already high, can lead to improved "norms of reciprocity" among a community.

Norms of reciprocity are the norms that community members have set around what is expected of residents to give to the community around them, and when norms have been set, residents are expected to try to exceed the expectations of those norms, further increasing volunteerism.¹³ Simply put, volunteering can be an important part of a positive feedback loop that encourages more people to be generous and volunteer.

Individuals are considered to be volunteers based on a series of questions asked by the U.S. Census when administering the Current Population Survey. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

¹² Cortright, J., 2017, "City observatory - volunteering as a measure of social capital", *City Observatory*, <https://cityobservatory.org/volunteering-as-a-measure-of-social-capital/>.

¹³ Wu, Zhongsheng et al., 2018, "The impact of social capital on volunteering and giving: evidence from urban China," *Nonprofit And Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 47, no. 6 pg.1201-1222, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018784761>.

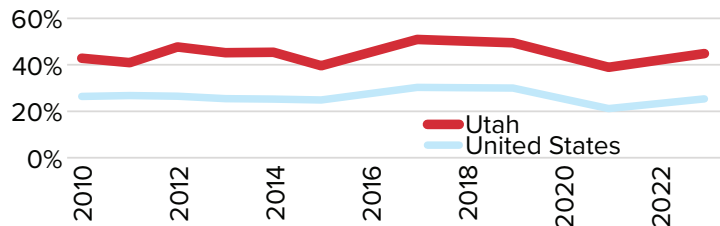


Salt Lake City, Utah, 1983, Photo credit: Tom Smart, Desert News

VOLUNTEERING DASHBOARD

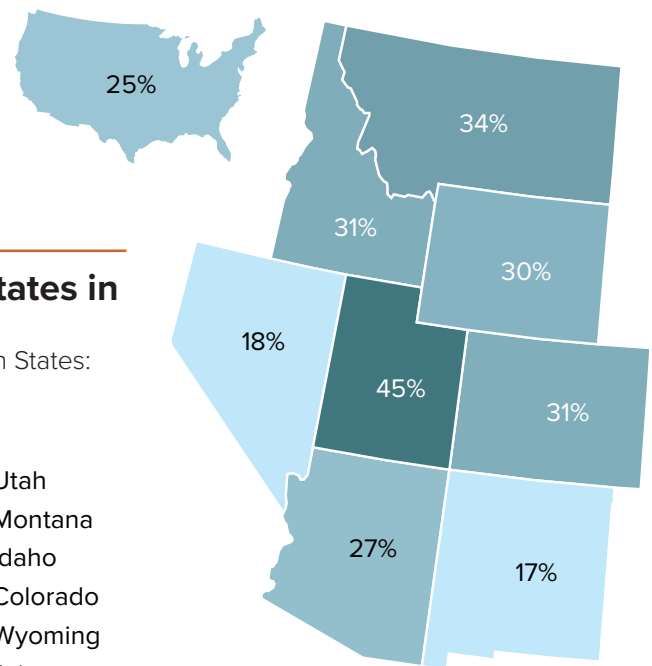
Utah's volunteering rates increased after dipping in 2021.

Figure 2.1: Share of Adults Who Report Volunteering, Utah and the United States: 2010-2023



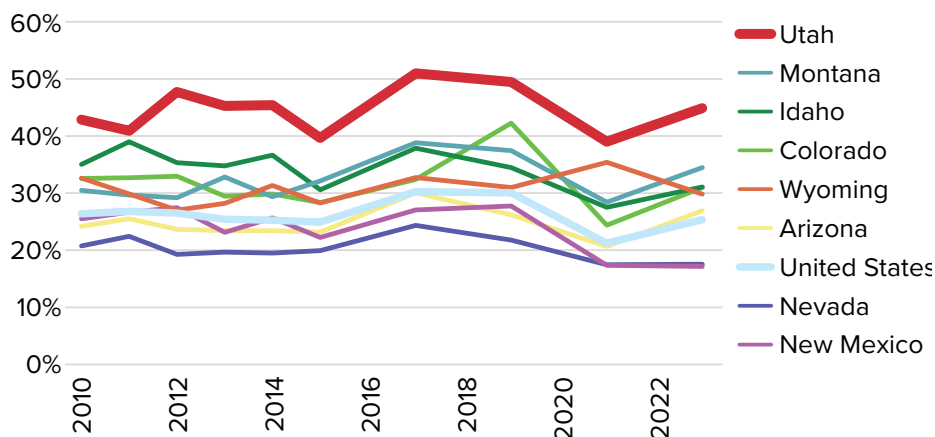
In 2023, Utah's share of volunteering far exceeded all other Mountain States.

Figure 2.2: Share of Adults Who Report Volunteering in the Mountain States: 2023



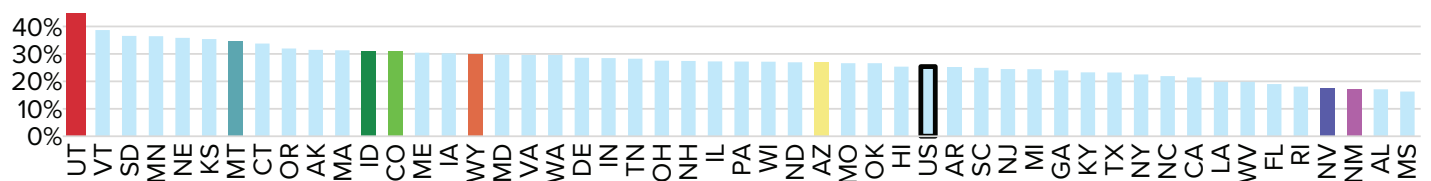
Utah consistently surpassed other Mountain States in terms of volunteerism.

Figure 2.3: Share of Adults Who Report Volunteering, in the Mountain States: 2010-2023



Utah was the top state in volunteerism.

Figure 2.4: Share of Adults Who Report Volunteering by State, 2023



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utah Volunteering Over Time

In 2023, approximately 45% of Utahns were classified as volunteers – the same rate as its 13-year average. The share of adults volunteering in Utah from 2010 to 2023 fluctuated between 39% in 2021 and 51% in 2017. Utah's volunteerism dropped in 2021 – likely related to the pandemic, but has since recovered.

Volunteering in the Mountain States

Utah reported the highest level of volunteerism, although Montana is also among the top ten. Most Mountain States residents volunteer at higher rates than the nation as a whole. Nevada and New Mexico are the only two Mountain States that are not only below the national share, but within the bottom five states.

Utah and the Nation

Utah's level of volunteerism outstrips any other state in the nation. The next closest state – Vermont – reports a rate six percentage points lower than Utah. Over time, Utah has consistently outperformed the nation in volunteerism by a wide margin, although it appears to follow national trends. At times, Utah's level of volunteerism has been nearly double the national share. As of 2023, the share of Utahns who reported volunteering stood at 45%, compared to only 25% nationally.

RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

Religious groups provide perhaps the most powerful forum for creating social connections, better, maybe, than those in the workplace, civic groups, or neighborhoods. One prominent expert told the Utah Foundation that roughly half of all U.S. social capital comes from religious groups in one form or another.¹⁴ Religion, in fact, can influence several of the other indicators included in this report, including associational memberships, charitable giving, and volunteerism.¹⁵

While religion can produce social sorting and form dividing lines, the relatively high and growing degree of religious toleration in the U.S. has opened the way for interfaith connections.¹⁶ Nationally, religious participation is also correlated with economic success and self-reported happiness, and apparently, the key is not just to believe but also to participate in worship services.¹⁷ Here in Utah, the Utah Foundation has found that those who identify with a religion report a higher community quality of life on most measures.¹⁸

This discussion looks at weekly religious service attendance as periodically updated by the public policy firm Pew Research Center. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

14 The Utah Foundation, 2019, "Robert Putnam," *Utah Thrives podcast*, www.utahfoundation.org/2019/05/utah-thrives-robert-putnam/.

15 As Putnam has written: "... Our evidence shows nearly half of all associational memberships are church-related, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context." See *Bowling Alone*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

16 Putnam, Robert D., David E. Campbell, and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, 2012, "American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us," *New York: Simon & Schuster*, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/American-Grace/Robert-D-Putnam/9781416566731>.

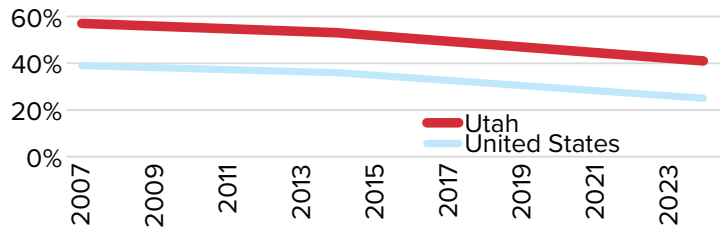
17 Murray, Charles, 2012, "Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010," *New York: Crown Forum*, pp. 205-208, 259-260, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/119020/coming-apart-by-charles-murray/>.

18 Utah Foundation, 2022, "The 2022 Utah Community Quality of Life Index: Is a Booming Economy Making Life Better?" <https://www.utahfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/rr802.pdf>.

RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION DASHBOARD

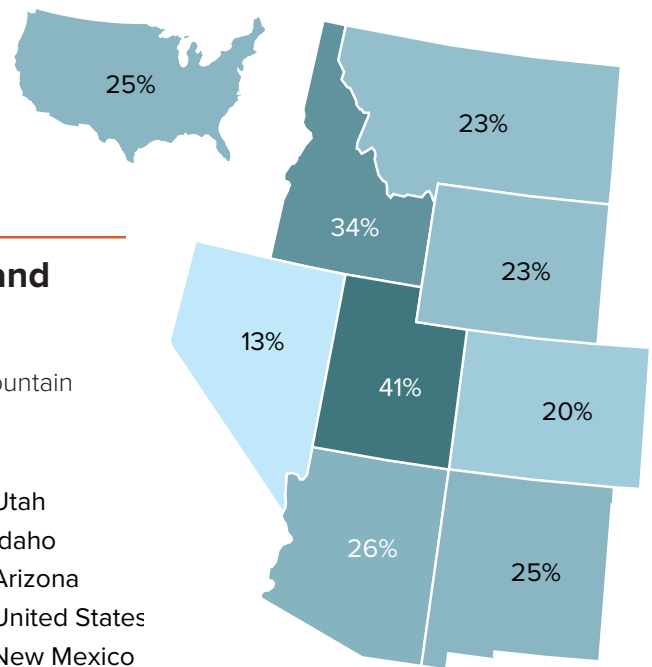
Utah's attendance at religious services decreased over time.

Figure 3.1: Share of Weekly Religious Service Attendance, Utah and the United States: 2007-2024



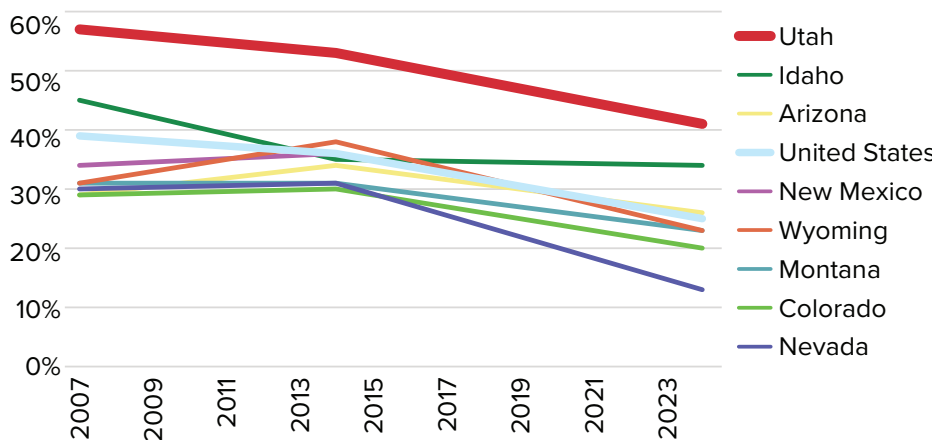
In 2024, Utah ranked far ahead of the rest of the region in service attendance.

Figure 3.2: Share of Weekly Religious Service Attendance in the Mountain States: 2024



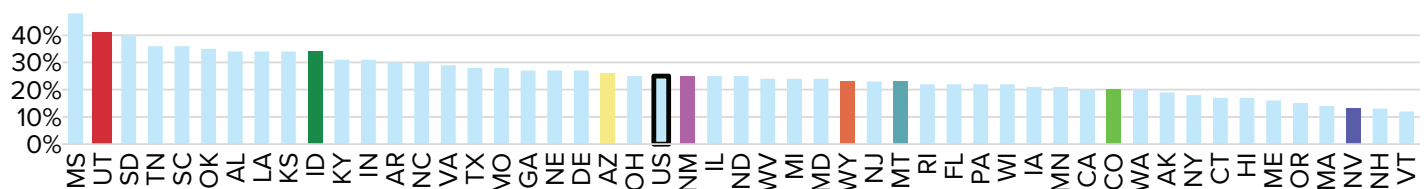
Among the Mountain States, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada saw some of the steepest declines in religious service participation.

Figure 13.3: Share of Weekly Religious Service Attendance, in the Mountain States: 2007-2024



Utah ranked second in the nation for weekly attendance at religious services.

Figure 3.4: Share of Weekly Religious Service Attendance by State, 2024



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Religious Service Attendance Over Time

Throughout the United States, church attendance has been in long-term decline. Utah is no exception. In 2007, 57% of Utahns polled said they attended at least once a week, 23% said once or twice a month or a few times a year, and 20% said seldom or never. By 2024, 41% (a 16% decrease) said at least once a week, 23% (a 4% decrease) once or twice a month or a few times a year, and 28% said seldom or never (an 8% increase).

Over 2.2 million Utahns are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; around 63% of the state's population, according to the church's membership statistics.¹⁹ However, this does not reflect the number of people who actually attend services.²⁰ As noted earlier, many social capital benefits of religiosity require actual participation, rather than simply belief or membership.

Religious Service Attendance in the Mountain States

Utah is by far the most religious of the Mountain States. At 41% weekly attendance in 2024, it was far ahead of the second-ranked Mountain State (Idaho, at 34%). Nevada had the lowest attendance in the region and nationally, with only 13%. The rest of the Mountain States saw around one-quarter of the population participating weekly. All the Mountain States saw notable declines; one of the most notable ones is Nevada. In 2007, Nevada had a weekly attendance rate of around 30%, but by 2024, it had dropped to 13%.

Utah and the Nation

There is growing distrust of institutions in America, and organized religion is not immune. In addition to decreasing religious attendance, trust in organized religion has also decreased. In 1975, 68% of Americans reported being confident in organized religion. That proportion has dropped to 36%.²¹

With that said, the most recent data makes Utah one of the top states in the nation on this indicator. While religious attendance in Utah has declined, it remains one of the top states in the nation on this indicator, ranking second behind Mississippi. And it, along with Idaho, is one of the only Mountain States among the top 10 nationally. Most of the other top states are concentrated in and around the South.

19 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2024, "Facts and Statistics," <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/state/utah>.

20 Pew Research Center, "Mormons who are in Utah," <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/utah/religious-tradition/mormon/>. Pew says the state was 55% Mormon in 2014, as it subtracted those who seldom/never attend services.

21 Newport, F., 2019, "Why Are Americans Losing Confidence in Organized Religion?" *Gallup*, <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/260738/why-americans-losing-confidence-organized-religion.aspx>. And see: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>.

PARTICIPATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS

People often find common causes and opportunities for community connections through participation at the neighborhood level. Some have argued that religiosity can inhibit neighborhood-level participation.²² Quite the opposite appears to be the case in Utah, which tops the nation on both counts.

Participation in neighborhood projects is measured by the Current Population Survey administered by the U.S. Census. All states saw large growth in reported neighborhood participation levels from 2015 to 2017, which is likely the result of a change in the wording of the question. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

22 Maselko, Joanna, Cayce Hughes and Rose Cheney, 2011, "Religious Social Capital: Its Measurement and Utility in the Study of the Social Determinants of Health", *Social Science & Medicine* 73, no. 5 pg.759-767. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.06.019

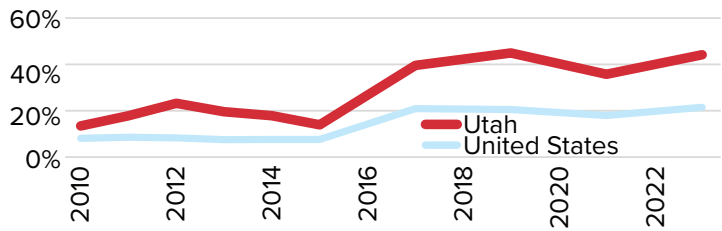


Hill Air Force Base, Utah

NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS DASHBOARD

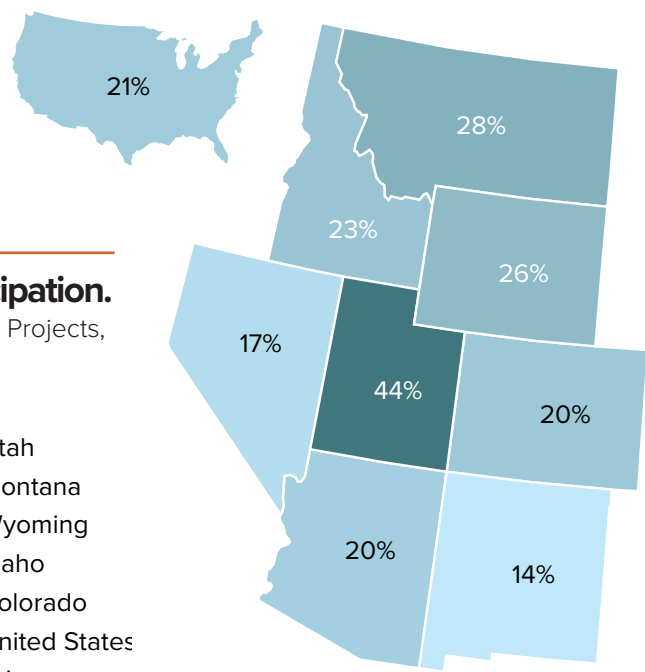
Utah more than doubled the national rate of participation in neighborhood projects.

Figure 4.1: Share of Adults Who Report Participating in Neighborhood Projects, Utah and the United States: 2010-2023



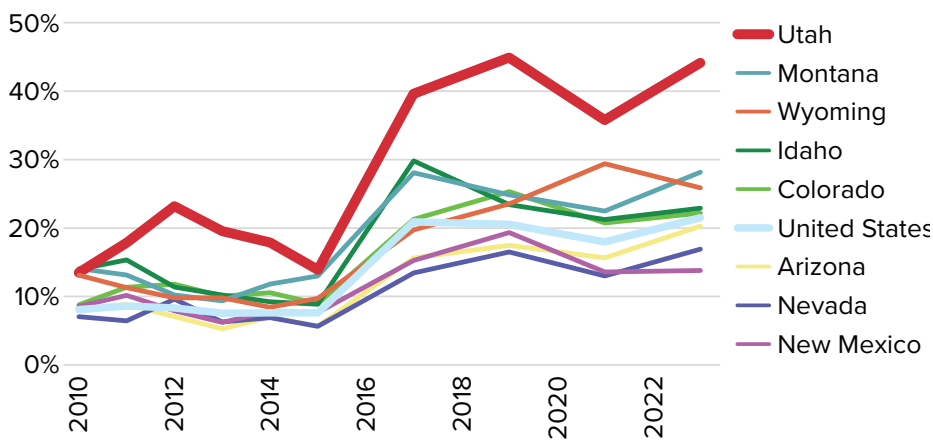
Among the Mountain States, Utah stood out as the state with the highest neighborhood participation.

Figure 4.2: Share of Adults Who Report Participating in Neighborhood Projects in the Mountain States: 2023



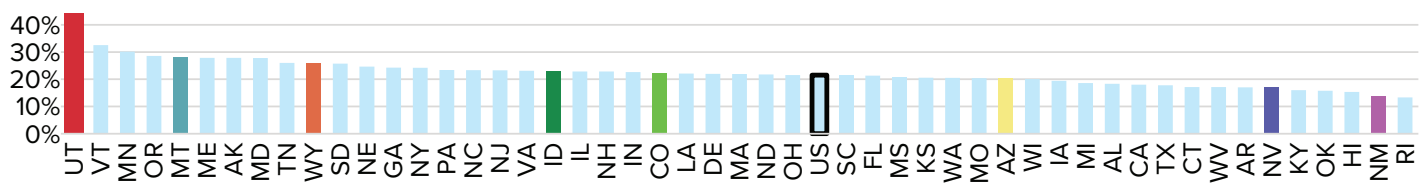
Utah far outshined the region in neighborhood participation.

Figure 4.3: Share of Adults Who Report Participating in Neighborhood Projects, in the Mountain States: 2010-2019



Utah clearly lead the nation in neighborhood participation.

Figure 4.4 Share of Adults Who Report Participating in Neighborhood Projects by State, 2023



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Please note, all states saw large growth in reported neighborhood participation levels from 2015 to 2017, which is likely the result of a change in the wording of the question.

Utah Participation in Neighborhood Projects Over Time

In 2023, 44% of Utahns reported participating in a project to improve their neighborhood or community. This is just shy of the high-water mark in 2019, when 45% of Utahns reported participating in neighborhood projects. While participation levels dipped around the pandemic, Utah appears to have recovered since.

Neighborhood Participation in the Mountain States

While several Mountain States perform relatively well in terms of neighborhood participation, none come close to Utah. While Montana and Wyoming (at 28% and 26%, respectively) both appear in the top 10, Utah's 44% stands out in the region. Idaho and Colorado perform well as they are both above the national share. Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico perform particularly poorly on this measure, with Nevada and New Mexico landing in the bottom five nationally.

Utah and the Nation

Utah has by far the nation's largest share of adults participating in neighborhood projects, and the proportion has surged rapidly in recent years. Utah is the only state that approaches 50%, while all other states cluster around 25%. Even the next closest state – Vermont – has only three-quarters of the rate Utah has.



Connecting People to Their Public Lands, Credit: Flickr User "BLM Utah"

NON-PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION FUNDING EFFORT

If asked about the most quintessentially American things, baseball or apple pie may come to mind. Non-professional associations probably do not. Still, they have arguably played a far more important role in the development of our democracy and social capital, dating all the way back to the associations that supported the War of Independence and the founding of the United States.²³

The Utah Foundation looks at the amount of money earned by or donated to non-professional organizations per \$1,000 of personal income. These organizations are non-profit entities that focus on culture, recreation, community development, or volunteerism. The data are from the IRS. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

23 Gamm, Gerald, and Robert D. Putnam, 1999, "The growth of voluntary associations in America, 1840–1940", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 4 pg. 511-557, doi:10.1162/002219599551804.

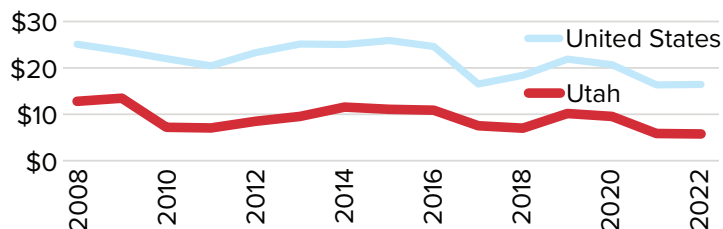


Salt Lake City, Utah

NON-PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION FUNDING EFFORT DASHBOARD

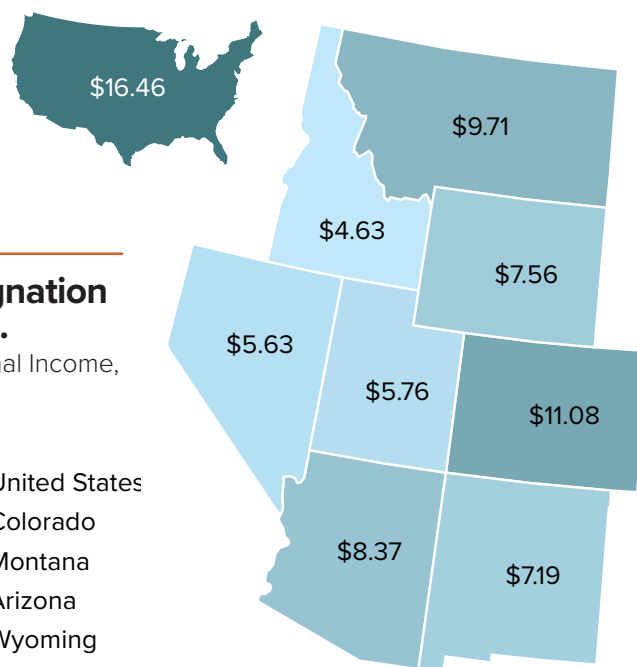
Utah's non-professional organizations' funding effort has declined slightly in recent years.

Figure 5.1: Non-Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income, Utah and the United States: 2008-2022



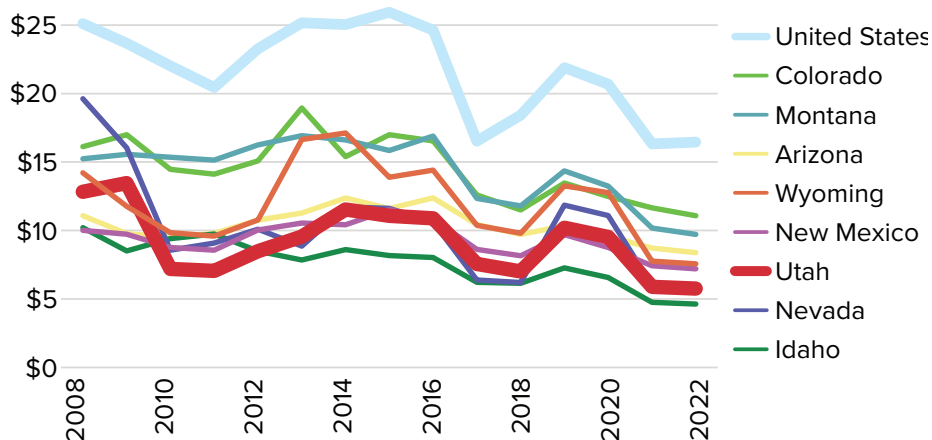
In 2023, Utah ranked sixth in the region for non-professional association funds.

Figure 5.2: Non-Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income in the Mountain States: 2022



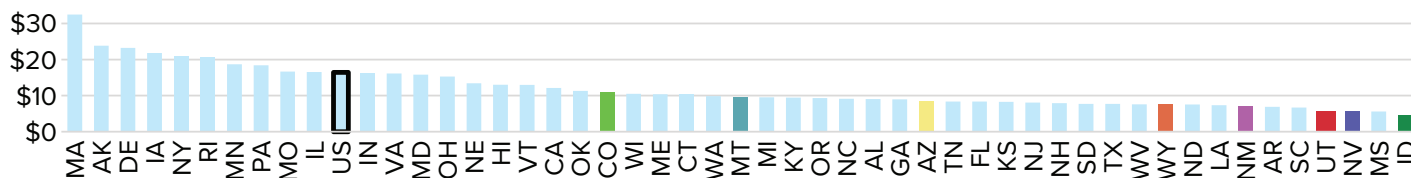
Most Mountain States have seen declines or stagnation in non-professional organization funding effort.

Figure 5.3: Non-Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income, Utah and the Mountain States: 2008-2022



Utah was among the bottom five states in terms of non-professional organization funding effort.

Figure 5.4: Non-Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income by State, 2022



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utah Non-Professional Organization Funding Effort Over Time

In 2022, Utahns contributed \$5.76 for every \$1,000 of personal income to non-professional organizations in 2022. This represents the lowest amount Utahns have contributed over the previous 15 years. This represents nearly a 60% decline from the state's high point of \$13.46 in 2009.

Non-Professional Organization Funding Effort in the Mountain States

Utah has one of the lowest shares of funds for non-professional organizations per capita in the Mountain States. Nevada and Idaho perform worse than the Beehive state, with Idaho placing dead last. While the Mountain States perform below the national average, Colorado leads strongly in this measure, with Montana and Arizona performing well.

Utah and the Nation

Compared to the nation, Utah is ranked one of the states with the lowest share of funds for non-professional organizations. The national funding effort includes Washington, D.C. (which comprises \$93.50 for every \$1,000 earned by residents). While no state compares to the amount Washington D.C. produces, Massachusetts performs very well on this indicator, surpassing \$30 for every \$1,000 earned by residents. The following states are only slightly above \$20.



Magna, Utah

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FUNDING EFFORT

Professional associations, or associations formed to promote the interests of a particular profession, have become a staple of the working world. They are generally defined as, “Learned societies, professional councils, and other organizations that bring together individuals or organizations with a common professional or vocational interest.”²⁴ Examples include: the Governmental Research Association, Utah Education Association, United Association of Journeymen & Apprentices of the Plumbing & Pipe, Future Business Leaders of America, Utah Minority Bar Association, Utah Geek Events, Utah HVAC Contractors Association, Utah Brewers Guild, Utah Government Finance Officers Association, Utah Society of Addiction Medicine, and the Utah Student Nurses Association.

The Utah Foundation looks at the amount of money earned by professional organizations per \$1,000 of personal income. Data are from the IRS, while personal income data are from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

24 Jones, D., 2019, “I.R.S. Activity Codes,” *Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics*, <https://nccs.urban.org/publication/irs-activity-codes>.

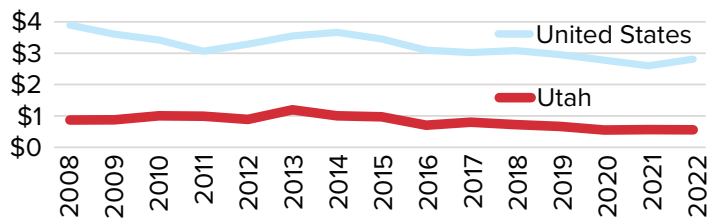


Utah Foundation Annual Luncheon, Salt Lake City, Utah

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FUNDING EFFORT DASHBOARD

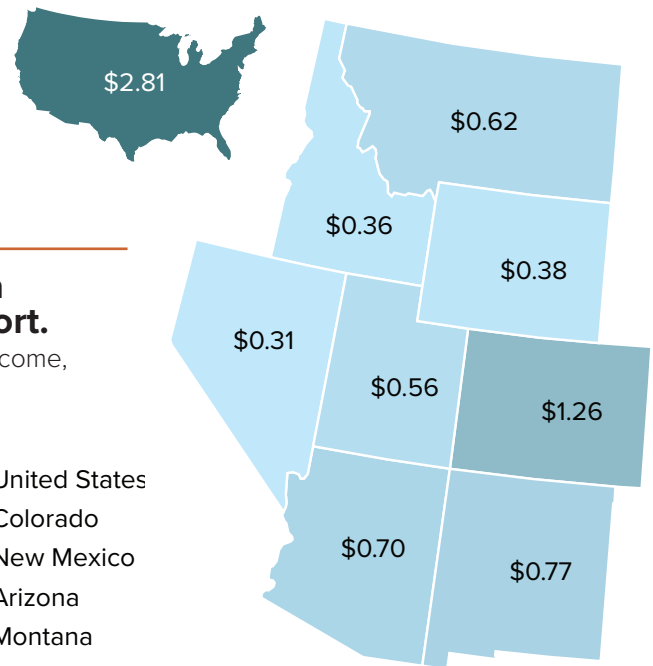
Utah's level of professional organizations was trending downward.

Figure 6.1: Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income, Utah and the United States: 2008-2022



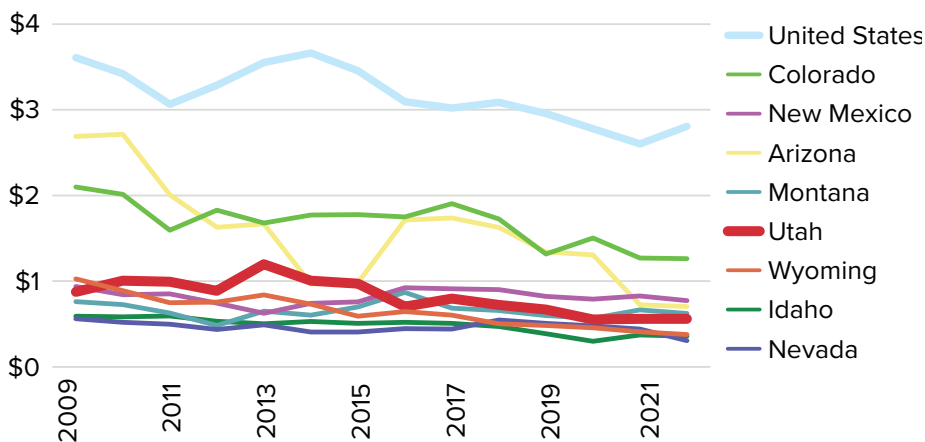
Utah fell in the middle of Mountain States, in terms of professional groups' funding efforts.

Figure 6.2: Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income in the Mountain States; 2022



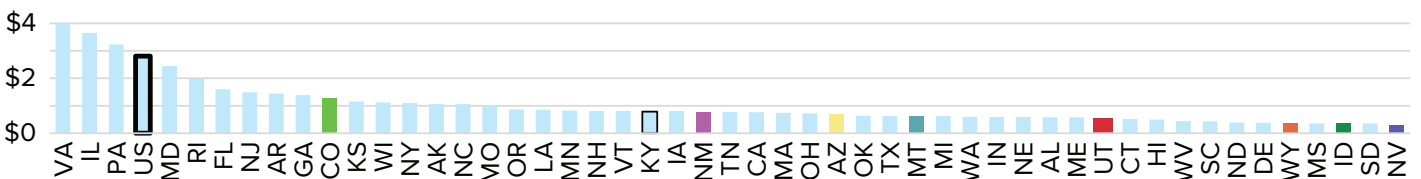
Utah – and most Mountain States – has seen a decline in professional association funding effort.

Figure 6.3: Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income, Utah and the Mountain States: 2008-2022



Utah was at the lower end of the U.S. in terms of professional association funding effort.

Figure 6.4: Number of Professional Association Funds Per \$1,000 of Personal Income by State, 2022



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utah Professional Association Funding Effort Over Time

For every \$1,000 earned by Utahns, \$0.56 was paid to or donated to a professional organization in 2022. This is very near the 15-year low point of \$0.55 in 2022. Utah has experienced a general decline since its high point in 2013, when it reached \$1.20.

Professional Association Funding Effort in the Mountain States

Most of the states in our region have professional organization funds well below the national level. This is largely because the national share includes Washington, D.C. (which spends \$93.55 per \$1,000 of personal income on professional organizations). Even still, most Mountain States fall below the bottom half of states. Three mountain states – Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada – are among the bottom five states in the nation. On the other hand, Colorado is the best-performing state in the region with \$1.26. Colorado also ranks fairly high nationwide as well. Utah sits around the median among the Mountain States, with four states performing better and three states performing worse.

Utah and the Nation

The Beehive State (at \$0.56 per \$1,000 of personal income) remains far below the nation at large (at \$2.81). Similar to Utah and several other Mountain States, the funding effort nationwide has also decreased over the 15-year period.



UEA Excellence in Teaching Awards, Credit: Flickr User "PBS Utah" under license (CC BY-NC 2.0)

SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Informal settings, such as spending time with neighbors or friends, often provide opportunities for people to share personal experiences and life updates. This not only strengthens individual relationships but also fosters a sense of shared community identity and solidarity. Through these informal connections, people become more aware of the needs, issues, and interests of others in their community, which can lead to more cooperative and inclusive community action.

Friends and neighbors often exchange resources, whether it's borrowing a tool, sharing advice, or offering emotional support. These exchanges create a form of social capital that is more fluid and immediate than formal institutions, such as organizations and religious participation.

The Utah Foundation measures the time spent with friends and neighbors as the average number of minutes per day. Four-year averages help smooth out fluctuations in low-population states with limited data. Data are from the American Time Use Survey produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

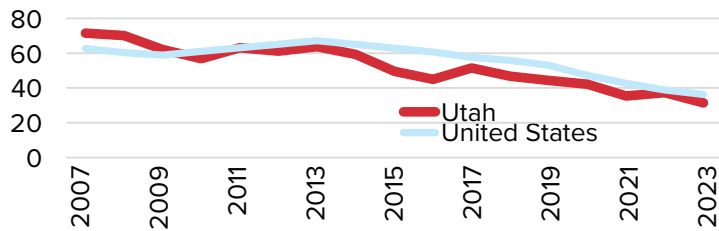


Jordanelle Reservoir, Utah

SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS DASHBOARD

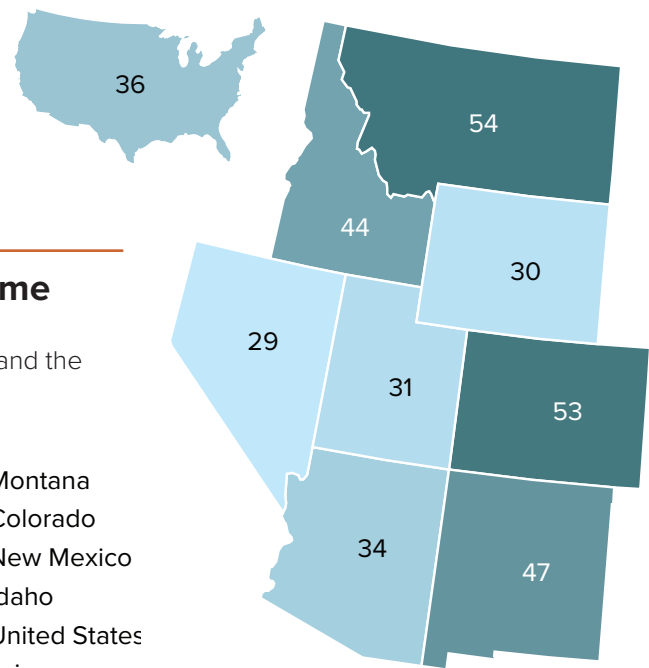
Utahns' time spent with friends and neighbors dropped by more than 50%.

Figure 7.1: Minutes Spent with Friends and Neighbors per Day, Utah and the United States: 2007-2023, Four-Year Average



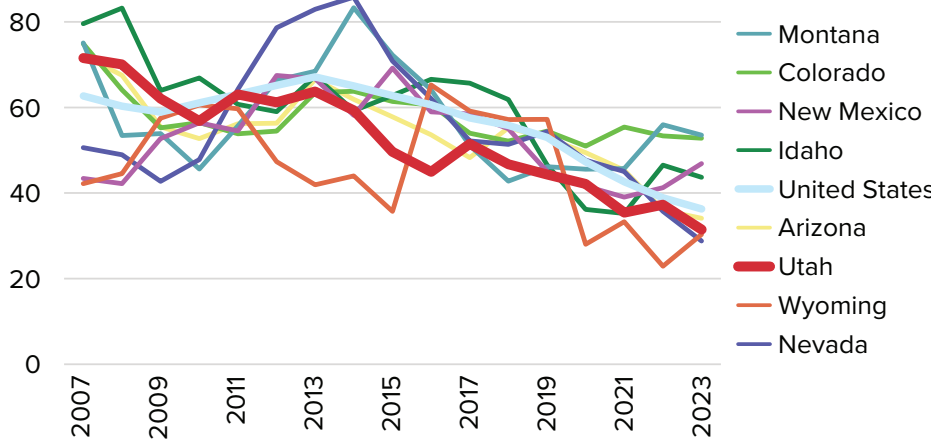
Utah was among the bottom of the Mountain States for time spent with friends and neighbors.

Figure 7.2: Minutes Spent with Friends and Neighbors per Day in the Mountain States: 2023, Four-Year Average



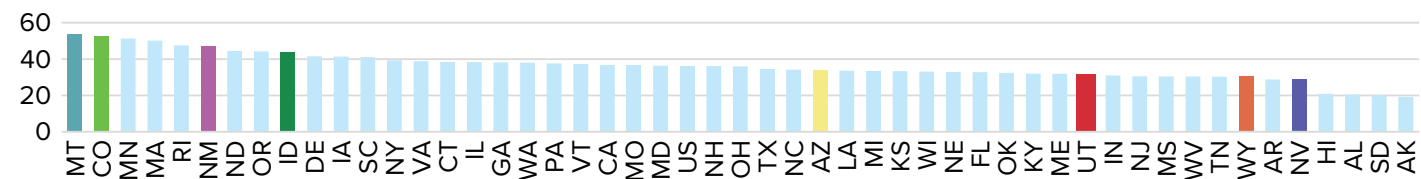
Most Mountain States have seen a decline in time spent with friends and neighbors.

Figure 7.3: Minutes Spent with Friends and Neighbors per Day, Utah and the Mountain States: 2007-2023, Four-Year Average



Mountain States are split in the time spent with friends and neighbors.

Figure 7.4: Minutes Spent with Friends and Neighbors per Day by State: 2023, Four-Year Average



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utahns Spending Time with Friends and Neighbors Over Time

From 2020 to 2023, Utahns spent an average of 31 minutes per day with friends and neighbors. This marks a large decrease from its high point of 72 minutes in 2004-2007. This decrease over the previous 17 years represents a reduction of more than 50%.

Time with Friends and Neighbors in the Mountain States

Mountain States are divided in terms of time spent with friends and neighbors. Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, and Nevada spend a below-average amount of time with friends and neighbors. Moreover, Nevada and Wyoming actually fall among the ten lowest states. At the other end of the spectrum, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, and Idaho are all among the top ten states in terms of residents spending time with friends and neighbors.

Utah and the Nation

Before 2009, Utah spent a higher-than-average amount of time with friends and neighbors. Since 2009, however, Utah has consistently been below the nation and matched the nation's declining trend.



Liberty Park, Salt Lake City, Utah

SPENDING TIME ALONE

While social capital is often measured through visible connections – like group membership, civic engagement, or family ties – the absence of interaction can also reveal a lack of access to supportive networks. Individuals who frequently spend time alone are likely less embedded in community structures and may lack connections that would allow them to leverage networks and relationships. High levels of solitude can reflect social isolation, which often correlates with weaker ties to institutions, lower trust in others, and limited reciprocal relationships. As a result, time spent alone functions as a proxy for missing or underdeveloped social capital. It suggests not just physical separation, but potential exclusion from the kinds of networks that build collective resilience and individual opportunity.

The Utah Foundation measures the time spent alone as the average number of minutes per day. Four-year averages help smooth out fluctuations in low-population states with limited data. Data are from the American Time Use Survey produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Please refer to the appendix for additional details.

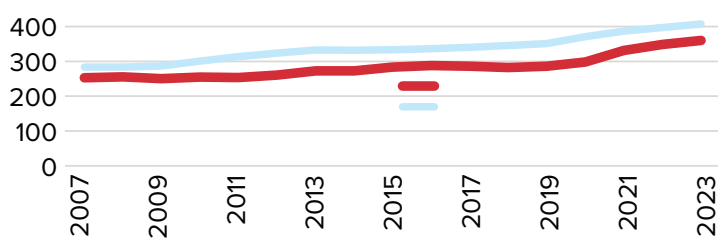


Salt Lake City, Utah

SPENDING TIME ALONE DASHBOARD

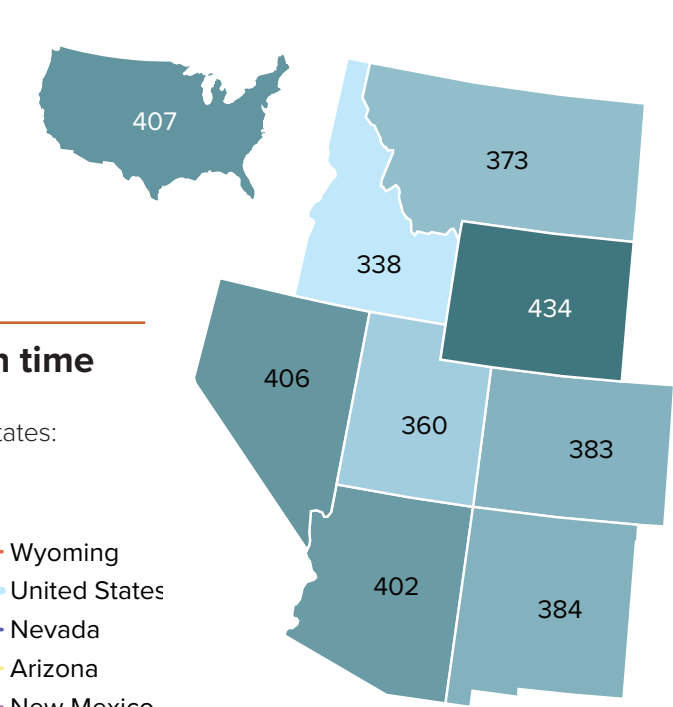
Utahns' time spent alone jumped during the pandemic and continued to grow after.

Figure 8.1: Minutes Spent Alone per Day, Utah and the United States: 2007-2023, Four-Year Average



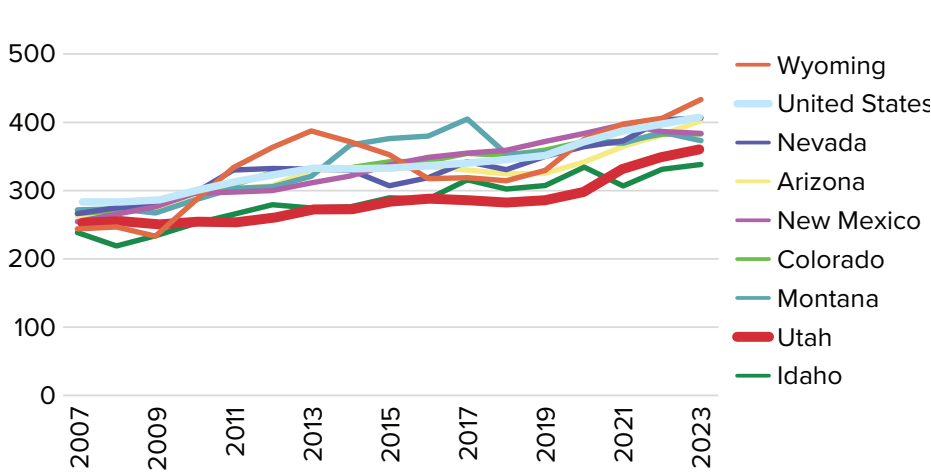
Utah has the second-lowest time spent alone in the Mountain States

Figure 8.2: Minutes Spent Alone per Day, in the Mountain States: 2023, Four-Year Average



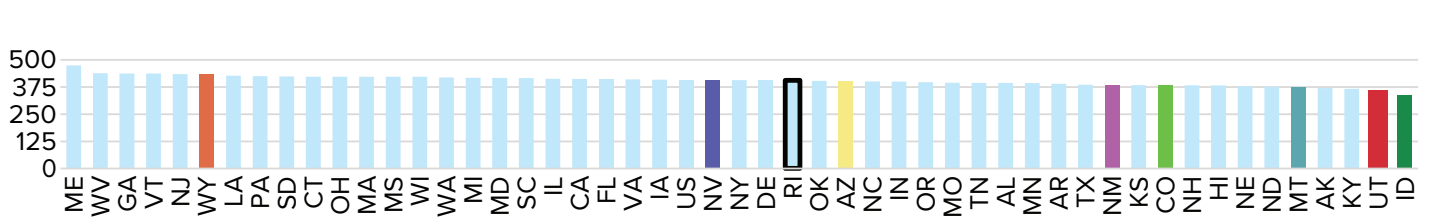
The Mountain States have seen an increase in time spent alone.

Figure 8.3: Minutes Spent Alone per Day, Utah and the Mountain States: 2007-2023, Four-Year Average



Utah had the second-lowest time spent alone in the nation.

Figure 8.4: Minutes Spent Alone per Day by State: 2023, Four-Year Average



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utahns Spending Time Alone Over Time

Between 2020 and 2023, Utahns spent an average of 360 minutes (six hours) alone per day. This is substantially higher than the time spent alone in 2004-2007, which was 253 minutes (four hours and 13 minutes). The time Utahns spent alone increased slowly from 2007 to 2019, but accelerated with the onset of the pandemic. Unlike many other indicators that saw a reversion to the mean after the pandemic, Utahns' time spent alone has been increasing substantially faster than the pre-pandemic rate.

Time Spent Alone in the Mountain States

Except for Wyoming, which has the sixth highest time spent alone, Mountain States fall below the national rate, with Idaho, Utah, and Montana among the ten states with the lowest amount of time spent alone. That being said, the Mountain States have all seen an increase in the amount of time their residents spend alone since 2004-2007.

Utah and the Nation

Utahns spend the second least amount of time alone in the nation, second only to Idaho. While Utah has consistently spent less time alone than the nation, the state has been following the national trend, as it has steadily increased.



Salt Lake City, Utah

COMMUNITY LIFE SUB-INDEX SCORE

The Utah Foundation standardizes the indicators discussed in this report to create an index score ranging from 0 to 14. This scale was standardized to 2016 levels. Since the index is standardized to 2016 levels, if states improve or decline over time, they can achieve index scores outside this range. Additionally, several states have indicators so far outside the norm that they may also fall outside this range.

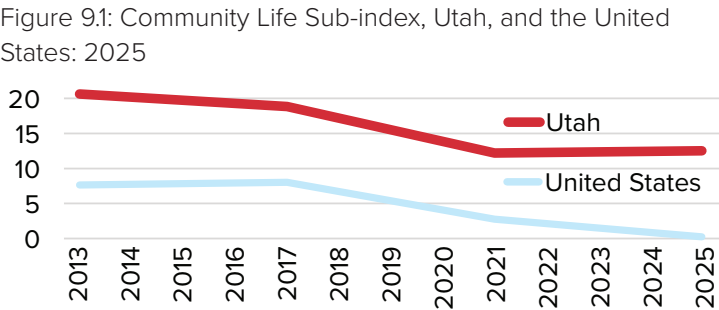
When it comes to the social capital captured by community life, the large decreases in both religious participation and time spent with friends and neighbors, and the large increase in time spent alone, have left the national index score around 0, and more than one in three states have a negative index score.



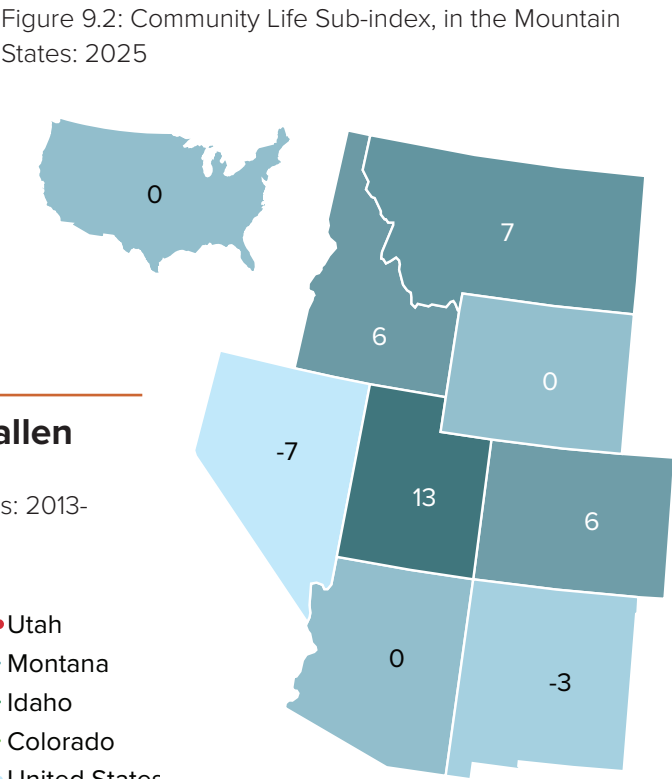
Park Silly Sunday Market, Credit: Flickr User Tom Kelly under license (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

COMMUNITY LIFE SUB-INDEX SCORE

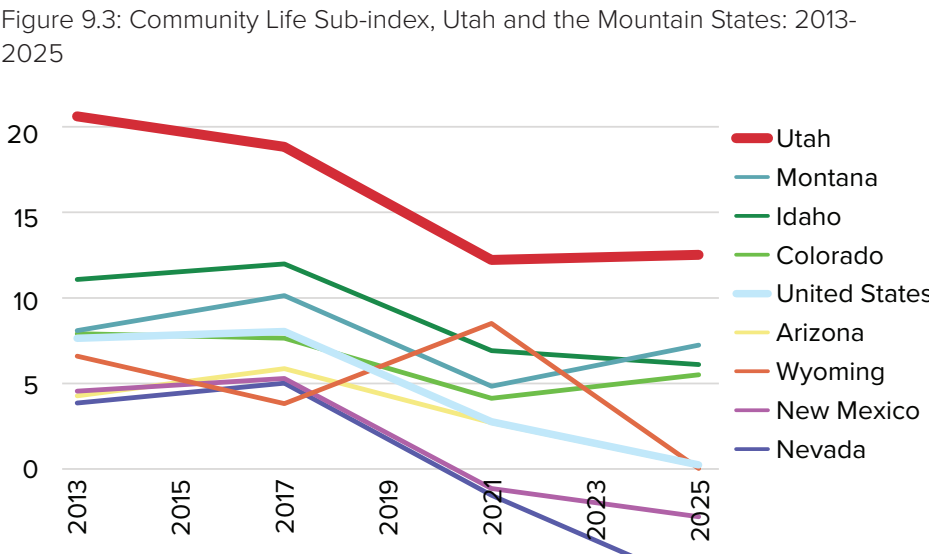
Community life has fallen since 2013.



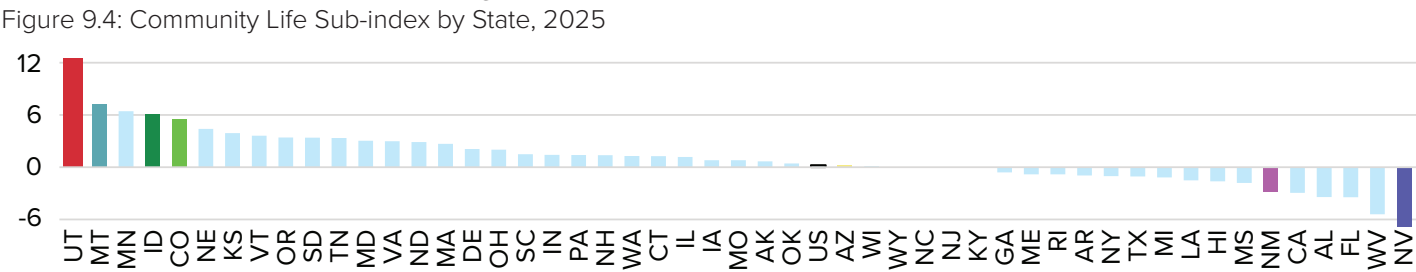
Utah has highest community life among Mountain States by far.



Community life among Mountain States has fallen since 2013.



Utah had the best community life in the nation.



For source information on all figures, please see the Appendix.

Utah Community Life Over Time

Utah's community life scored 21 in 2013 – a notable outlier due to its high levels on most indicators. However, decreases in religious participation and time spent with friends and neighbors, along with increases in time spent alone, have led to a decline in Utah's score to 13 in 2025. However, this represents a slight improvement from 2021.

Community Life in the Mountain States

When it comes to community life, Mountain States fall into two camps. Arizona, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Nevada perform lower than average. Nevada and New Mexico fall among the bottom six states in the nation. On the other hand, Utah, Montana, Idaho, and Colorado are four of the top five states in the nation.

Utah and the Nation

Utah has the highest level of community life in the nation – and it isn't even close. Utah's index score of 13 nearly doubles that of the next-closest state, Montana, which has an index score of 7. This is largely driven by Utah holding the top or second-highest spot in the nation on five of the eight indicators looking at community life.



Holi Festival of Colors, Utah 2010 – Running From the Scene, Credit: Flickr User “Jeremy Nicoll” under license (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

CONCLUSION

Utah's strong culture of service and community participation helps the state stand out from the rest of the nation. The fact that Utah is first in the nation when it comes to community life reflects the state's exceptional strength when it comes to charitable giving, volunteerism, religious participation, neighborhood engagement, and time spent with others. That said, not all is well in the Beehive State. The state's funding efforts for professional associations and non-professional organizations do not look so rosy, nor does the amount of time Utahns spent specifically with neighbors or friends.

Moreover, the state is not immune to national trends, as evidenced by the nation having an index score of 0, and more than one-third of states receiving a negative index score. This highlights the strong negative trends across the nation of three indicators – religious participation, time spent with friends and neighbors, and time spent alone. As de Tocqueville observed nearly two centuries ago, America's "art of association" is a vital asset. Even in Utah, the strong downward trend suggests that the art of association needs help, regardless of that fact that the state tops the nation.



People at a Lantern Festival, Credit: Pexels User Julius Tejeda

TECHNICAL DATA SECTION

The Share of Residents Reporting a Donation Of At Least \$25 To A Charitable Group

The U.S. Census Bureau gathers these data through a supplementary section of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement was issued annually from 2010 to 2015, and biannually since 2015. 2019 represents the latest data available.

Before 2016, the question was worded “During the past 12 months, did you donate money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25 to charitable or religious organizations?” After 2016, the question was modified slightly to “In the past 12 months, did you give money or possessions with a combined value of more than \$25 to a non-political group or organization, such as a charity, school, or religious organization?”

The data were gathered from the CPS microsample. Respondents could reply yes, no, do not know, or refuse, or could provide no answer. The Utah Foundation calculated the share donating as the proportion of respondents who replied “yes” out of all available responses and used the supplement weight.

The Share of Adults Who Report Volunteering

The U.S. Census Bureau gathers these data through a supplementary section of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement was issued annually from 2010 to 2015, and biannually since 2015. 2019 represents the latest data available. The data was gathered from the CPS microsample. The Census Bureau categorized respondents as ‘volunteer’ or ‘non-volunteer’ based on their responses to several questions. Respondents were only classified as volunteers if they had volunteered within the past 12 months. The Utah Foundation calculated the share attending as the proportion of respondents who replied “yes” out of all available responses and used the supplement weight.

Weekly Church/Religious Service Attendance

Pew Religious Landscape Study: The Pew Religious Landscape Study was released in 2007, 2014, and 2024. It is unclear when the next set of data will be released.²⁵

²⁵ Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study,” <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

The Share of Adults Who Report Participating in Neighborhood Projects

The U.S. Census Bureau gathers these data through a supplementary section of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement was issued annually from 2010 to 2015, and biannually since 2015. 2019 represents the latest data available.

Before 2016, the question was worded, “Since September 1st, 2009, have you worked with other people in your neighborhood to fix or improve something?” After 2016, the question was modified to “In the past 12 months, did you get together with other people from your neighborhood to do something positive for your neighborhood or the community?”

The data were gathered from the CPS microsample. Respondents could reply yes, no, do not know, or refuse, or could provide no answer. The Utah Foundation calculated the share participating as the proportion of respondents who replied “yes” out of all available responses and used the supplement weight.

Non-Professional Organization Funding Effort

Advocacy organizations are gathered from the IRS Business Master File, which lists nonprofit organizations registered or active with the IRS. The Utah Foundation used the files hosted by the Urban Institute.²⁶ To ensure that the Utah Foundation counted only active organizations, it restricted the count to 1) nonprofits filing within the previous two years and 2) those filing with more than \$0 in gross receipts.²⁷

Nonprofit organizations are categorized based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) code. In order to look at just non-professional organizations, we restricted the count to those where the where the first digit was “A”, “N”, “S”, or “T” which represents “Arts, Culture & Humanities,” “Recreation & Sports,” “Community Improvement & Capacity Building,” and “Philanthropy, Voluntarism & Grantmaking Foundations” respectively. Utah Foundation also included more targeted groups, including:

- K3 Food Programs, Food Banks & Pantries, Congregate Meals, Soup Kitchens, and Meals on Wheels
- P2 Human Service Organizations, American Red Cross, Urban League, Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Young Men’s or Women’s Associations, Neighborhood Centers, and Thrift Shops
- B83 Student Sororities & Fraternities
- B84 Alumni Associations

26 Urban Institute, 2024, “NCCS Data: Open Access to U.S. Nonprofit Sector Data,” *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, <https://nccs-data.urban.org>.
27 Urban Institute, 2018, “Guide to Using NCCS Data,” *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, <https://nccs.urban.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Guide%20to%20Using%20NCCS%20Data.pdf>.

- B94 Parent Teacher Groups
- J40 Labor Unions
- L50 Homeowner & Tenants Associations
- W24 Citizen Participation
- W30 Military & Veterans Organizations
- W70 Leadership Development

In 2017, several states were missing data. In these cases, the data were calculated by averaging their 2016 and 2018 numbers.

The NTEE classification used to identify the type of organization is not complete in the IRS file, so the NCCS systematically created a version of the NTEE classification to fill in the gaps. Because these were not reported by the organizations themselves, there is a possibility of misclassification.

The total income of these organizations was divided by \$1,000 of personal income for each state as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Professional Association Funding Effort

Advocacy organizations are gathered from the IRS Business Master File, which lists nonprofit organizations registered or active with the IRS. The Utah Foundation used the files hosted by the Urban Institute.²⁸ To ensure that the Utah Foundation counted only active organizations, it restricted the count to 1) nonprofits filing within the previous two years and 2) those filing with more than \$0 in gross receipts.²⁹

Nonprofit organizations are categorized based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) code. In order to look at just professional organizations, we restricted the count to those where the second and third digits are “03,” which represents “Professional Societies & Associations” organizations across major group areas. In 2017, several states were missing data. In these cases, the data were calculated by averaging their 2016 and 2018 numbers.

The NTEE classification used to identify the type of organization is not complete in the IRS file, so the NCCS systematically created a version of the NTEE classification to fill in the gaps. Because these were not reported by the organizations themselves, there is a possibility of misclassification.

The total income of these organizations was divided by \$1,000 of personal income for each state as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

28 Urban Institute, 2024, “Business Master File (BMF): Unified BMF Data Series,” *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, <https://nccs.urban.org/nccs/datasets/bmf>

29 Urban Institute, 2018, “Guide to Using NCCS Data,” *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, <https://nccs.urban.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Guide%20to%20Using%20NCCS%20Data.pdf>

Time Spent with Friends and Neighbors

Data was collected from the American Time Use Survey produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data were restricted to the Who codes 28, 29, 54, and 56, which indicate that the individual was with a roommate, boarder, friend, or neighbor for those activities.³⁰ Data were available from 2003 to 2023.

Time Spent Alone

Data was collected from the American Time Use Survey produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data were restricted to the Who codes 18 and 19, which indicate that the individual was alone for those activities.³¹ Data were available from 2003 to 2023.

30 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025, "American Time Use Survey (ATUS) data dictionary," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, <https://www.bls.gov/tus/dictionaries/atusintcodebk24.pdf>

31 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025, "American Time Use Survey (ATUS) data dictionary," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, <https://www.bls.gov/tus/dictionaries/atusintcodebk24.pdf>



Volunteers install cribbing on trail, Credit: Flickr User "BLM Utah"



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