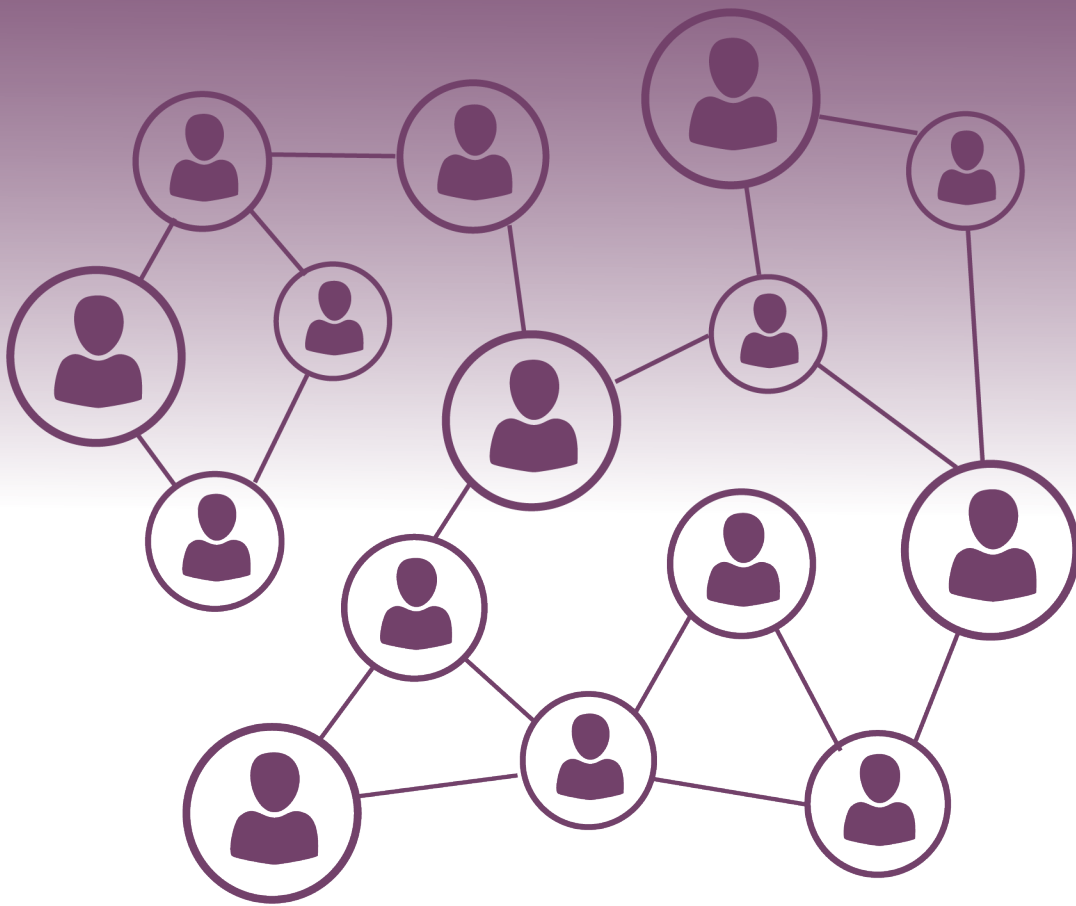


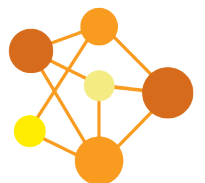
Scores and Successes

How Utah Leads in Social Capital



UTAH FOUNDATION
RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

**SOCIAL
CAPITAL
INDEX**



SCORES AND SUCCESSES

HOW UTAH LEADS IN 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.**

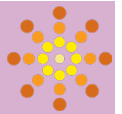
INTRODUCTION

Simply put, social capital refers to the ways people use networks and social connections to benefit themselves and their communities.

Economists often measure physical capital (things used to produce other things) and human capital (the skills and labor of employees). Similarly, social scientists seek to measure how people and groups can use individual networks and community groups to change the world around them.

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*. It can provide individual benefits, such as helping someone find a job, accessing additional resources from friends or family during a stressful economic time, or participating in a group to learn new skills or advance existing ones.

Social capital can also be leveraged to change a community. This can be achieved directly through volunteering in a community project or indirectly by encouraging your network to influence a legislator.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS REPORT

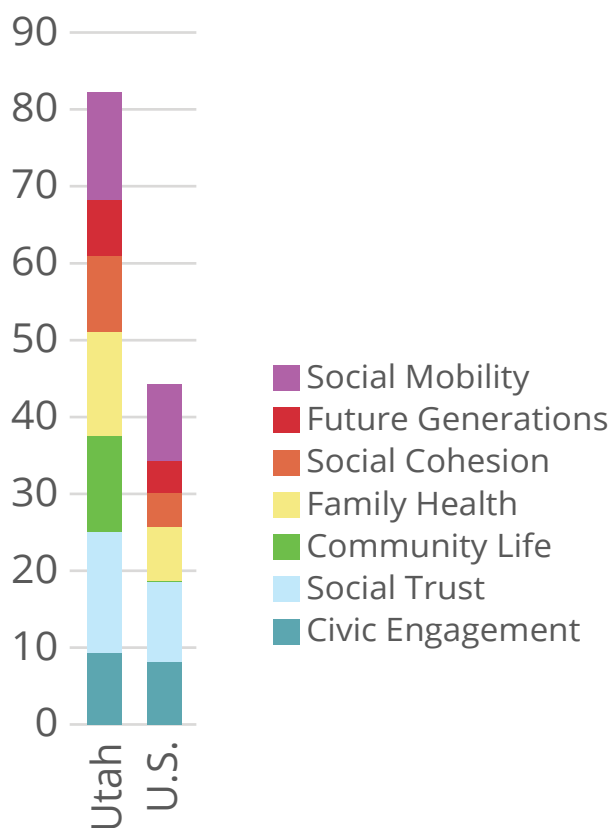
- In 2025, Utah had the highest Social Capital Index score in the nation and has consistently been among the top states over the previous 12 years.
- The 2025 Social Capital Index shows that Utah is grouped favorably with Colorado, as well as some Midwestern and Northeastern states.
- Utah's Social Capital Index score stands at 82 out of 100, which is a continuing downward slide from 2013, when Utah stood at 96. This compares to the United States, which stands at 44.
- Utah is first or second in the nation in three of the seven subindices: social trust, family health, and community life.
- The largest difference between Utah and the U.S. is with the community life subindex. Utah's score is 13 compared to 0 for the U.S.
- Much of the decline in Utah's index score is from three subindices: future generations, family health, and community life.
- Utah's index score decline since 2013 is partially counteracted by three improving subindices: civic engagement, social trust, and, particularly, social mobility.

Low levels of social capital often lead to poor economic and social outcomes, affecting individuals and communities alike. Policymakers seek to ameliorate these poor outcomes through initiatives spanning educational efforts, election reforms, public assistance programs, and law enforcement interventions. As social capital declines, the challenges become more acute. Concerningly, social scientists across the political spectrum affirm that social capital in the U.S. is in long-term decline.

In places where social capital is comparatively robust, it can translate into heightened economic prospects and lower demands on the public sector.

The Social Capital Index shows that Utah is far above the national average.

Figure A: Social Capital Index by Subindices,* Utah and the United States, 2025



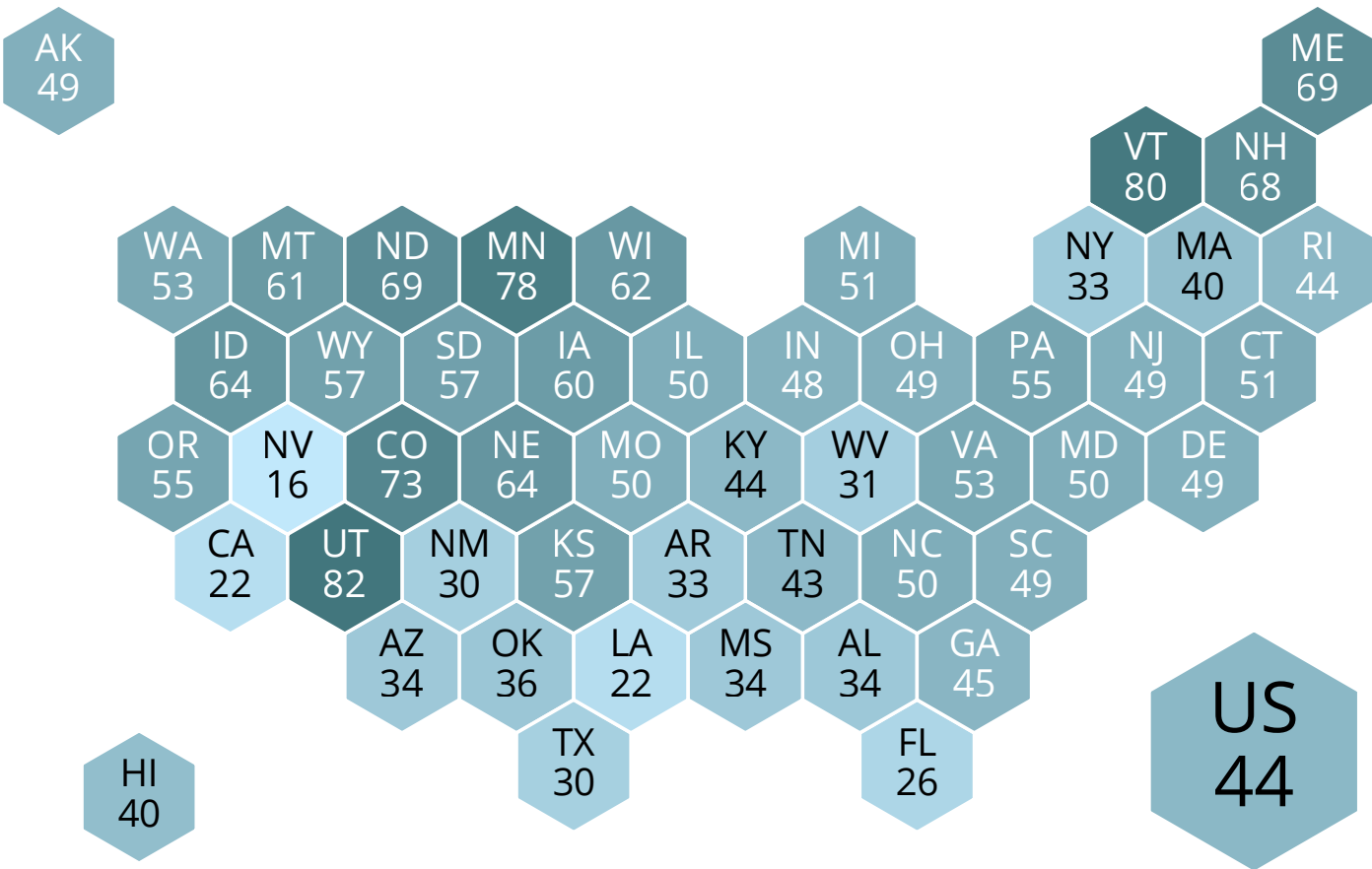
*Each subindex has the average of states set at just over 14 in the base year (2016). See the methodology in Appendix C.
Please note that the United States' Community Life score is 0 in 2025.

While social connections can be negative (consider the criminal bonds and networks within gangs and organized crime), the Social Capital Index project primarily focuses on positive social capital that benefits both societies and the individuals participating in it.

This installment in the Social Capital Index project combines the data from the previous seven subindex reports to rank states over time, beginning in 2013. Utah compares remarkably well.

The Social Capital Index shows that Utah is grouped favorably with Colorado and some Midwestern and Northeastern states.

Figure B: Social Capital Index by State, 2025



FORMAT OF THE SOCIAL CAPITAL INDEX PROJECT

Social capital takes many forms. With this series, the Utah Foundation seeks to be comprehensive, gathering data on 34 metrics, sorted into seven categories:

- Civic Engagement.
- Social Trust.
- Social Cohesion.
- Focus on Future Generations.
- Family Health.
- Community Life.
- Social Mobility.

In determining the metrics, the Utah Foundation explored other social capital analyses, including the indices created by the Joint Economic Council and by Harvard University political scientist Robert Putnam. The Social Capital Index excludes metrics that are not regularly reproduced, which could hinder comparisons over time. The Index adds several factors that facilitate a more in-depth analysis of specific topic areas.

This study 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. Metrics vary depending on the function of each study. Many of these factors may correlate closely with one another. Some factors may be more closely linked to social capital than others. However, this study represents the best methodologies of the Utah Foundation for creating a balanced and comprehensive index to estimate levels of social capital across the nation and over time. Refer to the appendices of all of the Social Capital Index reports for more detailed information on individual factors and the overall methodology.

The 2025 iteration of the Social Capital Index project uses the most recent data available. For previous years, the project uses what would have been the most recent data available at the time.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON SCORES

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.

Please note that all scores in this report are based on the metrics for the 2025 Social Capital Index project, some of which differ from those used in the 2021 project. Accordingly, this report should not be compared to the 2021 Social Capital Index project reports.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

One aspect of social capital involves how individuals and groups utilize their social connections to shape the governance of their communities. There are many avenues for individuals to do so. They can collaborate by voting. They can participate in get-out-the-vote efforts – rallying their connections for a specific candidate or outcome. They can organize into groups to push for specific policies or causes. They can attend public meetings and ensure their voices are heard. Generally, these actions can be summarized as civic engagement.

In the early 2000s, concerns about declining civic engagement intensified, particularly following the publication of Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*.¹ His book highlighted a decline in civic life participation. Research links societies with high levels of civic engagement to a greater willingness among individuals to work collectively and coordinate efforts to address neighborhood issues.²

The Social Capital Index project’s civic engagement subindex includes three key measures:

- Voter turnout.
- Resident attendance at public meetings.
- Funds received by advocacy organizations.

1 Greenberg, Alva, Thomas P. Gullotta, and Martin Bloom, “The Role of Social Capital to American Democracy and the Creation of Serve Here CT” in *Social Capital and Community Well-Being: The Serve Here Initiative*, p. 1, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jill-Sinha/publication/305661291_Millennials_and_Social_Capital_Explorations_in_Re-inventing_the_American_Dream/links/5cc1e6f7299bf120977f74ed/Millennials-and-Social-Capital-Explorations-in-Re-inventing-the-American-Dream.pdf.

2 Collins, Charles R., Jennifer Watling Neal and Zachary P. Neal, “Transforming Individual Civic Engagement into Community Collective Efficacy: The Role of Bonding Social Capital,” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 54, No. 6, pp. 328-336, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9675-x>.

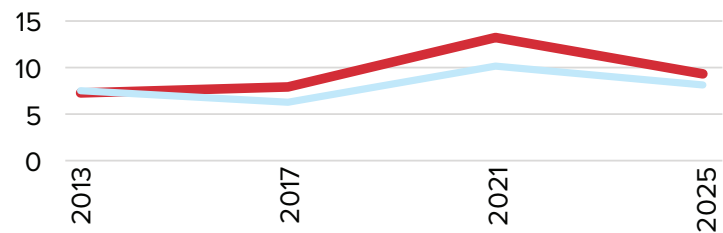


Heileman, Tammy. ‘Secretary Ken Salazar in Salt Lake City, Utah for public meeting on AGO Initiative’, National Archives Catalog, 113

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUBINDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

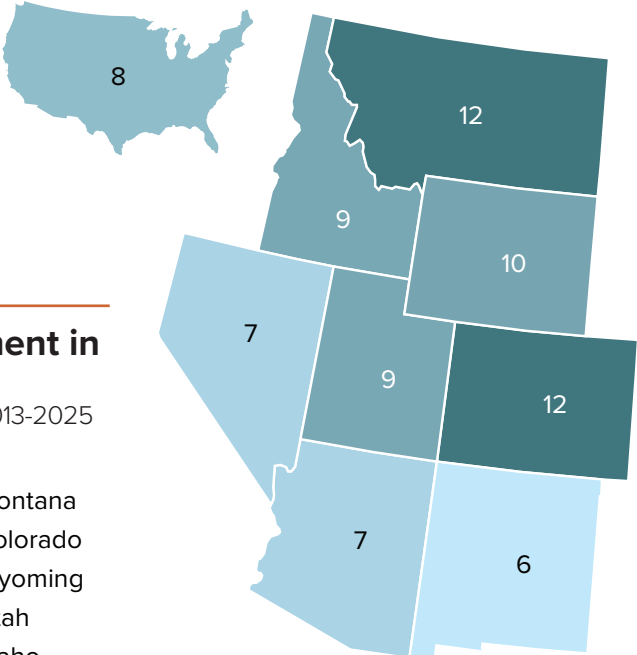
Utah’s civic engagement has declined since the 2021 Social Capital Index project.

Figure 1.1: Civic Engagement Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2025



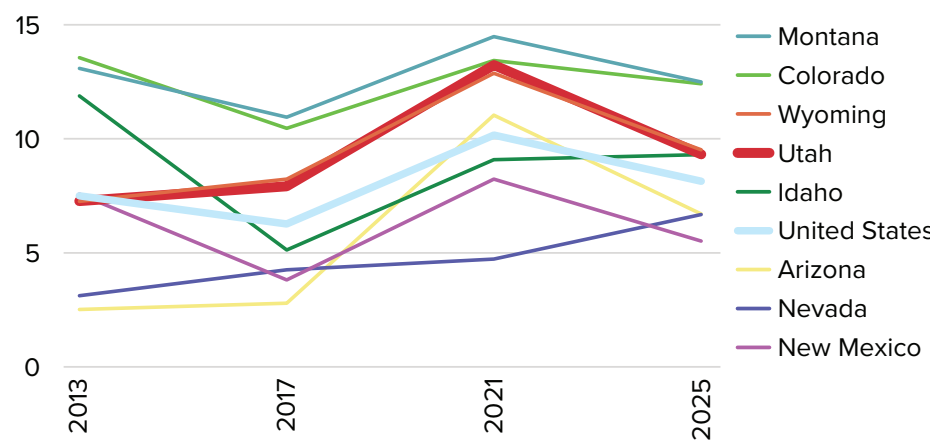
Utah is in the middle of the Mountain States in civic engagement.

Figure 1.2: Civic Engagement Subindex in the Mountain States; 2025



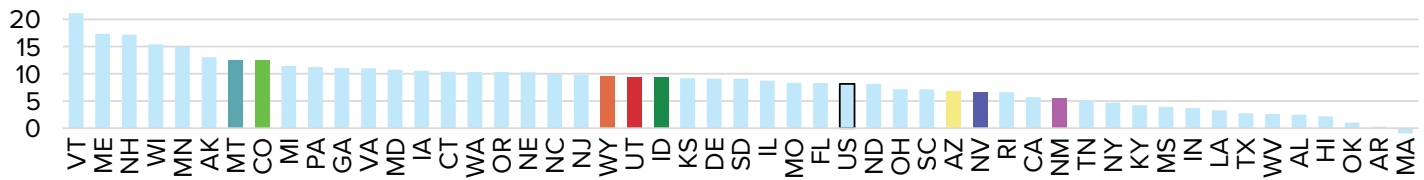
Utah experienced a large drop in civic engagement in 2025, while two Mountain States improved.

Figure 1.3: Civic Engagement Subindex, Utah and the Mountain States: 2013-2025



Utah is 22nd in the nation for civic engagement.

Figure 1.4: Civic Engagement Subindex, by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

Utah Civic Engagement

From 2013 to 2025, Utah saw fluctuations in civic engagement, and it continued downward in 2025. This is due to attendance at public meetings and voter turnout.

Resident attendance at public meetings is a strong point for Utah, although Utah has slipped in recent years from 3rd in the nation in 2019 to 10th in 2025. Utah has lost ground in voter turnout after rising to 13th in the nation in 2018. However, its most recent level of voter turnout – 26th in the nation – remains much higher than its pre-2016 level, when it never ranked higher than 43rd in the nation. Voter turnout in Utah improved markedly with the adoption of universal mail-in voting, rising from 44th in 2014 to 13th in 2018. Utah may lose the ground it has gained with the removal of universal mail-in voting scheduled for 2029.

Across the three measures of civic engagement, Utah ranks among the top ten for one measure, the median for another, and the bottom ten for a third. When it comes to advocacy funds per \$1,000 of personal income, Utah has consistently trended below the nation during the past decade, ranking 43rd.

Civic Engagement in the Mountain States

Across all three measures of civic engagement, Colorado appears to be the best positioned, and New Mexico seems to be the worst positioned among the Mountain States. Nevada and Idaho are the only states to have improved since 2021.

Utah and the Nation

With the U.S. increasing advocacy spending per \$1,000 and Utah decreasing public meeting attendance, the state is looking more like the nation, ranking 22nd in civic engagement. Interestingly, it is still well above the national average, due to large states such as California, New York, and Texas, which pull down the average.

SOCIAL TRUST

Successful social interactions depend on trust. Social trust has major implications for an economy's prosperity, a democracy's health, and a community's social fabric. As people develop social trust, communities develop stronger social cohesion, stability, integration, and economic mobility.³ This is all tied to high levels of social capital.

Numerous ad hoc national attitude surveys look to measure social trust. This subindex in the Social Capital Index project aims to measure social trust through four indicators that researchers can revisit consistently at the state level over time:

- Fraud convictions per capita.
- Convictions with breach of trust penalties per capita.
- Federal corruption convictions per capita.
- Violent crimes per 1,000.

3 Newton, Kenneth, Dietlind Stolle, and Sonja Zmerli, 2017, "Social and Political Trust," in Uslaner, The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.38. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274801.013.20>. And Herreros, Francisco and Henar Criado, 2009, "Social Trust, Social Capital and Perceptions of Immigration," Political Studies, Vol. 57, No. 2, pp. 337-355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00738.x>.

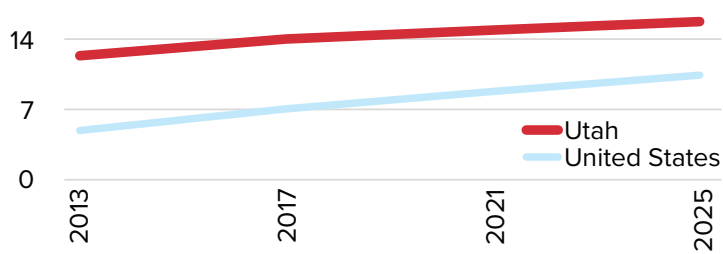


Gunnison, Utah Police Department by 'An Errant Knight' under license (CC-BY-SA 4.0)

SOCIAL TRUST SUBINDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

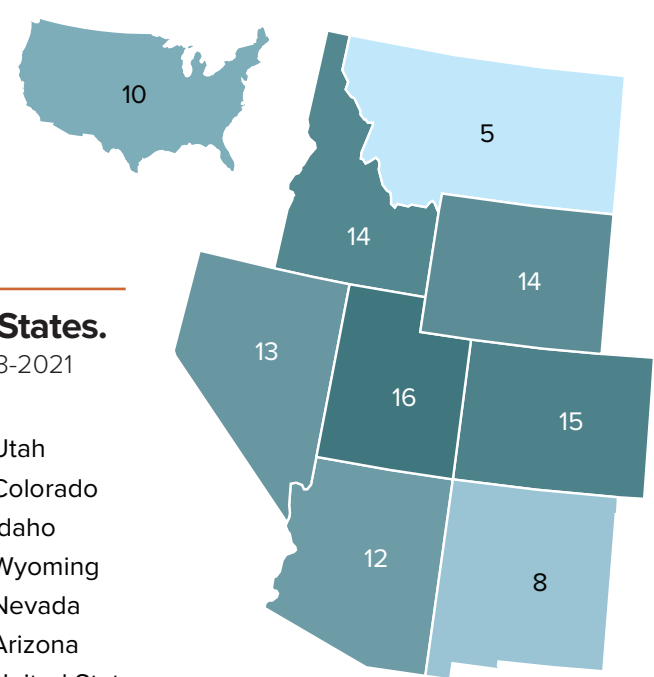
Utah’s social trust subindex continues to improve.

Figure 2.1: Social Trust Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2021



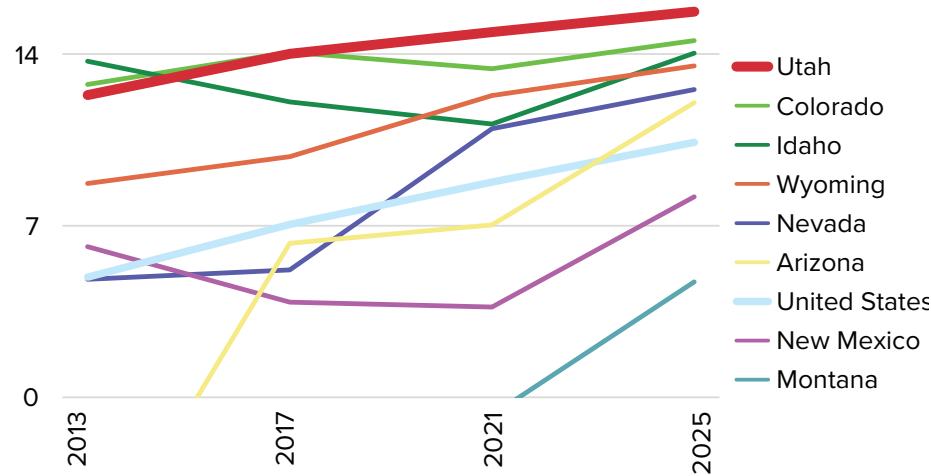
Utah is outperforming all other Mountain States in social trust, but most of them perform very well.

Figure 2.2: Social Trust Subindex among Mountain States, 2025



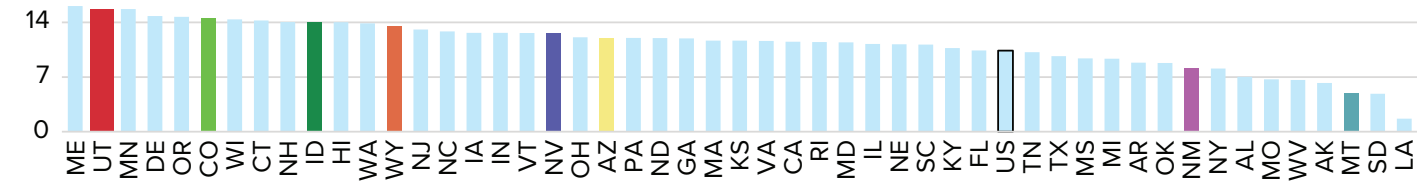
Social trust has been improving in the Mountain States.

Figure 2.3: Social Trust Subindex, Utah and the Mountain States, 2013-2021



Utah ranked second in the nation in 2025 for social trust.

Figure 2.4: Social Trust Subindex by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

Social Trust in Utah Over Time

Utah's social trust subindex has continued to increase over the past 12 years. The falling rates of fraud convictions in the state primarily drive this increase. The three-year average of fraud convictions has dropped from 22 convictions per million people for the three years ending in 2013 to 10 convictions per million for the three years ending in 2025. Utah's index scores from the three other measures have plateaued over the past eight years.

Please note that the Utah Foundation standardizes the indicators discussed above to create an index score ranging from 0 to 14, standardized to 2016 levels. However, some states, such as Arizona and Montana, have indicators so far outside the norm that they have previously received negative scores. Additionally, since the index is standardized to 2016 levels, if states continue to improve over time, they can achieve index scores above 14. This is indeed the case for Utah and Colorado in 2025.

Social Trust in the Mountain States

Utah has the highest social trust index among the Mountain States. This is mainly because Utah consistently performs well across indicators, ranking among the top 12 states for all four. Except for Montana and New Mexico, the Mountain States all perform well in measures of social trust. Like Utah, most Mountain States are experiencing rising civic trust.

For Montana, 2025 is important: it marks the first year the state has achieved a positive score. High levels of federal public corruption convictions and breach-of-trust penalties had kept Montana with negative scores for nearly a decade. Similarly, Arizona had negative civic trust scores due to a high rate of fraud convictions before 2016.

Utah and the Nation

Utah ranked second in social trust in 2025, behind Maine. Along with Utah and most other Mountain States, the United States has benefited from rising social trust, as fraud and federal public corruption convictions have declined over the past 12 years.

SOCIAL COHESION

For this series, the Utah Foundation defines social cohesion as the commonalities that allow a population to function effectively as a group and enable individuals to participate in that whole.

Notions of social cohesion are woven throughout the topics contained in this series. For instance, social cohesion provides communities with pathways to build trust, making it easier for individuals to develop networks and rely on one another for resources and social mobility.⁴ This series places special emphasis on background factors facilitating the broad-based interactions across Utah communities.

A variety of factors could be selected to suggest the relative level of social cohesion. For instance, tribal allegiances, such as common ethnicity or political outlook, could suggest relative cohesion in one place or another, though to varying degrees. An emphasis on them may also create fragmentation.

This subindex, however, focuses on more practical indicators of broad-based cohesion by employing four lenses:

- Middle-class strength.
- Limited English language proficiency among children.
- Limited English language proficiency among adults.
- Population born in-state.

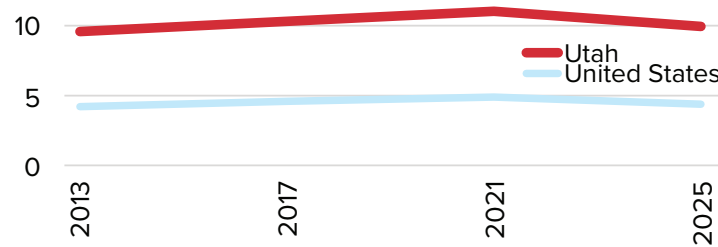
4 Mishra, Pratibha J., 2022, "Social Cohesion for Global Wellbeing and Sustainable Development," [IndianJournals.com, indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:tsi&volume=11&issue=1&article=012](https://indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:tsi&volume=11&issue=1&article=012).



SOCIAL COHESION SUBINDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

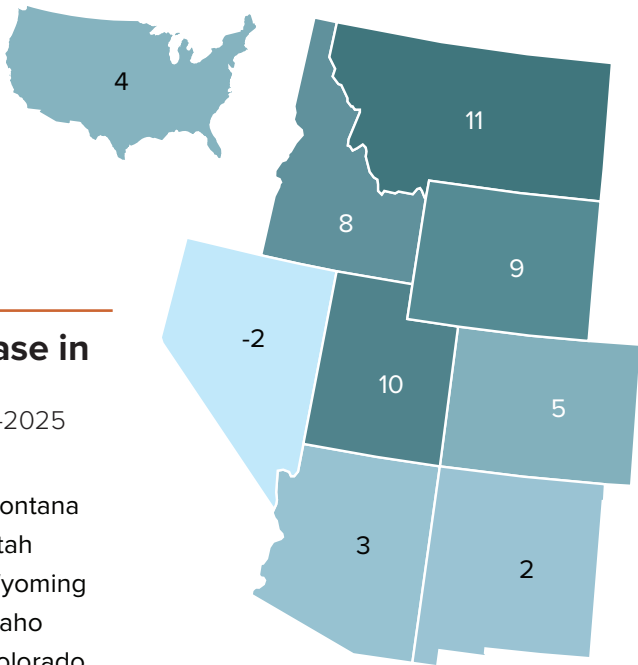
Utah’s cohesion subindex fell back to 2017 levels.

Figure 3.1: Social Cohesion Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2025



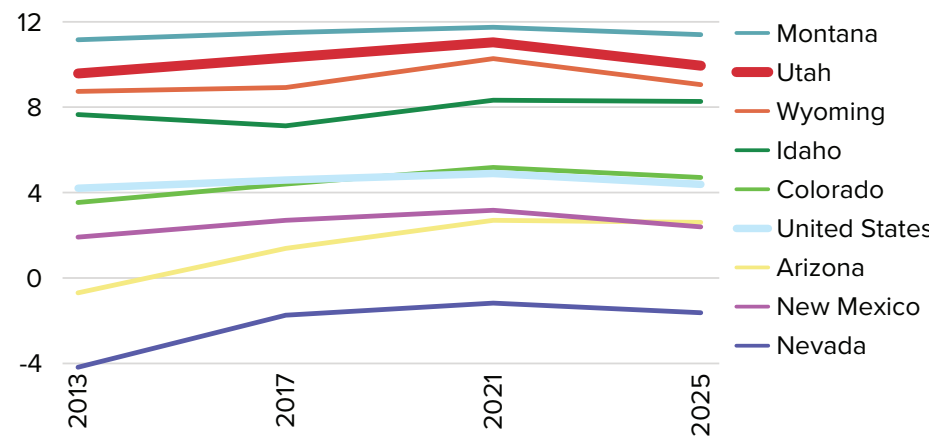
Utah places second among the Mountain States on social cohesion.

Figure 3.2: Social Trust Subindex among Mountain States, 2025



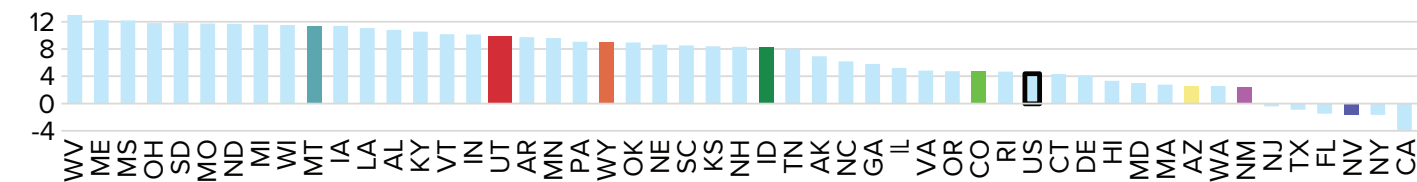
Most Mountain States have seen a slight decrease in social cohesion from 2021 to 2025.

Figure 3.3: Social Trust Subindex, Utah and the Mountain States, 2013-2025



Utah ranks in the middle of the pack in 2025 for social cohesion.

Figure 3.4: Social Trust Subindex by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

Social Cohesion in Utah Over Time

Utah's social cohesion subindex increased from 2013 to 2021. However, since then, it has fallen back to 2017 levels. This is not due to any single factor, but rather a composite of all four factors, which are slightly below prior high points.

Social Trust in the Mountain States

Utah has the second-highest social cohesion index score among the Mountain States, behind Montana. While Utah leads the nation in its share of the middle class, it ranks in the middle for all other indicators. Like Utah, many Mountain States have seen a slight decrease in social cohesion from 2021 to 2025.

Nevada continues to have a negative score, primarily driven by the low number of current residents originally born in the state and high rates of children and adults with limited English proficiency.

Utah and the Nation

Utah ranked 17th among states in social cohesion in 2025. Along with Utah and most other Mountain States, the United States has seen slight declines in social cohesion over the past four years.



Pexels user "Jeffrey Eisen," (PDM)

FUTURE GENERATIONS

In 2019, the Utah Foundation hosted Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam as the keynote speaker at its annual luncheon. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential scholars in the field 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.⁵

For instance, Putnam noted that team sports were once wide open to all children, whereas today, many lower-income children cannot afford the hefty fees and travel they entail. As the Utah State University Families in Sports Lab has documented, participation in youth sports now requires significant investments, and participation in sports among youth has generally declined since 2008.⁶ This means many children are missing out on the chance to build soft skills, such as teamwork. It also means reduced opportunities to build social capital.

Youth team sports participation is only one of several noteworthy trends. American birth rates are on a downward slide. Class segregation remains a feature of American schools, and the relative investment in schools is in decline. Public investments in recreation are also in decline.

The focus of future generations includes a look at four metrics:

- Parks and recreation funding effort.
- Public school funding effort.
- Birth rate.
- Youth organization funding effort.

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

6 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.

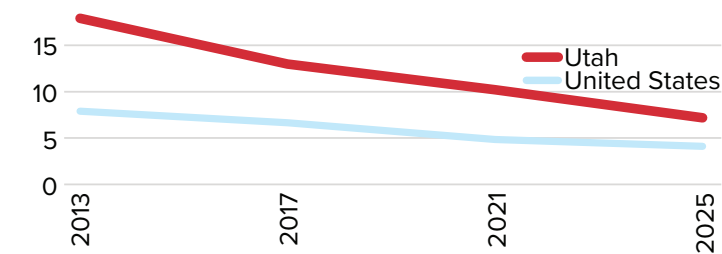


Pexels user "Kindel Media," (PDM).

FUTURE GENERATIONS INDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

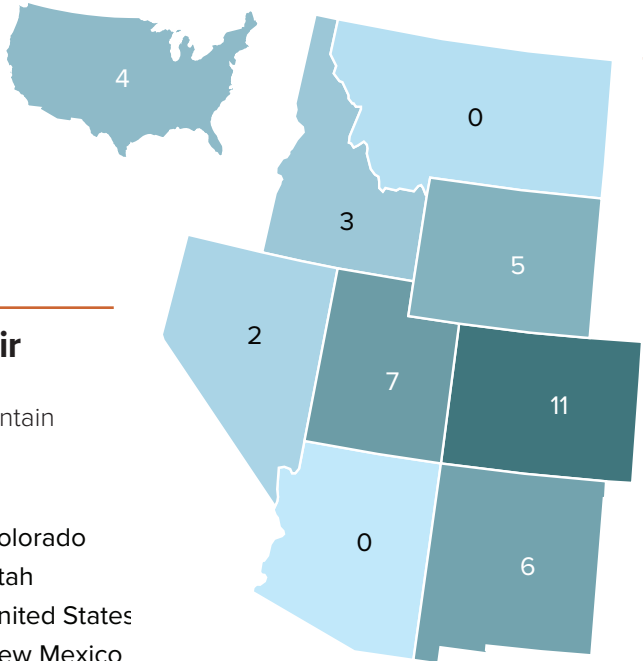
Utah’s focus on future generations has dropped by 60% over the past 12 years.

Figure 4.1: Focus on Future Generations Subindex, Utah and the United States: 2013-2025



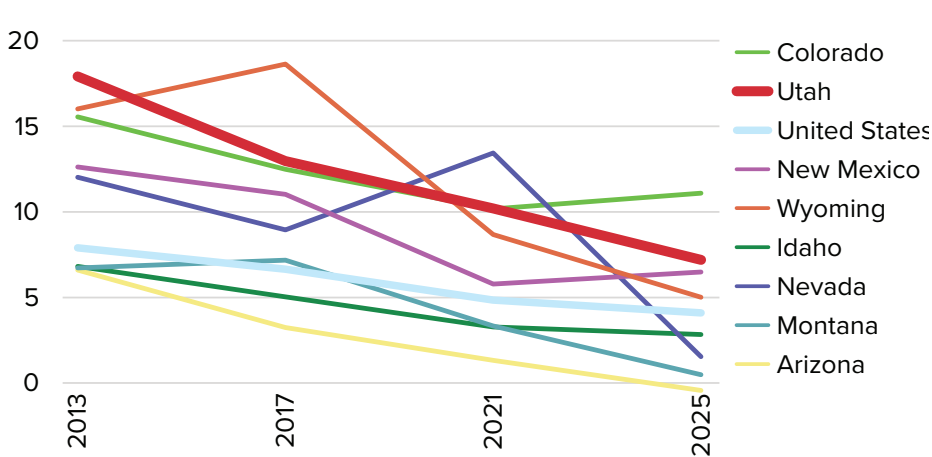
Mountain States vary widely in their focus on future generations.

Figure 4.2: Focus on Future Generations Subindex in the Mountain States, 2025



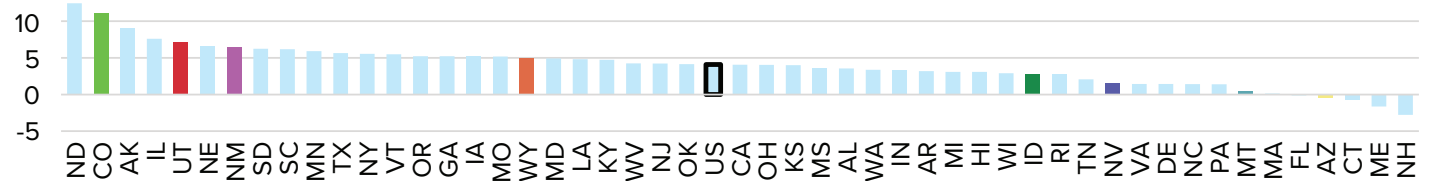
The Mountain States have steeply declined in their focus on future generations.

Figure 4.3: Focus on Future Generations Subindex, Utah and the Mountain States: 2013-2025



Utah ranks fifth in the nation for its focus on future generations.

Figure 4.4: Focus on Future Generations Subindex by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

FOCUS ON FUTURE GENERATIONS OVER TIME

Utah's focus on future generations has fallen significantly from 18 to 7 from 2013 to 2025. This represents a 60% decrease. This decrease is due to Utah's decline across all four indicators. However, the largest share of the decrease is from birth rates. Utah's declining birth rates account for two-thirds of the total decline from 2013 to 2025. Although Utah's birth rate has declined over the past 13 years, it still has the highest birth rate in the nation.

Focus on Future Generations in the Mountain States

The Mountain States show a wide range in their focus on future generations, from Colorado in second place to Arizona in forty-seventh place. However, all Mountain States have seen serious declines in their focus on future generations. Six of the Mountain States are among the top ten states with the largest decline in their focus on future generations. While Colorado and Idaho were not among the top ten states with the largest declines, they still experienced faster declines than the nation.

Utah and the Nation

Utah ranks fifth in the nation for its focus on future generations. While Utah has seen steep declines over the past 12 years, it had a high starting point, and most states have also declined over the same period. In fact, only Vermont and North Dakota have improved their focus on future generations from 2013 to 2025. While Utah has outperformed the nation in the past, the gap is closing.



Sandy, Utah.

FAMILY HEALTH

Family is the basic building block of society and a core component of social capital. Stable families provide ways for children to socialize and develop emotionally and intrinsically. The larger community benefits from this stability, especially when family connections are strong.

Strong family health is inextricably linked to a network of interrelated, self-perpetuating benefits. For instance, families with two parents are far less likely to live in poverty, and their children are more likely to achieve higher educational attainment.⁷ The data are so stark that it is impossible to honestly examine economic or educational outcomes without considering family structure.

Beyond structure, there is growing concern about how families spend time together and how children allocate their time. For instance, as the Social Capital Index project shows, the time children spend in front of a screen has been increasing at an alarming rate.

For this series, the Utah Foundation uses seven indicators across two categories to compare states in terms of family health:

- Share of adults aged 35 to 64 who are currently married.
- Share of births to married women.
- Number of adults per household.
- Share of children aged five and under who are read to every day.
- Time spent on electronic devices by children from 6 to 17.
- Share of families eating a meal together daily.
- Time spent with family while eating, exercising, or socializing.

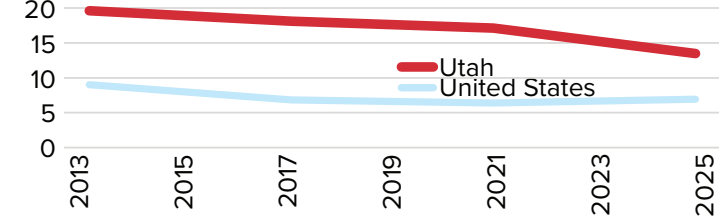
The first three indicators focus on the strength of family structure, while the last four indicators focus on the quality of family ties. While Utah has some of the best indicators in the nation for family structure, indicators of interaction quality place Utah at or below average.

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."

FAMILY HEALTH INDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

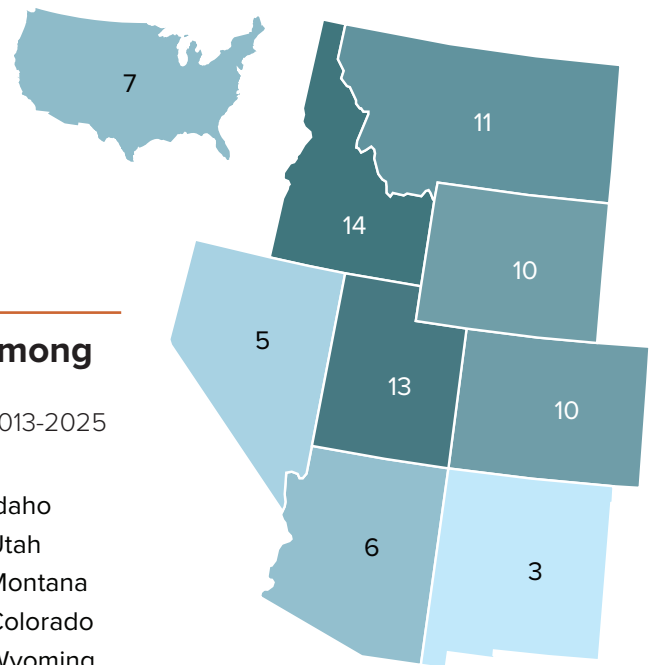
Utah’s family health has declined, yet it remains one of the best in the nation.

Figure 5.1: Family Health Subindex, Utah and the United States, 2013-2025



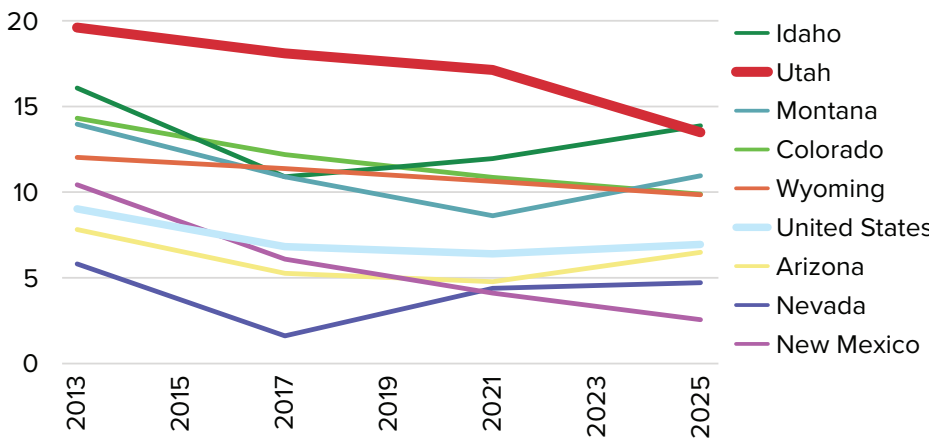
Utah has the second-highest family health among the Mountain States.

Figure 5.2: Family Health Subindex in the Mountain States; 2025



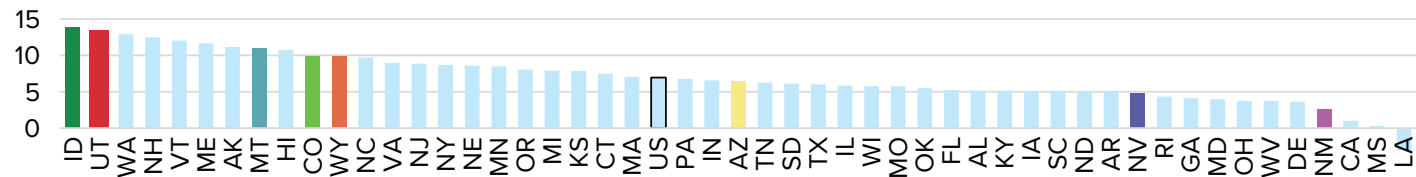
Utah had the biggest decline in family health among the Mountain States.

Figure 5.3: Family Health Subindex, Utah and the Mountain States: 2013-2025



Utah has the second-highest family health in the nation.

Figure 5.4: Family Health Subindex, by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

Utah Family Health

From 2013 to 2025, Utah saw a downward trend in family health. However, Utah had an extremely high starting place in 2013. At that time, Utah was a high outlier on six of the seven indicators. This gave Utah an index score of 20 on a scale where most states should fall between 0 and 14. As the time spent reading to children and attending family dinners has decreased in Utah, and while time spent on electronic devices has increased, Utah has fallen within the expected range. At the same time, Utah's high rankings in family structure indicators (married adults, births to married women, and adults per household) keep it among the top states in family health.

Family Health in the Mountain States

Idaho and Utah have the best family health in the nation. While Montana and Colorado also fall among the top ten, and Wyoming ranks eleventh, there is a wide gap between these two sets of states. New Mexico, on the other hand, has the fourth-lowest family health.

Over time, the Mountain States appear to have evolved into two distinct categories. Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico have all seen steady decreases over the past 12 years. Idaho, Montana, Arizona, and Nevada have all experienced dips, followed by subsequent recoveries. This appears to be related to the rise and subsequent decline in the use of electronic devices during the pandemic, as well as trends among adults per household. While almost all Mountain States saw a similar pattern in peak electronic device usage during the pandemic, the states with continued declines had other factors that declined faster than the electronic devices rebounded.

Utah and the Nation

Utah's high rankings in family structure (married adults, births to married mothers, and adults per household) have helped the state maintain its lead among the nation. However, factors measuring the quality of interactions between family members have been responsible for Utah's decrease over the past 12 years, moving Utah closer to the national score.

COMMUNITY LIFE

One of the most influential works ever produced on social capital documented a decline in associational life, with a title that speaks for itself. Robert Putnam's 2000 landmark work, *Bowling Alone*, draws on the decline of bowling leagues to symbolize the disintegration of community participation.⁸ This disintegration not only tears at our social fabric, but it can also diminish our mental and physical health.⁹ Recent developments, such as increased time spent on personal technology devices, may be contributing to 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.¹⁰

For this series, the Utah Foundation defines participation in community life as people's involvement in and financial support of non-governmental community endeavors. It looks at:

- Charitable donations.
- Volunteering.
- Religious participation.
- Neighborhood participation.
- Non-professional organizations funding effort.
- Professional associations funding effort.
- Spending time with friends and neighbors.
- Spending time alone.

8 Putnam, Robert, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

9 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.

10 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.

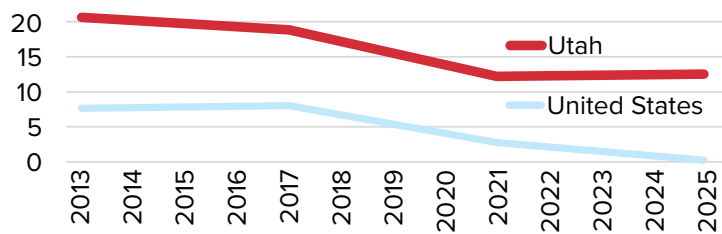


Utah Foundation Annual Luncheon, Salt Lake City, Utah

COMMUNITY LIFE INDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

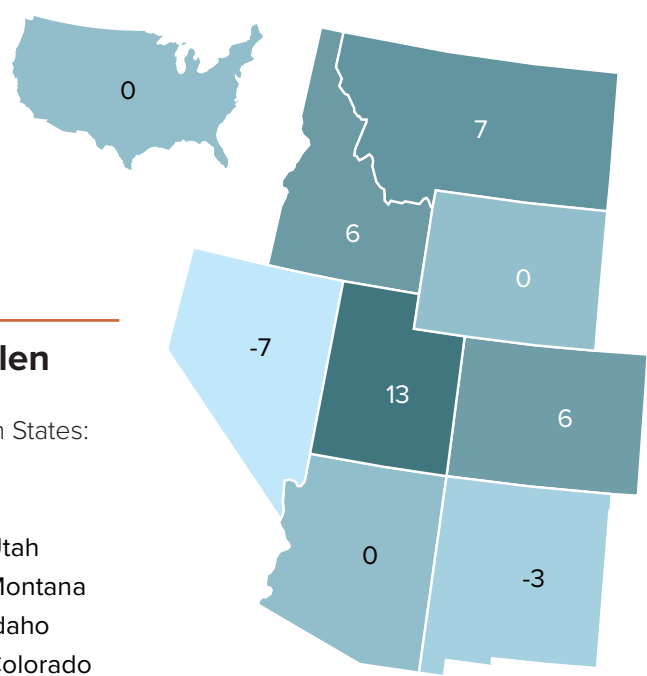
Community life has fallen since 2013.

Figure 6.1: Community Life Subindex by State, Utah, and the United States: 2025



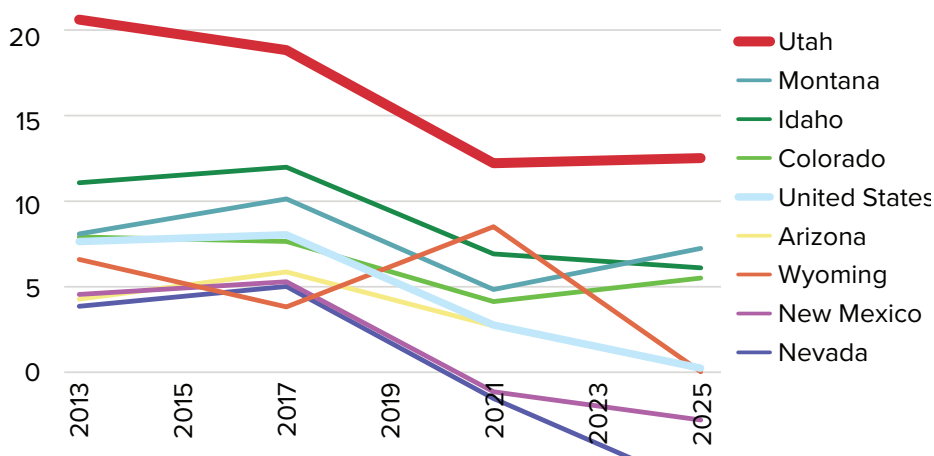
Utah has highest community life among Mountain States by far.

Figure 6.2: Community Life Subindex by State, in the Mountain States: 2025



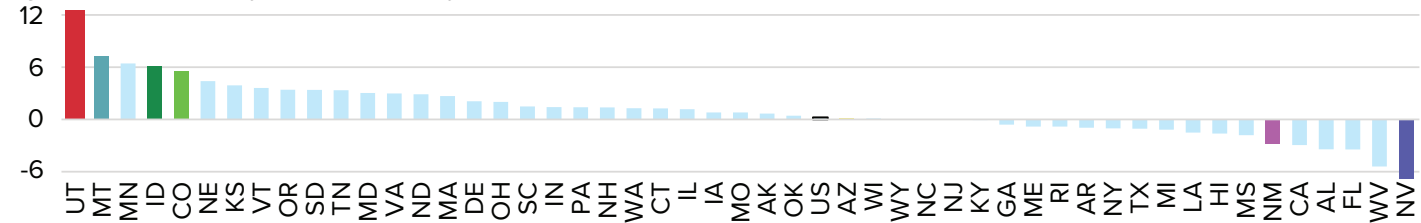
Community life among Mountain States has fallen since 2013.

Figure 6.3: Community Life Subindex by State, Utah and the Mountain States: 2013-2025



Utah has the best community life in the nation.

Figure 6.4: Community Life Subindex by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

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.

As noted, 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. 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.

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 primarily driven by Utah holding the top or second-highest spot in the nation across five of the eight indicators measuring community life.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

The idea of the American Dream is intimately bound to opportunities for homeownership and the improvement of one's economic position. To the extent that this is achievable in a place, people will be more likely to invest themselves there both financially and socially. But if people perceive that a place does not offer these possibilities, they are likely to lose faith, become alienated from the social structures, or break away to seek greener pastures. This leads us to social mobility.

For this study, the Utah Foundation defines it as the potential for individuals, families, or groups to move toward higher incomes or wealth over a lifetime or across generations. The Utah Foundation does so using four indicators:

- Post-secondary attainment.
- Homeownership levels.
- The extent to which people are earning more than their parents did.
- The proportion of unengaged youth.

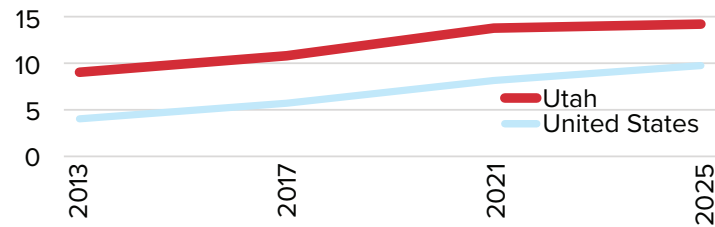


Image courtesy of the University of Utah. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

SOCIAL MOBILITY INDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

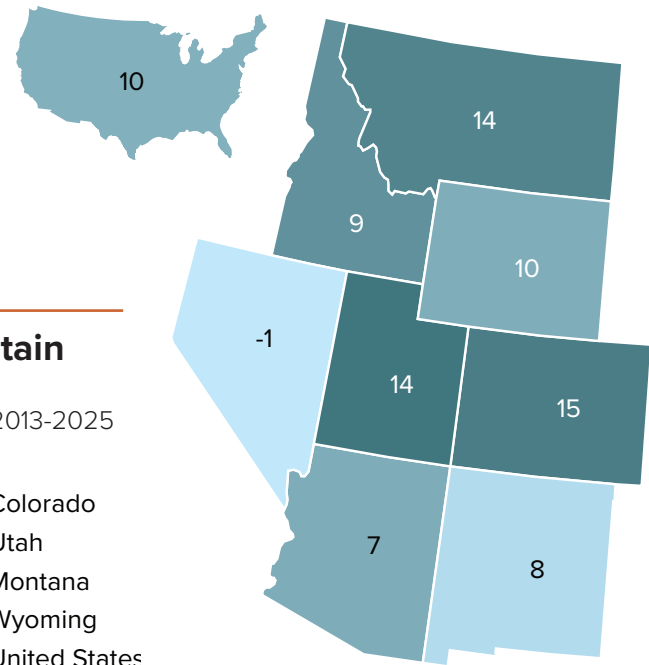
Utah’s social mobility has improved, though the gap between it and the nation is shrinking.

Figure 7.1: Social Mobility Sub-index, Utah and the United States, 2013-2025



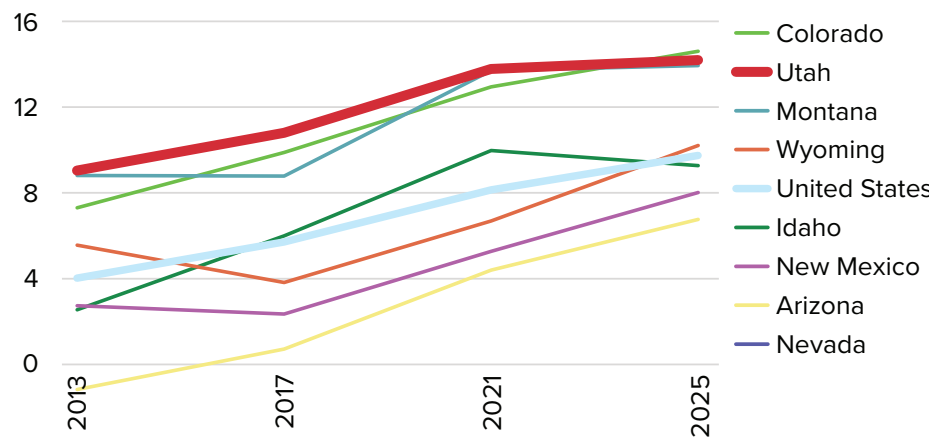
Utah has the highest social mobility score among the Mountain States.

Figure 7.2: Social Mobility Sub-index in the Mountain States, 2025



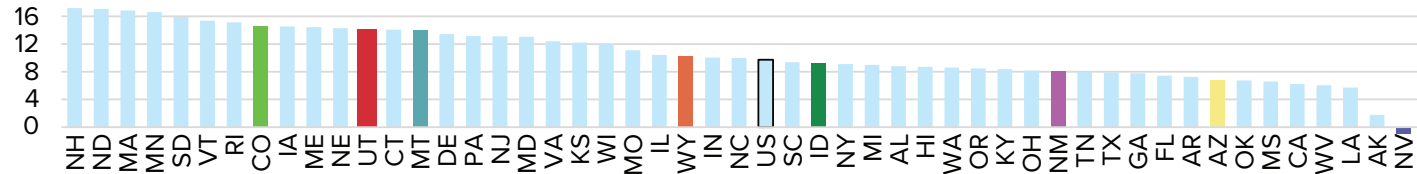
Colorado surpassed Utah to become the Mountain State with the best social mobility.

Figure 7.3: Social Mobility Sub-index, Utah and the Mountain States, 2013-2025



Utah ranks 12th in social mobility nationwide.

Figure 7.4: Social Mobility Sub-index, by State, 2025



For source information on all figures, please see Appendix C and the appendix of each corresponding subindex report.

Utah Social Mobility

From 2013 to 2025, Utah saw an upward trend in social mobility. This improvement gives Utah an index score of 14 on a scale where most states should fall between 0 and 14. The improvement is primarily due to higher educational attainment and a lower proportion of unengaged youth.

Social Mobility in the Mountain States

Utah ranks 12th in social mobility, closely grouped with Colorado and Montana in the Mountain States. Over time, the Mountain States have been seeing improvement. As in Utah, this improvement is primarily due to increases in educational attainment and decreases in the proportion of unengaged youth.

Utah and the Nation

Utah's starting point in 2013, with high social mobility, has helped Utah maintain its standing among the nation. This is due in part to its relatively high homeownership rate. However, the nation is gaining on Utah. Most states fare well with increases in educational attainment and decreases in the proportion of unengaged youth. Furthermore, many states are seeing some improvement in homeownership rates.

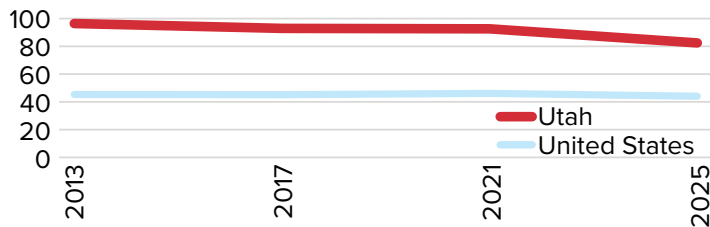


Snow House, Credit: Flickr User arbyreed under license CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

SOCIAL CAPITAL TOTAL INDEX SCORE DASHBOARD

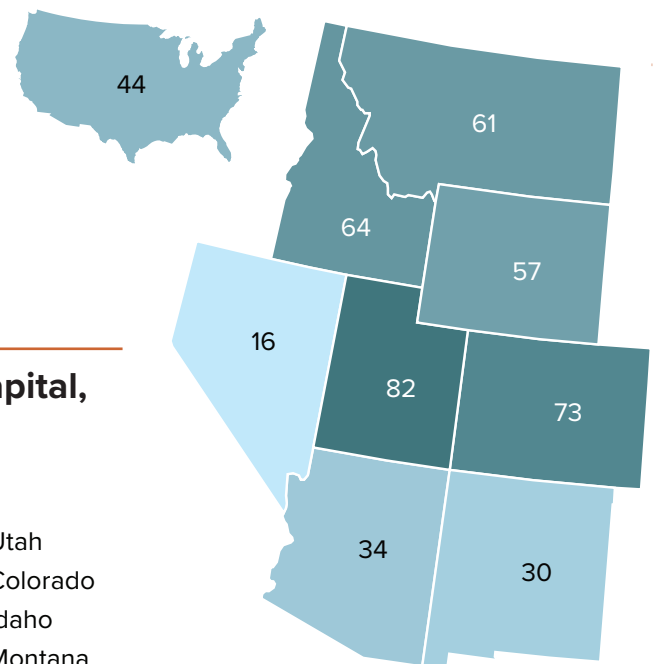
Utah has consistently outperformed the national average in social capital indicators, though the gap is narrowing.

Figure 8.1: Social Capital Index, Utah and the United States, 2013-2025



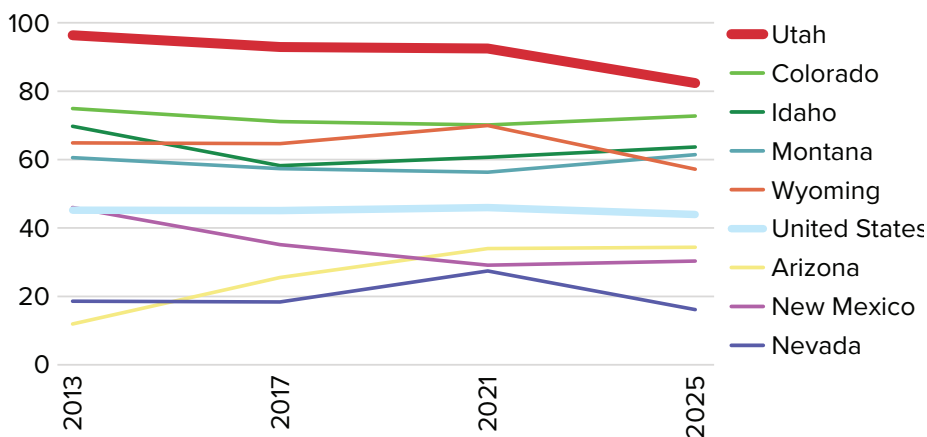
Utah is far above the region in social capital.

Figure 8.2: Social Capital Index in the Mountain States, 2025



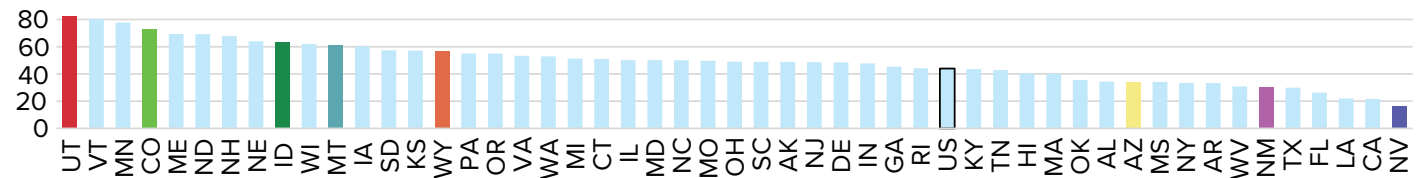
Utah has been far above the region in social capital, but the gap is shrinking.

Figure 8.3: Social Capital Index in the Mountain States, 2025



Utah is the best-performing state in social capital indicators.

Figure 8.4: Social Capital Index by State, 2025



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

TOTAL INDEX

Utah’s Social Capital Index score stands at 82 out of 100. Utah had the highest level of social capital in 2025 among the 50 states.

However, Utah has seen a downward slide from 2013, when Utah stood at 96. Much of the decline in Utah’s index score is due to three subindices: future generations, family health, and community life. Utah’s index score decline since 2013 is partially counteracted by three improving subindices: civic engagement, social trust, and, particularly, social mobility.

Social Capital in the Mountain States

Utah is clearly at the top of the Mountain States. However, Colorado is not far behind. Further, the gap between Utah and Colorado is narrowing. In terms of trends over time, Arizona has improved, most Mountain States have held steady, while Utah and Nevada are declining.

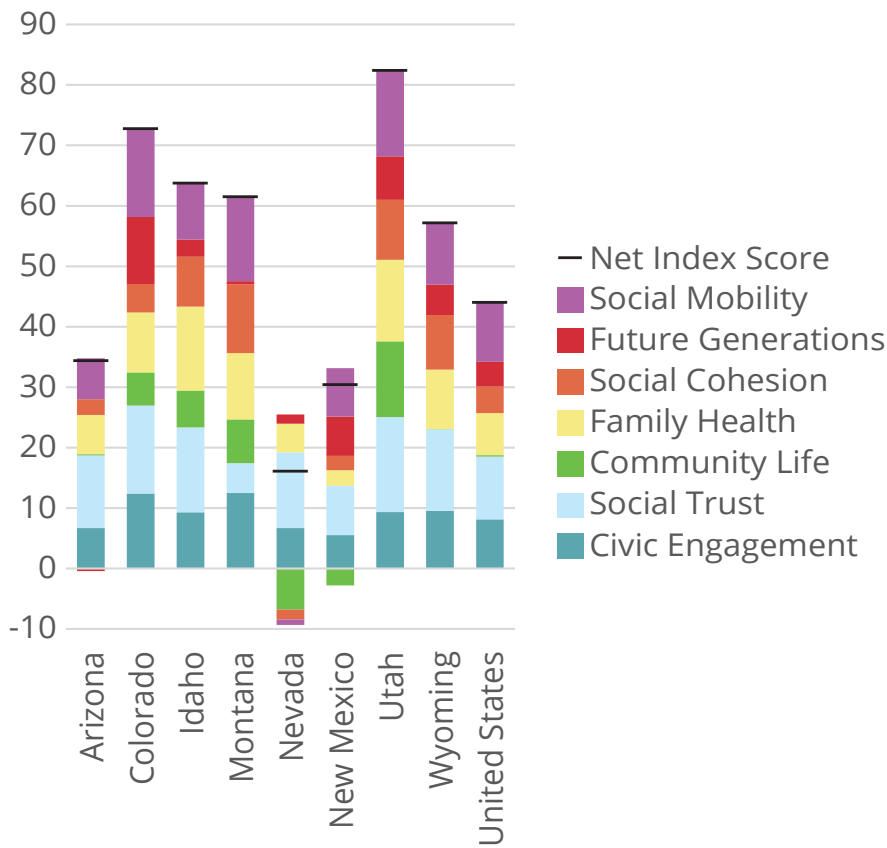
Utah and the Nation

Utah’s Social Capital Index score stands at 82 out of 100. This compares to the United States, which stands at 44, though the gap is narrowing over time. This is because the nation has held steady.

The largest difference between Utah and the U.S. is with the community life subindex. Utah’s score is 13 compared to 0 for the United States. Utah is first or second in the nation in three of the seven subindices: social trust, family health, and community life.

Community life helps set Utah above the other Mountain States.

Figure C: Social Capital Index in the Mountain States, 2025



CONCLUSION

Social capital refers to the ways people use networks and social connections to benefit themselves and their communities. Accordingly, Utahns and the state are well-positioned, given that Utah has the highest level of social capital in the nation. In fact, Utah has consistently been among the top states over the previous twelve years.

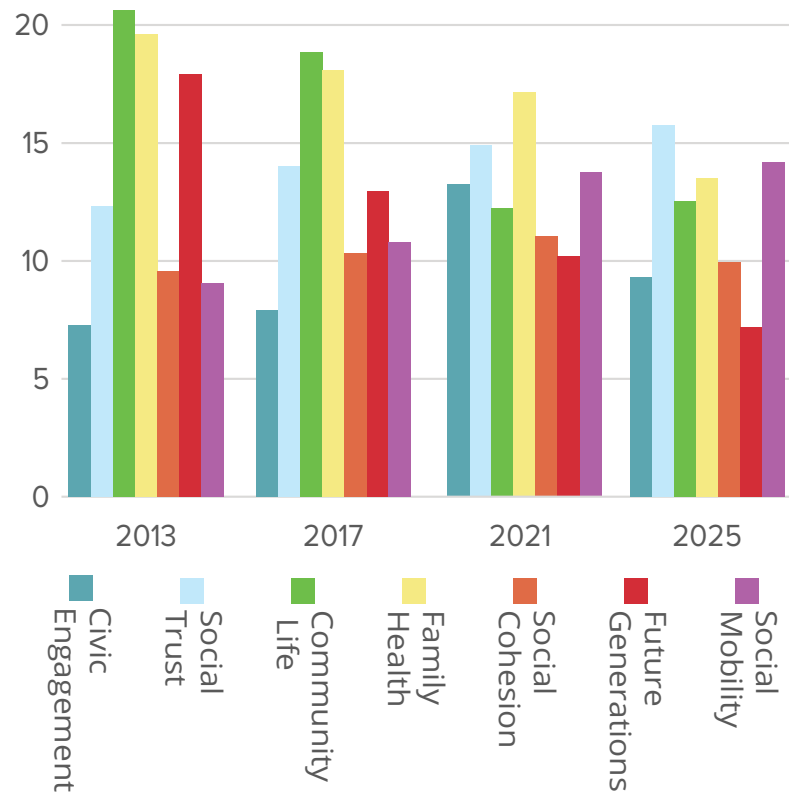
How does Utah do it? Utah ranks first or second in the nation on three of the seven subindices: social trust, family health, and community life. Only three other states have more than two subindices in the top five: Minnesota, Maine, and New Hampshire.

The 2025 index shows that Utah is grouped favorably with some Midwestern and Northeastern states. Colorado also performs very well.

Utah particularly excels in community life. The largest difference between Utah and the U.S. is in the community life subindex. Utah's score is 13 compared to 0 for the U.S.

Three Social Capital Index subindices lose ground, while three gain some of it back.

Figure D: Social Capital Index by Subindices, Utah, 2025



While Utah is doing great, its 2025 index score stands at 82 out of 100, marking a continued downward slide from 2013, when it stood at 96. Much of the decline in Utah's index score is from subindices: future generations, family health, and community life.

In places where social capital is robust, it can translate into heightened economic prospects and lower demands on the public sector. So, while the Beehive State is thriving relative to the nation in terms of social capital, that does not mean we should rest on our laurels. We still have work to do.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF METRICS BY SUBINDEX

Civic Engagement

1. Voter turnout.
2. Resident attendance at public meetings.
3. Funds received by advocacy organizations.

Social Trust

1. Convictions for fraud
2. Penalties for breach of trust
3. Public corruption convictions
4. Violent crime rates

Social Cohesion

1. Middle-class strength.
2. Limited English language proficiency among children.
3. Limited English language proficiency among adults.
4. Population born in-state.

Future Focus

1. Parks and recreation funding effort.
2. Public school funding effort.
3. Birth rate.
4. Youth organization funding effort.

Family Health

1. Share of adults aged 35 to 64 who are currently married.
2. Share of births to married women.
3. Number of adults per household.
4. Share of children aged five and under who are read to every day.
5. Time spent on electronic devices by children from 6 to 17.
6. Share of families eating a meal together daily.
7. Time spent with family while eating, exercising, or socializing.

Community Life

1. Charitable donations.
2. Volunteering.
3. Religious participation.
4. Neighborhood participation.
5. Non-professional organizations funding effort.
6. Professional associations funding effort.
7. Spending time with friends and neighbors.
8. Spending time alone.

Social Mobility

1. Post-secondary attainment.
2. Homeownership levels.
3. The extent to which people are earning more than their parents did.
4. The proportion of unengaged youth.

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL FIGURES

Figure i: Social Capital Index, Indices by State, 2025

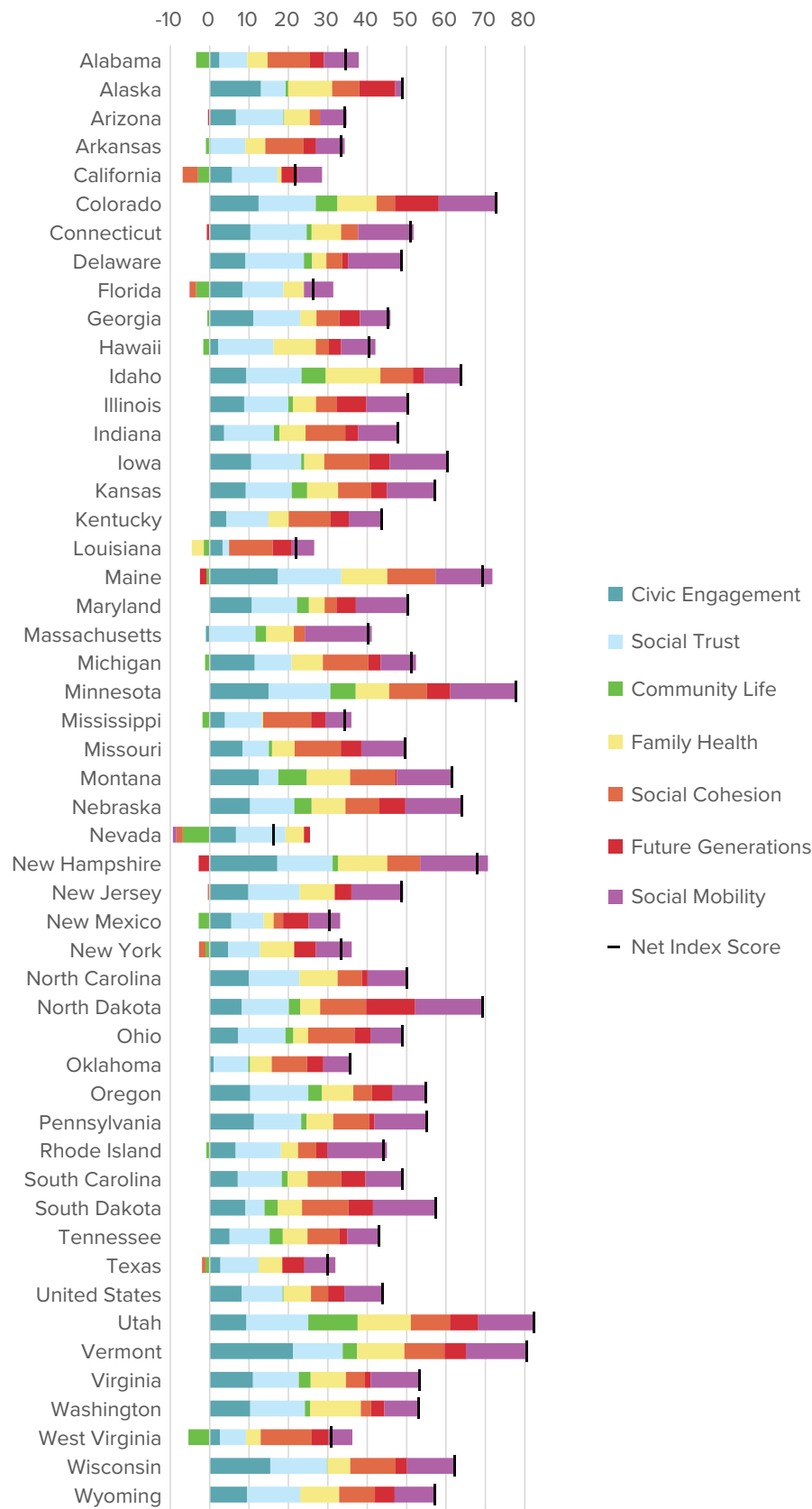


Figure ii: Social Capital Index, Rankings of Indices by State, 2025

	Civic Engage- ment	Community Life	Family Health	Future Generations	Social Cohesion	Social Mobility	Social Trust	Total
Alabama	47	49	35	31	13	33	45	40
Alaska	6	28	7	4	29	51	48	28
Arizona	34	31	26	49	43	45	21	41
Arkansas	50	40	40	34	18	44	41	44
California	37	48	49	27	51	48	28	50
Colorado	8	6	10	3	35	9	6	4
Connecticut	15	24	21	50	38	14	8	21
Delaware	25	17	47	43	39	16	4	30
Florida	29	50	34	48	48	43	35	48
Georgia	11	37	43	16	31	42	24	32
Hawaii	48	45	9	36	40	34	11	37
Idaho	23	5	1	38	27	30	10	9
Illinois	27	25	30	5	32	24	31	22
Indiana	43	20	25	33	16	26	17	31
Iowa	14	26	37	17	11	10	16	12
Kansas	24	8	20	29	25	21	26	14
Kentucky	41	36	36	22	14	37	34	35
Louisiana	44	44	52	21	12	50	51	49
Maine	2	38	6	51	2	11	1	5
Maryland	13	13	44	20	41	19	30	23
Massachusetts	51	16	22	47	42	3	25	38
Michigan	9	43	19	35	8	32	40	20
Minnesota	5	4	17	11	19	4	3	3
Mississippi	42	46	50	30	3	47	39	42
Missouri	28	27	32	18	6	23	46	25
Montana	7	3	8	46	10	15	49	11

Figure ii, continued: Social Capital Index, Rankings of Indices by State, 2025

	Civic Engage- ment	Community Life	Family Health	Future Generations	Social Cohesion	Social Mobility	Social Trust	Total
Nebraska	18	7	16	7	23	12	32	8
Nevada	35	52	41	41	49	52	19	51
New Hampshire	3	22	4	52	26	1	9	7
New Jersey	20	35	14	24	46	18	14	29
New Mexico	38	47	48	8	45	39	43	46
New York	40	41	15	13	50	31	44	43
North Carolina	19	34	12	44	30	27	15	24
North Dakota	31	15	39	2	7	2	23	6
Ohio	32	18	45	28	4	38	20	26
Oklahoma	49	29	33	25	22	46	42	39
Oregon	17	10	18	15	34	36	5	17
Pennsylvania	10	21	24	45	20	17	22	16
Rhode Island	36	39	42	39	36	8	29	33
South Carolina	33	19	38	10	24	29	33	27
South Dakota	26	11	28	9	5	5	50	13
Tennessee	39	12	27	40	28	40	37	36
Texas	45	42	29	12	47	41	38	47
United States	30	30	23	26	37	28	36	34
Utah	22	1	2	6	17	13	2	1
Vermont	1	9	5	14	15	7	18	2
Virginia	12	14	13	42	33	20	27	18
Washington	16	23	3	32	44	35	12	19
West Virginia	46	51	46	23	1	49	47	45
Wisconsin	4	32	31	37	9	22	7	10
Wyoming	21	33	11	19	21	25	13	15

Figure iii: Social Capital Index, Scores for Indices by Year, Utah

	Civic Engagement	Community Life	Family Health	Future Generations	Social Cohesion	Social Mobility	Social Trust	Total
2013	7	21	20	18	10	9	12	96
2017	8	19	18	13	10	11	14	93
2021	13	12	17	10	11	14	15	92
2025	9	13	13	7	10	14	16	82

APPENDIX C: TECHNICAL DATA SECTION

Timeliness of Data

The 2025 iteration of the Social Capital Index project uses the most recent data available. For 2013, 2017, and 2021, the project uses what would have been the most recent data available at the time.

Standardization

Each metric was standardized based on its z-score. 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 indices when compared to the 2021 index.

Weighting

While there are many arguments for weighing specific factors as more accurate measures of social capital over other less accurate measures, 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

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.



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