



Quality of Life Survey

Social Capital

Spokane County, 2019

What is Social Capital and why is it important?

Social capital is “the degree of connectedness and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population.”¹ People who can get help, information or resources from their social networks, and who feel a sense of belonging to a group or community, have more social capital. Higher levels of social capital have been linked with better overall health. For example, being connected to and able to rely on others makes people happier,² less prone to illness,³ and more likely to engage in healthy activities.⁴

Conversely, low social capital has negative health consequences. For example, one review found that social isolation and feelings of loneliness were associated with increased risks for all-cause death comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes per day.⁵ As social interactions and feelings of connectedness within communities may be limited by various factors (e.g., use of social media), there are implications for community health and quality of life.

How is Social Capital Assessed?

In the QoL Survey, social capital was measured using a **composite Social Capital score**. This score is calculated from residents’ responses to 15 survey questions. These questions capture different individual- and community-level aspects of social capital. Questions included:

- Psychological questions (e.g., feelings of safety and belonging)
- Social questions (e.g., number of close friends and trust in others)
- Civic engagement questions (e.g., volunteering, religious service attendance and interest in politics)

A formula is used to assign a composite score, which ranges between 0 and 1; higher scores close to 1 reflect more, or higher, social capital.

Key Findings

- Residents scored highest on the following aspects of social capital: feelings of safety in parks, partner/child relationships and neighborhood satisfaction.
- Residents scored lowest on the following aspects of social capital: volunteering, receiving family support, religious attendance and helping others.
- Social capital differed by sociodemographic factors.
- 63% of residents had a strong sense of belonging to their neighborhood.
- 51% of residents felt most people can be trusted.

Produced by



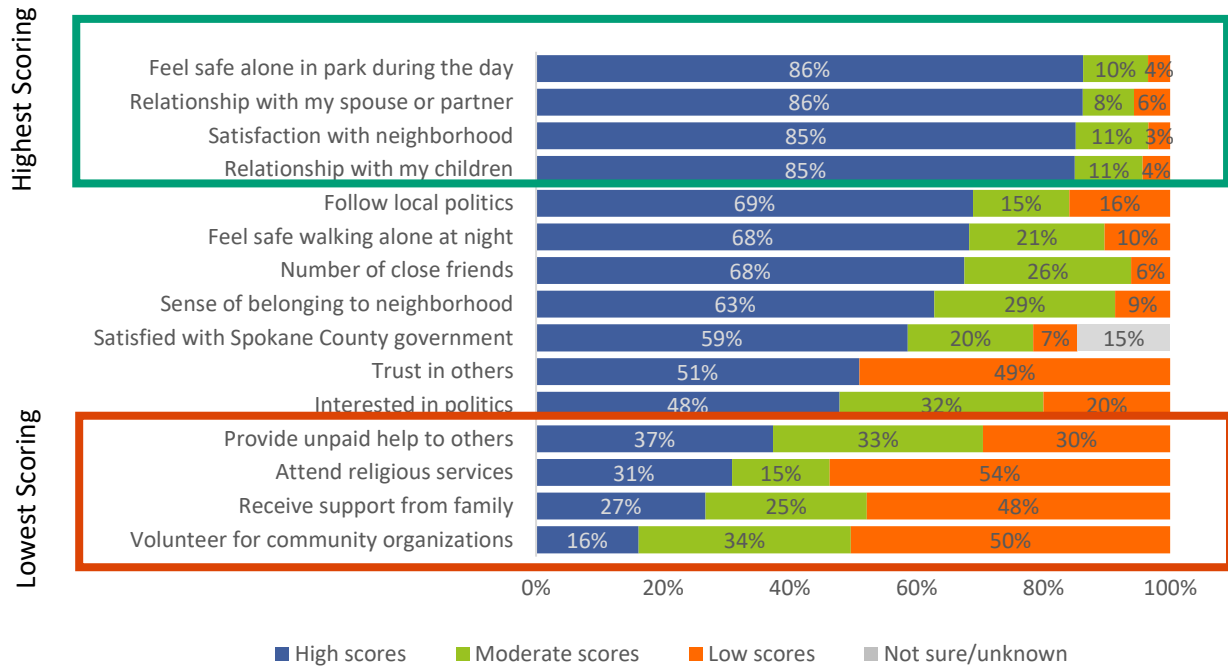
Spokane Regional Health District
Data Center

1101 W. College Ave., #360
Spokane, WA 99201
509.323.2853
srhd.org/datacenter

2019 Social Capital Results

Social Capital Items

Figure 1. Percentage of Residents Scoring High, Moderate, or Low on Each Aspect of Social Capital, Spokane County, 2019



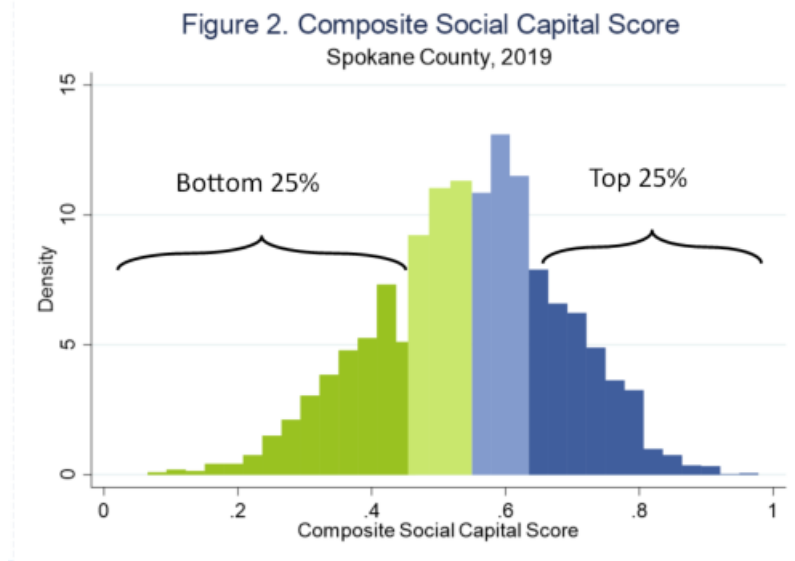
High scores were defined as follows: felt safe, had excellent/very good relationships, were satisfied, participated in activities at least once a month, had at least three close friends, had a strong sense of belonging, interested in politics, or believed “most people can be trusted.”

Low scores were defined as follows: felt very unsafe, had fair/poor relationships, were very dissatisfied, did not participate in activities, had no close friends, had a very weak sense of belonging, not interested in politics, or believed “you can’t be too careful.”

Residents’ social capital scores were highest for park safety, satisfaction with their neighborhoods and relationships with their partners and children. Scores were lowest for community involvement (e.g., helping, volunteering) and receiving family support (Figure 1).

Composite Social Capital

In 2019, Spokane County residents varied in their overall social capital; composite scores ranged from 0.10 to 0.91. Half of the respondents had social capital scores above 0.55. Respondents scoring in the top 25% (i.e., highest social capital) had scores above 0.63, and respondents in the bottom 25% (i.e., lowest social capital) had scores below 0.45 (Figure 2).

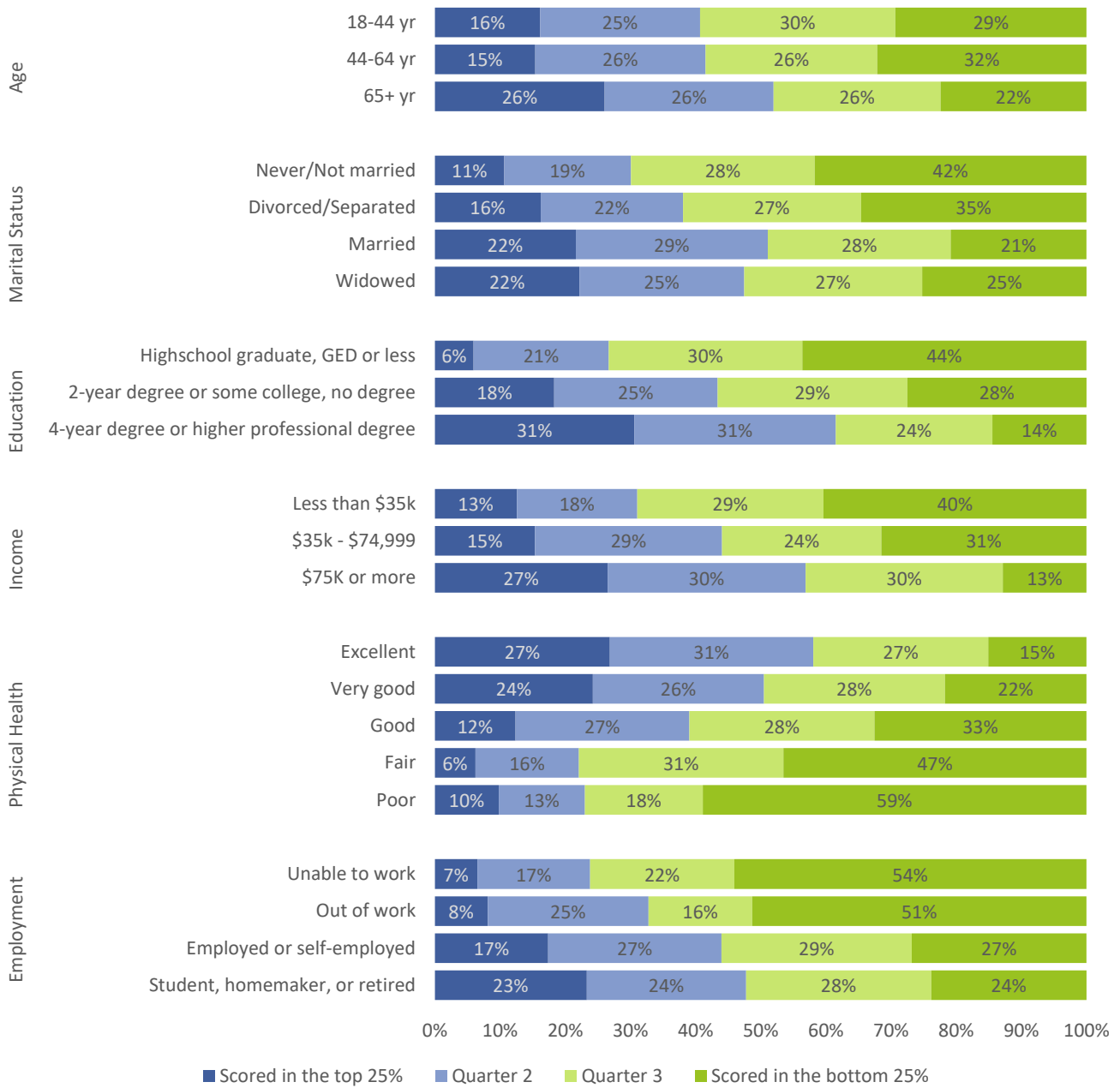


Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to Higher Social Capital, Spokane County, 2019

Generally, Spokane County residents with higher social capital were:

- Older (65+ years old)
- Widowed or married
- More educated (received 4-year college and/or professional degree)
- In higher-income households
- Students/homemakers/retirees
- In “excellent” or “very good” physical or mental health
- In stable housing
- Satisfied with their neighborhood or community
- In households with children

Figure 3. Composite Social Capital Score by Selected Socioemographic Factors, Spokane County, 2019



Sense of Belonging to One’s Neighborhood or Community

Figure 4. Sense of Belonging, Spokane County, 2019

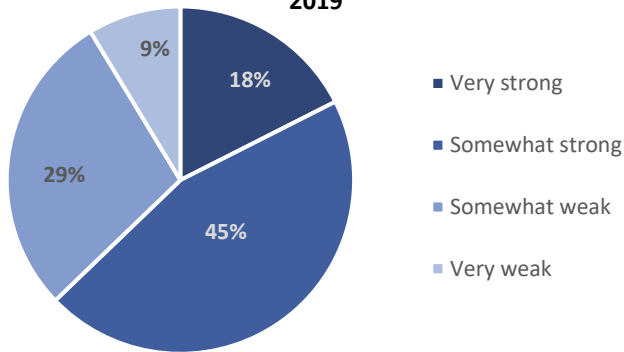
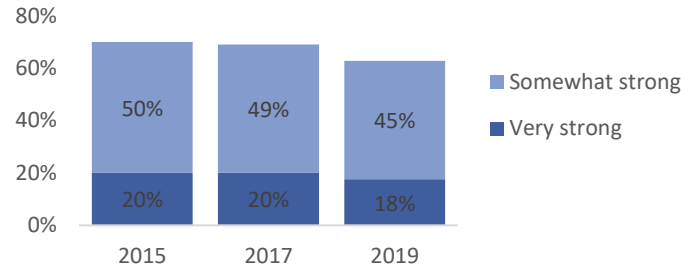


Figure 5. % of Residents Felt Very or Somewhat Strong Sense of Belonging to Their Neighborhood, Spokane County, 2015-2019



Approximately 63% of Spokane County residents reported having a “very strong” or “somewhat strong” sense of belonging to their neighborhood (Figure 4).

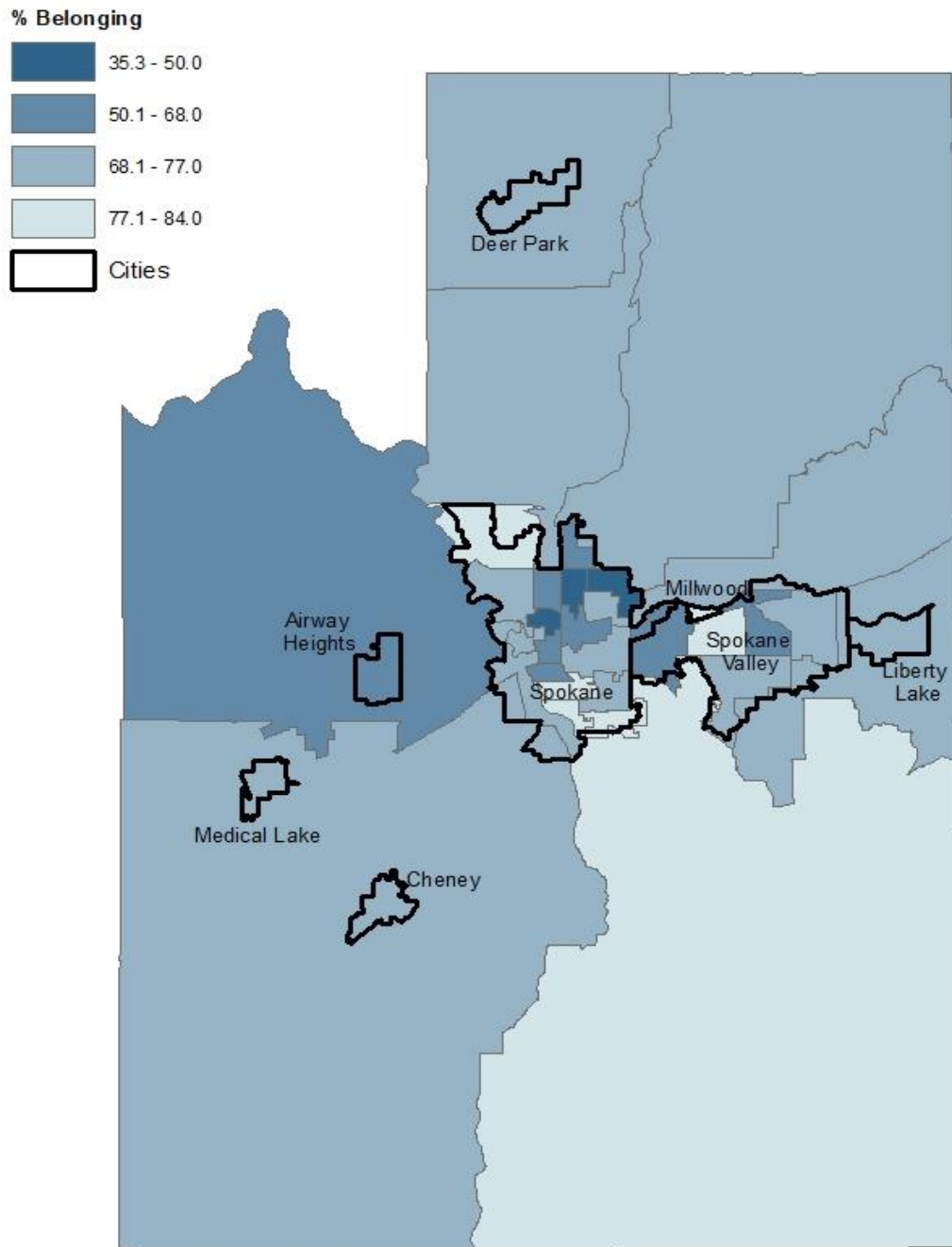
The percentage of Spokane County residents who felt a strong sense of belonging slightly decreased from 70% in 2015 to 63% in 2019 (Figure 5).

Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to a Weaker Sense of Belonging to One’s Neighborhood or Community, Spokane County, 2019

Generally, residents who reported a “very weak” or “somewhat weak” sense of belonging to their neighborhood or community were:

- Younger (< 45 years old)
- Never married or not married
- Less educated (high school diploma/GED or less)
- Unable to work or out of work
- In lower-income households
- In “poor” or “fair” physical or mental health
- Living in Spokane < 10 years
- In unstable housing
- Dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community
- Residents of certain neighborhoods (e.g., Hillyard/Whitman, Emerson/Garfield, and Nevada/Lidgerwood) (Figure 6)

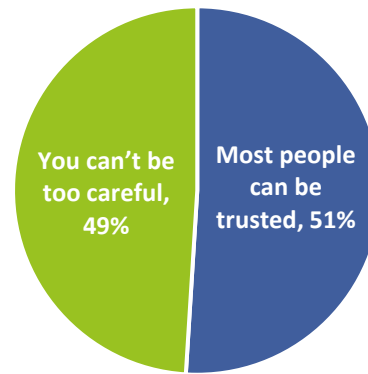
Figure 6. Residents' Sense of Belonging to their Neighborhood or Community, by Neighborhood, Spokane County, 2019



Trust in Others

Trust was assessed by asking residents, “Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful?” The answer choices were “most people can be trusted” or “you can’t be too careful.” Spokane County residents were almost evenly split on the issue: 51% felt most people can be trusted, and 49% felt you can’t be too careful (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Trust in Others, Spokane County, 2019



Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to Lower Trust in Others, Spokane County, 2019

Trust in others was lower among Spokane County residents who were:

- Younger (< 45 years old)
- Never married or not married
- Less educated (high school diploma/GED or less)
- Unable to work or out of work
- In lower-income households
- In “poor” or “fair” physical or mental health
- In unstable housing
- Dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community

Conclusion

In 2019, social capital in Spokane County differed by residents’ age, marital status, educational attainment, income, employment status, physical and mental health, housing security, neighborhood satisfaction and whether they had children in the household. Social capital did not differ by gender, race, or ethnicity. Most residents reported having a strong sense of belonging to their neighborhood or community. However, findings regarding trust in other people were mixed. These results highlight the impacts of social determinants of health on social capital. Results could be used to identify subpopulations with lower social capital for targeted outreach, resources and interventions at the community level. Populations at higher risk of experiencing health disparities due to social determinants of health (e.g., residents with low income and living in unstable housing, or areas with low levels of social trust) should be prioritized for intervention.

Sources: ¹ Harpham T, Grant E, Thomas E. Measuring social capital within health surveys: key issues. *Health Policy Plann.* 2002;17(1):106-11. ² Diener E, Seligman ME, Choi H, Oishi S. Happiest people revisited. *Perspectives on Psychological Science.* 2018 Mar;13(2):176-84. ³ Cohen S, Janicki-Deverts D. Can we improve our physical health by altering our social networks?. *Perspectives on Psychological Science.* 2009 Jul;4(4):375-8. ⁴ Yang YC, Boen C, Gerken K, Li T, Schorpp K, Harris KM. Social relationships and physiological determinants of longevity across the human life span. *PNAS.* 2016 Jan 19;113(3):578-83.

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