

# Social Capital Brief

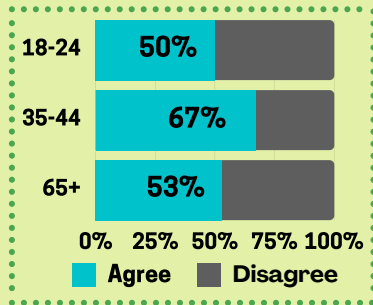
This brief identifies Austin Area trends in social capital, which broadly refers to the social connectedness and how that affects community well-being. In 2020, social capital increased in the Austin Area across the three dimensions we track: trust, neighborhood cohesion, and bonding networks. However, the increases were not equal among all residents. Compared to 2018, Black residents, suburban residents, and those who report a household income of less than \$40k, indicate an increase in social capital. The amount of social capital in a community has implications for a multitude of beneficial outcomes for communities. Understanding these changes is essential to community improvement.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION

Neighborhood cohesion is the occurrence of shared norms and cohesiveness within a neighborhood. We measure neighborhood cohesion by summarizing survey responses relevant to **neighborhood relationships, cooperation, and skill development**. The 2020 survey data indicated a **decline of neighborhood cohesion across all race/ethnic** categories as compared to 2018. **Black respondents** saw the **smallest decrease, -1.2%** in neighborhood cohesion. This is compared to a greater decline experienced by white and Hispanic survey respondents, which saw a -6% and a -6.6% decline in 2020.

### Lending and Borrowing among Neighbors

In 2020, Austin Area survey respondents aged 35-44 report borrowing/lending items to neighbors at **higher rates, 67%**, than other age groups.



There was a statistically significant difference between age groups as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA test.

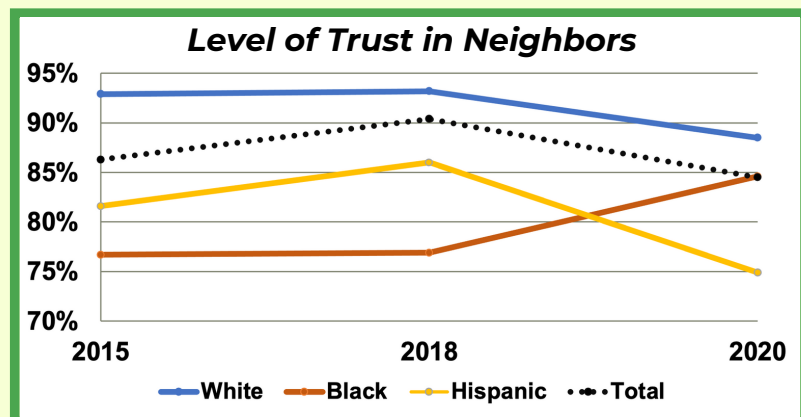
When looking at neighborhood cohesion, data **indicated lower levels of cohesion than in 2018**. Interestingly, those with a household income of **\$125K+ saw the smallest change**, only a 1% decrease in cohesion.



In 2020, rural, urban and suburban survey respondents **indicated a decline in neighborhood cohesion levels as compared to 2018**.

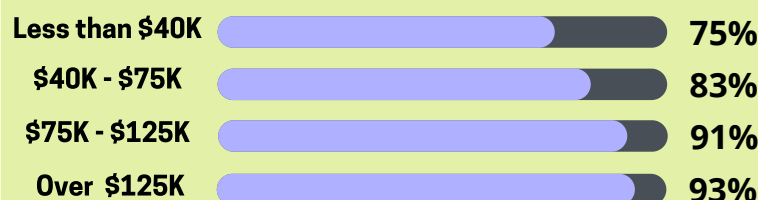
## TRUST

Our survey measures trust by summarizing the responses of questions which examine attitudes towards neighborhood trustworthiness. The **2020 survey data indicates a general decline in trust levels by race/ethnicity and household income**. **Black Austin Area survey respondents report an increase in trust levels**, an increase of 5%, as compared to other race/ethnic groups.



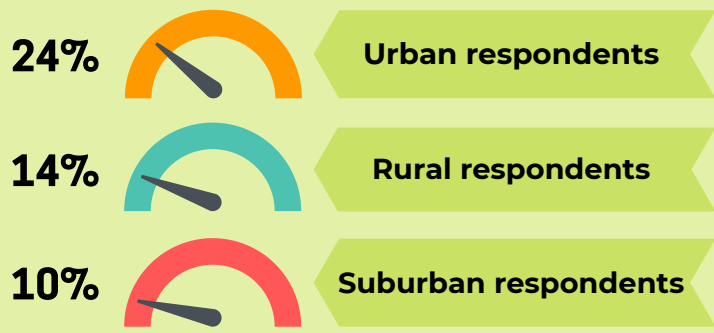
Meanwhile, when trust is examined by length of time in a neighborhood, all groups of **residents indicate a decline in trust levels in 2020** as compared to 2018. Interestingly, those who report living in their neighborhood for 20 or more years report the greatest decline in trust, a decline of ~7%, as compared to 2018.

### Agree to "Generally speaking, I can trust people who live in my neighborhood"



There was a statistically significant difference for this question between income groups as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA test.

**DO NOT feel at home in neighborhood**

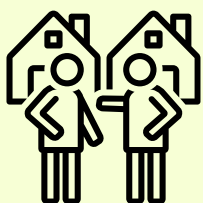


There was a statistically significant difference for this question between Residence categories as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA test.

In 2020, all household income groups reported a decline in trust levels as compared to 2018. Those who report a **low income indicated the largest decline in trust, -6%**, when compared to other income groups. Similarly, a **decline in trust is seen across most age groups**, except those who are between 25-34 years old. This cohort indicated an increase in trust, 8%, in 2020.

**BONDING NETWORKS**

We measure bonding networks, or social support networks, by averaging survey responses to multiple questions that serve as indicators for this dimensions of social capital. This included identifying whether survey respondents **visit neighbors and borrow/lend items** in their neighborhood. **2020 data indicates an overall increase in bonding** since 2018 across all race/ethnic categories, household income categories, and survey respondents who identified as male or female.



Black, Hispanic and white survey respondents indicated an increase in bonding networks in 2020 as compared to 2018. **Hispanics indicated the greatest increase, 32%, in bonding networks.**



One variable used to measure bonding networks was survey respondents reporting whether they **visit of their neighbors.**

When examined by education, those with a high school degree indicated the **highest rate, 46%, of having visited neighbors** when compared to those with a different educational background

There was a statistically significant difference for this question between education categories as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA test.



In 2020, **all household income groups reported an increase in bonding networks.** Those who reported a household income of less than \$35k indicated the greatest increase, 31%, in bonding networks. Those who reported a household income of \$125k+ indicated the smallest increase, 8%.

In 2020, survey respondents between the **ages of 18-24 reported feeling alone** in their neighborhood at a rate of **38%**, which is the highest amongst age categories.



There was a statistically significant difference for this question between age categories as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA test.

**About The Project:**

The Austin Area Sustainability projects covers a six county area including Travis, Williamson, Burnet, Hays, Caldwell and Bastrop counties. Data is collected through our biennial survey, that started in 2004. The mission of the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators is to measure the quality of life and sustainability trends of the Austin MSA, and to serve as a foundation for a systems approach to address the challenges of our region. The 2020 survey took place between the months of September through December of 2020. Like our previous surveys, the survey is primarily telephone, landline and cellphone. In 2020, 10% of our responses fielded online. Generous support from **St. David's Foundation** directly supported the social connectedness data collection and analysis of the project.