



Social Cohesion

What is social cohesion?

[Social cohesion](#) is the bond that ties our neighborhoods together. It's a key element in violence prevention and reduction. To build social cohesion, it's critical to [increase engagement](#), leadership, and ownership of community events among the wider community.

Neighborhood with strong social cohesion

Is socially organized and neighbors agree on what is acceptable behavior and reinforce it in each other.



This helps them build [collective efficacy](#), which is what community members are willing to do to improve their neighborhoods.



Social organization is associated with positive health outcomes and lower crime.

Neighborhood with poor social cohesion

Is [socially disorganized](#), meaning there is low community participation and a lack of trust among neighbors.



This makes it hard to build community efficacy, which is what community members are willing to do to improve their neighborhoods.



Social disorganization is associated with a rise in [negative health outcomes](#) and crime.

Measuring Social Cohesion

One way to measure a community's social cohesion is to look at the social capital within a community.

- Social capital is the amount of social connections within a community, so the higher the social capital the greater the social cohesion.
- In 2018, the federal government published the [Social Capital Project](#).
- The project measures social capital at a State and County level using a Social Capital Index with four sub-indexes: Family Unit, Community Health, Institutional Health, and Collective Efficacy.

Dane County has an overall Social Capital Index in the 92nd percentile.

This means Dane County scored better than 92% of other counties.

- Family Unit: 76th percentile
- Community Health: 81st percentile
- Institutional Health: 100th percentile
- Collective Efficacy: 43rd percentile

While our total social capital is in the top 10% of all counties, our social efficacy – or what we are willing to do for each other – is in the bottom-half, so there is still lots of room for work.

Madison and Dane County Coalition to Prevent Violence

Improved social cohesion is [Goal 3: Foster Strong Neighborhoods of the Coalition](#). Building and sustaining strong neighborhoods is an essential component of public safety and preventing violence in Dane County.

With this goal, we want to support and increase opportunities to empower communities. We'll do this by bringing together community members and stakeholders—including government—to develop trust and working relationships, and support community-member leadership in developing solutions to address systemic challenges in neighborhoods.