



AREAS OF STRENGTH

Below we highlight measures where Mesa County is outperforming Colorado, the US, or comparison communities, or measures where Mesa County has shown marked improvement.

Some areas of strength point to resources Mesa County can leverage in tackling larger issues. Some indicate areas where intervention has been successful, and continued support has the opportunity to continue improving outcomes. Some areas of strength, indicated with an asterisk (*), highlight recent changes or interventions that seek to address existing needs - ongoing monitoring will reveal their effectiveness.

More information about each area of strength can be found by turning to the corresponding Social Determinant of Health section in this document.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Household Stability

- Many household types earn a median wage well above that required for basic self-sufficiency.
- Single female households with children can close the gap to self-sufficiency by enrolling in benefits programs.

Industry and Jobs

- Compared to St. George, UT and Bend, OR, Mesa County has more workers earning an *essential* and *desirable income*.
- Health Care, Construction, and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are industries that pay an *essential* or *desirable income* and are projected to grow in Mesa County.

helped District 51 purchase new elementary curriculum and teacher training.*

- Students who do not finish high school in four years are now twice as likely to go on to graduate as in 2012.

UPDATE

SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT

The **Child Care 8,000 Initiative (CC8K)** has established a successful approach through partnerships and effective support systems in the early childhood industry. CC8K is working holistically to build a strong early childhood education sector by improving business practices and revenue, expanding capacity, and increasing workforce, workforce development opportunities, and quality of workforce. These strategies have led to a regional expansion of child care services.

EDUCATION

P-12 Education

- Revenue from the 2017 mill levy override

Higher Education

- Between 2015 and 2019, the number of young adults with a bachelor's degree nearly doubled in Mesa County.
- Mesa County higher education institutions prioritize meeting the needs of all students drawn from the Western Slope and creating programs that allow students to climb a ladder of certification and degree programs with ease.
- District 51 high school students have opportunities to take a variety of college-level courses at no cost, giving them a head start on their higher education goals.*
- CMU has increased completion rates dramatically since 2005.
- CMU students score higher on many professional exams than their peers in Colorado and the US.

HEALTH CARE AND ACCESS

Health Care Access and Utilization

- More Mesa County residents than Colorado residents report having a usual source of health care, reducing usage of the emergency room for care that could be treated by a regular doctor.
- The Healthy Families and Workplaces Act of 2020 will increase the number of workers able to accrue paid sick leave, which may impact their ability to attend needed health care visits.*
- Nearly three in four Mesa County residents indicated that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The health care system meets the needs of my family."

Mental Health

- Mesa County primary care providers have prioritized patient conversations about mental health. As a result, Mesa County residents were significantly more likely to have spoken to a doctor about their mental health than Colorado residents in general.
- District 51 provides licensed clinicians to provide mental health services to students. More health care services, including mental health, are now available through the Warrior Wellness Center at Central High School.*

NEIGHBORHOOD AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Mesa County has a lower student-teacher ratio and higher per-pupil spending than two of the three comparison communities.
- A 2017 bond measure allowed District 51 to address more than \$50 million in top-priority maintenance projects.
- Mesa County law enforcement has higher crime clearance rates than the US.
- Mesa County Code Compliance recently instituted a neighborhood/environmental clean up day project in Clifton to facilitate improved neighborhood aesthetic and build community connections.*
- Ballot initiatives to increase sales tax in support of public safety in Mesa County passed in 2017 and 2019, resulting in new facilities and increased personnel.
- Mesa County has 277 miles of non-motorized trails open to hikers, horseback riders, and bikers.
- Despite 18 weeks of closures, the Mesa County Library System provided over one million checkouts in 2020, and saw increases in digital materials checkouts and adult student hours.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT (CONT.)

- The Mesa County Library Wellness Desk is a partnership with Mind Springs Health and began providing patrons access to a qualified mental health clinician in spring of 2021.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) offers free radon test kits to all residents by mail.
- Mesa County has a regional water quality lab facility that provides testing services for the Western Slope, reducing the time and cost associated with analysis.

UPDATE

SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT

Trails and open space remain a valuable Mesa County resource for the community, and **usage of trails increased nearly 50%** between 2019 and 2020 as residents sought outdoor recreation opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. To support this resource, **Mesa County Public Health funded a 4-person trails maintenance crew** contracted through the Western Colorado Conservation Corps, focused on revegetation, social trail closure, erosion control, rock work, and other maintenance projects, primarily on Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service lands over the next two years, and possibly beyond.*

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- In 2019, high school students reported less bullying on school grounds than in 2017.
- Mesa County has less than half as much white/non-white segregation than Colorado, and 40% less Hispanic/Non-Hispanic segregation than Colorado.

SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT

The **Community Transformation Group (CTG)** is a collaborative project of public health, education, health and human services, civic organizations, law enforcement, faith communities, and individual residents working together to improve health, education and the economy by building social capital in neighborhoods. In the Clifton community, where CTG work is currently centered, residents identified safe community spaces and improvements to the physical environment as the highest priorities for community change. The CTG coalition's efforts have resulted in an annual neighborhood cleanup and ongoing advocacy for park amenities, pedestrian safety improvements, and connectivity between outdoor spaces in the area.

UPDATE

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Health Behaviors

- The Division of Child Welfare for Mesa County has put additional focus on preventive interventions, resulting in a significant reduction of children needing to be placed in County custody.
- Mesa County drug overdose hospitalizations are decreasing significantly while overdose emergency department visits are going up, meaning that more overdose emergencies can be treated without admission.

Health Behaviors (cont.)

- Targeted education programs promoting overdose intervention practices like Naloxone/Narcan may be effectively reducing the number of serious overdoses and deaths. Small sample sizes make it difficult to confirm this trend, but initial findings are promising.
- Mesa County's teen birth rate decreased by one-third between 2015 and 2019.

UPDATE

SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT

The **Mesa County Opioid Response Group**, formed in 2018, brings together multidisciplinary community partners to address substance use in Mesa County. The goals of the group are to prevent substance misuse, improve treatment access and retention, and reduce harm. These efforts are led through its workgroups focused on prevention and education, treatment, and recovery.

Health Outcomes

- While rates are increasing over time, Mesa County has a lower rate of sexually transmitted infections than Colorado.

SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT

The **Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition** consists of a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders that works together to implement a community suicide prevention plan in partnership with the Colorado National Collaborative.

UPDATE

