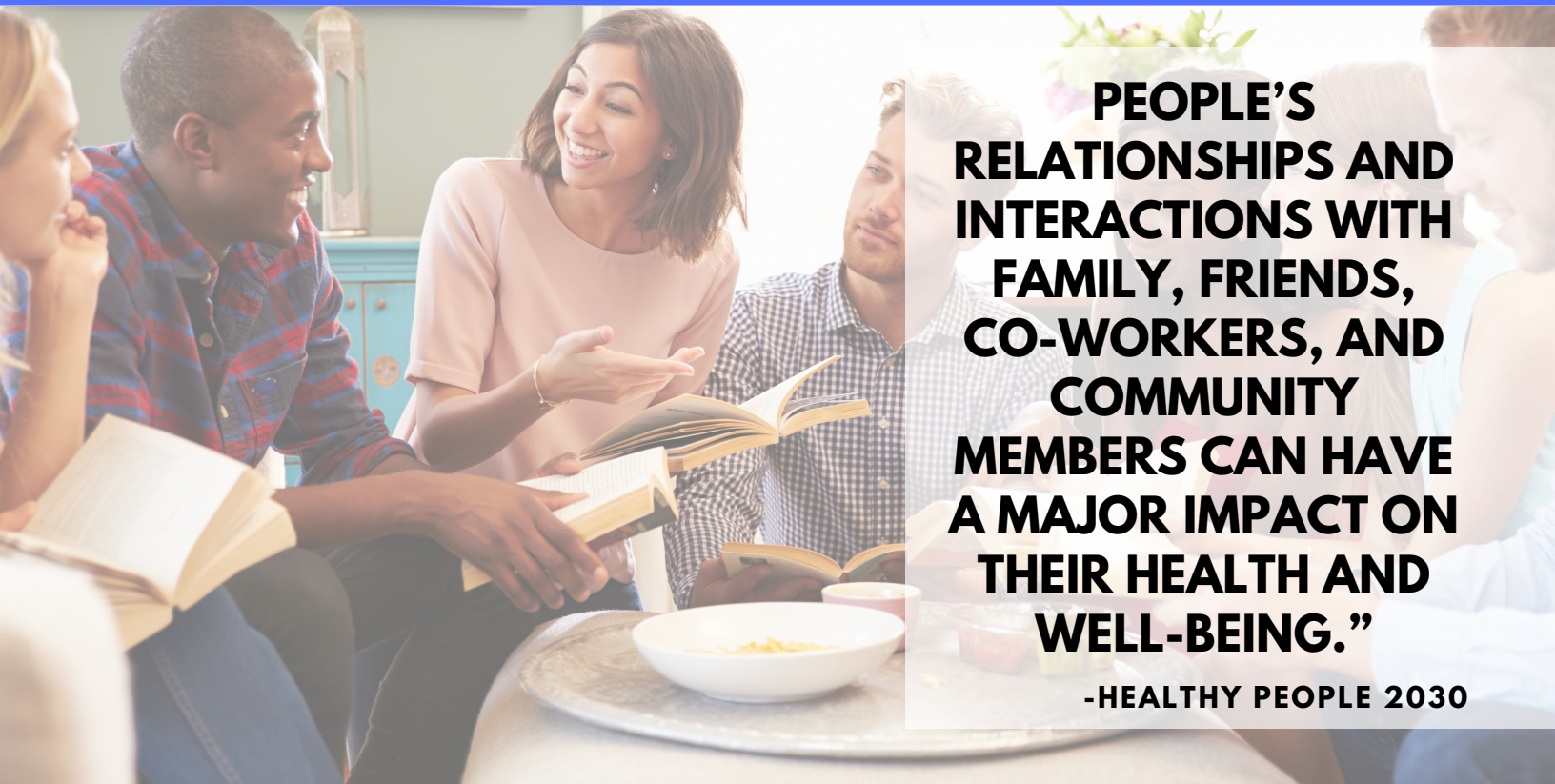


SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT



**PEOPLE'S
RELATIONSHIPS AND
INTERACTIONS WITH
FAMILY, FRIENDS,
CO-WORKERS, AND
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS CAN HAVE
A MAJOR IMPACT ON
THEIR HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING.”**

-HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030

WHY IT MATTERS IN THIS ASSESSMENT

This section seeks to measure the relationships in our community (between residents and their friends, family, and co-workers, and with their community through civic engagement). Many of these measures are dependent on survey questions. We've included existing data measures to characterize social context and the questions we intend to answer as next steps.



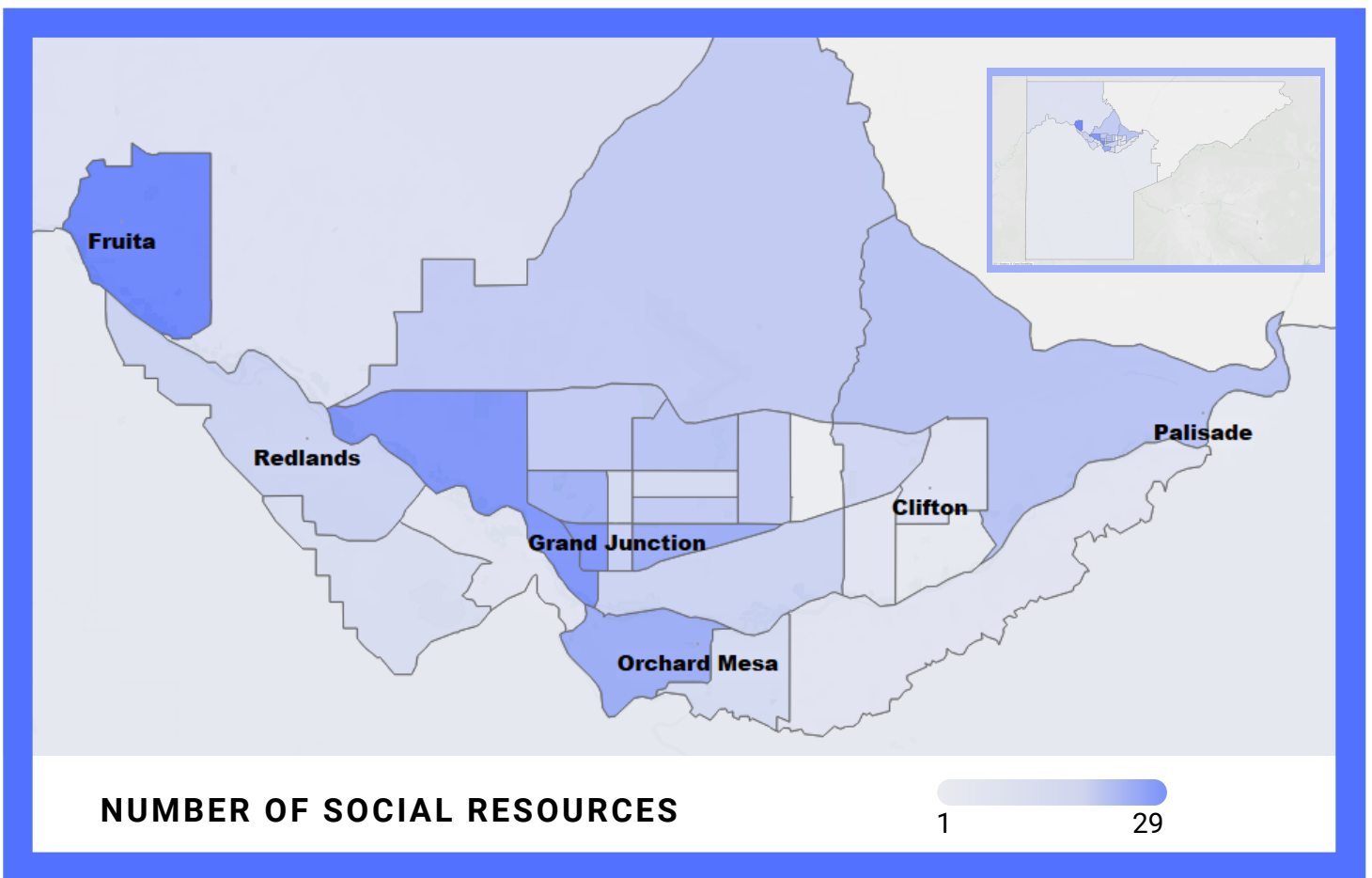
SOCIAL RESOURCES

For our purposes, social resources are places people can gather to strengthen their personal, community, or civic ties. We know these resources are not distributed evenly across Mesa County communities, nor do they necessarily need to be. However, people in low-income communities may face barriers accessing social resources that require leaving their neighborhoods because of transportation limitations or a lack of flexibility in work schedules.

Here we highlight the number of churches, schools, gyms, parks, sports fields, libraries, senior centers, recreation centers, and farmer's markets. Some of these resources are free to use, like libraries and parks, and others require fees to enter or participate, such as gyms and some functions of recreation centers. Nonetheless, this measure can be used as a baseline of resources that facilitate social connection.

“ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND ACROSS ENTIRE COMMUNITIES CAN BENEFIT HEALTH.”

-COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS



Mesa County has 14 census tracts with lower median household income than the county average of \$55,379, of those, five have fewer than 10 social resources. The three tracts centered on Clifton have fewer than five each.

Rural areas in Mesa County tend to have above-average household incomes, but isolation and lack of social resources may still be an issue based solely on the time commitment to travel to a social resource located more centrally. Notably, the three largest rural census tracts each have five or fewer social resources.

A better predictor of the availability of social resources in each census tract is whether that neighborhood is part of an incorporated city or town. Sixteen census tracts in Mesa County have fewer than 10 social resources, and 11 of the 16 are unincorporated. Some of these census tracts represent large rural regions, but many are densely populated areas of Clifton, Fruitvale, Orchard Mesa, and the Redlands.

**THE THREE LARGEST
RURAL CENSUS
TRACTS EACH HAVE**

5

**FIVE OR FEWER
SOCIAL
RESOURCES**



INCORPORATION IS THE BEST PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL RESOURCES IN MESA COUNTY.

ALL 11 UNINCORPORATED CENSUS TRACTS HAVE FEWER THAN TEN SOCIAL RESOURCES.

●●● **AREA OF ACTION**

- Identify strategies to boost social resources in unincorporated areas that lack them. Strengthen and diversify the ways in which these communities can use their existing resources, often schools and churches, to best facilitate the formation and reinforcement of social networks, especially targeting areas that are both unincorporated and low-income.
- Examine the most effective social resources for communities based on population and economic factors.

We identify three types of social and community context—personal relationships, community engagement, and civic participation. Each type provides different benefits and supports to individuals and the community, often stacking or facilitating each other. For example, the Senior Center profiled in the Community section is a resource open to the community that provides a place for personal relationships to be formed and strengthened and may encourage local seniors to get involved in volunteer projects or other civic activities.



PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

"Individuals have access to social capital through their social networks, which are webs of social relationships. Social networks are sources of multiple forms of social support, such as emotional support (e.g., encouragement after a setback) and instrumental support (e.g., a ride to a doctor's appointment)."

- Healthy People 2030

This section looks at existing data measures that quantify personal relationships and shows questions that we would like to ask to better understand the nature of personal relationships for residents of Mesa County. While high school students answer questions about their relationships to their parents in the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, in general there is little up-to-date information about personal relationships among adults in Mesa County.

AS A COMMUNITY WE CAN WORK TO FIND ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS:

- ? How often do Mesa County residents communicate/spend time with their friends and family?
- ? How many Mesa County residents have a friend or family member they could ask for support (such as money, last-minute child care, or a ride somewhere) in a time of need?
- ? How many Mesa County residents have offered a friend or family member support (such as money, last-minute child care, or a ride somewhere) in a time of need?



MESA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FEEL AS SUPPORTED BY THEIR PARENTS AS STUDENTS STATEWIDE.

MOST STUDENTS FEEL THEY COULD GO TO THEIR PARENTS FOR HELP WITH A PROBLEM AND BELIEVE THEIR PARENTS THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTING ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR PARENTS IN MESA COUNTY AND COLORADO (2019)

	Mesa County	Colorado
Could ask a parent for help with a personal problem.	84.6%	82.3%
Have chances to do fun things with their parents.*	80.2%	76.3%
Have parents who know where they are and whom they are with if they are not at home.	93.2%	92.2%
Have a trusted adult to go to for help with a serious problem.	72.1%	72.7%
Have parents who ask if their homework is done.	77.8%	75.9%
Have parents who ask what they think before most family decisions.	67.9%	66.4%

*indicates statistical difference from the state

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Conduct a survey and focus groups of Mesa County residents to better understand their personal relationships and the benefits and missing pieces in their social networks.





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

“Belonging to groups can improve physical and mental health by increasing social capital and decreasing social isolation.”

-Healthy People 2030

Mesa County high schoolers report an overall decline in bullying, fostering a better community environment at school, but after high school, several membership organizations reported difficulty attracting young members. Seniors have many opportunities for community engagement in Mesa County through senior centers, which made efforts to continue building connections with their members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Neighborhood segregation can also be an indication of a lack of community cohesion. Mesa County has lower rates of racial and ethnic segregation than the state of Colorado overall.

For every 10,000 people, Mesa County has 9.0 membership associations (such as civic, religious, and hobby organizations) as reported by those associations, ranking 27th across Colorado counties.

- Bend*: 10.3
- Bozeman*: 12.2

*comparison communities were measured at the county level



BULLYING/TEASING

In 2019, 19.5% of Mesa County students reported bullying on school grounds, compared to 16.6% of Colorado students.*

In Mesa County, this number is down from 23.5% in 2017.*

- LGBT students (39.4-47.8%) reported more bullying than heterosexual students (16.2%).*
- Multiple race students (29.8%) reported more bullying than White students (19.3%), or Hispanic/Latino students (15.6%).*
- Female students (23.6%) reported more bullying than male students (15.4%).*



15.7% of Mesa county students reported electronic bullying, compared to 13.3% of Colorado students.*

In Mesa County, this number is down from 18.5% in 2017.

- Female students (21.8%) reported more electronic bullying than male students (9.3%).*
- LGBT students (24.9-30.6%) reported more electronic bullying than heterosexual students (12.8%).*

*indicates statistical difference



● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Explore the relationship between high school mental health and bullying, since a decrease in bullying did not result in a corresponding decrease in mental health concerns.
- Work to address higher levels of bullying among specific sub-groups such as LGBT students, multiple race students, and female students.

ALTHOUGH OVERALL LEVELS OF BULLYING HAVE DECREASED, BULLYING REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE FOR SEVERAL SUB-GROUPS



SPOTLIGHT

FRUITA SENIOR CENTER

In 2019:

- Attendance at educational presentations was 483.
- Attendance at hikes and walks was 86.
- Attendance at Senior Socials was 2,187.
- Attendance at potluck lunch was 3,000.

In 2020, the Fruita senior center pivoted to emphasize check-ins on isolated seniors and help with odd-jobs, as well as socially-distanced activities like “quarantine bingo” and limited-capacity hikes.

The dissimilarity index measures segregation by census tract in Mesa County. Total integration isn't the goal, but residential segregation is often associated with health disparities in underrepresented groups. More diverse residential neighborhoods help ensure that groups are aware of and have access to community resources.

- Mesa County has less than half as much white/non-white segregation than Colorado.
- Mesa County has 40% less Hispanic/Non-Hispanic segregation than Colorado.

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Assess trends in Senior Center usage over time to determine if the existing facilities have the capacity to meet the needs of Mesa County Seniors.
- Investigate how Mesa County rates of segregation compare to benchmark communities. Survey Mesa County residents to better understand any impact or concerns about segregation.



AS A COMMUNITY WE CAN WORK TO FIND ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS:

- ? How many Mesa County residents feel safe walking their neighborhood streets at night?
- ? How many Mesa County residents feel like their neighbors are generally trustworthy people?
- ? How many Mesa County residents are members of a formal or informal community group (e.g. school group, volunteer organization, book club, hiking club)?
- ? How many Mesa County residents have participated in a community activity in the past year?



CIVIC PARTICIPATION

“CIVIC PARTICIPATION ENCOMPASSES A WIDE RANGE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL ACTIVITIES.... IN ADDITION TO THE DIRECT BENEFIT THAT CIVIC PARTICIPATION PROVIDES TO THE COMMUNITY, IT ALSO PRODUCES SECONDARY HEALTH BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS.”

-HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030

Mesa County had very high voter turnout in the 2020 general election, mirroring a state-wide trend that gave Colorado the second highest voter turnout of any state. Mesa County residents have many opportunities to volunteer. Nearly half of female and one-third of male high school students had volunteered in the past 30 days when surveyed in 2019, and Mesa County has the largest Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in Colorado.

EXAMPLES OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- VOTING
- VOLUNTEERING
- PARTICIPATING IN GROUP ACTIVITIES
- COMMUNITY GARDENING

2020 GENERAL ELECTION

- 79.9% of registered voters cast a vote, an increase of 11.4% over the 2016 General Election.
- The median age of voters was 55 years.
- 80.9% of registered female voters participated, and 77.4% of registered male voters participated.
- Gateway (68.8%) and Clifton (69.7%) had the lowest voter turnout while Glade Park (86.9%) and Loma (85.9%) had the highest.

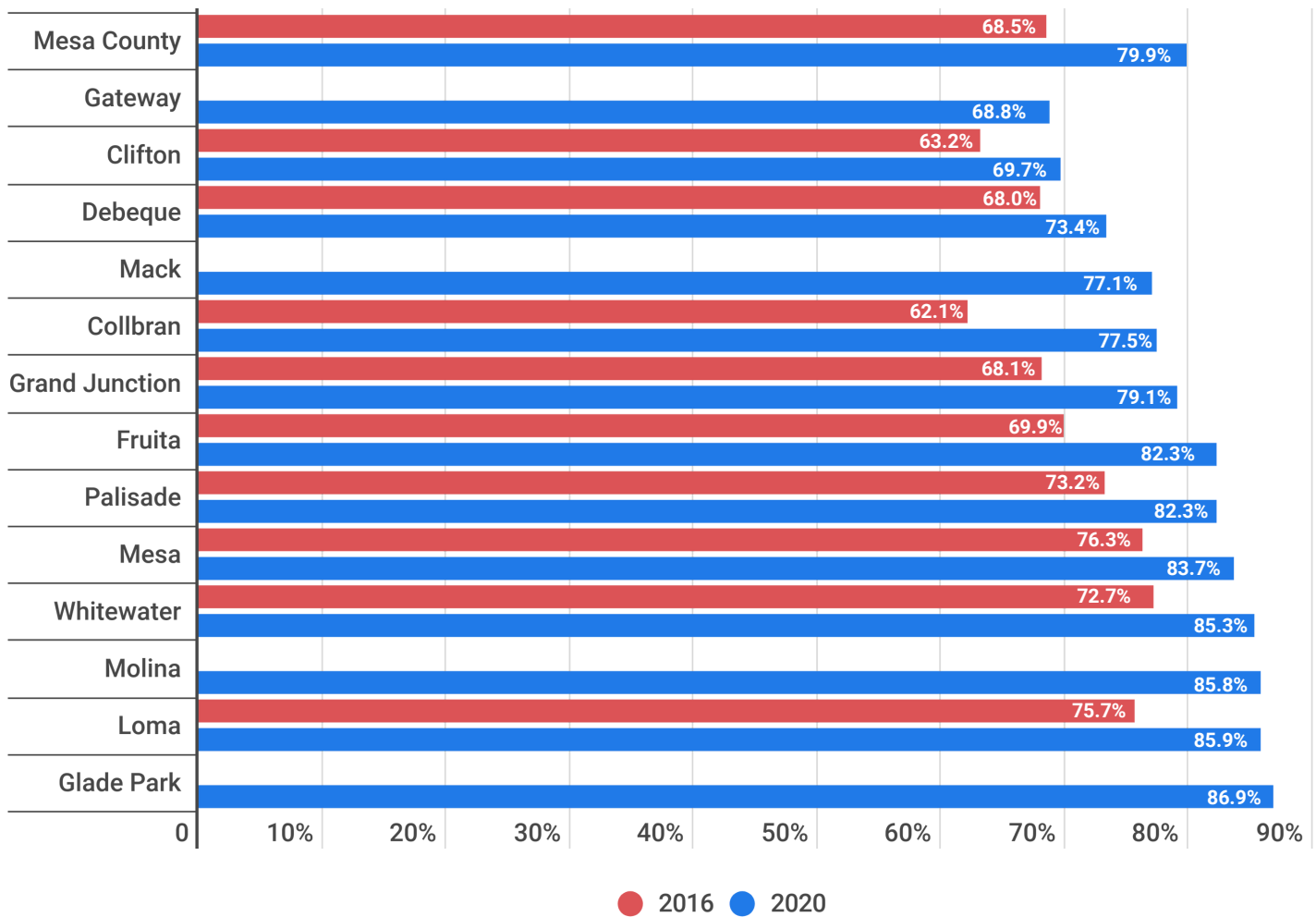
114,779

REGISTERED VOTERS
IN MESA COUNTY

COLORADO'S AUTOMATIC
VOTER REGISTRATION
SYSTEM HAS RESULTED IN
NEARLY ALL ELIGIBLE
VOTERS IN MESA COUNTY
BEING REGISTERED.



VOTER TURNOUT BY COMMUNITY IN MESA COUNTY (2016 AND 2020)



● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

Examine voter turnout at the precinct level to better understand local trends. Consider opportunities to engage voters in low-turnout precincts.

THE MESA COUNTY RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (RSVP) IS THE LARGEST RSVP PROGRAM IN COLORADO.



678

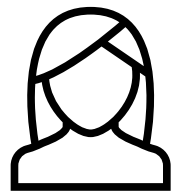
In 2019, 678 volunteers age 55+ volunteered through the Mesa County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), which is the largest RSVP program in Colorado.

39.7%

Mesa County students report volunteering in the past 30 days.

44.8%

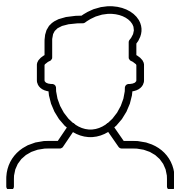
Colorado students report volunteering in the past 30 days.



Females

46.3%

Males
32.6%



FEMALE STUDENTS REPORTED MORE VOLUNTEERING THAN MALE STUDENTS.



INCORPORATION

- 79,117 Mesa County residents (52.3%) live in incorporated municipalities (towns and cities). Incorporated towns and cities have elected government officials and can levy taxes to provide services. In unincorporated areas, the most local level of government available is the county government and agencies.
- Examining the Social Resources Map on page 123, all 11 unincorporated tracts have fewer than 10 social resources. Incorporation is a better predictor of whether a tract will have more or less than 10 social resources than population size or median income.

HEALTH CARE FOUNDATIONS AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

Area hospitals play a key role in supporting our community. The contributions they make and the areas in which they invest support the work to build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Below is a profile for each non-profit hospital.

The **Community Hospital Foundation** raises, invests, and disperses funds to support the programs and services of Community Hospital. In 2020, the Community Hospital Foundation raised over \$700,000 to help support the hospital's mission and advance the commitment to care for people in a patient-centered environment. The majority of funds raised in 2020 went toward the capital campaign for the new James Pulsipher Regional Cancer Center, a state-of-the-art regional cancer center slated to open on the main Community Hospital campus in 2023. In addition, funds raised through the Community Hospital Foundation help support programs such as diabetes education, scholarships and staff tuition assistance, patient support including gas cards and lodging assistance for cancer patients traveling from outside the area, medical equipment purchases, and funding to help support the Nurse Residency Program at Community Hospital. Approximately 75% of fundraising dollars come from support from local and regional businesses and 25% come from individuals in our community. The average fundraising contribution to the Community Hospital Foundation in 2020 was \$1,000.

In 2020, the top three areas of investment from Community Hospital to support local community programs and organizations were Lunch Loop bike trail signage for COPMOBA, Grand Junction Economic Partnership, and a new gym floor at Redlands Middle School.

HEALTH CARE FOUNDATIONS AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS (CONT.)

St. Mary's Hospital Foundation is designed to support St. Mary's Medical Center programs and services. The foundation funds St. Mary's outreach programs including Suicide Prevention and Awareness, the HIV Clinic, Trauma Prevention Education, Heart Wellness Education, and education regarding non-accidental pediatric trauma. The Foundation also heavily supports furthering medical education which is key to developing a strong medical community in Mesa County. In addition, St. Mary's Hospital Foundation is the fiscal agent to three senior programs: Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents, and Meals on Wheels.

In 2020, the Foundation received contributions from 2,619 donors. Of those, 489 contributions came from donors living outside of Mesa County.



Of the \$3.55 million dollars the Foundation received in 2020:

- Grants - \$2.38 million
- Major Gift Contributions - \$329,000
- Estate Gifts- \$83,000
- Gifts from St. Mary's Associates- \$142,000

Although **Mind Springs Health** doesn't have a hospital foundation, they did raise money for their hospital capital campaign to support their new hospital building. To date that campaign has raised over \$5.5 million from 293 donors across Mesa County. Mind Springs Health supported the community through the following initiatives -

- Increased psychiatric inpatient and residential substance use disorder treatment capacity, providing more ready access to care for individuals on the Western Slope.
- Addressed the high suicide rate with a multi-path approach, by actively promoting and offering both crisis prevention and around-the-clock crisis services; collaborating with numerous partner agencies to increase awareness of suicide and possible symptoms, and maintaining an internal suicide task force to evaluate and evolve services intended to reduce the rate.
- Offered outpatient and residential substance use disorder treatment, including specialized services to women and teens that reduce the risk of teen pregnancy and substance abuse.
- Conducted tobacco screening and offered cessation counseling to patients at West Springs Hospital, decreasing the likelihood of continued tobacco use after discharge.

The **Family Health West Foundation** supports Family Health West and Colorado Canyons Hospital by providing non-medical support to reduce hardships for patients. In addition, they fund projects to expand resources and technologies available through their various treatment programs, especially the pediatric therapy and rehabilitation practice—the largest practice between Salt Lake City and Denver. Recent projects have included education resources for parents of children with autism, a new jungle gym and lift for the pediatric programs, and fencing and entertainment improvements at the Oaks Assisted Living facility.

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Mesa County has many active service organizations supported by the community. In addition to volunteer service, these organizations provide significant financial contribution to schools and area non-profit organizations as well as scholarships for students pursuing higher education. These organizations include Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Junior Service League, among many others.

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Engage with existing service organizations to understand their priority and funding areas and how they align with community health improvement efforts.
- Identify the extent to which young people are choosing not to participate in traditional community and civic organizations, and if so, explore whether they are joining new types of organizations or foregoing this type of social participation entirely.



SPOTLIGHT

GRAND JUNCTION ROTARY

Grand Junction Rotary is the oldest and largest Rotary Club in Mesa County with 111 members. Recent service projects include providing infant car seat covers, delivering meals to local seniors, and providing school supplies and books to D51 students. Grand Junction Rotary responds to the needs of the community through input from dues-paying members that often represent area businesses.

Several community and civic partners from churches to service clubs expressed concerns about an aging membership and a difficulty attracting young members. Grand Junction Horizons Rotary was identified as a group that is successful at bringing in young members, and they hypothesized that this was because of a fun atmosphere and members who issue personal invitations to young people in the community, rather than waiting for new members to find them.

AS A COMMUNITY WE CAN WORK TO FIND ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS:

- ? How many Mesa County adults have volunteered in the past year?
- ? How many Mesa County adults feel like the local/federal government can be trusted?
- ? How many Mesa County residents have contacted a government representative in the past year?



● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

Little is known about social and community connection among adults in Mesa County. Mesa County Public Health will prioritize collecting more information in 2021.

CONCLUSION

Existing data gives us a partial understanding of social and community context in Mesa County. Some data looks promising—teens report high levels of connection to their parents and overall decreases in bullying, many social resources are available to seniors, and 2020 showed record-setting levels of voter participation.

Other measures are less clear or concerning—social resources are not effectively distributed in areas where the need is greatest, especially in unincorporated areas of the county, and Mesa County ranks behind dozens of other Colorado counties in terms of the number of membership organizations available. Membership in community organizations by young and middle-aged adults appears to be low, leaving organizations with dwindling membership and a potential for unmet social needs and resources among parents of young children and adults between 18-54 years.

However, it's clear that existing data is insufficient to truly understand the benefits and gaps inherent in the social networks of Mesa County residents. A survey and focus groups that examine personal relationships, community engagement, and civic participation will enhance our ability to direct resources toward the social and community contexts that would best improve the lives of Mesa County residents.



REFERENCES USED

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT SECTION

Colorado Department of Health and the Environment. *Healthy Kids Colorado Survey Data*. www.cdphe.colorado.gov/center-for-health-and-environmental-data/survey-research/healthy-kids-colorado-survey-data

County Health Rankings. *Family and Social Support*. www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model/health-factors/social-and-economic-factors/family-and-social-support

Healthy People 2030. *Civic Participation*. www.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/civic-participation

Healthy People 2030. *Social and Community Context*. www.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/social-and-community-context

Healthy People 2030. *Social Cohesion*. www.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/social-cohesion

Office of the Colorado Secretary of State. *2020 Results - General Election Results in Excel Format*. www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/resultsData.html

Office of the Colorado Secretary of State. *State Election Results, 2015-2016 - General Election Results in Excel Format*. www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Results/archive2000.html

- T. Beard, Grand Junction Rotary. Personal Communication, Mar. 11, 2021
- T. Espinoza, Community Hospital. Personal Communication, Mar. 19, 2021
- J. Foster, Fruita Senior Center. Personal Communication, Feb. 9, 2021
- D. Hayden, Mind Springs Health. Personal Communication, Mar. 25, 2021
- K. Martsof, Community Hospital. Personal Communication, Mar. 25, 2021
- S. Raggio, Mind Springs Health. Personal Communication, Mar. 18, 2021
- K. Redlinger, Horizon Sunrise Rotary. Personal Communication, Mar. 12, 2021
- J. Rowland, Mesa County Commissioner. Personal Communication, Mar. 2, 2021
- C. Shipley, St. Mary's Hospital Foundation. Personal Communication, Mar. 23, 2021