



Waseca Assessing Social Capital: Results and Insights for Action



**Center for Community Vitality
University of Minnesota Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Background and Overview on Social Capital

What is social capital?

"It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know." This common saying describes some of what is known about *social capital*. The saying implies what we commonly observe—that getting membership to exclusive clubs requires inside contacts; that close competitions for jobs and contracts are often won by those with friends in high places.

But “who you know” makes a difference in other ways, too. When you fall on hard times, it is friends and family who create a safety net. Your happiest and most rewarding hours may be spent talking with neighbors, sharing meals with friends, being at religious gatherings, or volunteering for community projects. (Woolcock & Narayan 2000) That’s what social capital is all about.

There are three conditions that matter when thinking about social capital:

- ▶ **Trust:** Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something.
- ▶ **Engagement:** To take part...doing something for another without any immediate expectation of return (reciprocity).
- ▶ **Connections/Networks:** A collection of people you know who you can count on.

The ability to create and use networks is important for personal success – on-the-job; in professional organizations; in volunteer work. Communities also can create and use networks to improve the quality of life in their town. Networks help us get information, ideas, influence, and resources so that we can accomplish goals.

When you and your community improve your social capital, you can make change happen. You can leverage your strong networks for better results, and you can address your weak networks to make a difference in the future.

What are the benefits of social capital?

The basic idea of social capital is that your family, friends, associates – even acquaintances – are an important asset. You can tap that asset to survive a crisis, improve your financial footing, or just enjoy life more. This is true for individuals and for groups. Communities that have a rich and diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are less vulnerable, and can more easily tackle problems.

When social capital is lacking, it shows. It is difficult to be left out of the loop on important decisions, or to not be able to get a job in a field or organization where we don’t know anybody. One reason that people stay in poverty is that they don’t have the social networks and institutions that could be used to get a good job or decent housing (Woolcock & Narayan).

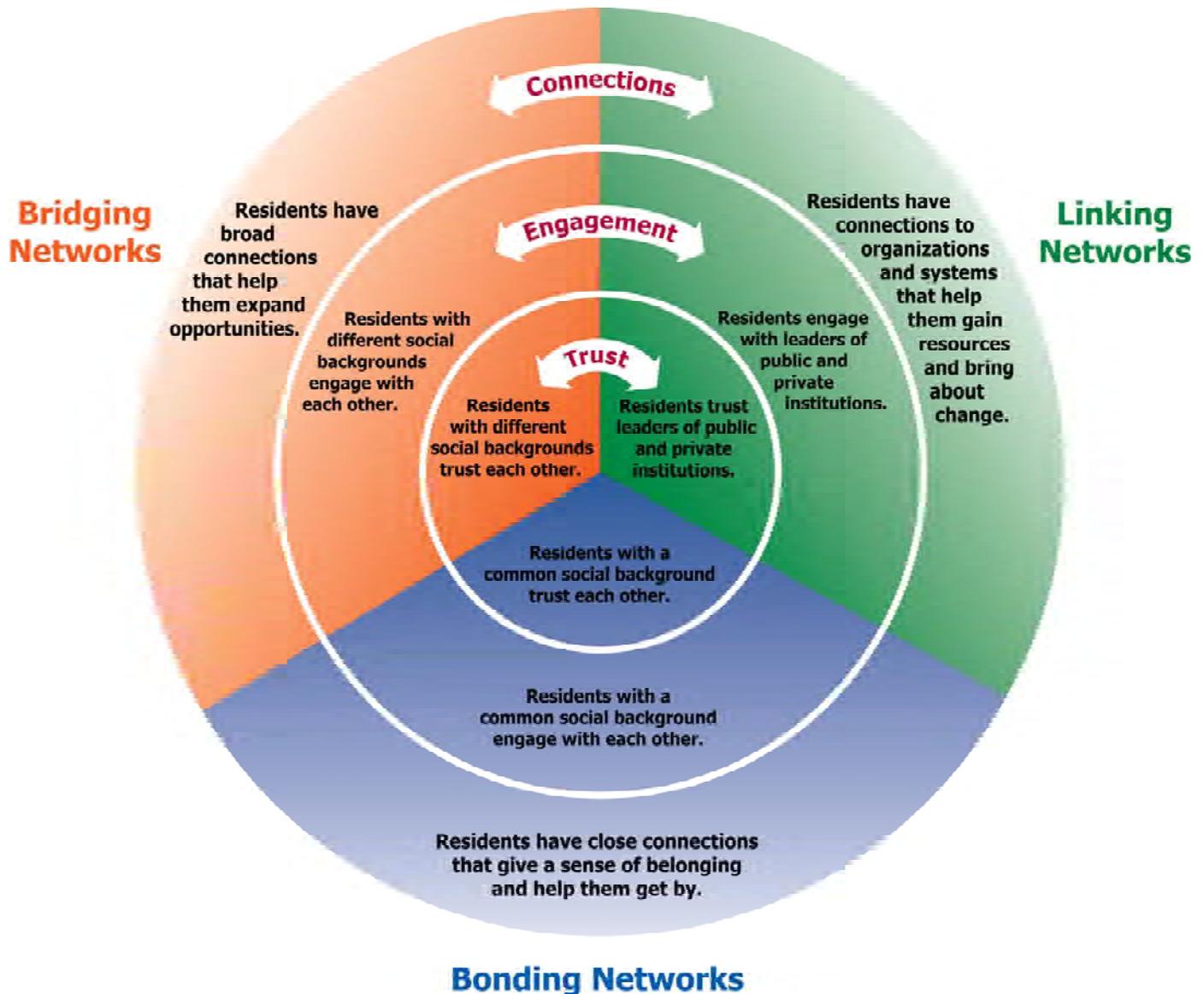
Social capital is so valuable that it affects almost every aspect of personal and community life. One report from Harvard University (Saguaro Seminar) summarized the benefits – stronger communities, better education, economic prosperity for peoples and communities, individual well-being and public health.

How can communities strengthen social capital?

Broad, diverse participation in social networks has benefits. When people are in social and economic relationships with an assumption of trust they are better able to resolve personal or community problems. Engaged people are more likely to hear about a job or get good information about health issues. Connections within communities help people link to resources so that personal and public problems can be solved more easily.

Communities can improve their social capital by strengthening their residents trust and engagement within three distinct types of networks: bonding, bridging and linking.

Figure 1. Community Social Capital Model



Community Social Capital Model

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The Social Capital Assessment

A bit of history

The University of Minnesota Extension's work on social capital started in August 2002 with a search for a community survey that would help rural communities look at the social aspects of their community life. When no model for rural communities could be found, Extension decided to develop one..

The first pilot of the survey was started in January 2004. Since then, the assessment process has been used with ten rural communities (four towns, two school districts and four counties). Between 2002 and 2008 we gathered data from over 3,200 individuals. We have responses from 2,659 adults and 555 youth who have completed a youth version of the survey. An online version of the survey has also been piloted.

The research (validity and reliability testing) included three pilot versions of the survey tool which resulted in an instrument that is a solid measure of social capital. The full survey has a total of twelve questions that focus on six measures: bonding-trust, bonding-engagement, bridging-trust, bridging engagement, linking-trust, and linking-engagement.

Focus on networks and our six measures

The assessment focuses on trust and engagement within the three types (bonding, bridging, linking) of networks.

Bonding networks are close ties that help people get by. These connections are usually with family, friends, and neighbors.

Bridging networks are weaker ties that can help people get ahead and gain opportunities. These networks are usually with people different from themselves who are engaged in different types of networks like occupations, organizations, etc.

Linking networks are links to organizations and systems that can help people gain resources and bring about change. These connections are usually with organizations that have resources, both within and outside of the community.

Some key assumptions:

- All three types of networks matter. They benefit individuals and communities differently.
- Size and strengths of networks can vary.

The Social Capital Assessment Survey measures three types of networks and two key variables resulting in these six measures:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| ▪ Bonding Trust | ▪ Bonding Engagement |
| ▪ Bridging Trust | ▪ Bridging Engagement |
| ▪ Linking Trust | ▪ Linking Engagement |

The community process

As its title suggests, the community assessment process requires communities to train volunteers gather survey data. The process is designed to identify areas where the community already has a strong foundation (strengths to build on) as well as areas to strengthen (priorities for action).

In Waseca, members of the Community Project Team were Audra Nissan Boyer, Community Education Director and Mayor Roy Srp who provided leadership for the assessment process which included the following efforts:

Informational and Planning Meeting

- Held October 31, 2007
- Attended by 25 people.
- Participants decided that:
 - 1) The school district would be the community boundary assessed.
 - 2) They would use “group settings”, “individual contact” and “local organizations” to gather survey information from individuals.
 - 3) Radio and newspaper would be used to promote the initiative.

Training Session

- Held December 5, 2007
- Attended by 15 people
- The training focused on the data collection process and identified a plan to reach a cross-section of the community to complete the survey.

The plan for data collection mapped out places where people gather in Waseca (civic and community organizations, private businesses, schools, food shelves, churches, community service agencies, coffee shops, work site, etc.) to reach a cross-section of the community consistent with the demographics of the community. Volunteers selected areas in the community where they would be responsible for distributing and collecting the surveys from adults.

To gather data from youth, the group planned to work with high school administrators, who coordinated efforts with teachers to assess all the students in grades 9 – 12 at a given time. School personnel participated in the training session, and then trained teachers in proper instructions for distributing the assessment forms. The youth data was collected at Waseca High School (grades 9, 10, and 12). NOTE: Students in the 11th grade participated in a different assessment that day so there is very little data from this age group.

The planning team found there were barriers to gathering data representative of the demographics of the community. What was most difficult was getting men to complete the survey, as well as individuals with lower household income and those with less formal education. Therefore, the respondent demographics over-represent upper income, more formally educated, and females. Survey data gathered by volunteers exceeded the percentage of respondents who are of minority status in the community.

The outreach efforts resulted in data gathered from 650 individuals (286 adults and 364 youth).

The Demographics

How representative of the larger Waseca community was the survey sample? In an ideal survey situation, survey participants would be truly representative of all the major population sub-groups of the community. This type of representativeness is best achieved when survey respondents are selected at random. However, random selection is often not practical in community-driven survey projects.

Using volunteers for data collection, Waseca was able to complete surveys with 286 adults and 364 youth. Volunteers made a strong effort to be as inclusive as possible of all demographic groups in the community, but the sample was not representative of the larger community in some important ways. The table below compares some of the demographics of the survey sample with census data from the larger Waseca school district population. The table shows that the study sample over-represented women, households with higher incomes, while it under-represented people with lower levels of formal education. The survey sample strongly represented minority residents, however.

Because of this bias in the sample, extra care should be taken to not generalize results to the entire Waseca population, because the findings tend to reflect the perspective of a more affluent, more educated segment of the community.

Table 1. Characteristics of the adult sample

Demographic Characteristic	School District Population	Sample
Percent female	48%	74%
Percent minority	7%	11%
Percent age 19-59	76%	76%
Percent who earn > \$75,000 (household)	15%	34%
Percent homeowners	80%	82%
Percent with high school education or less	54%	23%

The youth sample was more representative in terms of gender and had a stronger representation of minorities. (NOTE: The survey was not completed by the junior class because they had another test scheduled that day.)

Table 2. Characteristics of the youth sample

Demographic Characteristic	Population (U.S. Census)	Sample
Female	50%	51%
Minority	8%	11%
Born in the U.S.	98%	95%
Year in School		9 th grade 37%
		10 th grade 31%
		11 th grade 1%
		12 th grade 31%

Survey Findings

About the scores

It is important to keep a few things in mind about the data analysis.

- ▶ Responses to questions concerning each of the types of networks were quantified, combined, and averaged.
- ▶ The scores are intended to be starting points for talking about social capital in the community.
- ▶ They are not scientifically based, the whole story, or “proof”.
- ▶ Scores are from 0 to 100
 - 0 = everybody in the community had the lowest possible responses
 - 100 = everybody in community had the highest possible responses
 - 50 = a good benchmark to use. The further above or below 50 the score is, the more it is an indicator of areas of strength or challenge for the community

The more representative the sample, the more confident we can be about the results. In the case of Waseca, we know the sample over-represented wealthier and more educated people, and so some the community scores might have been lower if more low income or less educated community residents had been part of the survey sample.

Comparison to other communities

Throughout this report we share a comparison of Waseca with other communities that have completed the Social Capital survey. For comparison purposes, it can be helpful to know the demographics of those communities which we’ve included here (Table 3). Among the four communities, Waseca was the largest community with the highest percentage of people with a high school education or less.

Table 3. Demographics of comparison communities

	Waseca ¹	Southern Community ²	Western Community ¹	Northeastern Community ¹
Scope of community	School district	Zip code area	Zip code area	County
Population size	19,526	8,771	4,331	5,168
Percent minority	7%	2%	10%	9%
Percent of adults with high school education or less	54%	50%	50%	40%
Percent of households with \$75,000 or higher income	15%	22%	11%	14%
Percent of population age 60 or older	18%	16%	25%	23%

¹ SOURCE: American Fact Finder, index of data provided by the US Census Bureau, <http://factfinder.census.gov/>
² SOURCE: School District Census Data, <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/>

Waseca's scores for the six measures

Bonding Trust

Bonding trust was one of the stronger dimensions of social capital for Waseca. As seen in Figure 2, adults in the community had an average bonding trust score of 63.3, well above the benchmark of 50. Youth in the community had a score of 59.4, also well above the 50 benchmark.

Do residents with a common social background trust each other?

Figure 2. Bonding trust averages for adults and youth

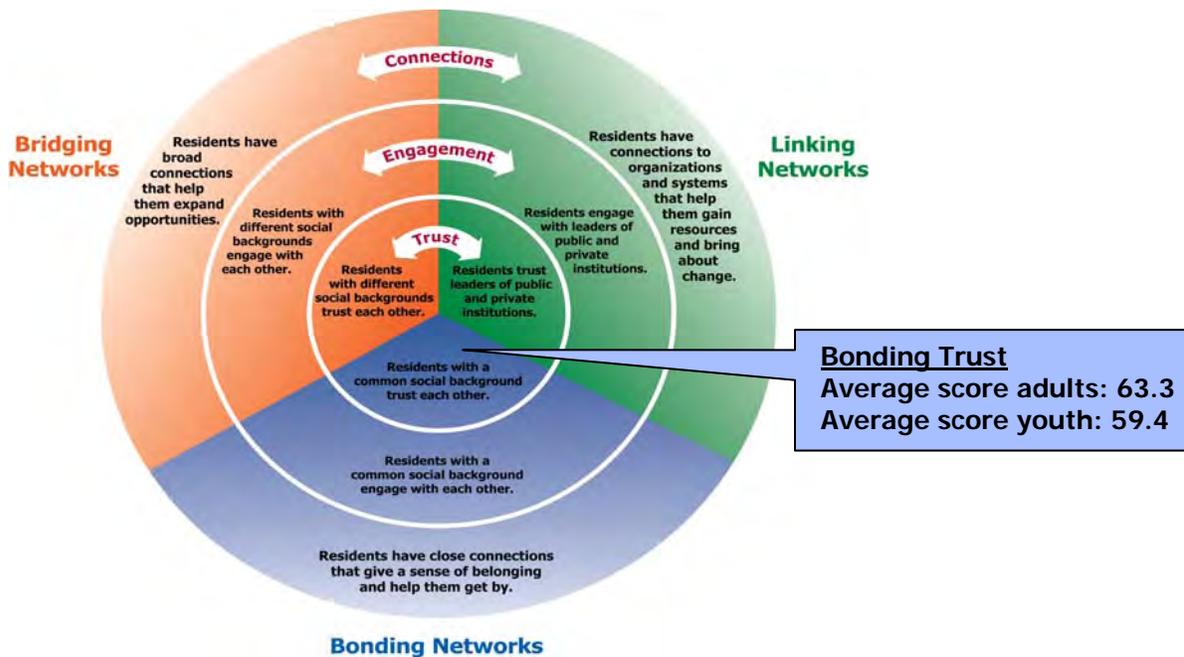
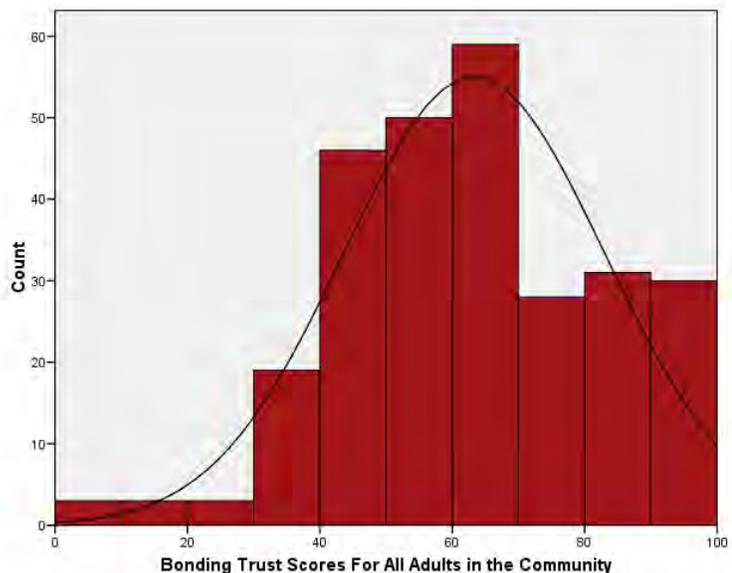


Figure 3. Bonding trust distribution

Average scores are informative, but they don't tell us much about the range of bonding trust levels in the community. Figure 3 shows the distribution of scores among those surveyed, with the figure somewhat skewed toward higher levels of bonding trust. The greatest number of Waseca residents scored in the 60s or higher, and a substantial number of community residents scored below 60.

When we compare the averages in bonding trust among demographic subgroups of adults, we found several statistically



significant differences.¹ In Waseca, bonding trust is different based on age, length of residence, income, and educational level:

- Youngest adults tended to have less bonding trust than older adults.
- Those with longer residence in the community had higher levels of bonding trust than those with shorter terms of residence.
- Lower income and less educated adults also had lower levels of bonding trust than higher income and more educated adults. This is of particular concern because bonding networks are crucial for creating a safety net, and low income adults are more in need of a safety net than adults with higher incomes.

Table 4. Differences in bonding trust among adults

Gender	Bonding trust not significantly different among women and men.	
Age	Age 18-29	54.0
	Age 30-39	60.9
	Age 40-49	66.3
	Age 50-59	66.4
	Age 60 or older	69.3
Length of residence in community	Less than five years	53.7
	Five to 19 years	62.1
	20 or more years	67.7
Education level	High school diploma or less	51.9
	Associate's degree or some college	63.2
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	68.5
Household income	Low income (less than \$25,000)	54.3
	Moderate income (\$25,000 to \$44,999)	62.2
	Middle income (\$45,000 to \$74,999)	66.2
	High income (\$75,000 or more)	66.1

Table 5 displays the average responses of adults and youth to five specific questions about bonding trust. Adults had the highest amount of trust in the people at their workplace, while youth had much lower trust in people at their school. For youth, the highest level of trust was in their group of friends (this question was not asked of adults).

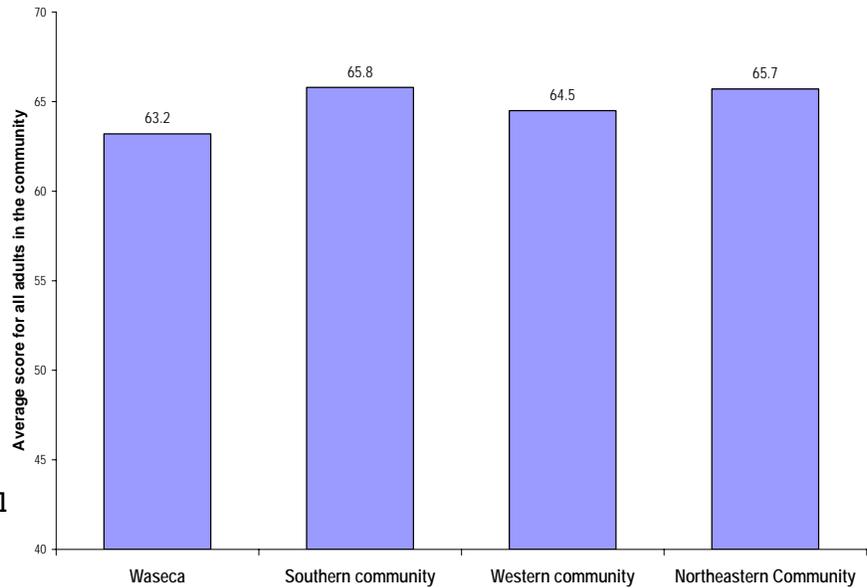
Table 5. Bonding trust item averages for adults and youth

To what degree do you trust the following groups? (1=to a very small degree to 4=to a very great degree)	Adult average	Youth average
Your group of friends	N/A	3.4*
People at church or place of worship	3.1	2.9
People in the same clubs or activities	2.7	2.8
Your immediate neighbors	2.9	2.6
People you go to work or school with	3.1	2.4

¹ **DEFINITION FOR STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE:** A difference between two averages is called statistically significant if it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. So when we state that a difference between averages for adults and youth, high or low income groups, or education groups, is statistically significant, we mean that the difference is likely due to real differences in survey responses, not chance. When a difference between groups is not statistically significant, it is less meaningful because it very well could be due to chance.

Figure 4. Bonding Trust in Waseca compared with other pilot communities

How did bonding trust in Waseca compare with other communities that participated in the social capital pilot survey? Figure 4 shows the average level of bonding trust in Waseca compared with another southern Minnesota community, a western Minnesota community and a northeastern Minnesota community. All four pilot communities had bonding trust averages in the 60s, well above the benchmark of 50. Waseca ranked lowest of the four communities in terms of bonding trust, but the differences among the communities were very small.



Bonding Engagement

Bonding engagement levels in Waseca were quite a bit lower than those of bonding trust, just above the 50 benchmark. Adults in the community averaged 51.3, while youth averaged 53.6. This was the only dimension of social capital in which Waseca’s youth had a higher score than adults.

Do residents with a common social background engage with each other?

Figure 5. Bonding engagement averages for adults and youth

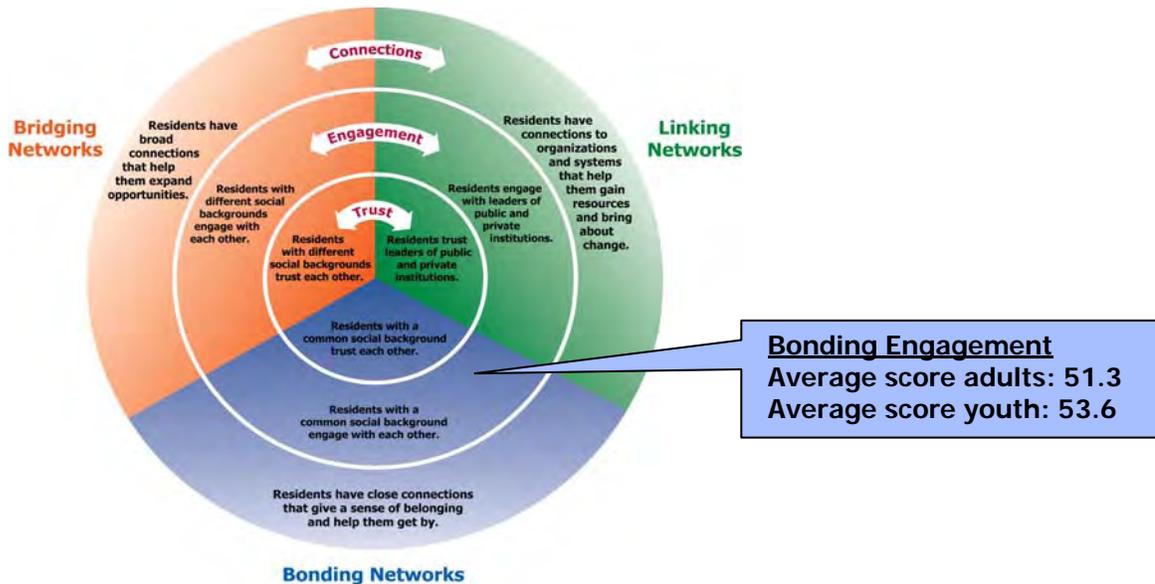
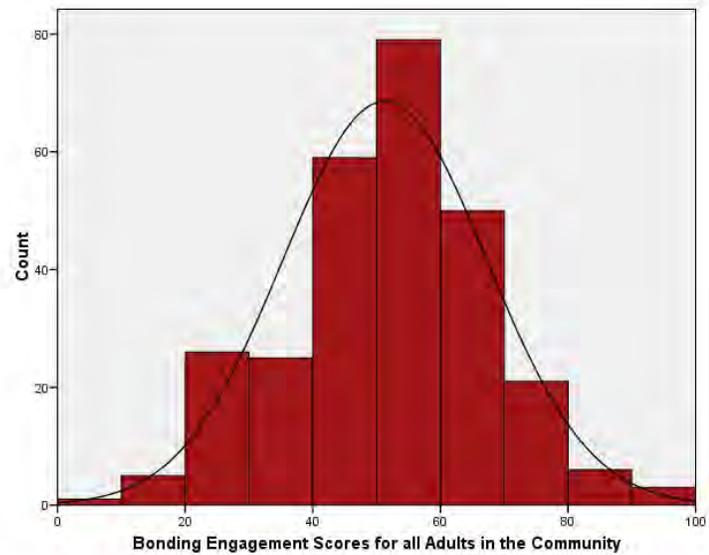


Figure 6. Bonding engagement distribution

As seen in Figure 6, bonding engagement varied widely among those who responded to the survey. A large number of community residents scored in the 50s on this scale, suggesting a moderate level of engagement for most community members. In contrast to bonding trust, few residents scored above 80 on this scale, and more residents scored below 40.



Several demographic factors were associated with differences in bonding engagement in Waseca (see Table 6). People with higher levels of education and people from higher income households had significantly higher bonding engagement scores than people with lower levels of education and household income. Young adults (ages 18-29) had much lower bonding engagement than older adults, and those with the fewest years of residence in the community had lower bonding engagement than those with longer term residence.

Table 6. Differences in bonding engagement among adults

Gender	Bonding engagement not significantly different among women and men.	
Age	Age 18-29	44.2
	Age 30-39	51.6
	Age 40-49	54.1
	Age 50-59	51.9
	Age 60 or older	55.0
Length of residence in community	Less than five years	43.3
	Five to 19 years	51.5
	20 or more years	54.1
Education level	High school diploma or less	41.1
	Associate's degree or some college	50.8
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	55.9
Household income	Low income (less than \$25,000)	44.4
	Moderate income (\$25,000 to \$44,999)	48.1
	Middle income (\$45,000 to \$74,999)	54.3
	High income (\$75,000 or more)	54.5

The survey questions that measure bonding engagement are shown in Table 7. Adults and youth in the community responded very similarly to both questions about how often they could count on someone if they needed help or do favors for each other, but 30 percent of adults and 28 percent of youth responded that they rarely or never could count on someone in the community for help. This is a bit concerning.

Table 7. Bonding engagement items for adults and youth

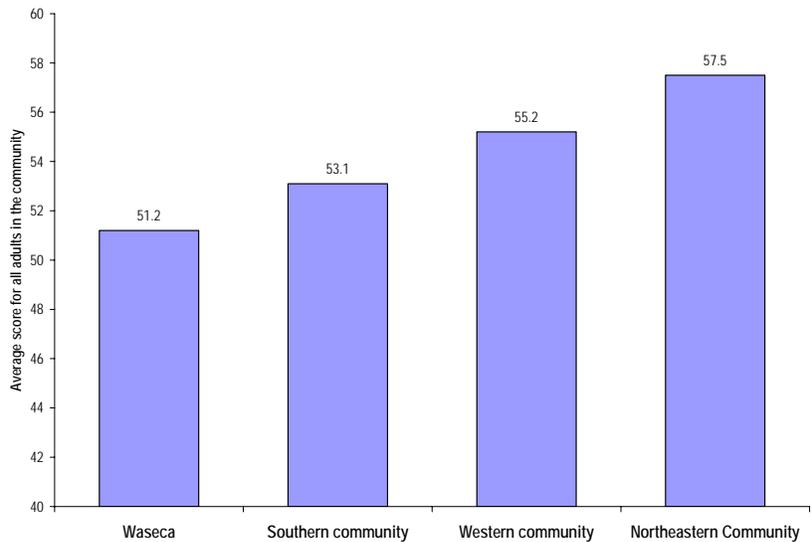
		Almost always	Often	Some- times	Rarely	Never
How often could you count on someone in the community if you needed extra help?	Adults	23%	22%	25%	17%	13%
	Youth	18%	28%	27%	18%	10%
How often do you and people in your community do favors for each other?	Adults	13%	36%	36%	11%	4%
	Youth	8%	35%	36%	16%	5%

What gives Waseca residents a sense of belonging? Table 8 shows the responses for adults and youth. For both adults and youth, family and friends were the strongest sources of bonding, while places of worship were stronger sources of bonding for adults than for youth. While neither adults nor youth felt strongly about online networks as a way to belong, the average response for youth was quite a bit higher than the average for adults.

Table 8. What gives Waseca residents a sense of belonging?

Group	Averages (1=not at all to 4=to a great extent)	
	Adults	Youth
My family	3.6	3.5
My friends	3.5	3.5
My place of worship	3.2	2.9
People I work/go to school with	3.1	3.0
People who share my interests	3.0	3.1
People who share my ethnic background	2.2	2.5
People who share my political views	2.0	-
People I have met online	1.2	1.9

Figure 7. Bonding engagement in Waseca compared with other pilot communities



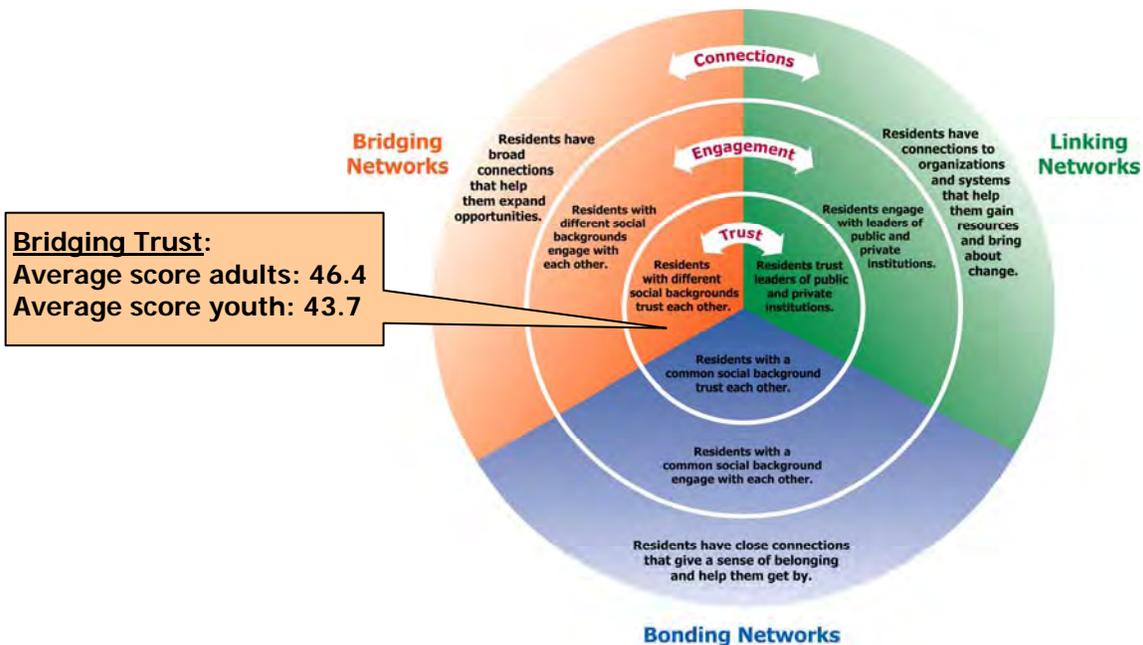
How did Waseca compare to other communities in terms of bonding engagement? As shown in Figure 8, bonding engagement in Waseca ranked was lowest among the four pilot communities. All four pilot communities had bonding engagement averages in the 50s.

Bridging Trust

Bridging trust, or trust among Waseca residents from different social backgrounds, was below the benchmark of 50. Adults averaged a score of 46.4, while the youth average was 43.7. The adult score was the lowest among the six social capital scales measured by the survey.

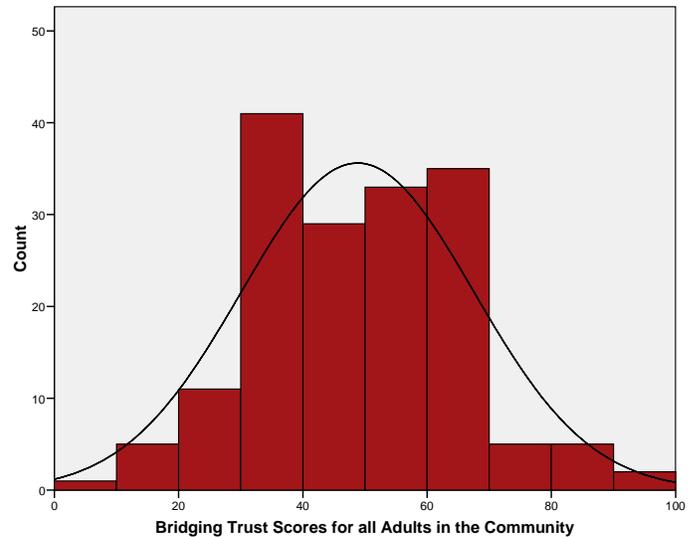
Do residents with different social backgrounds trust each other?

Figure 8. Bridging trust averages for adults and youth



The distribution of bridging trust in Waseca had a “bi-modal” pattern. As seen in Figure 9, there were distinct groups of community residents who scored relatively low (in the 30s) and relatively high (in the 50s and 60s) rather than a single “modal” group. There were very few community residents with high levels of bridging trust (scores above 70). The implication is that there is a relatively large segment of the community that is distrustful of strangers or people with backgrounds different from their own.

Figure 9. Bridging trust distribution



While there appear to be important differences in the community between people with high bridging trust and people with low bridging trust, only two of the typical demographic factors are associated with these differences. As shown in Table 9, average levels of bridging trust were significantly higher for women than men and for people with higher levels of formal education. Average levels of bridging trust were not significantly different based on age, income, or length of residence in the community.

Table 9. Differences in bridging trust among adults

Gender	Women	47.8
	Men	42.1
Age	Bridging trust scores were not significantly different among people from different age categories.	
Length of residence in community	Bridging trust scores were not significantly different among people with different lengths of residence.	
Education level	High school diploma or less	40.8
	Associate's degree or some college	43.7
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	50.5
Household income	Bridging trust was not significantly different among people with different levels of household income.	

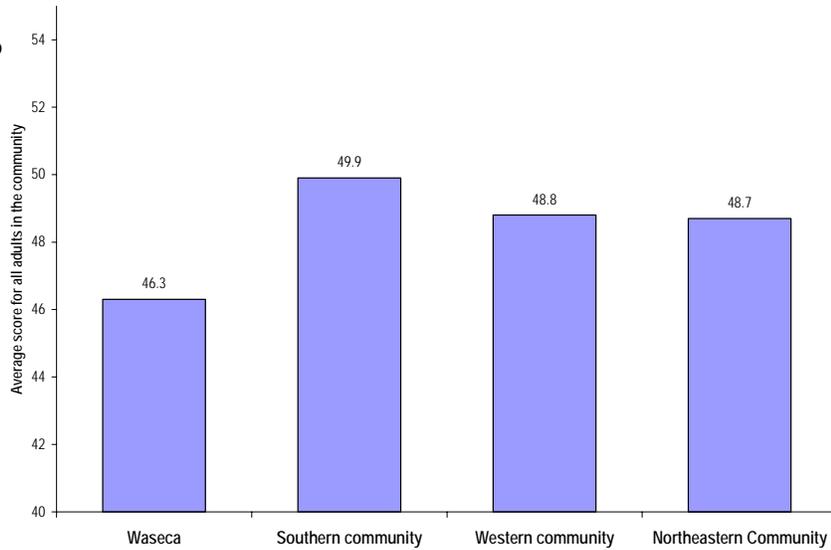
Table 10 displays the specific survey items used to measure bridging trust. On a scale of 1 to 4, averages below 3 suggest that trust is not strong for these groups. Adults tended to have higher levels of trust in people of other religious beliefs, while both adults and youth had the least trust for people new to the community.

Table 10. Bridging trust survey items

To what degree do you trust the following? (1=to a very small degree to 4=to a very great degree)	Averages	
	Adults	Youth
People of other religious beliefs	2.5	2.5
People from other cultural or ethnic groups	2.4	2.4
People new to the community	2.3	2.1

Figure 10. Bridging trust in Waseca compared with other pilot communities

How did Waseca compare to other communities in terms of bridging trust? All four pilot communities had bridging trust averages in the 40s. As seen in Figure 10, Waseca ranked fourth among the four communities that have completed the survey thus far.



Bridging Engagement

While bridging trust was the weakest of the six survey scales in Waseca, bridging engagement was much stronger, with an average of 61.4 for adults and 59.3 for youth. While it is not surprising for there to be a gap between trust of strangers and engagement with strangers, the size of this gap in Waseca is a concern.

Do residents with different social backgrounds engage with each other?

Figure 11. Bridging engagement averages for adults and youth

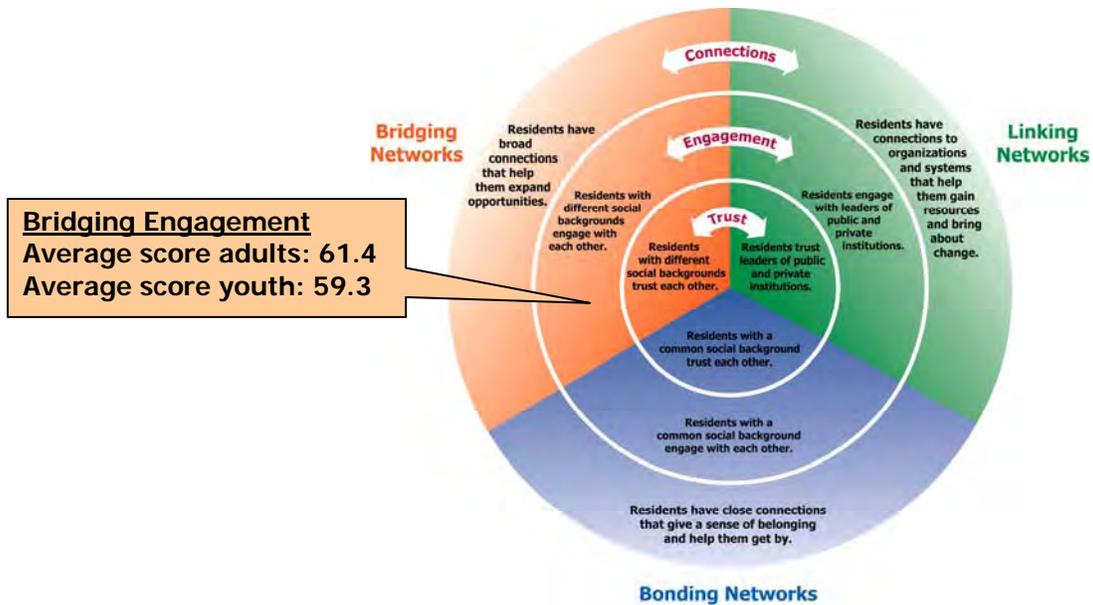
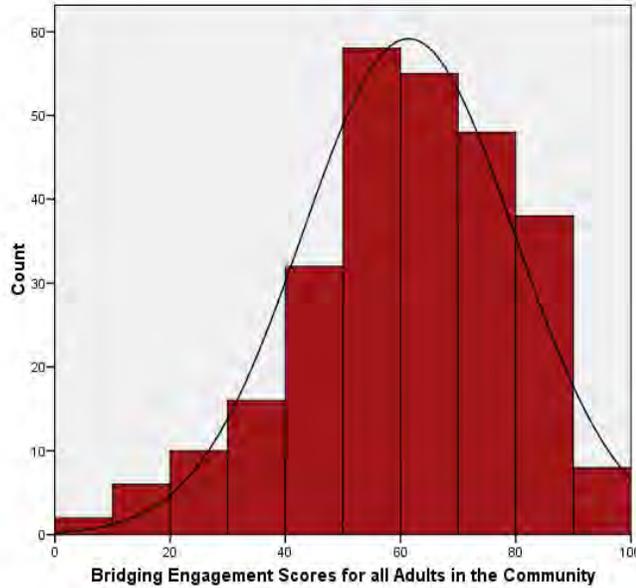


Figure 12. Bridging engagement distribution

The distribution of bridging engagement in Waseca was skewed toward higher levels of engagement. Large numbers of residents scored in the 60s and 70s on this scale, and a substantial number of residents scored in the 80s, showing high levels of contact with people different from themselves, despite the fact that bridging trust levels were much lower.



Education and income were significant factors in bridging engagement in Waseca. As seen in Table 11, people with a high school education or less had significantly less bridging contact than people with higher levels of education. The same pattern was true for people with low incomes.

Table 11. Differences in bridging engagement among adults

Gender	Bridging engagement not significantly different among women and men.	
Age	Bridging engagement not significantly different among age groups.	
Length of residence in community	Bridging engagement not significantly different among people with different lengths of residence in Waseca.	
Education level	High school diploma or less	52.5
	Associate's degree or some college	63.0
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	64.7
Household income	Low income (less than \$25,000)	58.4
	Moderate income (\$25,000 to \$44,999)	56.6
	Middle income (\$45,000 to \$74,999)	63.1
	High income (\$75,000 or more)	65.4

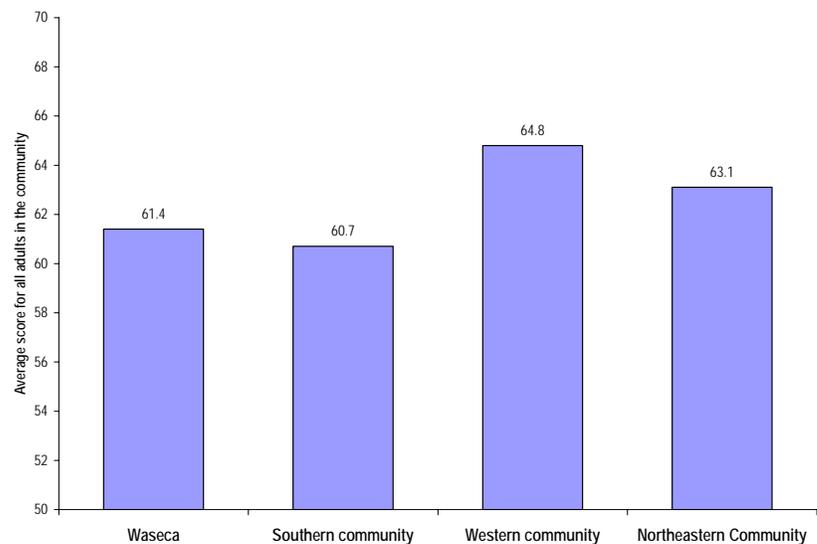
Table 12 shows responses of adults and youth to several of the survey items related to bridging engagement. Adults tended to have less contact than youth with people from a different racial or ethnic background. Youth tended to have less contact with people much poorer than themselves.

Table 12. Bridging engagement survey items

In the past month, how often have you had contact with the following categories of people?		Not at all	Once or twice	Three or four times	Five or more times
People who have a different religion than me	Adults	6.9%	12.9%	25.8%	54.4%
	Youth	5.7%	20.6%	17.8%	42.8%
People of a different race or ethnicity than me	Adults	12.9%	32.2%	18.9%	36.0%
	Youth	5.5%	24.9%	23.6%	40.3%
People much wealthier than me	Adults	6.3%	23.6%	31.6%	38.4%
	Youth	9.1%	22.7%	22.9%	31.0%
People much poorer than me	Adults	8.1%	26.9%	22.6%	42.3%
	Youth	12.2%	24.4%	21.8%	23.1%
People with disabilities	Adults	11.6%	38.8%	22.9%	26.7%
	Youth	12.5%	37.5%	15.9%	22.4%

Figure 13. Bridging engagement in Waseca compared with other pilot communities

How did Waseca compare to other pilot communities in bridging engagement? All four communities that have piloted the social capital survey thus far had bridging engagement scores in the 60s. Waseca ranked third among these communities.



Linking Trust

Linking trust was moderate among Waseca’s adults and youth, with average scores of 57.2 for adults and 55.4 for youth. While these averages are above the 50 benchmark, there is room for improvement in trust of community leaders.

Do residents trust leaders of public and private institutions?

Figure 14. Linking trust averages for adults and youth

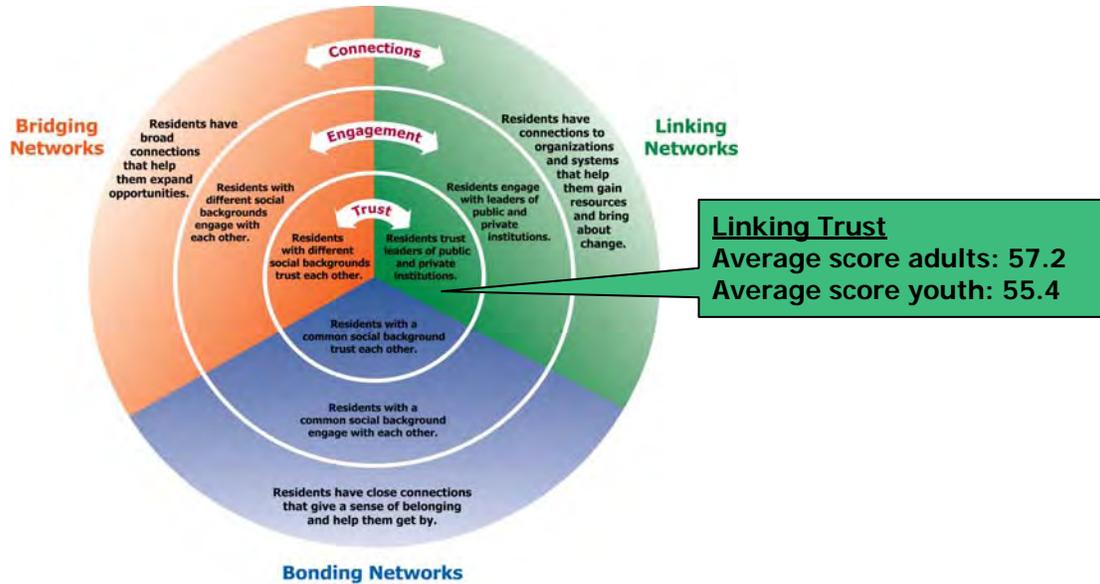


Figure 15. Linking trust distribution

Linking trust varied widely among adults in the community. The majority of adults had linking trust scores in the 50s and 60s, but a surprising number of adults had low levels of linking trust with scores between 30 and 50.

Education was the only demographic factor associated with differences in linking trust in Waseca. People with bachelor's degrees or beyond had an average level of 61.2, while people with less education had averages closer to 50. The survey sample included a very small number of people with very low household incomes, so it is possible that differences in linking trust based on income may exist in the community.

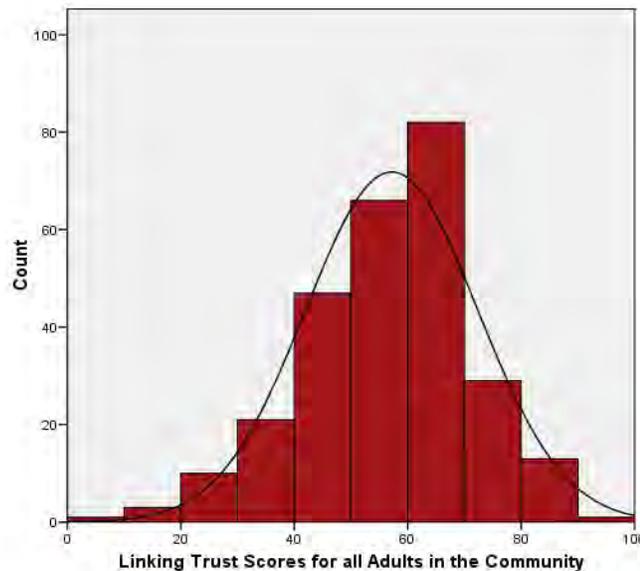


Table 13. Differences in linking trust among adults

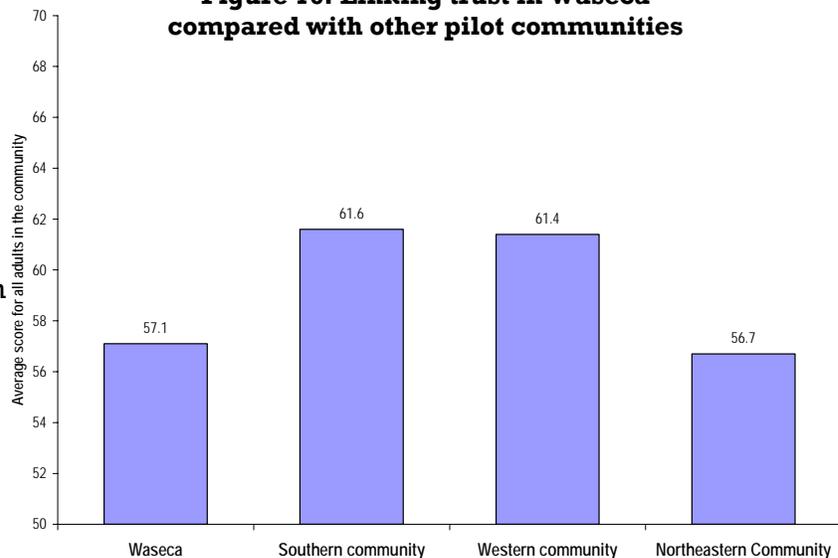
Gender	Linking trust was not significantly different among women and men.	
Age	Linking trust was not significantly different among age groups.	
Length of residence in community	Linking trust was not significantly different among people with different lengths of residence in Waseca.	
Education level	High school diploma or less	51.5
	Associate's degree or some college	54.3
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	61.2
Household income	Linking trust was not significantly different among people with different levels of household income.	

Linking trust in Waseca was strongest for people in education, health care, and law enforcement, although adults trust people in law enforcement more than youth did. Trust in local government officials and the local news media was relatively low for adults and youth.

Table 14. Linking trust survey items

To what degree do you trust the following?	Averages (1=to a very small degree to 4=to a very great degree)	
	Adults	Youth
Teachers / educators	3.1	3.0
Nurses / doctors	2.9	3.0
People in law enforcement	2.9	2.6
Business people	2.4	2.2
Local government officials	2.2	2.3
The local news media	2.1	2.0

Figure 16. Linking trust in Waseca compared with other pilot communities



How did Waseca compare with other pilot communities in terms of linking trust? As seen in Figure 16, Waseca ranked third among the communities in linking trust, reinforcing that there is room for improvement in this dimension of social capital in in the community.

Linking Engagement

Linking engagement, a measure of actual contact with leaders of public and private institutions, was somewhat lower than linking trust for Waseca adults in Waseca, with an average score of 49.8. The gap between linking engagement of adults and youth in Waseca was very large, with youth averaging a score of 33.3.

Do residents engage with leaders of public and private institutions?

Figure 17. Linking engagement averages for adults and youth

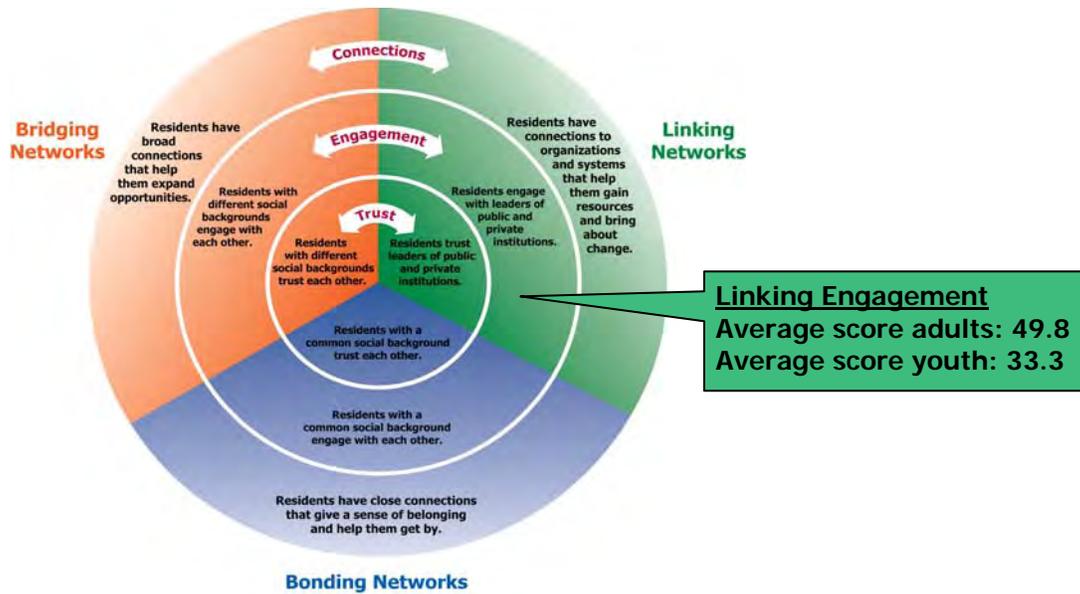
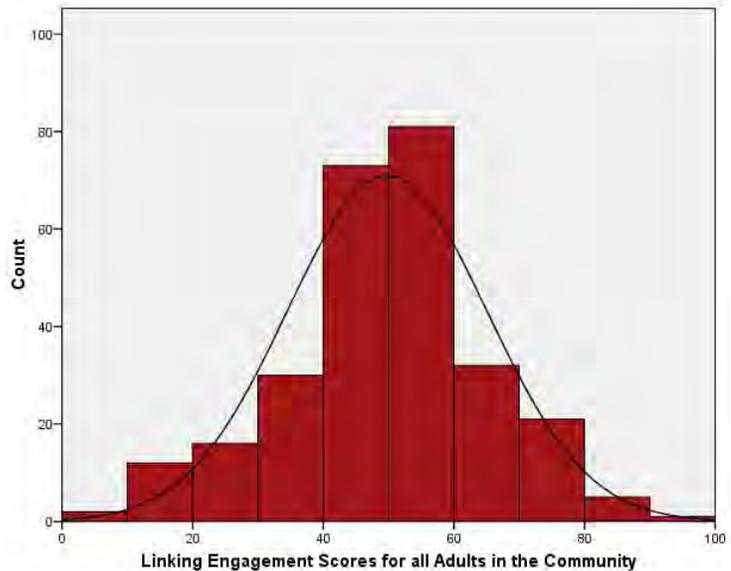


Figure 18. Linking engagement distribution

As shown in Figure 18, the majority of adults scored between 40 and 60 on the scale and the largest group scored in the 50s. This pattern suggests that most members of the community had a moderate level of engagement, but few were highly engaged and few were highly disengaged.



Several demographic factors were related to differences in linking engagement. Income and education had the strongest relationship to linking engagement. Adults from higher income households had an average score of 56.4, compared to a score of 34.5 for people in the lowest income category. Similarly, people with bachelor’s degrees or beyond averaged 55.1 on the scale, compared with an average of 38.2 for those with a high school diploma or less formal education. Age was also a factor, with the youngest group of adults having less linking engagement. Length of residence mattered as well, with longer term residents having much higher levels of linking engagement.

Table 15. Differences in linking engagement among adults

Gender	Linking engagement was not significantly different among women and men in Waseca.	
Age	Age 18-29	40.5
	Age 30-39	49.1
	Age 40-49	53.1
	Age 50-59	52.1
	Age 60 or older	53.9
Length of residence in community	Less than five years	37.6
	Five to 19 years	49.9
	20 or more years	54.2
Education level	High school diploma or less	38.2
	Associate's degree or some college	48.6
	Bachelor's degree or beyond	55.1
Household income	Low income (less than \$25,000)	34.5
	Moderate income (\$25,000 to \$44,999)	48.1
	Middle income (\$45,000 to \$74,999)	50.5
	High income (\$75,000 or more)	56.4

Table 16 compares the responses of adults and youth to several survey items related to linking engagement. Adults in the community are frequent contributors to charity, but they had less frequent involvement in community meetings or other efforts to solve community problems. Youth involvement was at an even lower level than adult involvement. For example, 42% of adults and nearly 69% of youth surveyed had not attended any public meetings in which there was discussion of school or town affairs during the past year.

Table 16. Linking engagement survey items

How many times in the past twelve months have you?		None	1 to 6 times	7 to 12 times	More than 12 times
Donated money, goods, or services to a charity?	Adults	12.7%	38.4%	23.1%	25.7%
	Youth	26.5%	52.6%	14.8%	6.1%
Attended any public meeting in which there was discussion of school or town affairs?	Adults	42.0%	43.9%	6.7%	7.4%
	Youth	68.5%	26.6%	2.1%	2.6%
Joined together with others in your community to address an issue?	Adults	49.8%	39.4%	4.8%	5.9%
	Youth	67.2%	25.5%	5.0%	2.4%
Been In the home of a community leader or had one in your home?	Adults	56.3%	37.3%	4.9%	1.5%
	Youth	58.5%	29.4%	8.1%	3.9%
Tried to get your local government to pay attention to something that concerned you?	Adults	68.8%	25.3%	4.5%	1.5%
	Youth	74.7%	17.9%	3.2%	4.2%

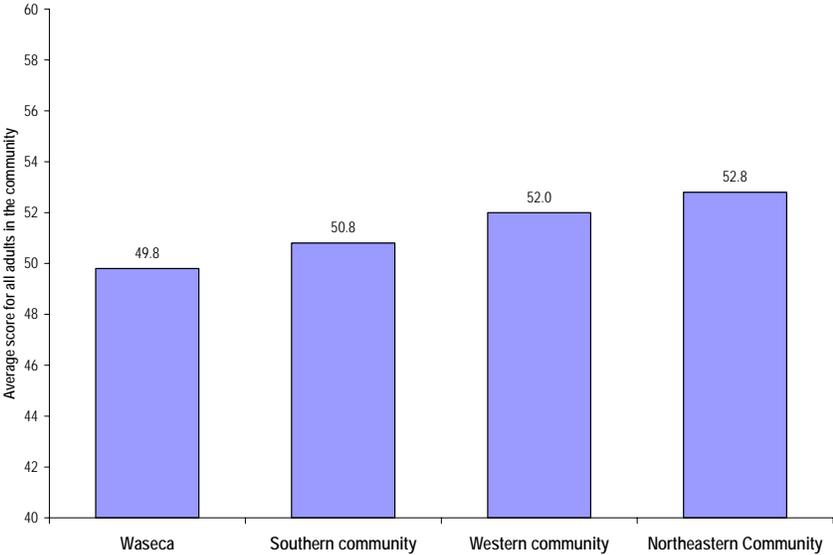
What factors limit linking engagement? As seen in Table 17, the biggest barriers to civic participation for adults in Waseca had to do with time. Conflicting time demands and inflexible or demanding work schedules were perceived as the biggest obstacles to participation. To a lesser degree, community residents reported issues such as lack of information, feeling unwelcome, or feeling that they can't make a difference as obstacles.

Table 17. Obstacles to civic participation

Obstacle (1=very large, 2=somewhat large, 3=not at all large)	Average
Conflicting time demands	2.1
An inflexible or demanding work schedule	2.2
Practical problems like child care or transportation	2.4
Lack of information or not knowing where to begin	2.4
Feeling unwelcome	2.5
Feeling that you can't make a difference	2.6
Concerns about costs of transportation	2.7
Commuting time for work/meetings	2.7
Personal health concerns	2.7

Figure 19. Linking engagement in Waseca compared with other pilot communities

How did Waseca compare to other pilot communities in linking engagement? All four communities averaged close to the 50 benchmark on this measure. Waseca ranked last among the four pilot communities.

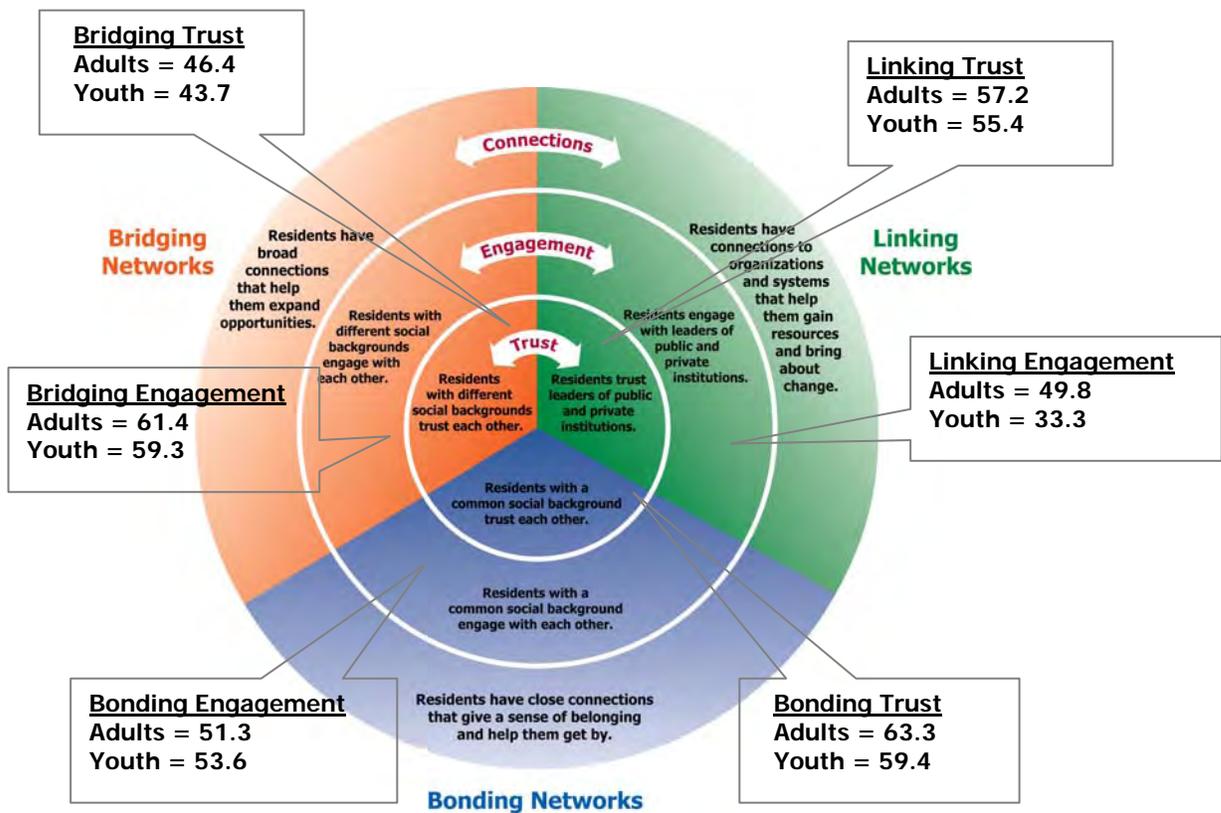


A Closer Look

The whole picture

Figure 20 shows the whole social capital picture for Waseca’s adults and youth. Overall, the picture is a positive one with adult averages over 50 for four of the six scales. The areas of strength for Waseca, with adult averages over 60, are bonding trust and bridging engagement. There are high levels of contact among people from differing social backgrounds, and high levels of trust among people with common backgrounds. The community has a moderate level of linking trust among both adults and youth. Another strength in Waseca is that youth and adults tended to have similar levels of social capital, with the exception of linking engagement. Knowing these areas of strength is key for planning action to improve the other three dimensions of social capital, namely bridging trust, linking engagement and bonding engagement.

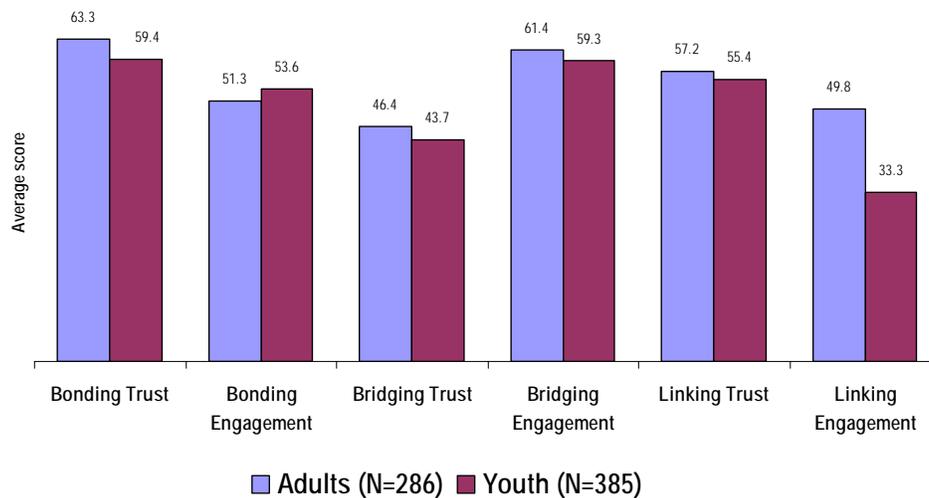
Figure 20. The whole picture for adults and youth



Comparison charts

Differences between adults and youth

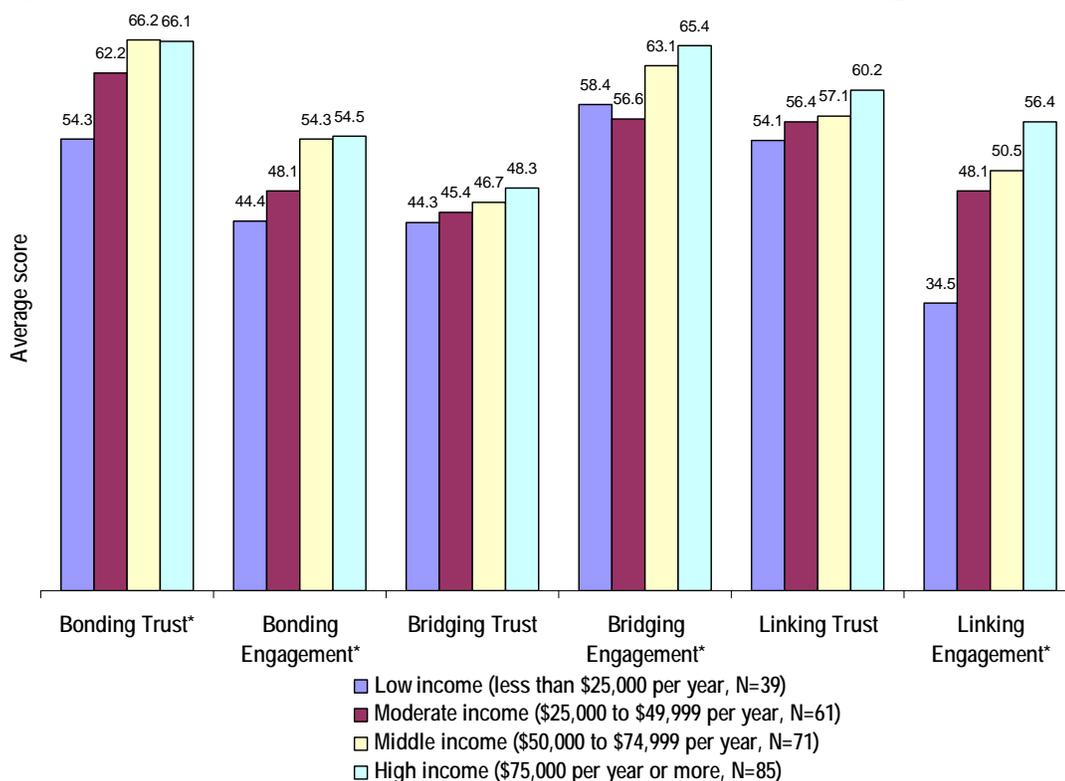
Figure 21. Differences between adults and youth across the six social capital scales



Differences among income groups in the community

As shown in Figure 22, residents with higher incomes tended to have higher levels of bonding trust and bonding, bridging and linking engagement, but income had less effect on bridging and linking trust levels in the community. This means that trust is probably not the biggest barrier to involvement of low income residents of Waseca in community life.

Figure 22. Differences between income levels across the six social capital scales

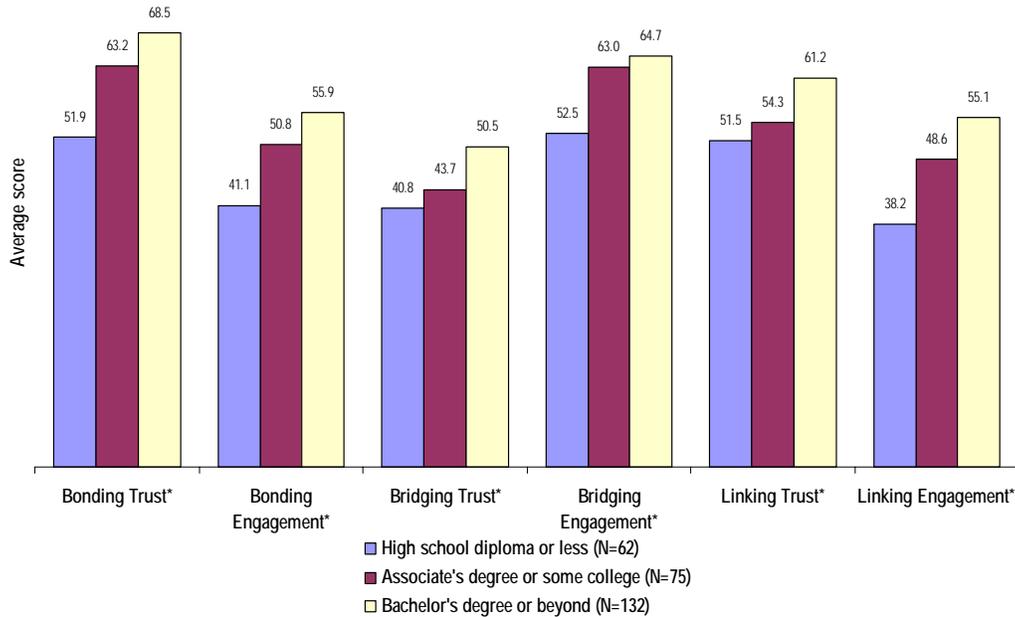


*The differences between income categories in bonding trust, bonding engagement, bridging engagement, and linking engagement were statistically significant.

Differences by education level in the community

Educational differences among adults had a significant relationship with all six of the social capital measurement scales. Adults with higher levels of education had stronger bonding, bridging and linking networks than adults with lower levels of formal education. This patterns suggests the importance of reaching out to adults with less formal education to strengthen the community or plan for the future.

Figure 23. Differences between education levels across the six social capital scales

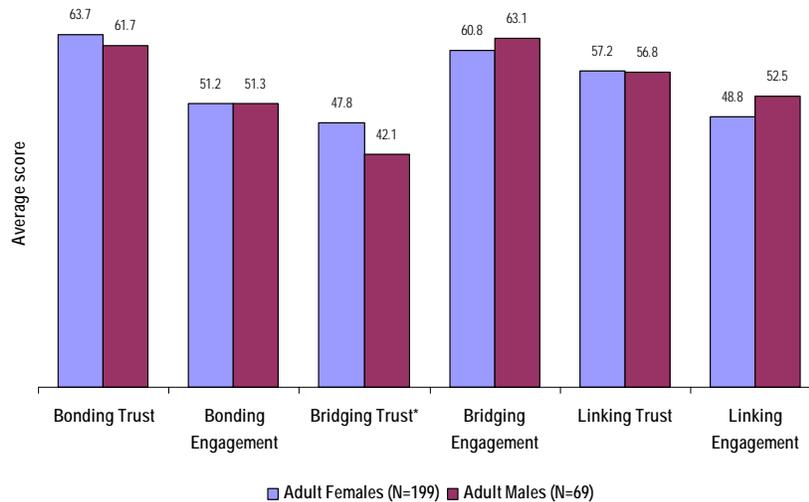


*The differences between education categories in bonding trust, bonding engagement, bridging trust, bridging engagement, linking trust and linking engagement were statistically significant.

Differences among adult men and women

Figure 24 shows the differences between adult men and women in each dimension of social capital. In most aspects of social capital, Waseca’s adult men and women had similar levels of trust or engagement. The only exception was in bridging trust. Women had significantly higher levels of bridging trust in the community than men.

Figure 24. Differences between men and women across the six social capital scales



*The difference between men and women in bridging trust was statistically significant.

Community Input

A data presentation with the survey findings was shared with the volunteers who collected the assessments on March 25, 2008. At that time, individuals had the following comments to offer as they reflected on the information they had just received. They noted that:

- ▶ Men weren't willing to complete the assessment. How can the community get them to trust and engage more?
- ▶ Much of this information is what our gut told us, but now we know it's not just a few of us that think we have areas where we can improve our community.
- ▶ Youth probably read the question about "asking neighbors for help if someone was sick" as meaning if they had a cold or the flu – but nothing more serious than that.
- ▶ If girls are more likely to do favors for others than boys, do we want that trend to continue into adulthood? Do we want boys to understand the concept of doing favors as well?
- ▶ No surprises that family, friends and worship rank high in belonging in Waseca.

"We need to find ways to connect blue collar and white collar workers so they understand each others worlds better. People who don't know teachers think they have an easy job. Sometimes educated people think manual laborers aren't very intelligent. We need to get to know each other across professions."
-Mayor Roy Srp.

"I grew up here, but my wife is from Texas. We lived here for 9 years, moved away for four and now we're back. My wife was never considered from here the first time we lived here and now is having a hard time adjusting again. It's difficult to fit in if you're not from here, even if you're married to someone who is. That's a challenge for Waseca."
A local banker.

- ▶ It's hard for newcomers to get connected here.
- ▶ People trust leaders of public and private institutions and yet they don't engage with them. Is that blind trust? Or do people not engage because they trust the leaders to make the best decisions?

Insights for Action

Strengthening networks

Things you can do to strengthen **bonding networks** are....

- Turn off the TV and computer and spend time with others
- Participate in groups, clubs, and community activities
- Play games or cards with your neighbors
- Join a project with others with similar interests
- Exercise together or take walks with family or friends
- Form or join a bowling team, golf team or other sport
- Hold a neighborhood get together

Things you can do to strengthen **bridging networks** include....

- Welcome new and lonely residents and youth into activities
- Volunteer in your area of interest
- Invite and support people from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds to be involved

Some things you can do to strengthen **linking networks** are....

- Provide input into community issues and decisions
- Link your outside contacts to needs and interests of the community
- Attend regional, statewide or national meetings
- Help create a shared agenda to be funded
- Form a regional or statewide network

Community Strengths to Build On

BONDING IS STRONG. Strong bonding networks in Waseca provide a great strength to build new relationships.

LEADERSHIP. Community leaders, including educators, are well respected. This can drive action with adults and youth.

Areas for Attention

ENGAGEMENT. A substantial number of community members (youth and adults) had low levels of bonding & bridging engagement which would suggest they don't have a "safety net." How can connections be made across demographic groups to create opportunities for engagement? What are ways to create engagement within and across groups?



DEMOGRAPHICS. The trend in this community is increased social capital for higher income residents and those with more formal education. How can this be addressed as demographics change?

EDUCATION. The divide between members of the community with formal education and those with less formal education is significant. What can be done to bridge relationships and create trust and engagement between those in different socio-economic conditions?

DIVERSITY: What can youth and adults learn from each other as it relates to engagement? The study indicates that adults are more likely to engage with people of different religions, whereas youth were more likely to engage with people of a different race/ethnicity.



"Our community needs to have a shared mission and vision that we all understand and are proud of. This should be included in the work." A local pastor

Next steps for the community

The team was excited to have the information and looked to the new City Manager (Crystal) who started in Waseca at the same time the Social Capital data was being shared, along with the Community Education Director (Audra) to begin some next steps. Under the direction of Crystal and Audra, positional leaders were invited to a luncheon meeting to further delve into the data and begin a discussion of what to do next.

**Next Step Plans:
Community Planning
Team...**

Of specific concern was how to be more intentional in finding ways to connect with populations that are less likely to have a safety net. School officials indicated that they have a high percentage of students who are transient, which makes it more difficult for the students and families to develop any type of network in the community.

Further community events, visioning, sharing of data, and dialogues are being planned.

**Next Step Suggestions:
Community Groups and
Clubs...**

Groups can:

- Reach out to those with less social capital to include them in networks
- Be intentional in building social capital as you go about your work
- Consider training in leadership and facilitation

You can:

- Read more about social capital
- Capitalize on your own social capital to build and strengthen networks.
- Get involved in your community!

**Next Step Suggestions:
Individuals...**

Social capital is built through hundreds of actions, large and small, that you take every day.

- ▶ Seek ways to nurture trusting relationships.
- ▶ Engage with others in your community.
- ▶ Get involved.

Each one of us in our own way is a builder of social capital.

References

Scheffert, Donna Rae, Jody Horntvedt and Scott Chazdon, *Social Capital and Your Community*, University of Minnesota Extension Service, May 2008.

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Thanks

Our thanks to the residents of the Waseca school district for their input throughout this assessment process.

Source

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visit www.extension.umn.edu/U-Connect/SocialCapital.html