



Let's talk about Social Capital



Social Capital refers to the connections, trust and cooperation between people.

It lives in our relationships: who we know, who we trust, how we show up for each other, how we share information and how we act together in times of need.

These invisible networks of people help communities thrive – socially, economically and in times of crisis. It improves the daily lives of individuals, and in doing so, makes communities stronger, more connected and more resilient.

Social capital is something we should all understand, value, and invest in.

It strengthens social cohesion, builds disaster readiness, and makes for happier people and places. But understanding social capital is only one piece of the puzzle.

To make social capital part of our everyday conversation, we need to measure and track it.

WHY MEASURING SOCIAL CAPITAL MATTERS

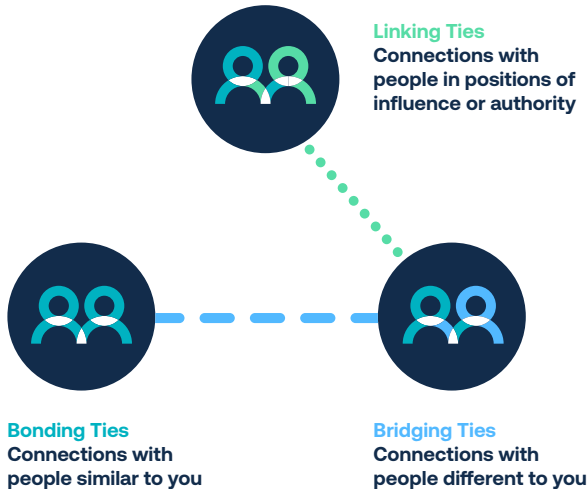
If we don't measure it,
we don't value it.

- **Identify** strengths and gaps in community connection, trust, and collaboration.
- **Target** support where it's needed most, especially for at-risk or disconnected groups.
- **Invest** in programs, infrastructure and services to strengthen community connection.
- **Track** improvements in social connections and identify opportunities for more investment.
- **Build** shared understanding and collaboration between government, business, and communities.

Social Ties: the building blocks of Social Capital

Social ties represent the various connections people have with others, and are what we use to measure social capital.

There are three main types of social ties: **bonding ties**, **bridging ties** and **linking ties**. Each plays a unique role in how we connect, support each other, and strengthen communities.



Adaptation of social capital ties diagram, Professor Daniel Aldrich



BONDING TIES

Connections between people who are close, often through shared experiences or backgrounds.

They provide emotional support, everyday help and strong mutual aid in times of crisis.

For example:

- Family members
- Friends including at work
- Trusted neighbours
- Kinship networks

BRIDGING TIES

Connections between people from different backgrounds such as cultures, generations, languages, beliefs, professions, geographies and life experiences.

They help build understanding, reduce division and open access to new ideas, perspectives and opportunities.

For example:

- Members of your sports club
- Parents at your kids' school
- People you meet at church, the pub or local café

LINKING TIES

Connections between community members and people or organisations with power, influence or authority.

They help communities access resources, information and decision-making pathways.

For example:

- Local mayor, senior council personnel, or state, territory or regional government representative
- Local business or industry leaders
- Faith or cultural leaders such as pastors, rabbis, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders

3 steps to measuring Social Capital

Social capital can be hard to see. It exists in how people connect, trust each other and work together.

1. Track indicators

We track indicators from national data sets for bonding, bridging and linking social ties. We are currently tracking 18 indicators.

2. Measure neighbourhoods

We measure how strong (or weak) the individual and combined social ties are at the neighbourhood (SA1) level.*

3. Validate and publish

Indicator findings are tested and validated through internal and external verification. Results are published on our mapping tool, where each neighbourhood has a rating from very low to very high, reflecting its relative social capital strengths and weaknesses. This will highlight where investment is needed to build more connected, resilient communities.

* A neighbourhood (SA1 area) is an area of around 200 to 800 people, with its size and spread varying across metro, regional and remote areas

Mapping tool

Australia has a new mapping tool available at sociabli.resilientready.org



Very low Low Medium High Very high

We all benefit from measuring Social Capital

Every individual, group and organisation benefits from understanding and measuring social capital, including:

- Individuals
- Community groups
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Local councils
- State and federal governments
- Emergency services and first responders
- Big and small businesses
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Academics and educational institutions
- Philanthropic funders
- Peak organisations
- Faith councils

By measuring indicators over time, we can see where social capital is growing and where it's at risk. We can then create policies, programs and place-based investments to build more connected, economically vibrant and healthier communities — strengthening both social and economic resilience.





Connecting the dots between Social Capital and Social Infrastructure

Social capital grows through everyday interactions with people we know, trust, and work with to solve problems and support each other. But these connections don't form in isolation. They need places and spaces to form and grow.

Social infrastructure includes the places and spaces — from cafes and sports clubs to parks and community centres — where people can meet, connect and build bridging ties.

Measuring social capital alongside social infrastructure provides a clearer picture of how and where communities connect, guiding investment to strengthen resilience.

Discover more in the National Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework

Visit sociabli.resilientready.org to find out how harnessing social capital can benefit your community



Resilient Ready

info@resilientready.org
+61 (0) 401 566 602
resilientready.org



Australian Government
National Emergency Management Agency

This Creating a Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework to benefit every Australian project received funding from the Australian Government.