



MAY 2021

Enhancing Community Resilience through Social Capital and Connectedness: Stronger Together!

The Resilient America Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine convened the Committee on Applied Research Topics for Hazard Mitigation and Resilience to assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in reducing the immense human and financial toll of disasters caused by natural hazards and other large-scale emergencies. FEMA asked the committee to identify applied research topics, information, and expertise that can inform action and collaborative priorities within the natural hazard mitigation and resilience fields. The committee, in consultation with the Resilient America Program, selected two large-scale themes within which to identify applied research topics: *Social Capital and Social Connectedness for Resilience*, and *Motivating Local Action to Address Climate Impacts and Build Resilience*. It then planned workshops for these two themes to gather information for identifying priority applied research topics.

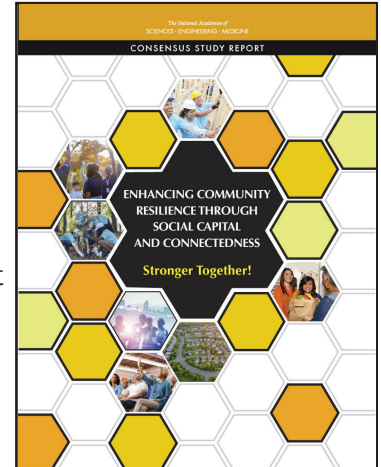
On the theme of *Social Capital and Social Connectedness for Resilience*, the committee identified three topics, each with underlying priorities, as particularly important for natural hazard mitigation and resilience:

1. Inspiring Communities to Create and Sustain Social Capital and Connectedness

- Identify and highlight key connections, co-benefits, and value of social capital and connectedness for equitable hazard mitigation and resilience.
- Document and disseminate examples of community-led approaches to building social capital and connectedness both before, during, and after disaster events, inclusive of under-represented and historically marginalized groups.
- Identify resources that make community-building activities equitable and sustainable within a community and scalable to other settings.
- Investigate differences in approaches to enhancing capacities for resilience in urban vs rural settings.

2. Bolstering Community-created Digital and Public Spaces

- Enhance community-led place-making to bolster social capital and connectedness.
- Make lessons from the 'science of inspiration and narrative' accessible and useful for strengthening social capital and social connectedness.
- Identify approaches to enhancing co-development and ownership of shared spaces.



3. Building Social Capital through Financial Investment Strategies

- Identify existing approaches and examples for integrating social capital considerations into financial mechanisms.
- Identify existing and potential metrics for social capital and social connectedness.
- Investigate the role of strong and equitable social capital and connectedness in the success of hazard mitigation and resilience investments.

The report provides examples of successful activities of each of these. It also identifies specific questions for attention by the applied research community, both within each of these topics and where they intersect.

In addition to these three applied research topics, the committee identified four themes that cut across all three topics:

EQUITY. The consideration of equity recognizes the importance of the social connections and interdependencies in relationships between people and between people and institutions. The need for equity within the applied research topics also implies that the freedom and flourishing of one group cannot come at the expense of others.

TRUST. Declining trust in government and civic landscapes threatens community engagement and resilience to disasters from natural hazards and other significant threats. In contrast, efforts to improve disaster risk reduction and response must recognize the capacity of digital media and online communities to build trust and cohesion. These new means of communication and organization exert both positive and negative influences.

COMMUNITY CO-DEVELOPMENT AND OWNERSHIP. By engaging community members as partners, researchers can best determine which types of questions community members find most compelling rather than imposing their own ideas on a population. In this way, researchers can collect better information and produce more worthwhile products while also cultivating community ownership in a worthwhile cause.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL FEASIBILITY. The feasibility of efforts to build and sustain social capital and connectedness involves many related concepts, including applicability, affordability, practicality, portability, scalability, and justifiability. The successful design of tools, programs, and interventions to reduce risks and strengthen capacities for resilience must consider these factors.

For More Information... This Consensus Study Report Highlights was prepared by the Resilient America Program based on the Consensus Study Report: *Enhancing Community Resilience through Social Capital and Connectedness: Stronger Together!* (2021). The study was sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization or agency that provided support for the project.

Copies of the Consensus Study Report are available from the National Academies Press, (800) 624-6242; <https://www.nap.edu>.

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