



GATEWAY AND  
NATURAL AMENITY  
REGION INITIATIVE

# GATEWAY AND NATURAL AMENITY REGION NETWORK

July 23, 2020 Research Q&A Session  
The Utah Wellbeing Project

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# OVERVIEW

On July 23rd, Utah State University professor Courtney Flint presented to the GNAR Network about The Utah Wellbeing Project.

The Utah Wellbeing project examines perceptions of wellbeing and indicators across Utah. While preliminary work started in 2018 with three pilot cities, in 2020 the project moved online. Surveys were conducted across 18 Utah cities (eight of which are considered GNAR communities) and there were over 4,000 responses. Dr. Flint discussed perceptions of wellbeing for both GNAR and non-GNAR communities.

This is a new and ongoing project and current data was gathered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, there are limitations on conclusions that can currently be drawn for GNAR communities. Dr. Flint is planning on re-surveying communities in the near future to see how COVID-19 changes these results and their ideas of wellbeing moving forward.

Dr. Flint is also very interested in expanding this project and welcomes the opportunity to work with more communities in Utah and beyond. If you are interested, please contact Courtney.Flint@usu.edu

This summary shares the ideas that were shared during the session. A recording of the session can be viewed here, on the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism's YouTube. Names and contacts for participants and the facilitation team are included in Appendix A. Dr. Flint's presentation slides are included in Appendix B.

This summary presents the ideas that were shared during the session. A recording of the session [can be viewed here](#), on the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism's YouTube. Names and contacts for participants and the facilitation team are included in Appendix A. Dr. Flint's presentation slides are included in Appendix B.

## ABOUT THE GNAR INITIATIVE

[The GNAR Initiative](#) leverages research, education, and capacity building to assist communities, land managers, and others in gateway and natural amenity regions throughout the West in preparing for and responding to planning, development, natural resource management, and public policy challenges, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. The Initiative is an affiliation of university faculty, government and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. It is based in the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University.



# THE UTAH WELLBEING PROJECT

Wellbeing can be loosely defined as what makes a “good” life, however this varies from one person to the next and there is no standardized definition of the term. The Utah Wellbeing Project measured wellbeing via ten factors:

- Income
- Living Standards
- Physical Health
- Leisure Time
- Mental Health
- Local Environmental Quality
- Connection with Nature
- Safety & Security
- Social Connections
- Cultural Opportunities
- Education

Community respondents were asked to rate and rank the importance of the ten factors. Following this, an individualized Wellbeing Matrix was created for each city (see IMAGE A). While many respondents ranked personal wellbeing as high across all cities (both GNAR and non-GNAR), the rankings and importance of individual factors varied greatly between communities.

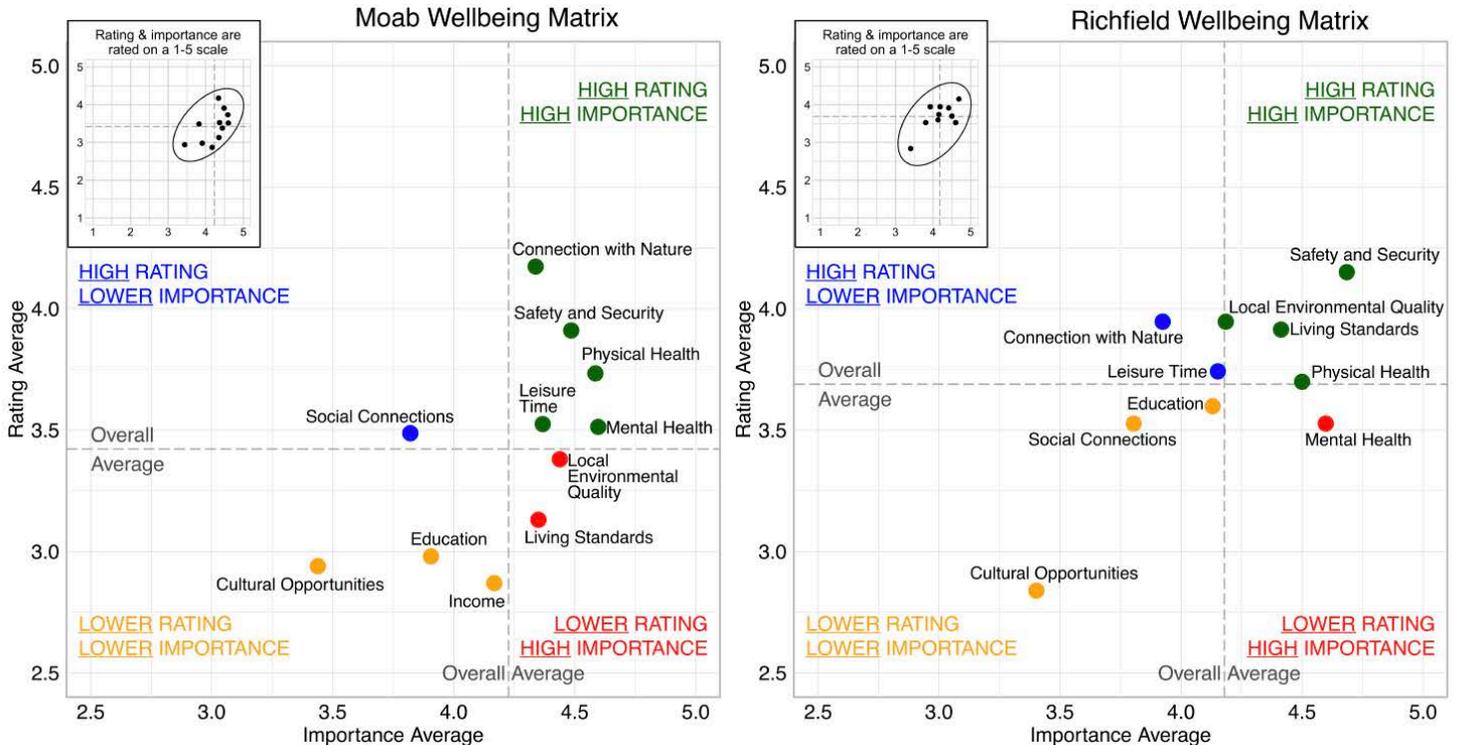
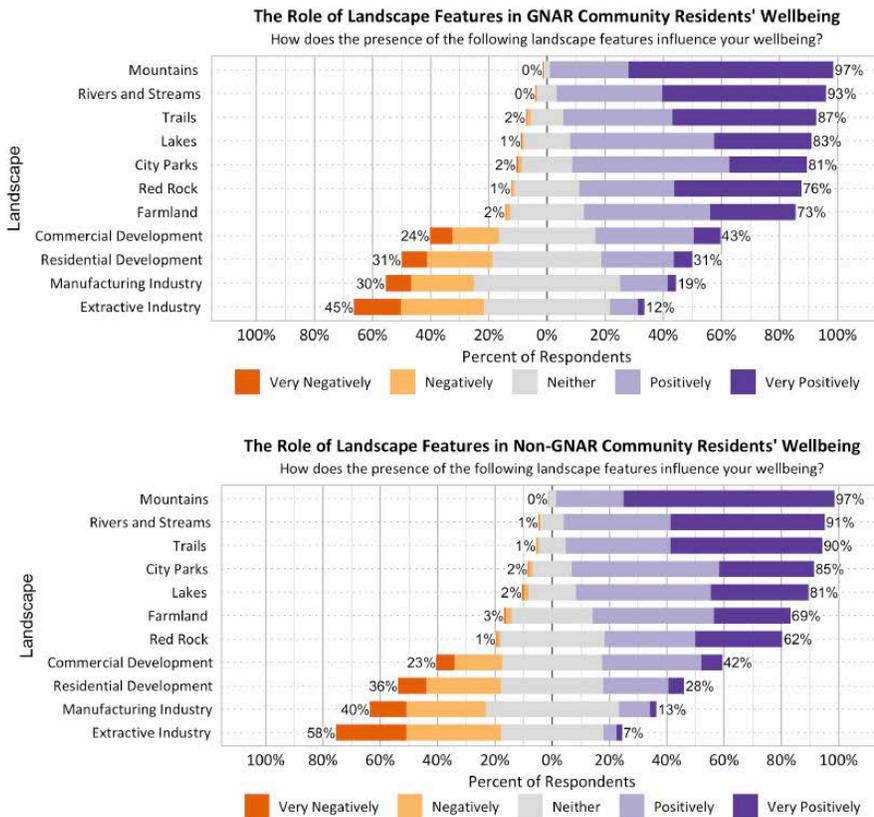


IMAGE A

# THE UTAH WELLBEING PROJECT

GNAR communities and their proximity to natural spaces highlight certain aspects of wellbeing and may lead us to make certain assumptions about them when it comes to wellbeing. One aspect that some may find surprising is that some GNAR communities feel more positively toward manufacturing or extractive industries than non-GNAR communities (see IMAGE B). This is most likely a result of rural economies being open to opportunities that bring jobs. Combined with the differences seen between community Wellbeing Matrices, we are cautioned against making broad assumptions about GNAR communities or that there are “one-size-fits-all” solutions for many of the problems facing GNAR communities.



## GNAR vs non-GNAR

Mountains	NS
Rivers/Streams	+ *
Trails	- **
Lakes	NS
City Parks	- ***
Red Rock	+ ***
Farmland	+ **
Commercial Devt	NS
Residential Devt	+ **
Manufacturing Ind	+ ***
Extractive Ind	+ ***

NS No Significant Difference  
\* p < 0.05  
\*\* p < 0.01  
\*\*\* p < 0.001

IMAGE B

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Are most respondents full-time residents in the communities?

Yes, 97-99% of respondents were full-time residents. In gateway communities there are many part-time residents, however this survey doesn't really speak to these folks, perhaps because of the time of year it was distributed.

- Do you see any differences between residents and community leaders in what they would like to see their communities become?

When we share the findings with community leaders, they often nod their heads and these findings do not surprise them at all. They hear these things on a daily basis. However, some results do come up as a surprise. Sometimes they have assumptions about the demographics and attitudes of their communities. For example, one community leader assumed only newcomers didn't want to see the population grow anymore and wanted to “shut the gates” after moving in. But actually, when we got into the data, over 75% of respondents both old and new felt growth was happening too quickly, so it can vary a lot.

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- **Are there plans to re-survey these communities to see if COVID changes the answers?**

We recently surveyed community leaders in response to COVID to ask them what kind of impacts they thought would be the most profound in their communities. These questions are important to ask residents too. What are the impacts? Are they social impacts? Are they health impacts? Are they economic impacts? And where do residents feel they need help? This could help county or local leaders direct resources where they are felt to be needed. We also allow every city to ask their own specific questions as well. While some questions need to stay the same, there's always space for questions that help city leaders.

- **Are there plans to expand to cities who weren't included?**

Absolutely. We'd love to partner with new communities. As long as a community is willing to take on the advertising and distribution efforts, it is very easy for us to partner and distribute this survey in an online format. However, if a community would like more than an online format that would take additional resources.



- **Do you think the differences seen in results across gateway communities could provide insight into different kinds of gateway communities and/or help understand the different development trajectories of gateway communities?**

While we had some findings that were quite generalizable across communities, whether gateway or non-gateway, there were others that were quite context specific. We don't have enough data to generate specific typologies of communities, however we do have enough to see distinct differences and portfolios of what is important to folks and what needs attention. We need to be mindful there are a variety of gateway communities, but we need more data to define further.

- **Do you collect data about the location of residence within a community? For example, in Moab can you compare people who live "Downtown" vs. those who live further from the center of town?**

Yes, but we rely on the cities to tell us what kind of question to ask to geo-locate folks. For example, in Moab we asked whether they lived in Moab, Spanish Valley, Castle Valley or elsewhere in the county. In Hurricane, there are ten distinct neighborhoods and we asked respondents which neighborhood they lived in. We depend on our city partners to help us get that specificity.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Following the question and answer segment of the presentation, attendees were invited to participate in some small group discussions about the content of the presentation and how it applied to their communities. They answered the following questions:

- What does community wellbeing mean or look like for you community? How can you measure it?
- How, if at all, has your community's perception of what community wellbeing means changed since the beginning of the pandemic?
- In your community's planning efforts, is there more emphasis placed on the wellbeing of residents or tourists? Has the emphasis shifted since the beginning of the pandemic?

### WHAT DOES COMMUNITY WELLBEING MEAN OR LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY? HOW CAN YOU MEASURE IT?

- Jim Schenck, Superior, AZ: Combination of environmental amenities and economic development
- Danya Rumore, Salt Lake City, UT: Different people in communities (Econ development people, planners, residents, etc.) all have different ideas of what community wellbeing means and what is most important
- Kelly Stowell, Kanab, UT: I think overall people in my rural community believe they have a better quality of life and overall wellbeing than people in metro areas

### HOW IF AT ALL HAS YOUR COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION OF WHAT COMMUNITY WELLBEING MEANS CHANGED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC?

- Jim Schenck, Superior, AZ: Population now very cognizant of pandemic issues.
- Danya Rumore, Salt Lake City, UT: One of our observations is that when we surveyed western gateway communities in 2018, no one identified pandemics as a concern or something to be worried about.

- Jim Schenck, Superior, AZ: Greater isolation and inability to have person to person contact.
- Liz Sodja, Salt Lake City, UT: Different segments of the population have different perceptions of what wellbeing means during COVID (Older/higher risk residents vs. those more dependent on tourism).
- Jake Powell, Logan, UT: COVID is forcing communities to focus on basic needs and having to abandon the things like recreation, arts, culture that add so much to wellbeing. Either from budget constraints or inability to gather.
- Kelly Stowell, Kanab, UT: Local governments are cutting budgets due to declining revenues and arts, outdoor recreation and other similar programs are getting the ax.

### IN YOUR COMMUNITY'S PLANNING EFFORTS, IS THERE MORE EMPHASIS PLACED ON THE WELLBEING OF RESIDENTS OR TOURISTS? HAS THE EMPHASIS SHIFTED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC?

- Jim Schenck, Superior, AZ: Increased tourism isn't always positive for local well-being.
- Danya Rumore, Salt Lake City, UT: Public officials in these communities are feeling stuck between concerns about resident wellbeing/public health and economic wellbeing/businesses wanting to be open and attract tourists.
- Jake Powell, Logan, UT: Communities are very torn between economics and public health.
- Courtney Flint, Logan, UT: It was interesting to hear the very different experiences between California south of Bishop and Kanab. Who's wearing masks vs no masks was opposite in these communities.
- Kelly Stowell, Kanab, UT: The focus is on locals, but people are grappling between business health and human health.
- Danya Rumore, Salt Lake City, UT: In a past GNAR Initiative session, the participants emphasized that the message needs to be "Stay safe, stay open" - taking precautions around public health is good for keeping the economy open.

# APPENDIX A – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATION TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

## LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Email Address	City, County, or Organization Name
Catherine Carr	Catherine.Carr@dot.ca.gov	Caltrans District 9, CA
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Pitt Grewe	pgrewe@utah.gov	Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
Jordan Katcher	jkatcher@utah.gov	Utah Community Development Office
Anna Miller	anna.miller@usu.edu	IORT at USU
Lindsey Romaniello	larom90@gmail.com	Missoula County
Jim Schenck	jim@magmadorada.com	Legends of Superior Trails (LOST), AZ
Kelly Stowell	stowell@kanab.net	Kane County
Kevin Walker	kevin@canyon23.net	Grand County, UT (Planning Commission)

## FACILITATION TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

### Jake Powell, GNAR Initiative Lead

Utah State University  
[jake.powell@usu.edu](mailto:jake.powell@usu.edu)

### Danya Rumore

Wallace Stegner Center for Land,  
Resources, and the Environment  
University of Utah  
[danya.rumore@law.utah.edu](mailto:danya.rumore@law.utah.edu)

### Jordan W. Smith

Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism  
Utah State University  
[jordan.smith@usu.edu](mailto:jordan.smith@usu.edu)

### Liz K. Sodja

GNAR Initiative Coordinator  
Utah State University  
[Liz.Sodja@gmail.com](mailto:Liz.Sodja@gmail.com)



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# APPENDIX B – DR. FLINT SLIDES

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# Wellbeing in GNAR Communities

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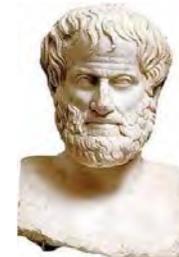
*Utah Wellbeing Project – Dr. Courtney Flint, USU*



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# Wellbeing



<https://thegreatthinkers.org/aristotle/>



<https://www.pinterest.com/xenuroo/ancient-greek-illustration/>

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# Gateway & Natural Amenity Communities

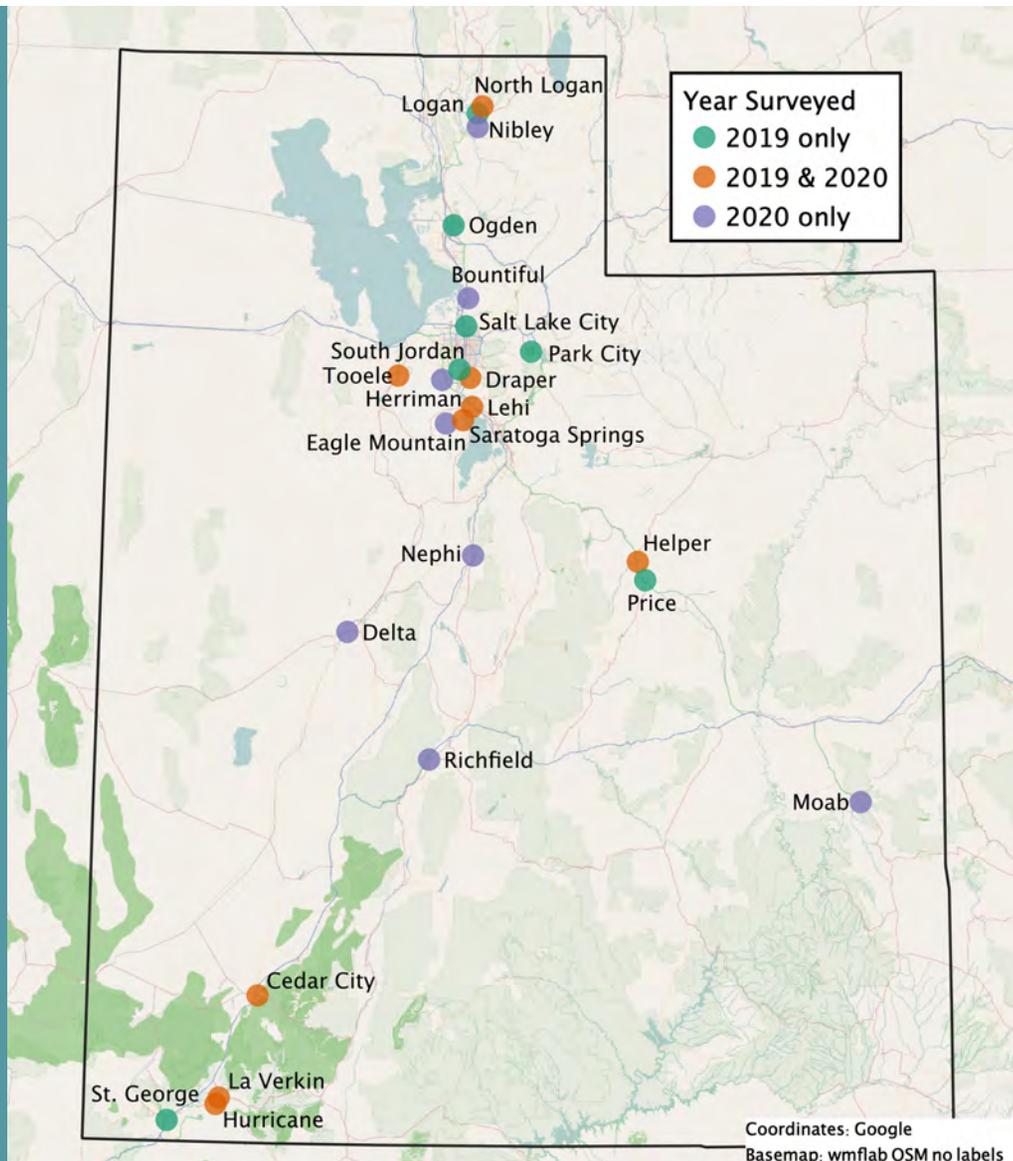


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# Utah Wellbeing Project





## 2020 Surveys

- Jan-Mar 2020 (Pre-Pandemic)
- 18 cities
- Online (Qualtrics)
- Cities led recruitment
- 4,354 completed surveys
- City reports:

<https://extension.usu.edu/business-and-community/utah-wellbeing-project/index>

- Statewide report coming soon

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# Survey Response & Margin of Error

GNAR Communities	2018 Population 18 & Over	# of 2020 Responses	Margin of Error
Eagle Mountain	15,797	506	~4%
Moab	4,192	377	~5%
Nephi	3,978	275	~5%
Hurricane	12,351	254	~6%
Santaquin	6,553	180	~7%
La Verkin	2,830	105	~9%
Richfield	5,089	94	~10%
Nibley	3,832	62	~12%
Total	54,622	1,853	~2%

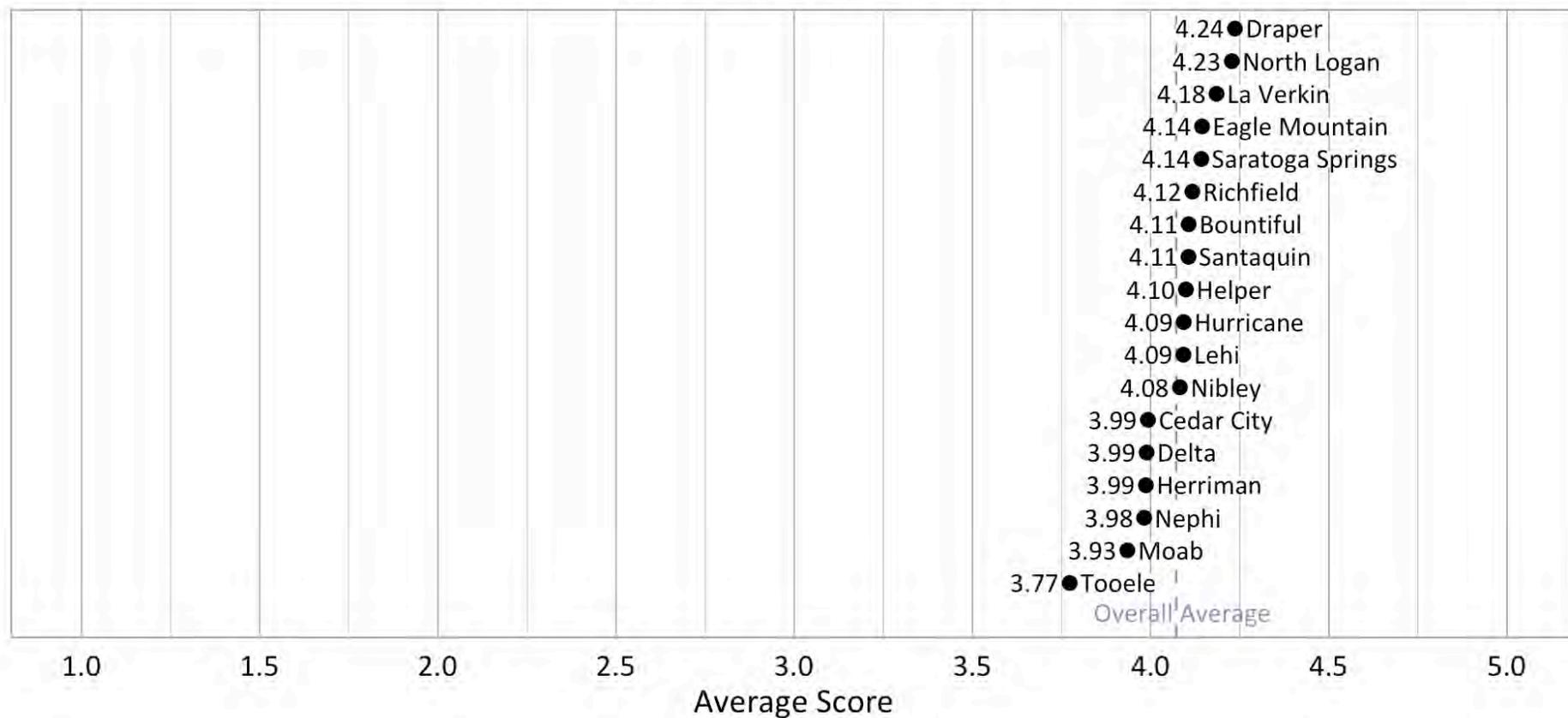
<https://extension.usu.edu/business-and-community/utah-wellbeing-project/index>

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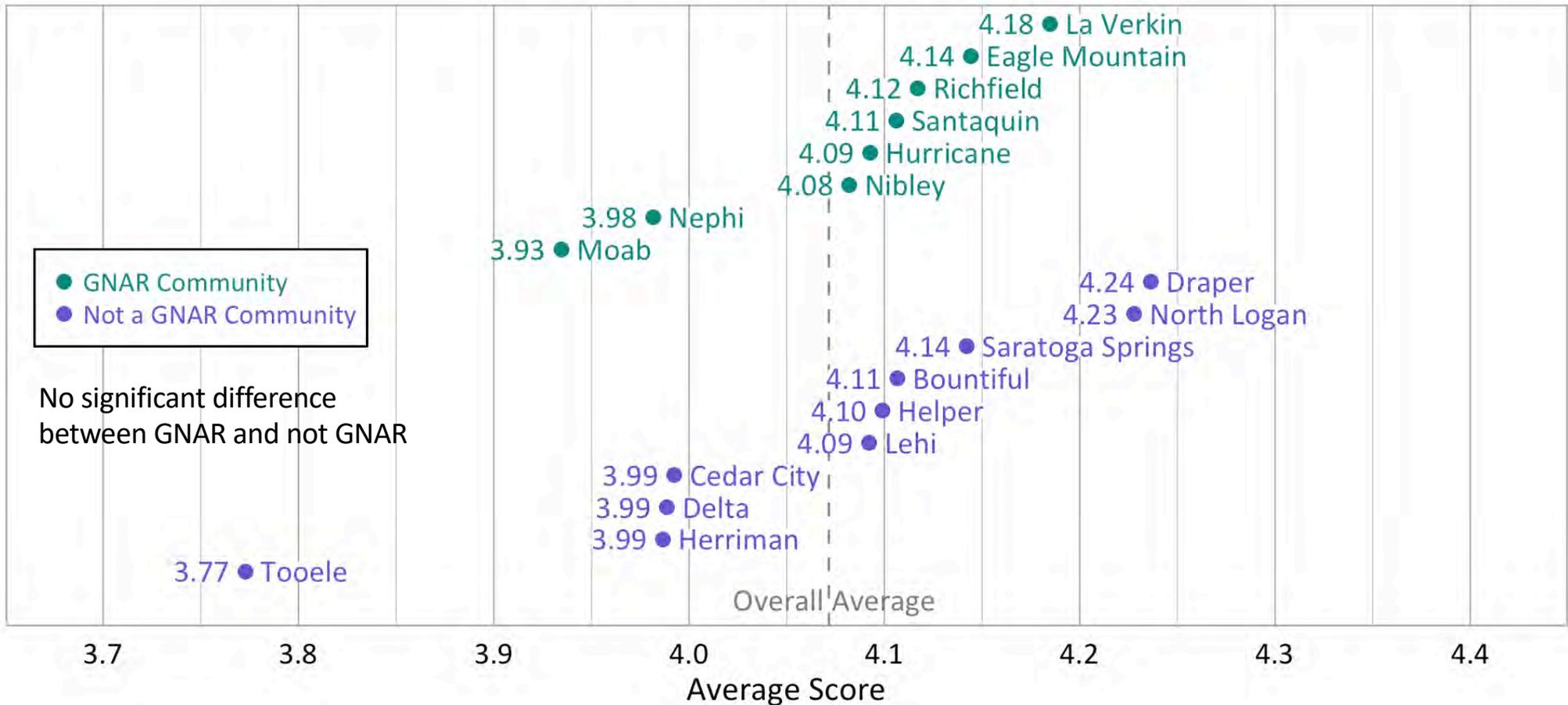
## Overall Personal Wellbeing Scores from Utah Study Cities (2020)

(On a scale from 1 = Very Poor to 5 = Excellent)

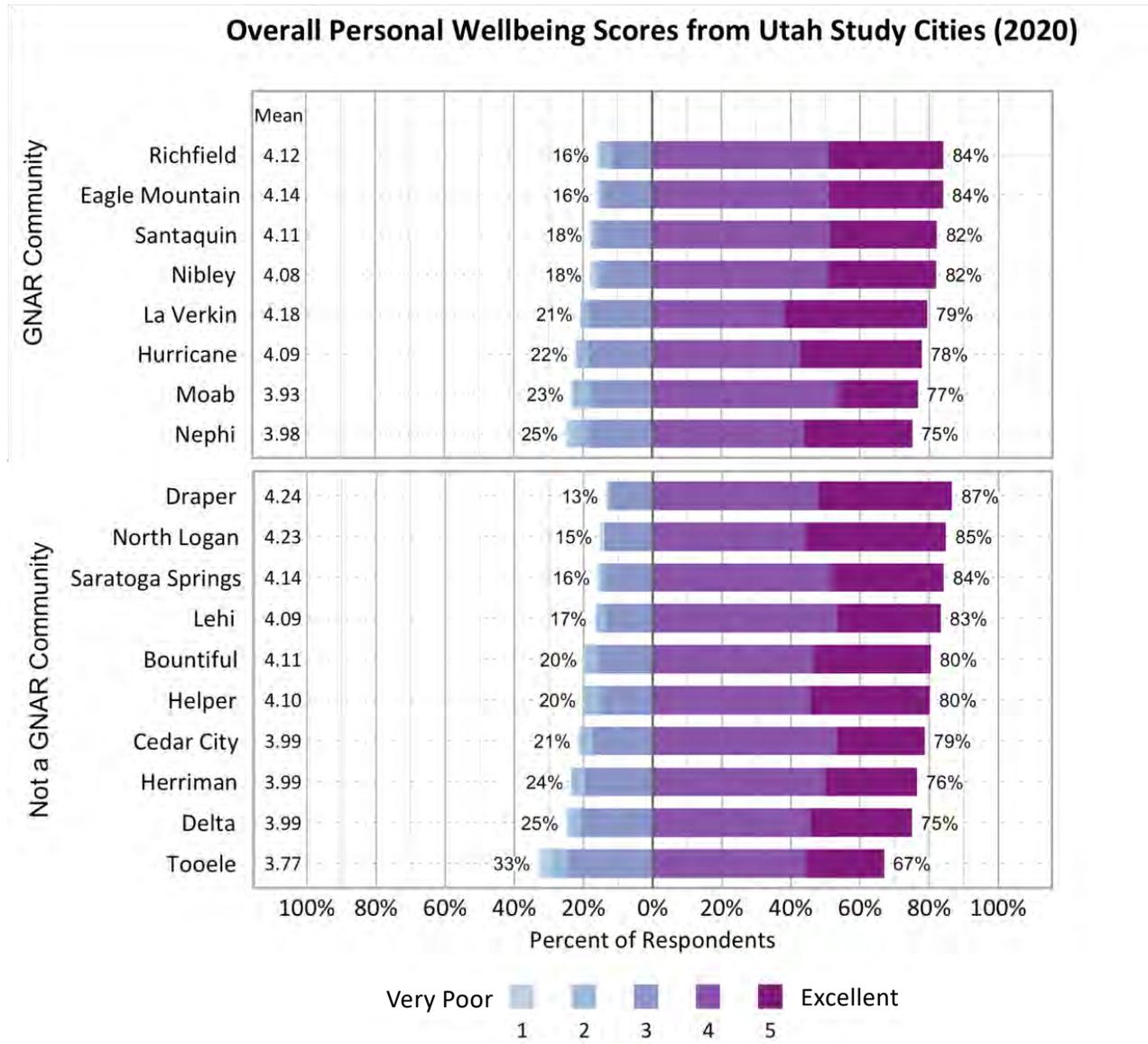


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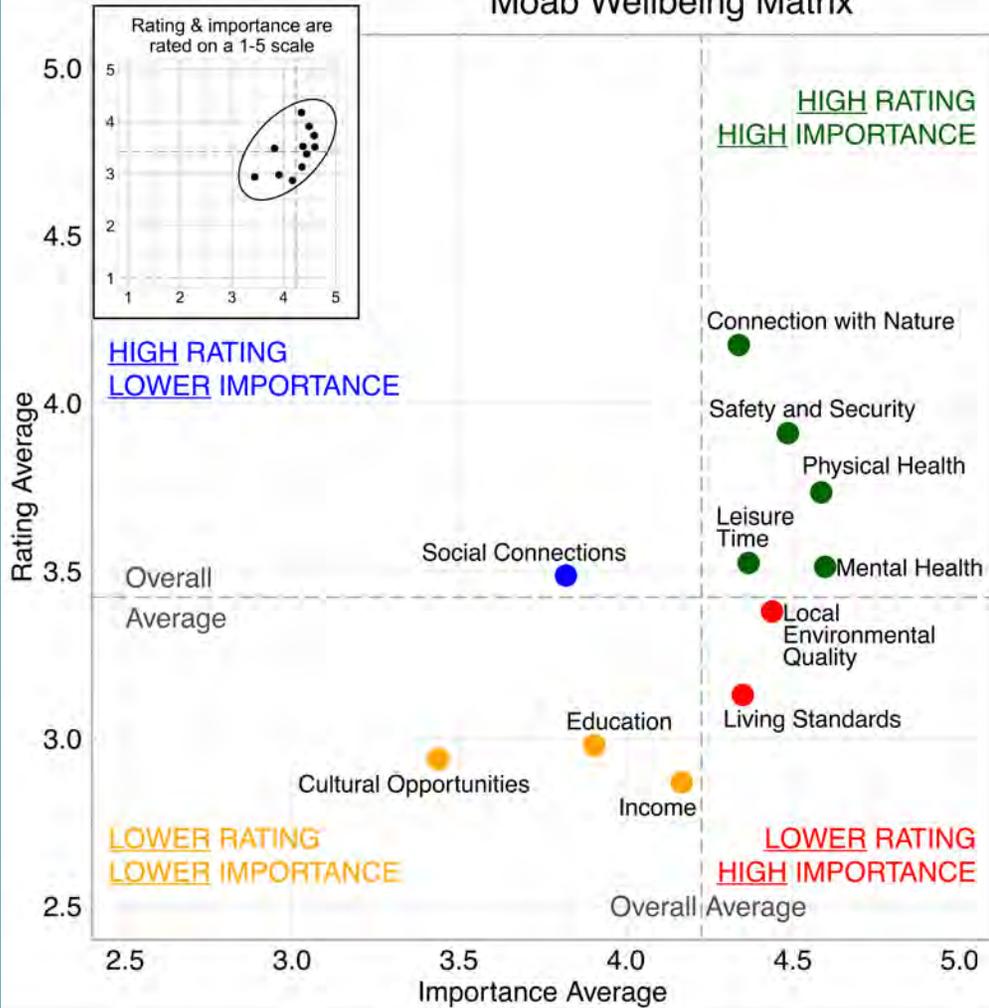
(On a scale from 1=Very Poor to 5=Excellent)



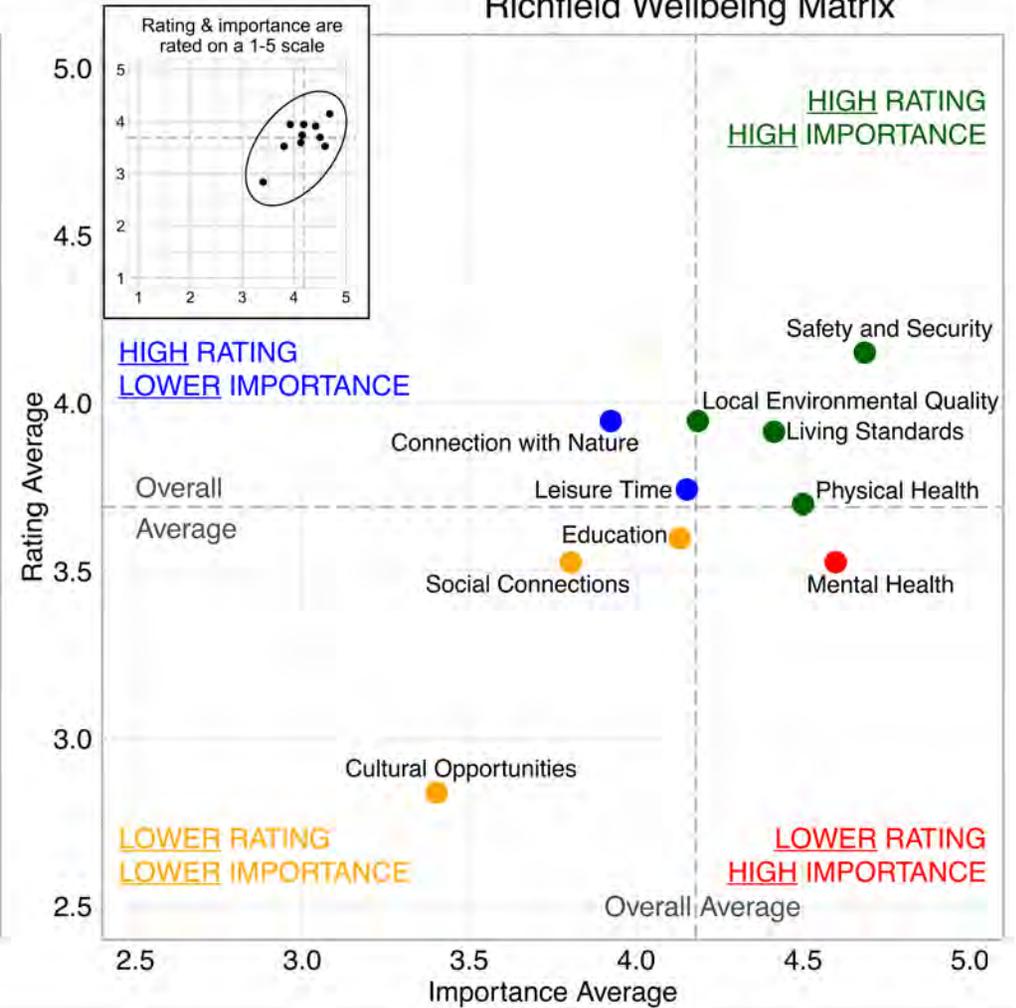
### Overall Personal Wellbeing Scores from Utah Study Cities (2020)



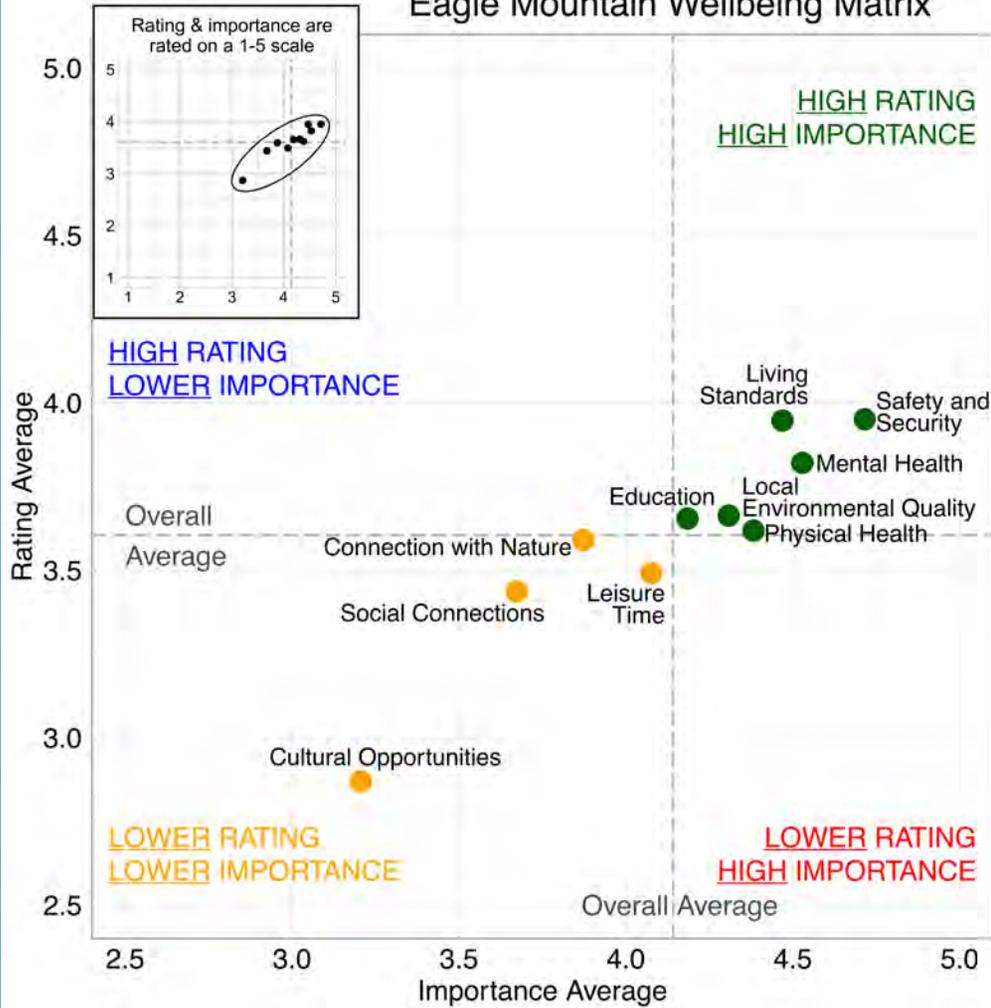
Moab Wellbeing Matrix



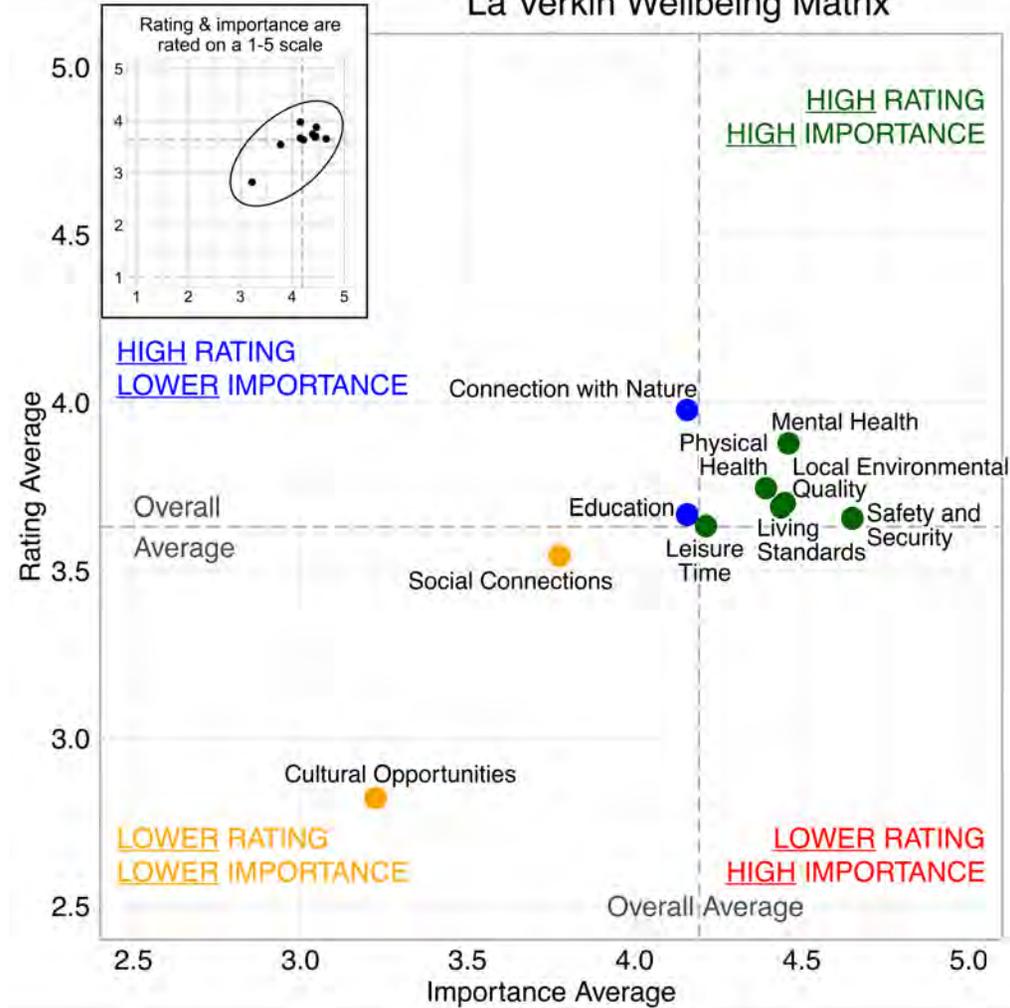
Richfield Wellbeing Matrix



Eagle Mountain Wellbeing Matrix



La Verkin Wellbeing Matrix



## MOAB - Relationships Between Demographic Characteristics and Wellbeing Domains

Domains Rated	Demographic Variables						
	Age 60+	Female	College Degree	Latter-day Saint	Higher Income	Nonwhite or Latino	20+ Years Resident
	Wellbeing Ratings						
Overall Personal Wellbeing	+		+		+ \$150,000+ > under \$75,000		—
Wellbeing in Moab					+		
Connection to Nature			+	— vs no religious preference			—
Cultural Opportunities	+						—
Education	+		+				
Leisure Time	+		+		+ \$150,000+ > \$74,999-\$99,999		
Living Standards	+		+		+ \$150,000+ > under \$75,000		
Local Environmental Quality							
Mental Health	+						
Physical Health							
Safety and Security			+				
Social Connections	+ vs 18-39		+		+ \$150,000+ > \$50,000-\$74,999		

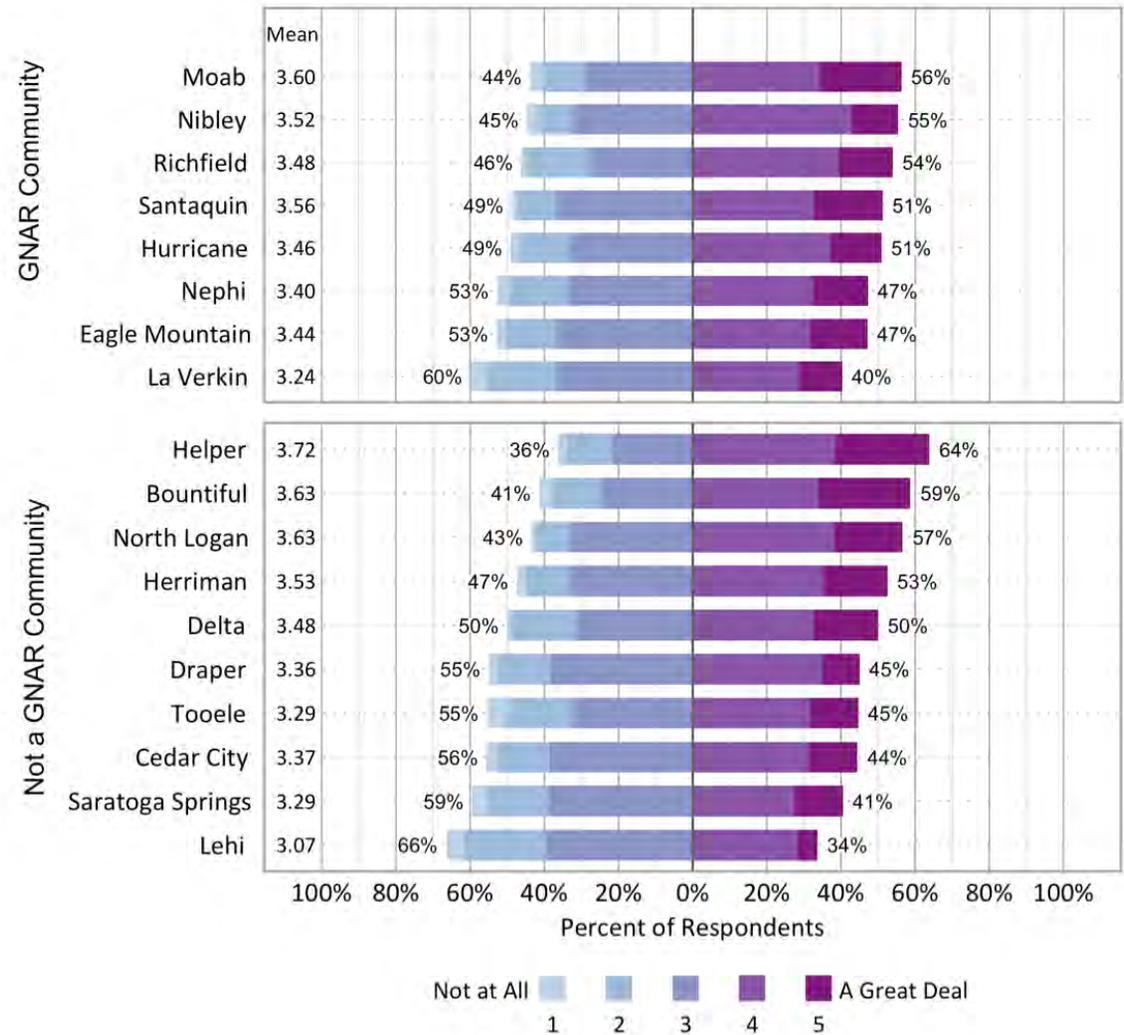
## MOAB - Relationships Between Demographic Characteristics and Wellbeing Domains

Importance of Domains	Age 60+	Female	College Degree	Latter-day Saint	Higher Income	Nonwhite or Latino	20+ Years Resident
Connection to Nature		+	+	— vs no religious preference			—
Cultural Opportunities			+	— vs no religious preference and other religion	—	+	—
Education					—\$75,000-\$99,999 > \$150,000+		
Leisure Time				— vs no religious preference			
Living Standards		+	—				
Local Environmental Quality	+ vs 18-39			— vs no religious preference and other religion			
Mental Health		+		— vs no religious preference	—\$75,000-\$99,999 > \$150,000+		
Physical Health		+		— vs no religious preference and other religion			
Safety & Security		+	—				
Social Connections		+	+				—

In your city, to what degree do people take action together in response to local problems and opportunities?

GNAR Mean 3.47  
 Not GNAR Mean 3.40  
 (F= 5.207, p= 0.023)

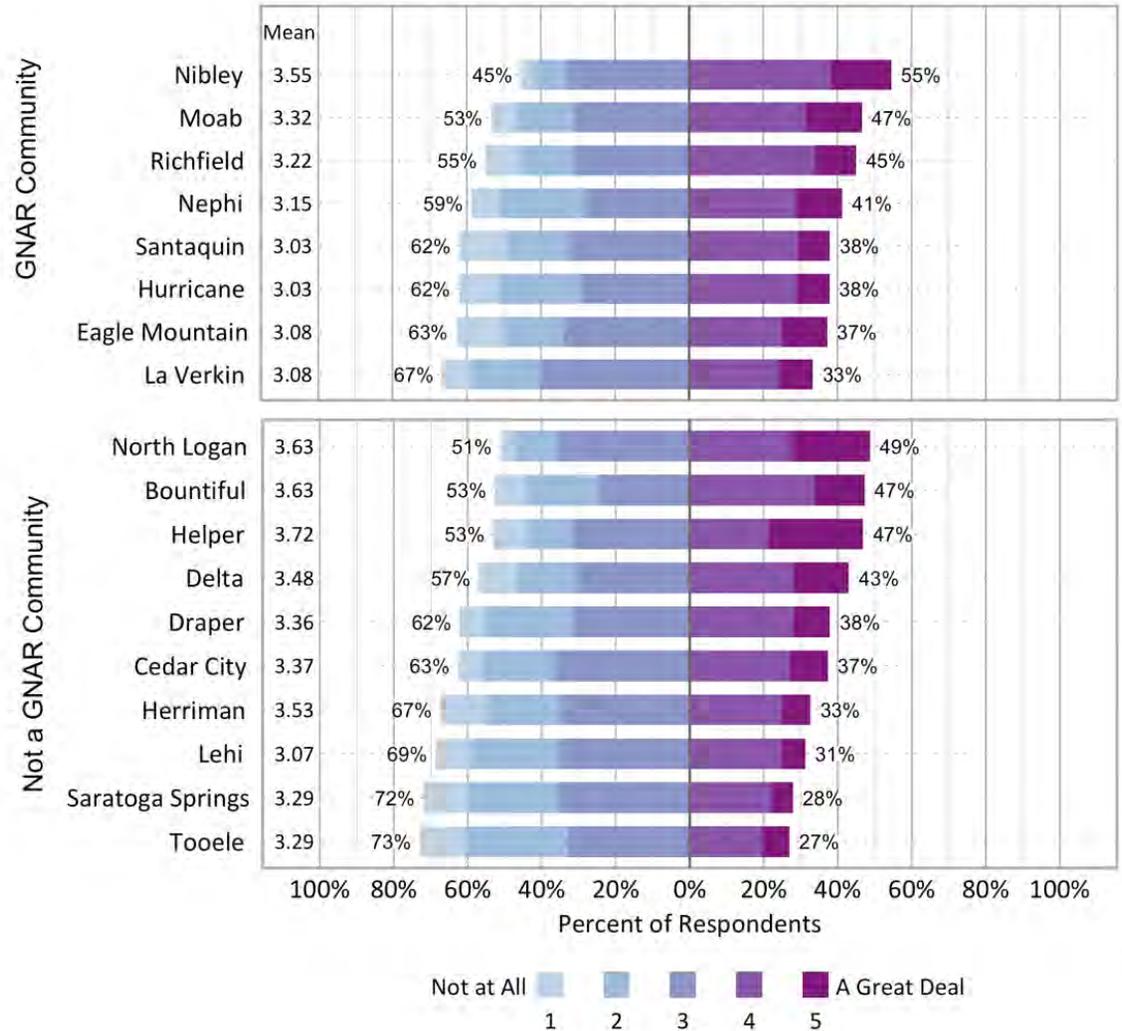
Community Action in Utah Study Cities (2020)



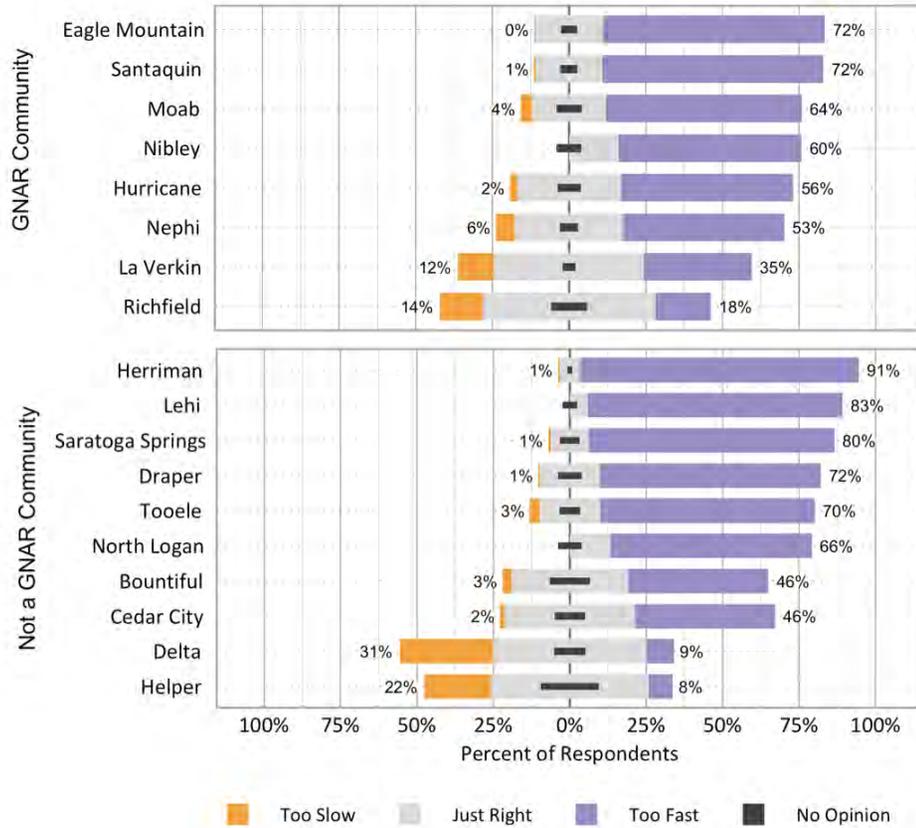
In your city, to what degree do you feel connected to your community?

GNAR Mean 3.15  
 Not GNAR Mean 3.05  
 (F= 7.719, p= 0.005)

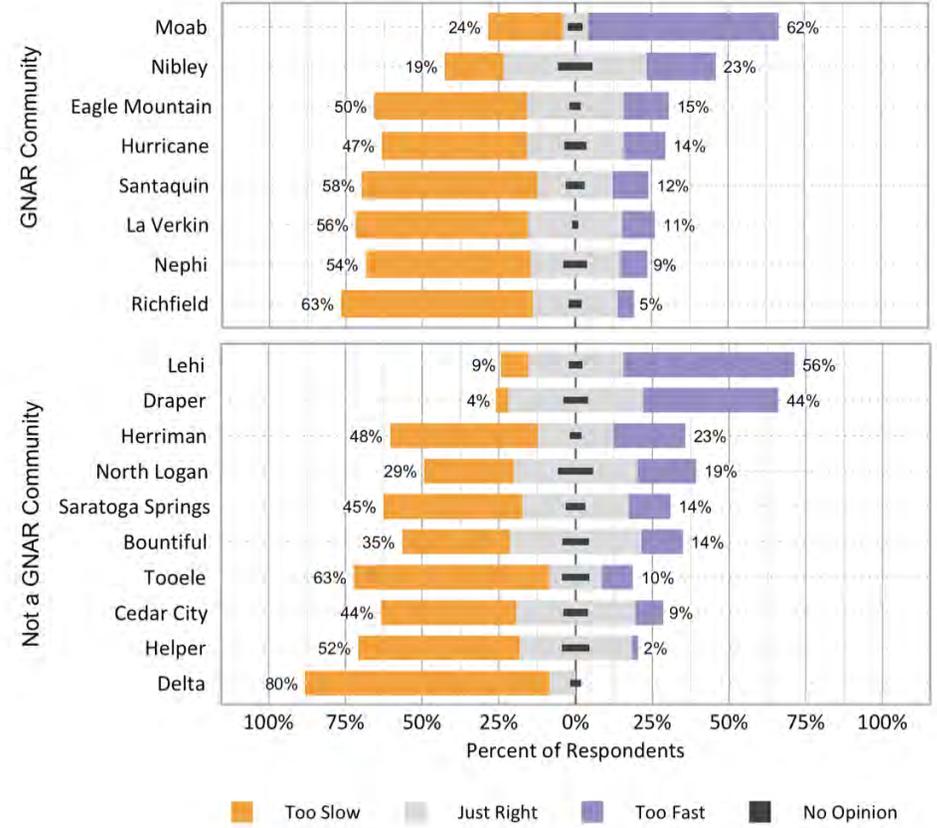
Community Connectedness in Utah Study Cities (2020)



Population Growth in Utah Study Cities (2020)

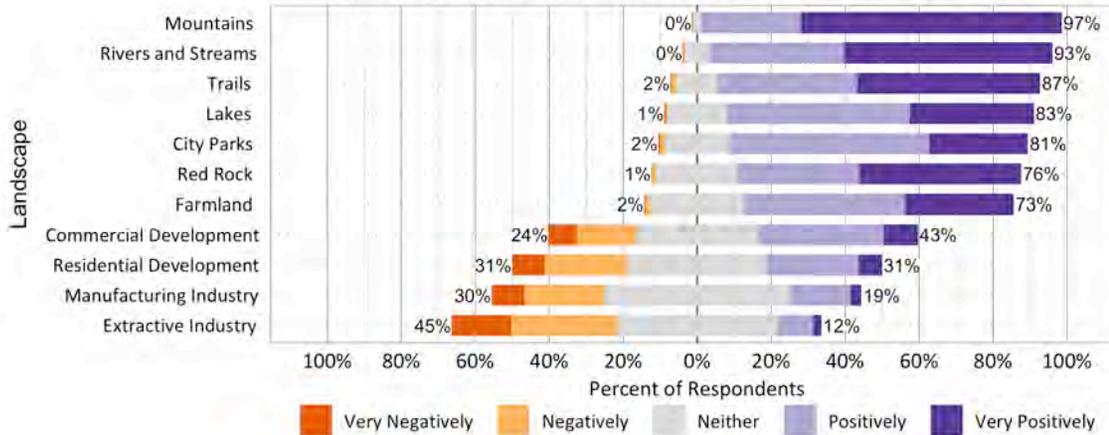


Economic Growth in Utah Study Cities (2020)



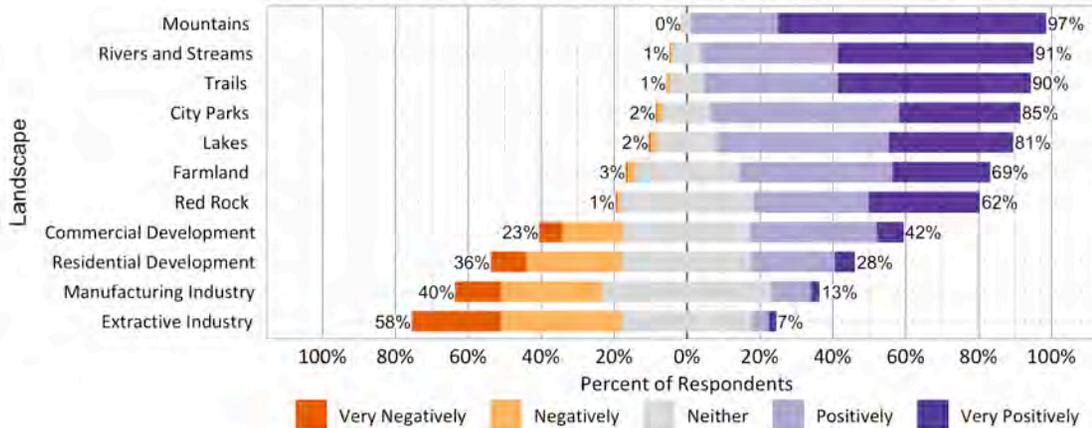
### The Role of Landscape Features in GNAR Community Residents' Wellbeing

How does the presence of the following landscape features influence your wellbeing?



### The Role of Landscape Features in Non-GNAR Community Residents' Wellbeing

How does the presence of the following landscape features influence your wellbeing?



### GNAR vs non-GNAR

Mountains	NS
Rivers/Streams	+ *
Trails	- **
Lakes	NS
City Parks	- ***
Red Rock	+ ***
Farmland	+ **
Commercial Devt	NS
Residential Devt	+ **
Manufacturing Ind	+ ***
Extractive Ind	+ ***

NS No Significant Difference

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# Conclusion

- Limited dataset (8 GNAR cities)
  - Welcome more cities into the study
- Pre-COVID-19 data
  - New factors influencing wellbeing
  - Important to look at change over time
- Heterogeneity
  - Considerable variation among GNAR communities
- Watch Assumptions
  - Not much difference between GNAR and non-GNAR communities
- Caution against assuming GNAR residents fit a particular attitudinal or wellbeing profile



[https://extension.usu.edu/  
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wellbeing-project/index](https://extension.usu.edu/business-and-community/utah-wellbeing-project/index)

Thank you!  
Any Questions?

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