

Love Thy Neighbor (Or know them, at least)

Building Social Capital Before Disasters

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what you need to know

what i did

why it matters

The Cascadia Subduction Zone



There is a fault 100 miles off the coast that runs from Northern California to Vancouver B.C. It's capable of producing magnitude 9.0 quakes, and there is a 10-15% chance that it will happen in the next 40 years. The last earthquake of that magnitude was in 1700, so there is no public memory of it -- therefore, Oregon is very underprepared.¹

Social Capital



Social capital consists of the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. There are three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking.

Third Places

Third places are social spaces other than work and home such as cafes, community centers, pubs, or parks. Physical third places are in decline, but virtual third places such as Nextdoor and Facebook are on the rise.²



To what extent can third places enhance the resilience of community networks before a crisis occurs?

Survey



The survey was designed to gauge the possibility of Nextdoor being a virtual third place and as an extension, a place for neighbors to build social capital. I asked questions about trust, perceptions of Nextdoor and the neighborhood, as well as demographics.



Qualitative Post Analysis

I analyzed a total of 108 posts for themes of interaction, beginning with the "categories" already available on Nextdoor: Classifieds, Crime & Safety, Documents, Free Items, General, Lost & Found, and Recommendations, and then created more specific sub-themes.

What kinds of interactions are taking place between neighbors, and are they helpful or harmful in creating social capital?

Fig. 1: What do you like most about Nextdoor?

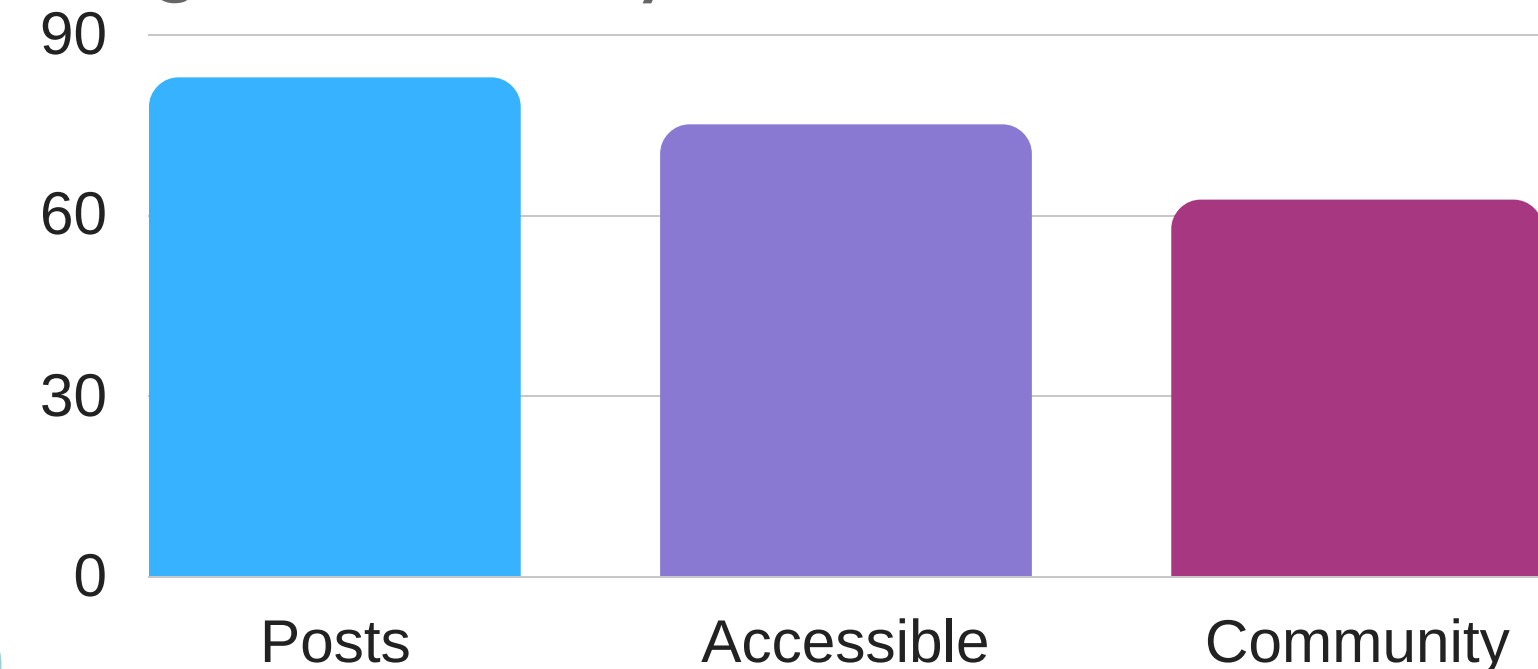
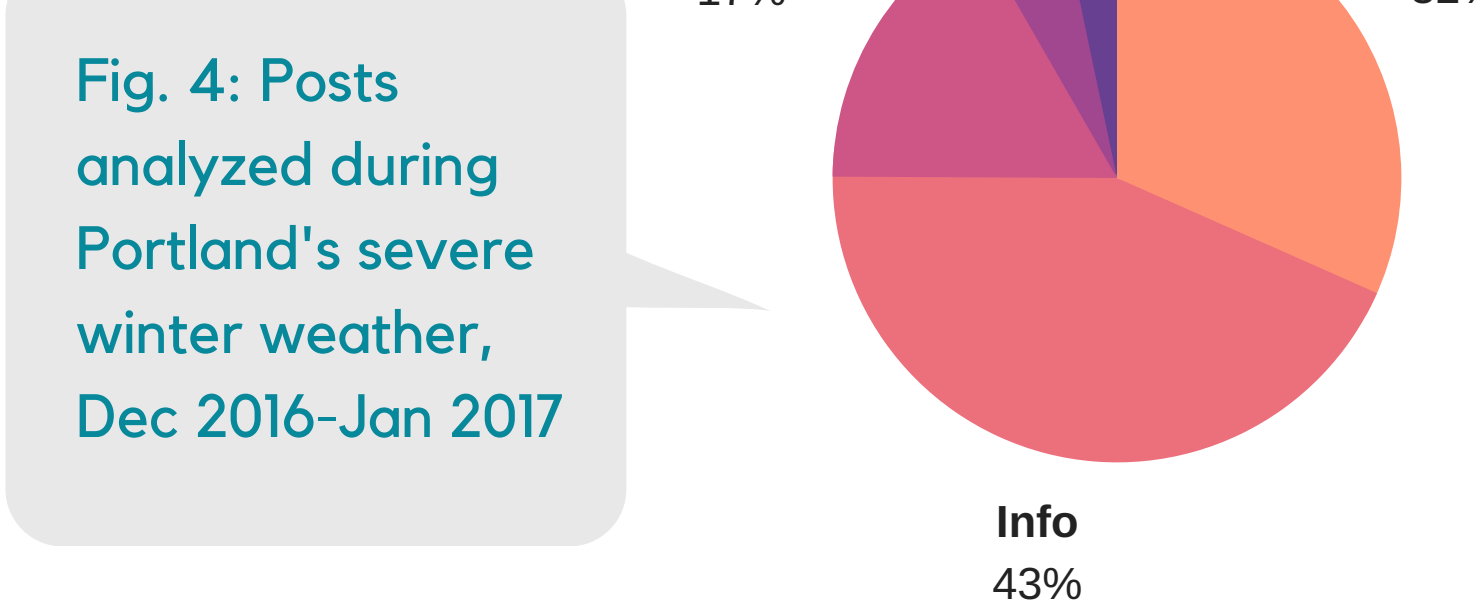
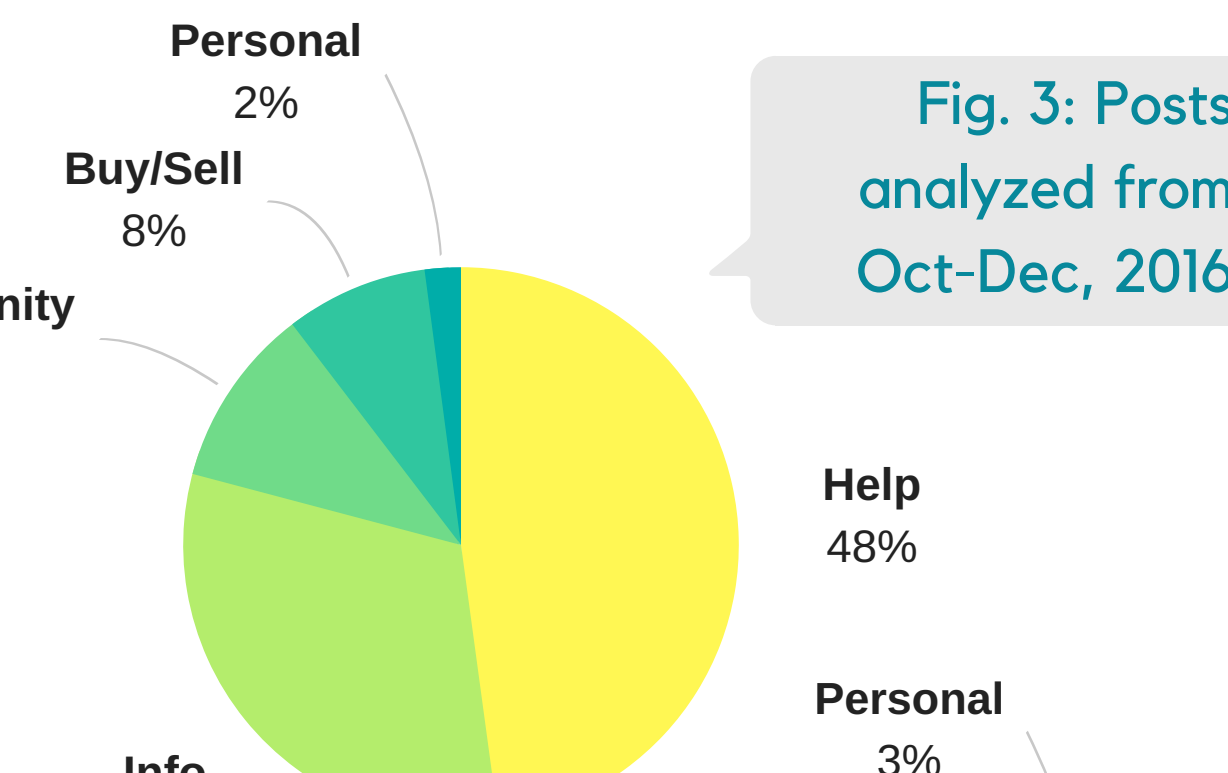
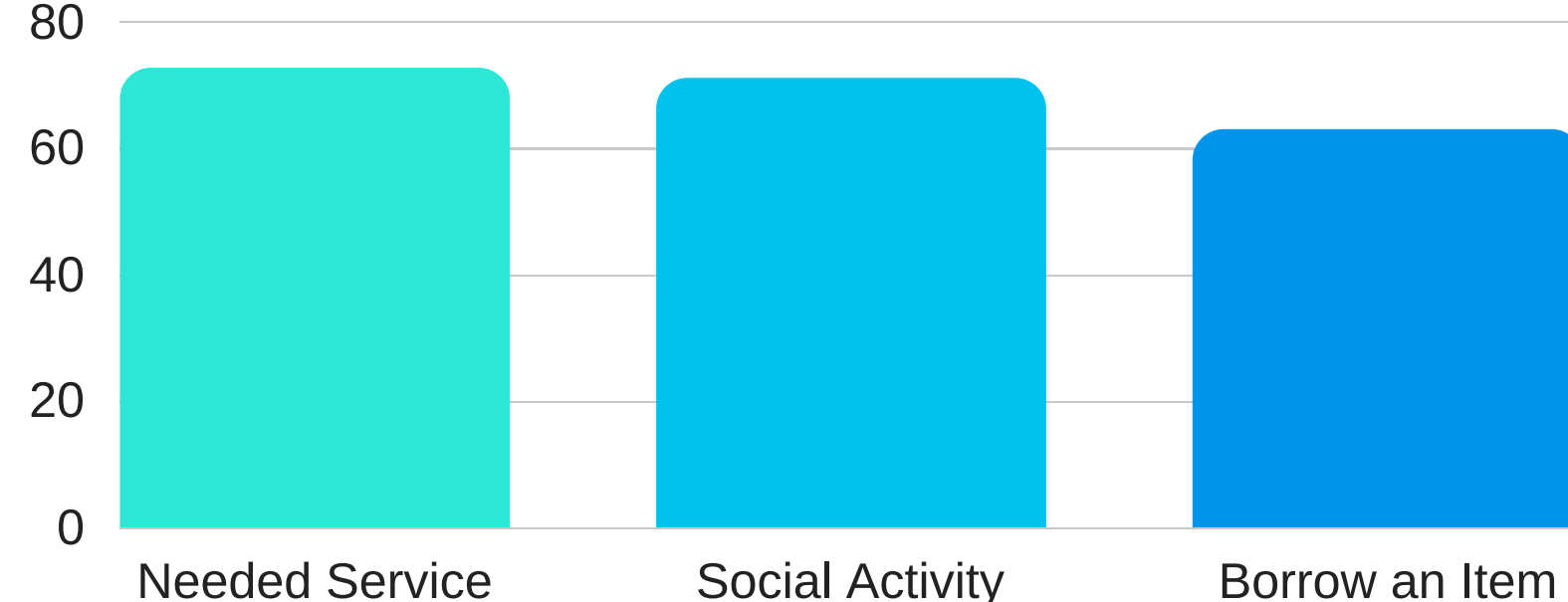


Fig. 2: Which trust-based activities would you feel comfortable doing with a neighbor you met on Nextdoor?



In Collins View, virtual third places are predominantly used for posts about giving and receiving help and providing information, which facilitates reciprocity and generalized trust, qualities needed for building social capital.

- Fig. 1: Conversation, accessibility, and community = important aspects of third place
- Fig. 2: Willingness to engage in trust-based activities = generalized community trust



- Over 50% of survey participants had met a neighbor in person because of Nextdoor, implying that virtual third places can connect people in person, not just online.
- The Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission recommends community level planning for disaster preparedness, which Nextdoor can help facilitate.
- People are more likely to listen to their friends and families regarding disaster information.³

What now?

Get online and meet your neighbors! But keep these guidelines in mind:

- Reciprocate
- Be mindful
- Encourage casual conversation
- Know the territory
- Assume Goodwill
- Jump in where you can add value
- Humanize

¹ The Oregon Resilience Plan, Reducing Risk and Improving Recovery, 2013. Report to the 77th Legislative Assembly, Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission (OSSPAC).
² Oldenburg, R. 1989. The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through The Day. New York: Marlowe & Company.
³ Haynes, Katharine, Jenni Barclay, and Nick Pidgeon. 2008. "The Issue of Trust and Its Influence on Risk Communication during a Volcanic Crisis." Bulletin of Volcanology 70 (5): 605-21.