

# Coloradans' Views on Major Issues Facing the State

*Key Findings from Pulse:  
The Colorado Health Foundation Poll 2021*



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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of The Colorado Health Foundation, the bipartisan research team of FM3 Research (D) and New Bridge Strategy (R) conducted the **2021 Pulse: The Colorado Health Foundation Poll**, exploring Coloradans' attitudes toward a wide range of issues facing the state. This year's survey built on the findings of the inaugural poll in 2020, and also included more detailed exploration of public sentiment around COVID-19 vaccination, mental health, challenges facing parents over the last year, and a range of policies that state government might pursue to address major issues facing Colorado.

While last year's survey showed the COVID-19 pandemic as clearly the top issue on voters' minds, it was no longer the dominant issue this year – with **roughly equal proportions volunteering COVID-19 (14%), problems with government and politics (14%), and the impacts of population growth (13%) as the state's top challenge**. When Coloradans were prompted to rate their concern with specific issues facing the state, a number of other issues showed heightened importance. In particular, **more than four in five (82%) now view the cost of housing as a "very serious" problem in Colorado** – up 15 points from last year. There is a similarly high degree of concern around the cost of living (73%) and the cost of health care (65%) – indicating that issues related to affordability are now significant worries for most Coloradans. At the same time, concerns about jobs and the economic impact of the coronavirus have receded since last year.

The results also show **rising concern about mental health, with 63% rating it a "very serious" problem in the state** – up eight points from last year. More specifically, **most Coloradans (55%) report having experienced anxiety in the past year**, and more than two in five have been subject to excessive worrying and difficulty focusing. While most of those who have experienced challenges to their mental health and well-being indicate that they have spoken with family or friends about the issue, far fewer (29%) spoke with a mental health professional.

**Seven in ten Coloradans (71%) now say that they have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine**. The unvaccinated tend to disproportionately include younger, Black, and uninsured Coloradans. Partisan divisions are also quite stark: while 91% of Colorado Democrats say they have gotten at least one dose of a vaccine, among Republicans the figure is only 57%. The data also show that vaccine hesitancy is also transforming into vaccine resistance; **among unvaccinated Coloradans, a majority (54%) now say they will "definitely not" get vaccinated**.

Overall, Coloradans offer mixed evaluations of their financial security. As was the case last year, about one quarter say that their financial position has gotten better over the past year (24%), while essentially the same number (25%) say that it has gotten worse – with the remainder indicating that it has not changed. However, these overall numbers mask stark differences based on income level which were also evident in last year's data: **the most affluent Coloradans are more likely to say that their financial situation has improved in the last year, while those in the lowest-income households are much more likely to say that they are worse off**.

Looking forward, many Coloradans express significant economic anxiety. **Nearly half (44%) indicate at least one major source of financial anxiety – whether it is worry that they will lose their home, not be able to afford food, lack health insurance coverage, or lose a job** in the next 12 months. These worries are disproportionately concentrated among certain segments of the Colorado population – most notably those who are unemployed, have household incomes under \$50,000 per year, rent their home, live with a disability, or are uninsured. Women of color also disproportionately experience these financial worries as they look ahead to the coming year.

As was the case in 2020, state residents also **perceive significant unfairness in the way that Coloradans of color are treated when compared to White Coloradans**. Majorities or pluralities indicate that Black Coloradans, Hispanic/Latinx Coloradans, and Indigenous/Native American Coloradans are more likely to experience unfair police treatment, poor quality or inadequate health care, and unfair treatment in seeking to rent or buy a home than are White Coloradans. However, only three in ten or fewer Coloradans believe that Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) Coloradans are likely to face the same inequities. While AAPI Coloradans are more likely than others to perceive the potential for discrimination against them (and are more likely to see it this year than they were last year), they also see such unfair treatment as more likely to impact other communities of color in the state.

Colorado parents also report that their children have faced some significant challenges over the course of the past year. In particular, **half (50%) say that their children have faced increased mental health strain the past year**. Roughly two in five say that their children have struggled with school or learning (44%) or have had difficulty building or maintaining friendships (39%). Parents in the middle of the income range are more likely to say that their kids have experienced mental health strain; parents at the lower end of the income range are much more likely to say that their kids have had trouble building or maintaining friendships, have had to forego medical or dental care, or have skipped meals due to an inability to afford food.

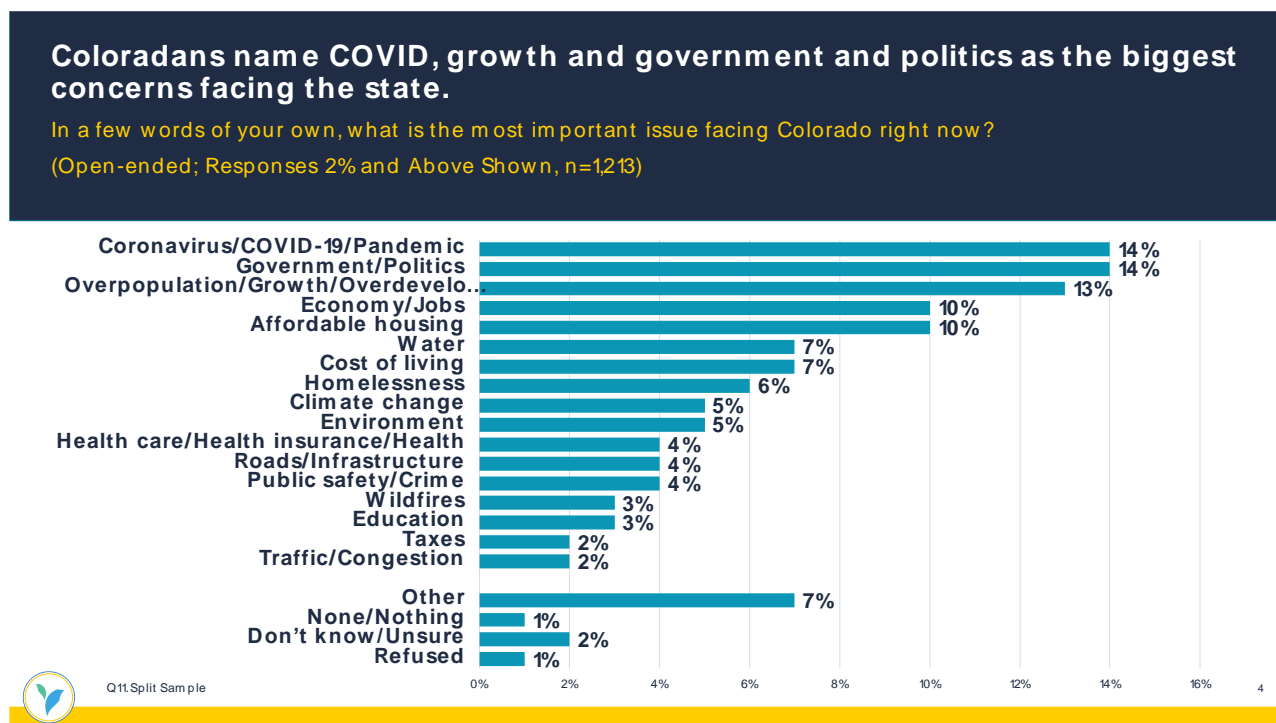
Parents also report a range of challenges in securing child care for their children over the last twelve months. **About two in five parents (39%) say they have struggled with balancing child care and other responsibilities**, and roughly one-quarter have had to forego a professional opportunity to provide child care (25%), or have been unable to find child care that fit their schedule (27%) or was affordable (24%). These challenges have been particularly acute for women and parents of children under five years old.

In response to the challenges Coloradans report facing over the last 12 months, they **embrace a wide range of proposed State actions and investments to provide additional assistance to the state's residents**. In particular, at least four in five support state government funding more mental health and substance use programs across the state (84%) and changing regulations to make health care more affordable (81%). At least three-quarters back increasing state investment to help Coloradans struggling with hunger (79%) and updating laws to prioritize more affordable housing construction (76%). Solid majorities also support state investments to reduce the cost of child care (71%) and increasing state spending to increase jobs and boost the economy (67%). While all of these policies win overwhelming support from Colorado Democrats and independents, majorities of GOP voters also back them – with the exception of increasing spending on economic stimulus programs.

## 2 COLORADANS' TOP CONCERNS

When asked to name the issues facing the state that most concern them, Coloradans most frequently point to the COVID-19 pandemic and related issues, with 14% identifying it as a top concern. However, this percentage has declined since 2020, when more than one-quarter of those polled flagged it as the most pressing issue facing the state (26%). Consistent with last year, concern about the pandemic has not displaced the many other issues that Coloradans view as pressing concerns. These include the functioning of state and local government and the role of politics in the state (volunteered by 14% of those polled); population growth and related development (13%), the economy (10%) and affordable housing (10%).

**Figure 1: Coloradans' Views of the Most Serious Issue Facing the State**



Respondents were also offered a list of major concerns facing the state and asked to rate each as either an “extremely,” “very,” “somewhat,” or “not too serious” problem. In this year’s survey, cost of living concerns stand out as particularly acute. The cost of housing is the top concern – by far – with 82% of those polled rating it at least a “very serious” problem, a perception that cuts across all regions of the state and nearly every major subgroup of the population. Other top concerns related to personal finances include the cost of living (73%) and the cost of health care (65%).

**Figure 2: Rating of the Seriousness of Problems Facing Colorado**

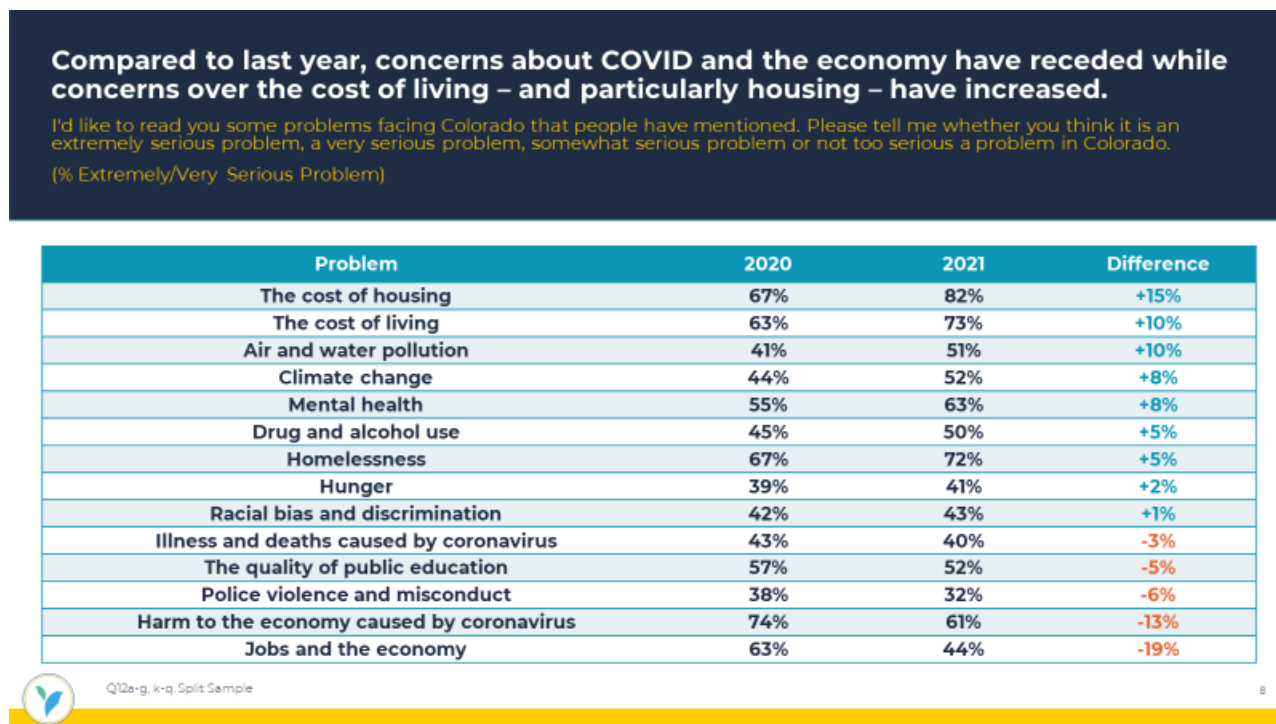
Problem	Total Ext/Very	Ext. Serious	Very Serious	SW Serious	Not Serious/DK
The cost of housing	<b>82%</b>	51%	31%	13%	5%
The cost of living	<b>73%</b>	42%	30%	19%	8%
Homelessness	<b>72%</b>	35%	36%	20%	8%
The cost of health care	<b>65%</b>	35%	30%	23%	12%
Mental health	<b>63%</b>	26%	37%	24%	13%
Divisions between people of different political parties	<b>61%</b>	32%	29%	23%	15%
Harm to the economy caused by coronavirus	<b>61%</b>	30%	32%	25%	13%
Climate change	<b>52%</b>	32%	21%	15%	32%
The quality of public education	<b>52%</b>	24%	28%	26%	22%
Air and water pollution	<b>51%</b>	25%	25%	29%	20%
Drug and alcohol use	<b>50%</b>	20%	30%	32%	18%
Gun violence	<b>46%</b>	23%	23%	23%	31%
The cost of child care	<b>44%</b>	21%	23%	20%	35%
Jobs and the economy	<b>44%</b>	17%	28%	30%	26%
Racial bias and discrimination	<b>43%</b>	18%	25%	23%	34%
Crime, in general	<b>41%</b>	16%	24%	41%	19%
Hunger	<b>41%</b>	13%	27%	32%	28%
Illness and deaths caused by coronavirus	<b>40%</b>	18%	22%	28%	33%
Illegal immigration	<b>38%</b>	24%	14%	20%	42%
Police violence and misconduct	<b>32%</b>	15%	17%	24%	43%

Other than cost-of-living concerns, a number of other issues also rate highly on the list, including homelessness, mental health, political divisions within the state’s population, and economic harms from coronavirus – all of which are rated “very serious” problems by at least three in five Coloradans polled. Notably, concern about the economic impacts of the coronavirus (viewed as an “extremely” or “very serious” concern by 61% of those polled) is much broader than concern about the illness and death it may cause (which only 40% rate as equivalently serious).

There have been some notable changes in the issues that most concern Coloradans since last year’s survey, as illustrated below in Figure 3. Concern about the cost of housing has increased dramatically – up a full 15 points relative to last year – and concern about the cost of living is also up 10 points. Coloradans have also grown notably more concerned about air and water pollution, up 10 points over the past year, and also about climate change (up eight points). Concerns about mental health and drug and alcohol use have also grown since last year (by eight and five points, respectively), likely reflecting the impact of the pandemic – which, as detailed later in this report, has had wide-ranging impacts on Coloradans’ mental health and well-being. Broader economic concerns

have declined significantly relative to last year, when economic uncertainty was much greater in the early days of the pandemic.

**Figure 3: Changes in Concern About Major Issues Facing Colorado, 2020-2021**



Some striking differences are evident in the way subgroups of Coloradans view these issues:

- Women express greater concern than men on nearly every issue. Some of the starkest gaps are on mental health, harm to the economy caused by COVID-19, drug and alcohol use, gun violence, hunger, and illness and deaths caused by COVID-19.
- Respondents under age 50 are more concerned when it comes to the cost of living, mental health, harm to the economy caused by COVID-19, climate change, the cost of childcare, hunger, and police violence and misconduct. Those 50 and over express greater concern on political divisions, gun violence, the economy, crime, and illegal immigration.
- Black respondents are far more likely to see illness and death from COVID-19 as a top-tier concern – 61% say it is “extremely” or “very serious” – compared to respondents of other ethnicities.
- Cost of living is also a much greater concern among respondents of color, particularly African Americans (81%) and Hispanic/Latinx Coloradans (83%) than among white residents (67%).
- Concern over the cost of housing is similar among homeowners and renters, although renters view other aspects of affordability with greater concern than homeowners do.
- Unsurprisingly, reactions to issues that have been divisive politically are perceived very differently by voters of different parties (as illustrated below in Figure 4); illness from COVID-19, pollution and climate change, the cost of childcare, racial discrimination and police misconduct, gun violence, immigration, and

hunger are all viewed drastically differently. However, the divisions among political parties are seen as similarly concerning across partisan lines. Additionally, the seriousness with which the cost of housing, the cost of living, homelessness, harm to the economy caused by COVID-19, public education, drug and alcohol use, the economy, and crime are viewed vary little across partisan lines.

**Figure 4: Divisions in Perceptions of the Seriousness of Problems Facing Colorado, by Party**  
*(Ranked by % Extremely/Very Serious Among Registered Voters)*

Problem	All Respondents	Party		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans
The cost of housing	<b>82%</b>	87%	81%	79%
The cost of living	<b>73%</b>	79%	72%	64%
Homelessness	<b>72%</b>	79%	68%	66%
The cost of health care	<b>65%</b>	76%	64%	53%
Mental health	<b>63%</b>	70%	63%	57%
Divisions between people of different political parties	<b>61%</b>	60%	66%	61%
Harm to the economy caused by coronavirus	<b>61%</b>	64%	59%	63%
Climate change	<b>52%</b>	82%	52%	18%
The quality of public education	<b>52%</b>	50%	53%	45%
Air and water pollution	<b>51%</b>	67%	54%	27%
Drug and alcohol use	<b>50%</b>	56%	45%	48%
Gun violence	<b>46%</b>	69%	46%	23%
The cost of child care	<b>44%</b>	55%	46%	29%
Jobs and the economy	<b>44%</b>	45%	42%	43%
Racial bias and discrimination	<b>43%</b>	60%	44%	27%
Crime, in general	<b>41%</b>	38%	40%	40%
Hunger	<b>41%</b>	51%	41%	27%
Illness and deaths caused by coronavirus	<b>40%</b>	64%	34%	20%
Illegal immigration	<b>38%</b>	17%	38%	62%
Police violence and misconduct	<b>32%</b>	55%	26%	14%

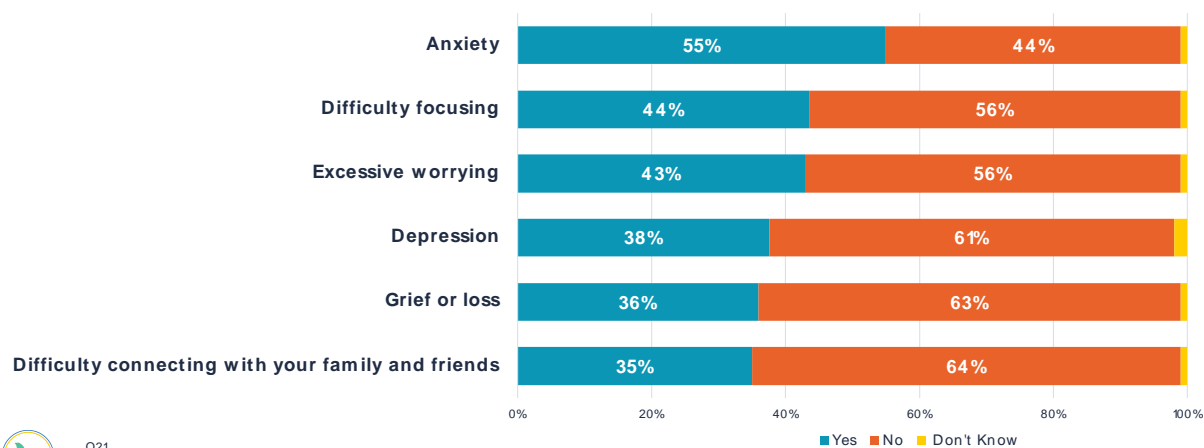
### 3 COLORADANS' PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As noted in the previous section, three in five Coloradans view mental health as an “extremely” or “very serious” problem (63%), compared to 55% in 2020. A majority of Coloradans say they have experienced anxiety in the past year (55%) and more than two in five report having felt difficulty focusing (44%) and excessive worrying (43%). More than one-third say they’ve felt depressed, grief or loss, and difficulty connecting with friends and family.

**Figure 5: Mental Health Impacts Experienced by Coloradans in the Last 12 Months**

**Most adult Coloradans report having experienced anxiety over the last 12 months; more than one-third have faced a range of other mental health challenges.**

The next few questions are about some of the mental health impacts people may have experienced in the last 12 months. Please tell me if you have experienced any of the following in the past year:



There are some notable demographic differences within the population in the degree to which Coloradans report having faced challenges with mental health and well-being:

- Women, particularly those under age 50, reported experiencing all mental health impacts at higher rates than men;
- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders were more likely than other ethnic groups to experience anxiety,
- Those facing financial difficulties were more likely to suffer mental health challenges, as were unemployed respondents compared to employed ones;
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents reported these impacts at higher rates;
- Renters faced greater levels of anxiety, difficulty focusing and excessive worrying than homeowners; and
- Coloradans living with a disability also suffered mental health challenges more frequently.

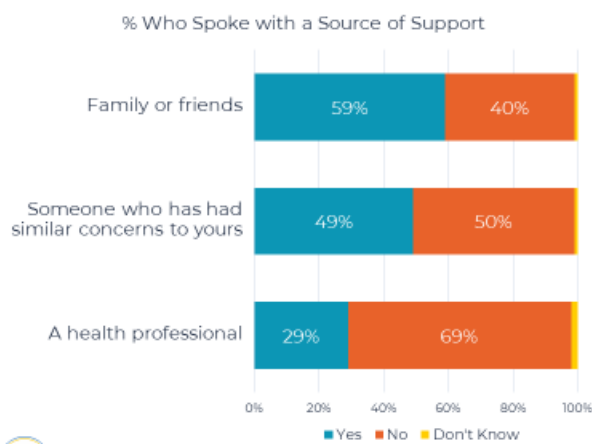
Many Coloradans also indicate that they have taken steps to seek help with their mental health challenges, though in most cases they have turned to informal networks of help rather than to health professionals. Most report that they spoke to family or friends about their mental health challenges (59%) and approximately half spoke to someone with similar concerns to them (49%). Only 29% spoke to a health professional. Consultation with a



professional was more widespread among lesbian, gay and bisexual Coloradans, those with a disability, and younger Coloradans – especially Democrats and women.

**Figure 6: Sources of Help and Support for Coloradans Facing Mental Health Challenges**

**While most Coloradans discussed mental health challenges with family and friends, only about three in ten spoke with a health professional.**  
 Did you talk to any of the following about your mental health and well-being in the last 12 months?



(Subgroups Most Likely to Have Spoken with a Mental Health Professional)

Demographic Group	% of Sample
LGB	53%
Live with a Disability	50%
Identify as "Very Liberal"	48%
Women Ages 18-49	47%
Democratic Women	42%
Democrats Ages 18-49	41%
Women with College Ed. or Higher	41%



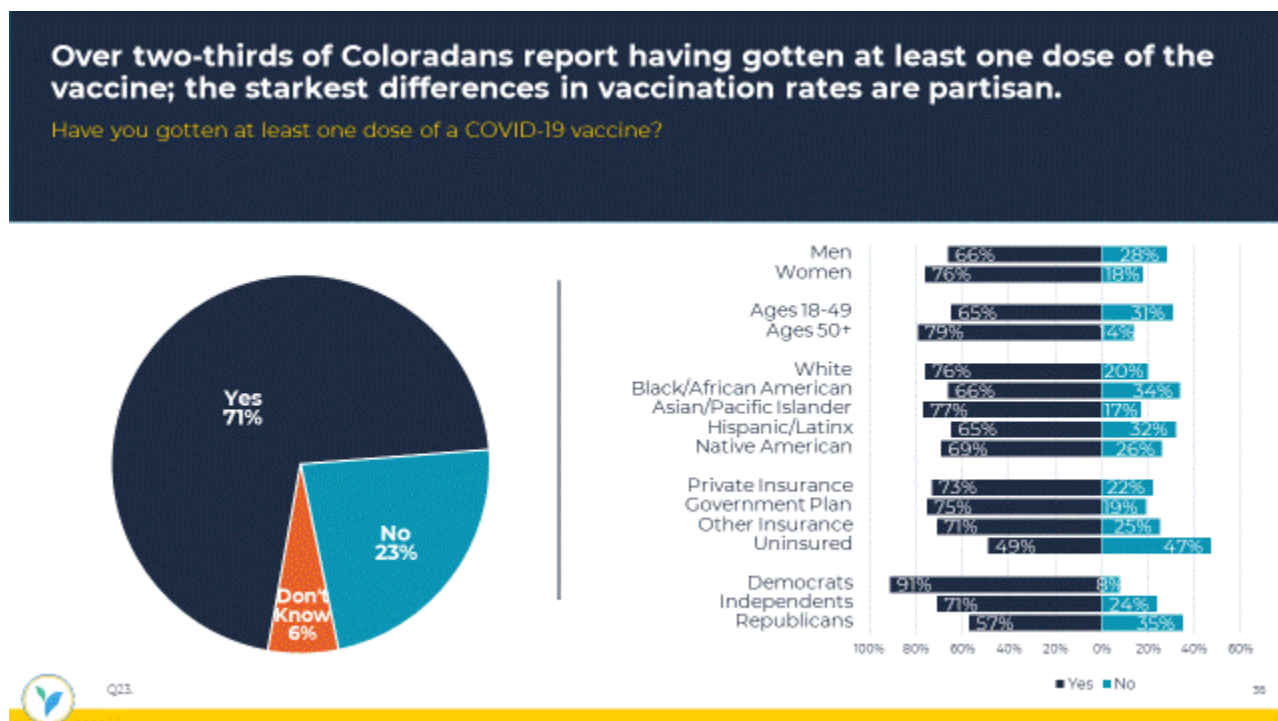
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## 4 COLORADANS AND THE COVID-19 VACCINE

More than two-thirds of respondents reported having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine (71%). Of course, it must be kept in mind that a number of factors may lead to over-reporting of vaccination in survey research. First, to the extent that vaccination is seen as socially desirable, some unvaccinated Coloradans may over-report the degree to which they have received the vaccine – even if they have not managed to get vaccinated yet, or retain some ambivalence about the idea. Second, some of the same lack of trust in public institutions that steers people away from taking a vaccine may also make them less likely to participate in public opinion surveys. Nonetheless, the reported vaccination rates in the survey can yield some insights about the relative rates of vaccination among different subgroups of Colorado’s adult population.

**Figure 7: Self-Reported Vaccination Rates Among Adult Coloradans**



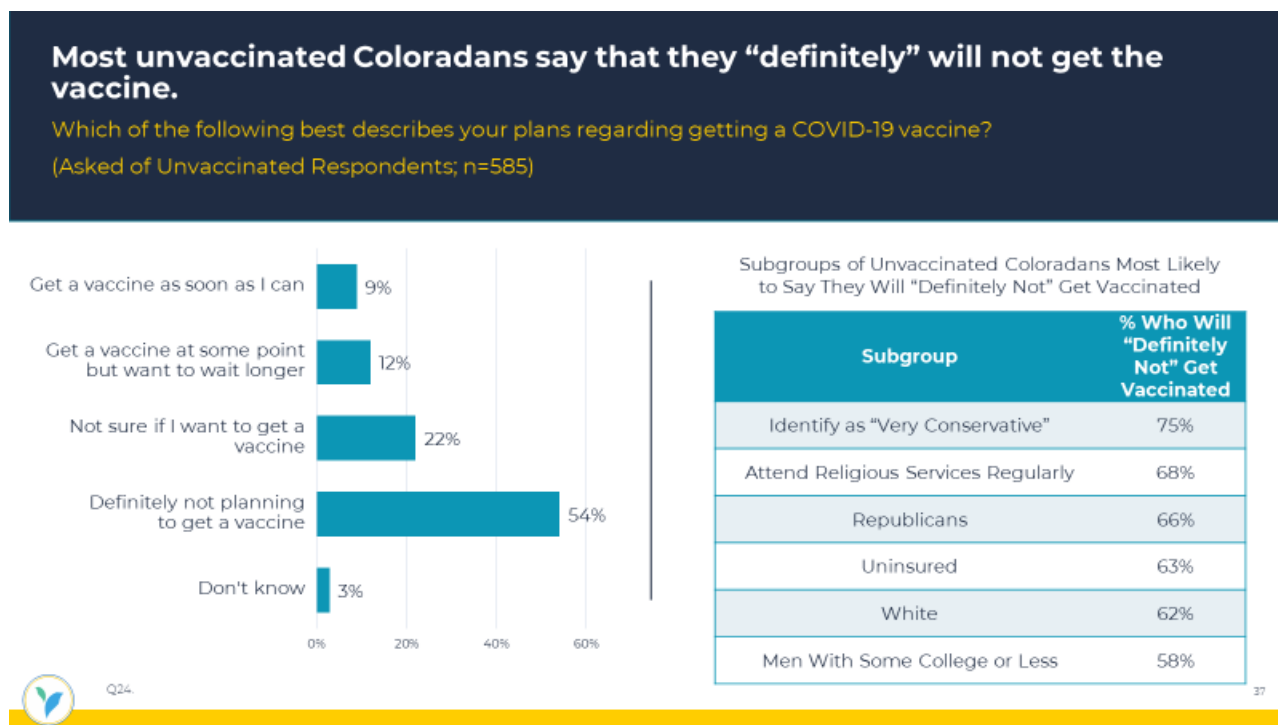
There are some notable demographic differences in the degree to which Coloradans report having been vaccinated:

- Women report being vaccinated at a slightly higher rate than their male counterparts.
- White and Asian American and Pacific Islander Coloradans report the highest vaccination rates with over seven-in-ten being vaccinated among both race/ethnicities, while African Americans have the lowest rate, with just two-thirds.
- Nearly all Democrats report being vaccinated, while only less than three-in-five Republicans report the same. Independents reported higher vaccination rates than Republicans, but one-quarter remain unvaccinated.

- There is a gap in vaccination rates between different age groups: while 79% of those ages 50 and over reported being vaccinated, only 65% of those ages 18-49 reported the same—a 14-percentage point difference.
- Coloradans with health coverage, either from their employer or the government, are much more likely to be vaccinated, while only half of Coloradans without health insurance report having received the vaccine.
- There is a connection between education and vaccination rates, with Coloradans who have a four-year college degree reporting higher vaccination rates than those without one.

Among Coloradans who report they are still unvaccinated, only about a quarter indicate that they plan on getting the vaccine in the future, while over half (54%) indicate that their intent is definitely to not get the vaccine (see Figure 8). Coloradans who are the most likely to express a definite commitment to remaining unvaccinated are those who identify as very conservative (75%); are over the age of 65 (73%); attend religious services regularly (68%); are registered Republicans (66%); or are uninsured (63%).

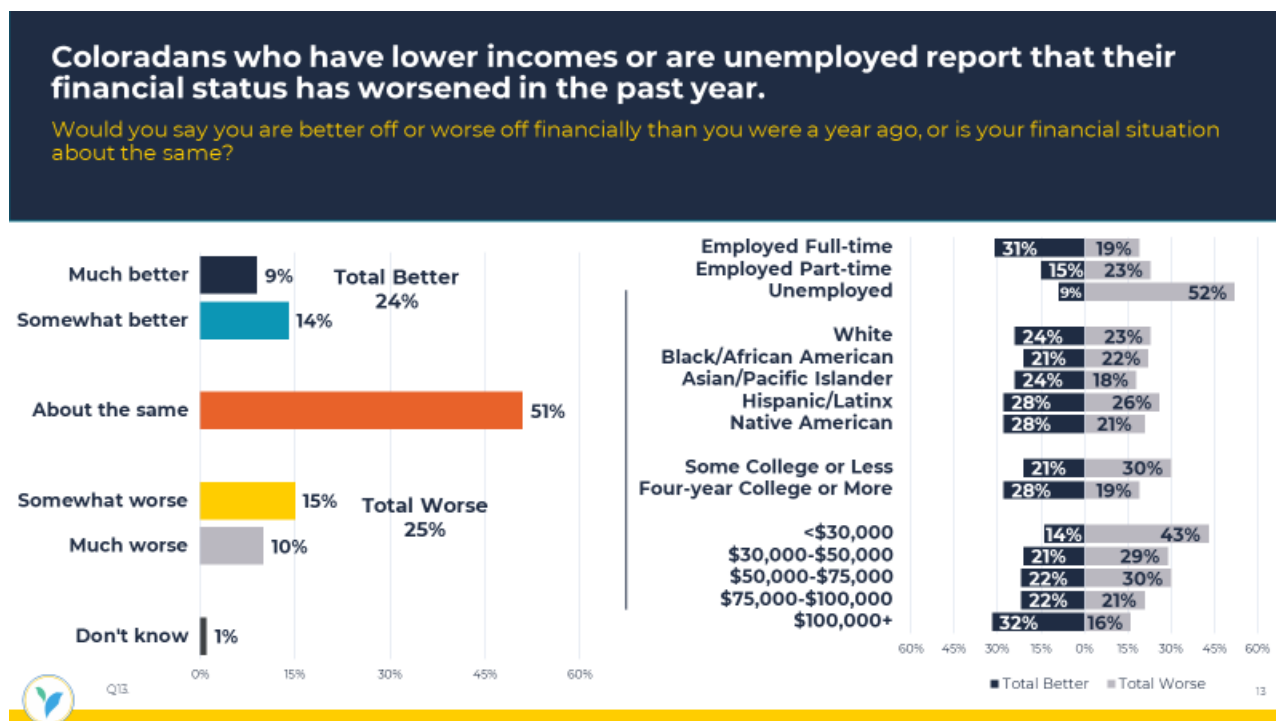
**Figure 8: Vaccination Plans Among Unvaccinated Coloradans**



## 5 COLORADANS' VIEWS OF THEIR FINANCIAL SECURITY

Overall, Coloradans are divided on how their financial security has shifted over the course of the past year. Half (51%) say their financial position is unchanged, while one-quarter (24%) say it has improved and another quarter say it has worsened (25%). These trends are nearly identical to those observed in the 2020 survey, where one-quarter reported an improved financial condition, one-quarter a more negative one, and the rest said their financial position had stayed the same. The socioeconomic patterns in responses were also very similar to last year – with those on the lowest end of the income spectrum most likely to say that their financial situation had worsened, and the most affluent Coloradans most likely to say that it had improved. Responses among middle-income Coloradans were more mixed.

Figure 9: Change in Financial Situation Over the Past Year



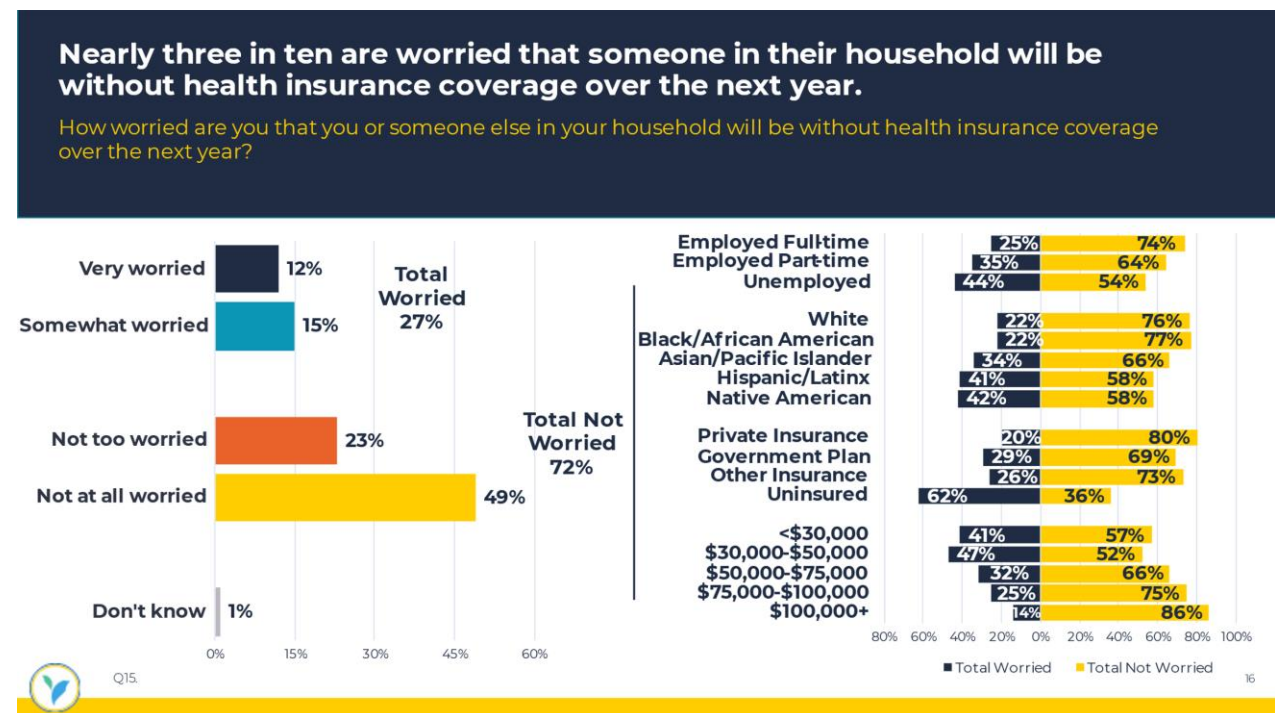
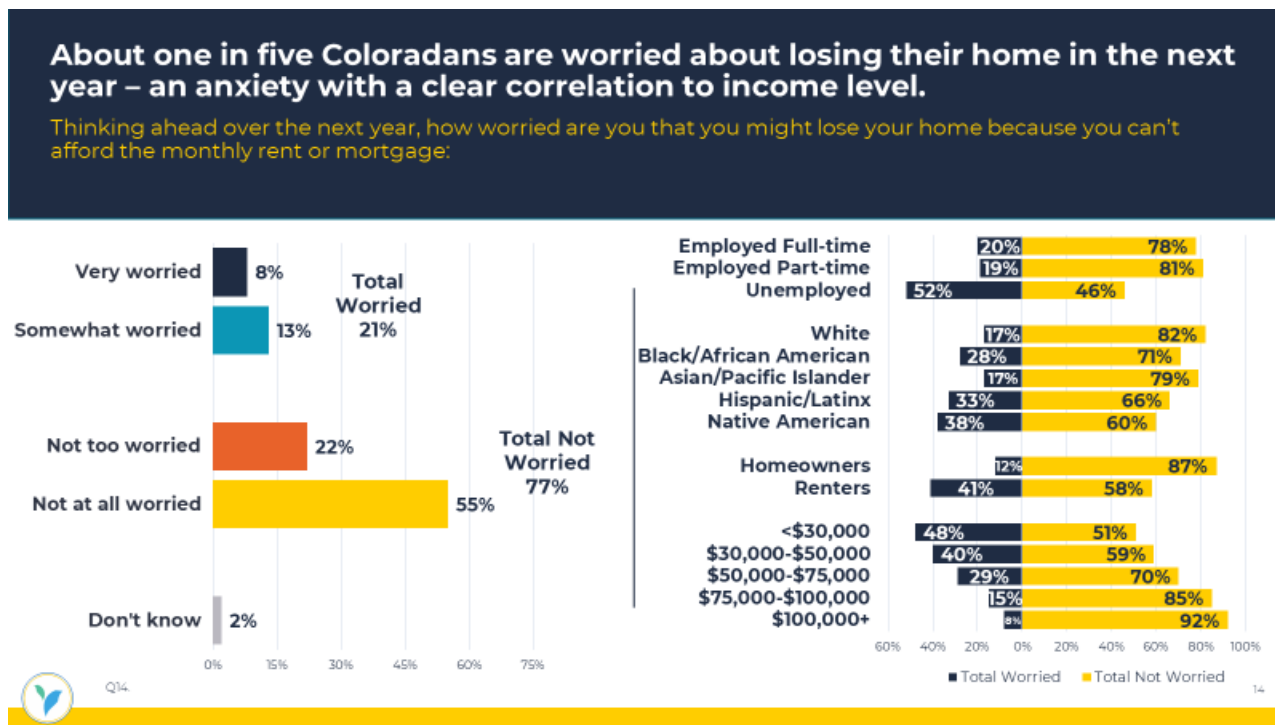
In addition, those whose employment has been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (particularly those who have been laid off) are much more likely to report a worsening of their financial status – while those who remain employed full-time are in a much more comfortable position.

Figure 10: Change in Financial Situation Over the Past Year, by Employment Status

Change in Financial Position	All Respondents	Employed Full-Time	Employed Part-Time	Retired	Unemployed	Laid Off
Better	24%	31%	15%	18%	9%	18%
About the Same/DK	51%	50%	61%	57%	37%	30%
Worse	25%	19%	23%	24%	52%	52%

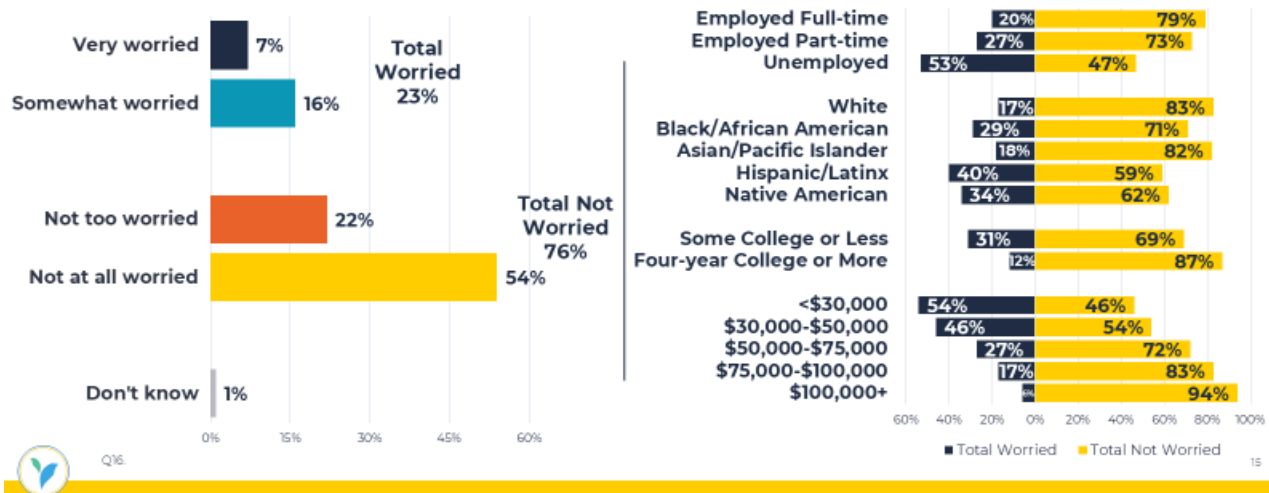
Looking forward over the next year, significant minorities of Coloradans anticipate financial struggles. Between 16% and nearly three in ten express concern about losing their home because they can't afford the monthly rent or mortgage (21%); being without health insurance (27%); not always being able to afford enough food to feed themselves and their family (23%); or not being employed during the coming year (16%), as shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Sources of Financial Anxiety for Coloradans in the Coming Year**



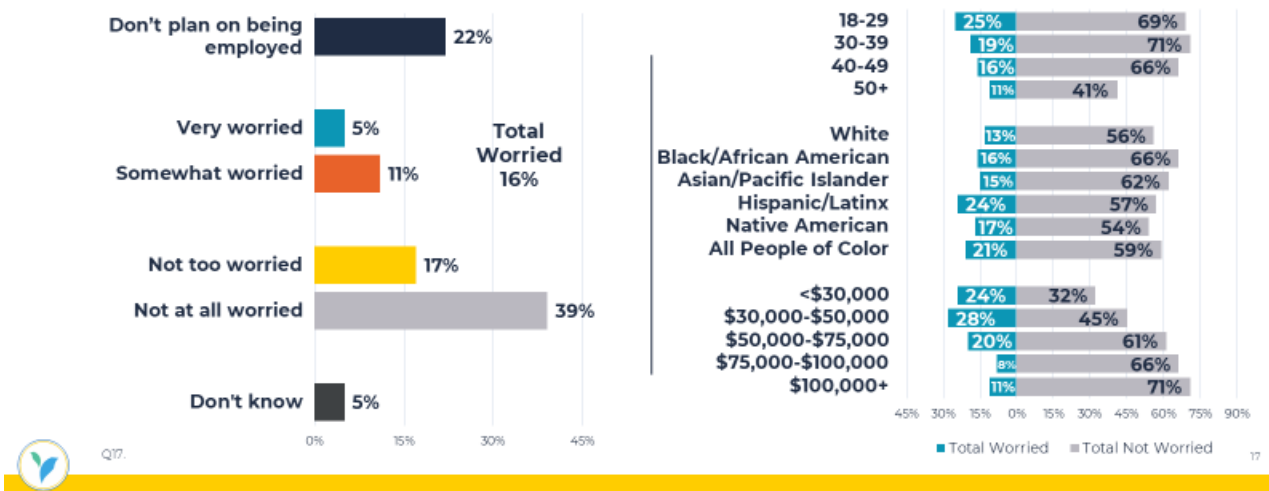
## Nearly one-quarter are worried about not always being able to afford enough food for their family.

Thinking ahead over the next year, how worried are you that you might not always be able to afford enough food to feed yourself and your family:



## About one-in-five are worried they might not be fully employed over the next year.

Do you plan to be employed over the next year? (IF YES:) How worried are you that you might not be fully employed over the next year:



Looking at the responses to these questions collectively, the prevalence of economic anxiety among Coloradans is clearly evident. Nearly half of all Coloradans (44%) anticipate that they will face at least one of these struggles in the coming year. Those who anticipate facing at least one challenge are disproportionately unemployed, have limited incomes, are Coloradans of color (especially women), are renters, or live with a disability.

**Figure 12: Subgroups Most Likely to Anticipate at Least One of Four Financial Challenges**

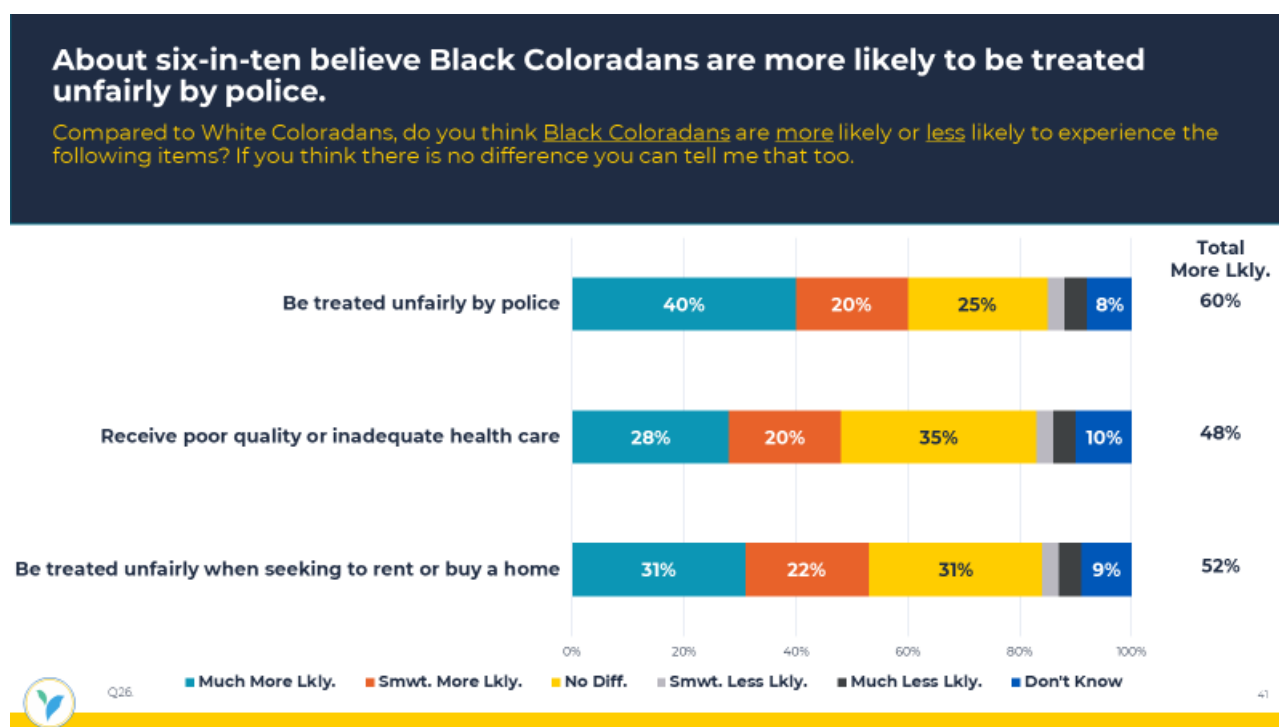
Subgroup	% Expecting at Least One Financial Challenge
<b>ALL COLORADANS</b>	<b>44%</b>
Unemployed	82%
No health insurance	74%
Household income <\$30,000	72%
Household income \$30,000-\$50,000	67%
Latino women	67%
Latinos ages 50+	66%
Renters	63%
Native Americans	62%
Latinos	61%
Women of Color	59%

## 6 PERCEPTIONS OF UNFAIR TREATMENT OF COLORADANS OF COLOR

Consistent with the findings of the 2020 Pulse survey, Coloradans continue to perceive a wide range of racial inequities in the state – and in particular believe that Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native American/Indigenous Coloradans are more likely than White Coloradans to be treated unfairly by police, receive poor quality or inadequate health care, or be treated unfairly when seeking to rent or buy a home. As noted above, the cost of housing and health care ranks among the top concerns for the residents of the state – and these data suggest that Coloradans believe unfair treatment exacerbates their impact on communities of color.

These perceived inequities are particularly acute when it comes to Colorado’s Black population, as shown below in Figure 13. Three in five Coloradans think that Black residents of the state are more likely than White ones to be treated unfairly by police, and roughly half perceive the same unfairness when it comes to health care or opportunities to purchase a home.

**Figure 13: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment for Black Coloradans**



While it is true that Black Coloradans are more likely to perceive these inequities than are white Coloradans, the same is also true for other communities of color. As illustrated in Figure 14 on the following page, Hispanic/Latinx Coloradans and Indigenous/Native American Coloradans have perceptions that parallel those of Black Coloradans, and AAPI Coloradans are even more likely to perceive that Black Coloradans do not have an equal opportunity to obtain quality health care or to purchase a home.



**Figure 14: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of Black Coloradans, by Race/Ethnicity**

**Coloradans of color are more likely than whites to perceive that Black Coloradans disproportionately face these experiences.**

Compared to White Coloradans, do you think **Black Coloradans** are **more likely** or **less likely** to experience the following items? If you think there is no difference you can tell me that too.

(% Total More Likely)

Experience	All	Race/Ethnicity					
		White	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic/ Latinx	Native American	All People of Color
Be treated unfairly by police	60%	59%	69%	72%	69%	69%	68%
Receive poor quality or inadequate health care	48%	46%	59%	67%	55%	55%	57%
Be treated unfairly when seeking to rent or buy a home	52%	50%	65%	68%	60%	62%	61%



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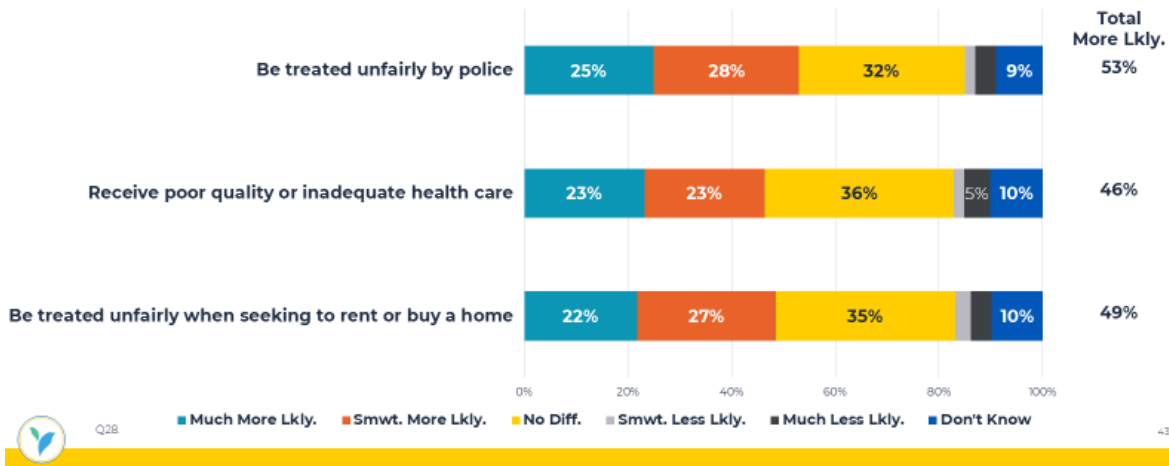
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Roughly half of Coloradans believe that Hispanic/Latinx Coloradans are more likely than Whites to receive unfair treatment from police, inadequate health care, or unfair treatment in purchasing a home (Figure 15), and similar proportions perceive that Indigenous/Native American Coloradans face the same types of unfair treatment (Figure 16).

**Figure 13: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of Hispanic/Latinx Coloradans**

**Only slightly over half believe Hispanic Coloradans are more likely to be treated unfairly by police.**

Compared to White Coloradans, do you think **Hispanic Coloradans** are **more likely** or **less likely** to experience the following items? If you think there is no difference you can tell me that too.



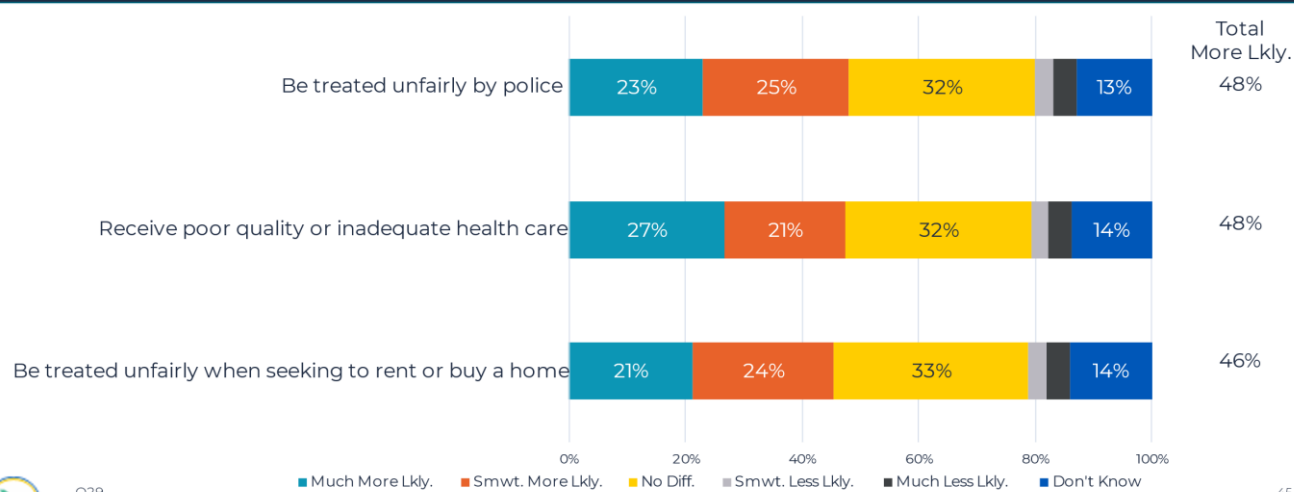
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Figure 16: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of Indigenous or Indigenous/Native American Coloradans

**Almost half believe Indigenous or Native American Coloradans are more likely to be treated unfairly, but to a lesser degree than Hispanic or Black Coloradans.**

Compared to White Coloradans, do you think Indigenous or Native American Coloradans are more likely or less likely to experience the following items? If you think there is no difference you can tell me that too.



The data for Asian American and Pacific Islander Coloradans tell a somewhat different story, as illustrated in Figure 17 on the following page. Overall, Coloradans are much less likely to perceive that Asian American and Pacific Islander Coloradans face unfair treatment, with just three in ten or less holding that perception overall. However, AAPI Coloradans are more likely to perceive that they are subject to unfair treatment in health care, housing, and policing – with nearly half agreeing that AAPI Coloradans face worse outcomes than whites in each of the three areas raised (as shown in Figure 18). At the same time, AAPI Coloradans are more likely to say that Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Indigenous and Native American Coloradans face unfair treatment in each of these areas than they are to say that AAPI Coloradans face them.

Figure 17: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of AAPI Coloradans

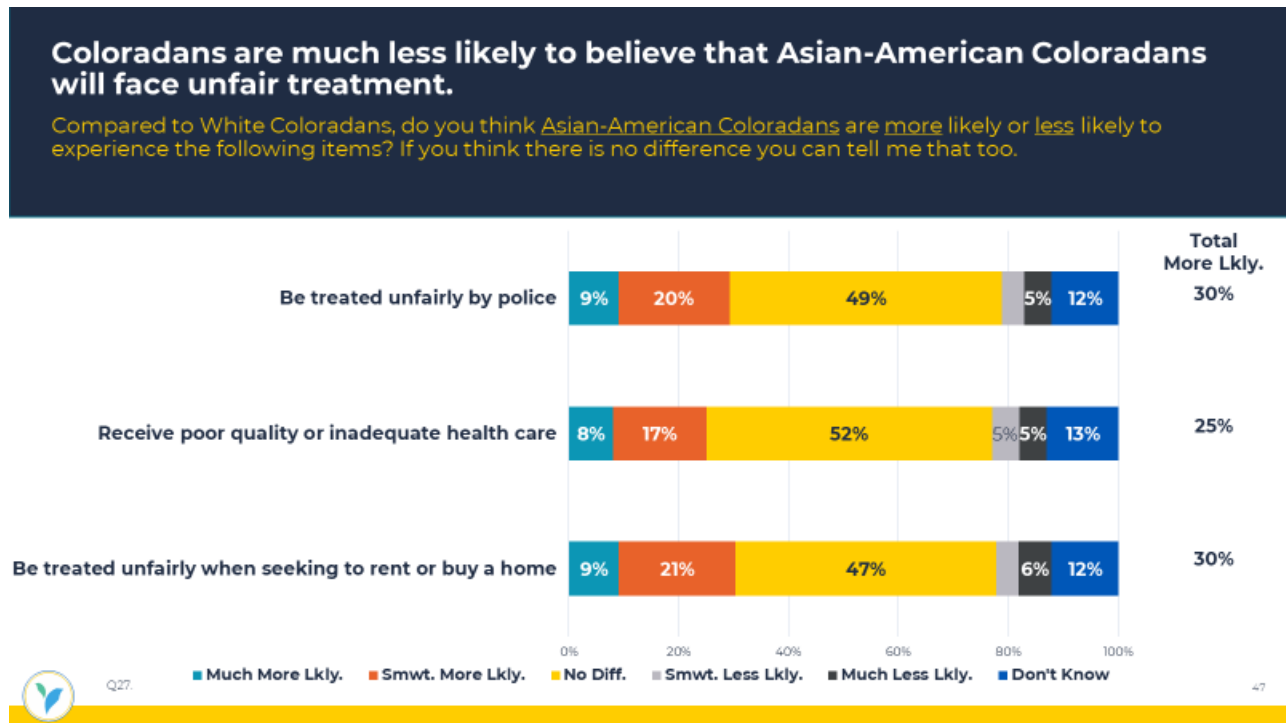
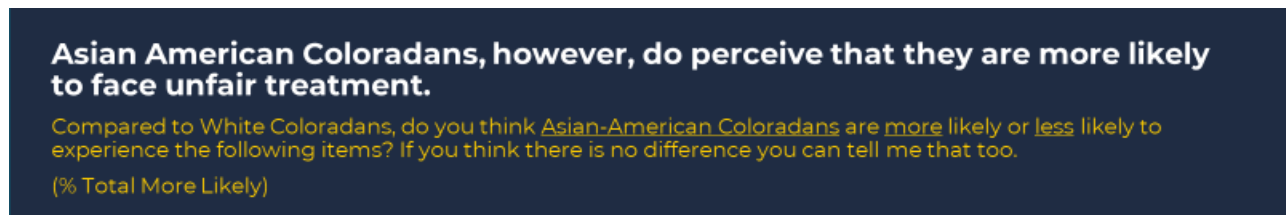


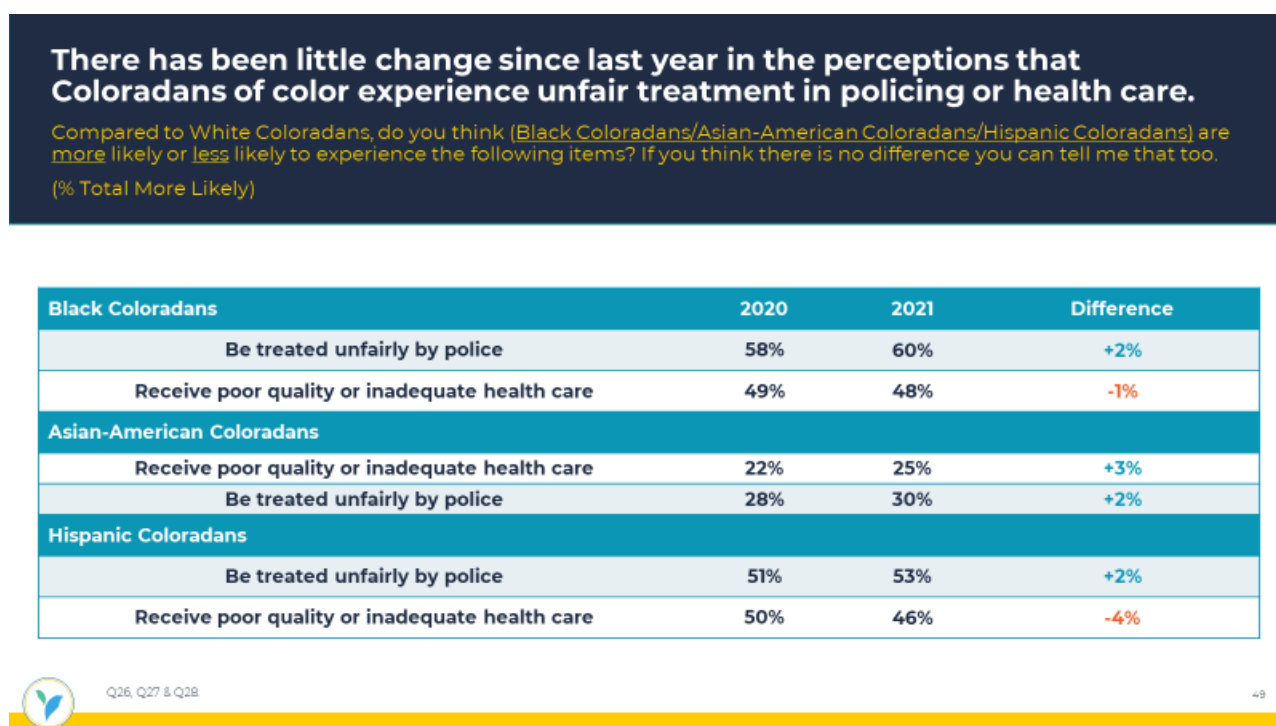
Figure 18: Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of AAPI Coloradans, by Race/Ethnicity



Experience	All	Race/Ethnicity					
		White	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic/ Latinx	Native American	All People of Color
Be treated unfairly by police	30%	27%	33%	45%	36%	44%	37%
Receive poor quality or inadequate health care	25%	23%	29%	48%	29%	39%	32%
Be treated unfairly when seeking to rent or buy a home	30%	29%	30%	49%	35%	46%	36%

Overall, these perceptions of inequities have not changed dramatically since our 2020 survey, as illustrated in Figure 19. (Last year’s survey did not include a question asking about perceptions of disparate outcomes for Indigenous/Native American Coloradans, and did not include questions about inequities in access to housing.) The lack of change in perceptions of unfair treatment of AAPI Coloradans is noteworthy, given increased attention in the past year to discrimination, harassment and hate crimes directed against members of the AAPI community. However, there have been increases in perceived discrimination among AAPI Coloradans: the proportion of AAPI Coloradans who say they are subject to unfair treatment by police has risen from 41% to 45%, and the proportion who say they are subject to receiving worse quality health care has risen from 31% to 48%. In addition, the survey did not ask about the degree to which AAPI Coloradans are subject to discrimination in their interaction with other members of the public, which is where much of the documented increase in anti-Asian sentiment has occurred.

**Figure 19: Change in Perceived Likelihood of Unfair Treatment of Coloradans, 2020-2021**

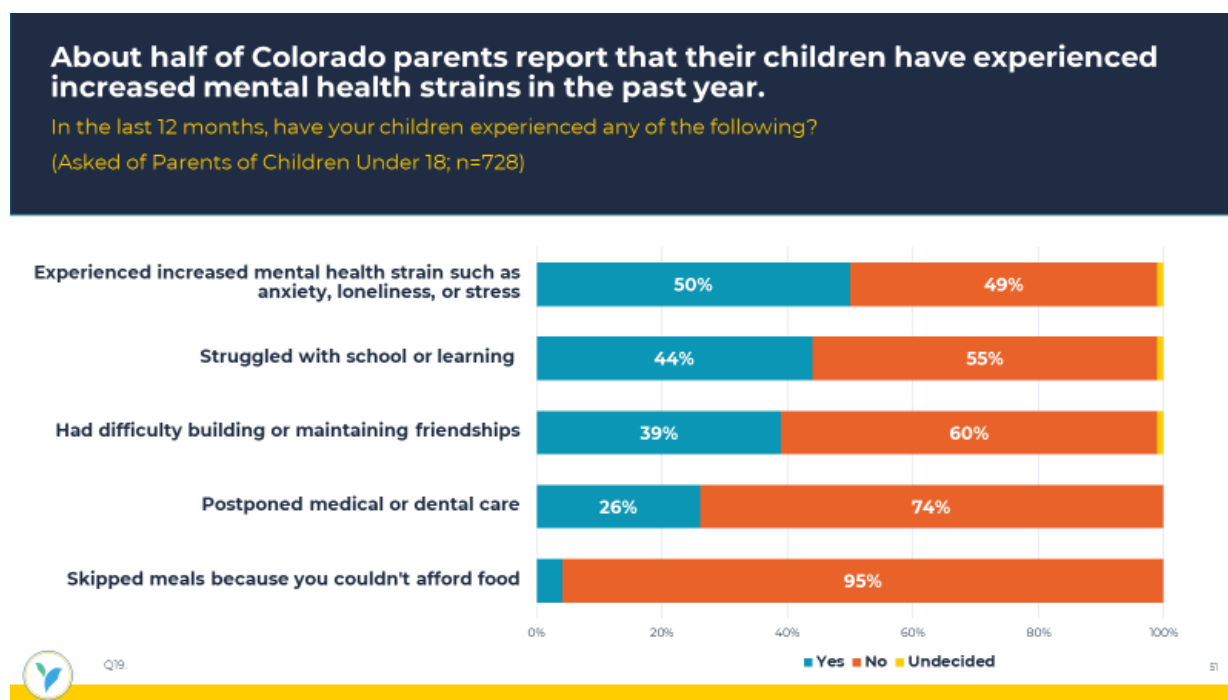


There were a number of other noteworthy differences in perceptions of inequitable outcomes. In general, the youngest Coloradans are more likely to perceive unfair treatment of Coloradans of color than are their older counterparts; women are more likely to perceive them than are men; college-educated respondents are more likely to perceive unfairness than those without a college degree; and there are dramatic ideological differences, with liberal Coloradans much more likely to perceive them than are conservative ones.

## 7 CHALLENGES FACING COLORADO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

As noted earlier, Colorado adults have struggled with a range of mental health challenges themselves in the last year; parents also report that their children have faced significant hardships of their own. Half of parents (50%) say their children experienced increased mental health strain in the last year, and 44% say they struggled with school and learning. More than one-third struggled to maintain friendships (39%) and one-quarter postponed medical or dental care (26%). On the other hand, lack of access to food was a less widespread concern - only four percent say their children skipped meals because they couldn't afford food (see Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Challenges Faced by Colorado Children in the Last 12 Months**



As shown in Figure 21 on the following page, there were also some notable differences by parents' income level in the degree to which children experienced these challenges. Interestingly, parents with middle-incomes were more likely to say that their children experienced increased mental health strain, though that perception may be relative – if kids in lower-income households started out with higher levels of mental health stresses than those in more affluent households, they may have been less likely to experience an increase in such strains during the pandemic. Kids in households with incomes under \$30,000 per year were more likely to have had to postpone medical or dental care and to have difficulty forming or maintaining friendships.

Interestingly, struggles with school or learning seem to have little correlation with household income – about two in four parents report that their children faced such challenges in the past year, a level of concern that cuts across income levels.

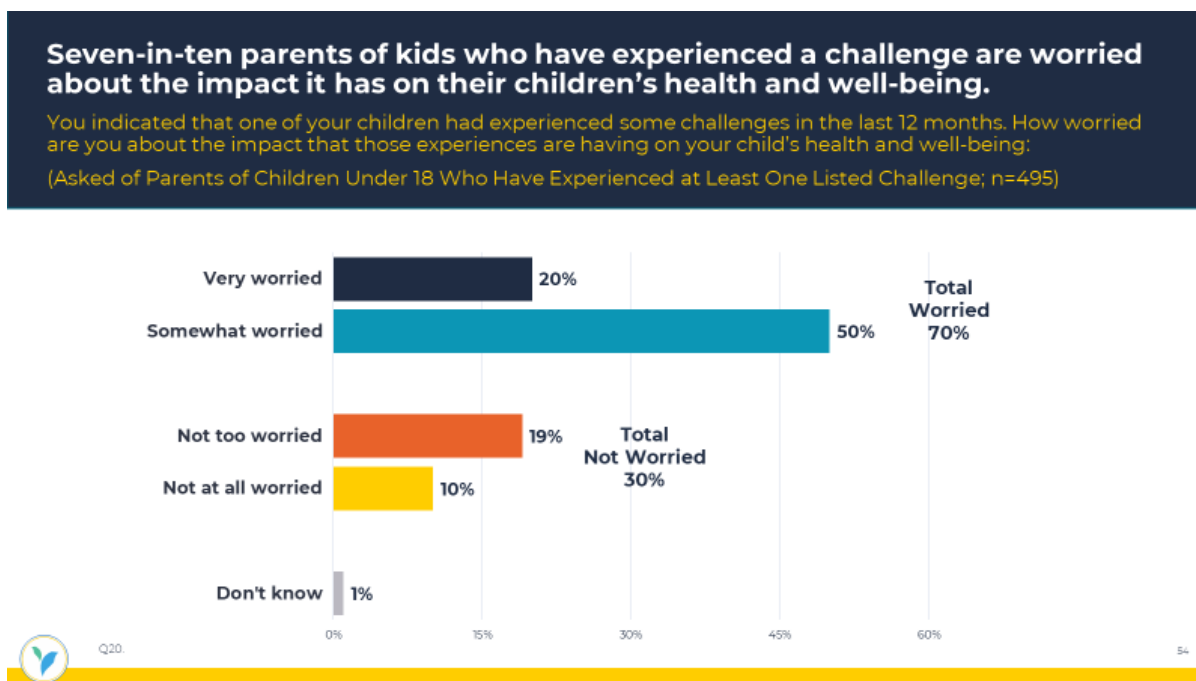
**Figure 21: Challenges Faced by Colorado Children in the Last 12 Months, by Household Income**

Challenges	All Respondents	Under \$30K	\$30-50K	\$50-75K	\$75-100K	\$100K+
Experienced increased mental health strain such as anxiety, loneliness or stress	50%	49%	55%	63%	43%	48%
Struggled with school or learning	44%	55%	46%	48%	45%	37%
Had difficulty building or maintaining friendships	39%	57%	47%	38%	38%	34%
Postponed medical or dental care	26%	41%	32%	34%	20%	20%
Skipped meals because you could not afford food	4%	10%	14%	7%	6%	0%

Parents of school age children were more likely than parents of pre-school age kids to say their children suffered these impacts (with the exception of hunger). In addition, women with children at home and white parents were more likely than others to report that their children had experienced mental health strains than were men with children at home or most parents of color. It should be kept in mind that these differences may simply reflect differences in willingness to report or discuss children’s mental health challenges, as opposed to a real underlying difference in the prevalence of those challenges.

Looking forward, parents are concerned that the impacts of these challenges may endure into the coming year. Seventy percent of parents whose children suffered at least one of these impacts worried it would affect their health and well-being, although only 20% felt “very worried.”

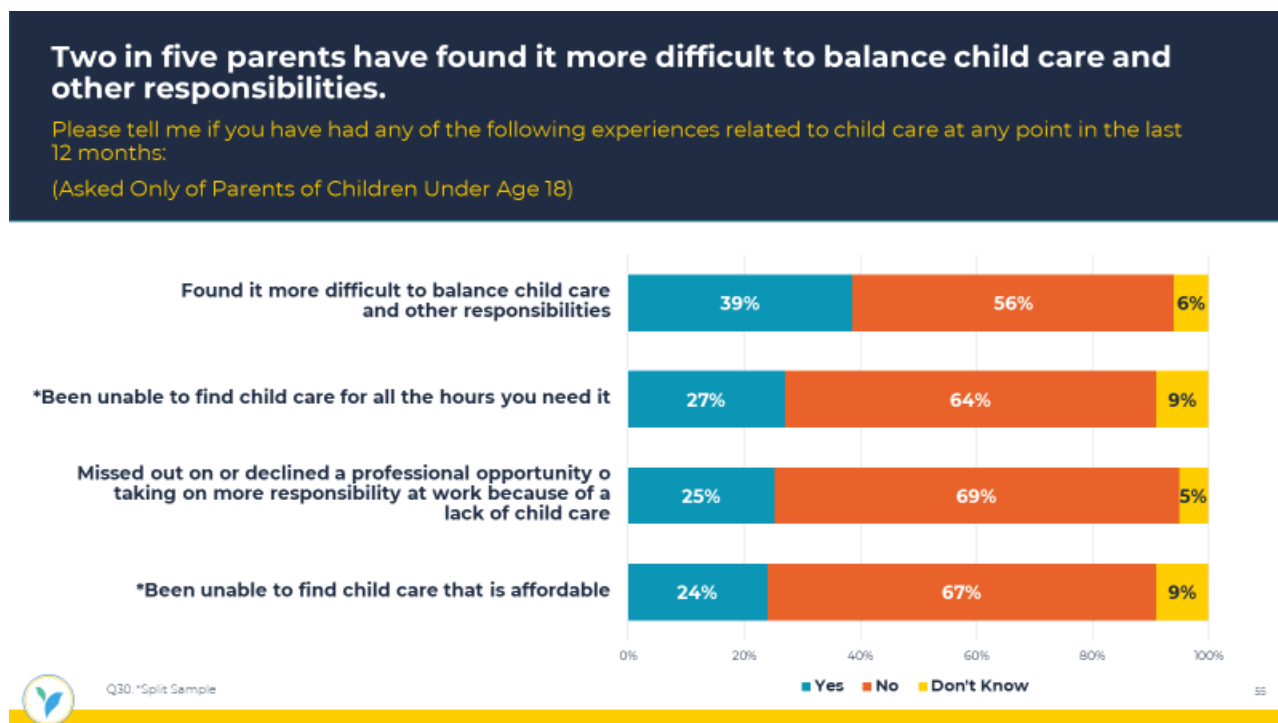
**Figure 22: Concern About Future Impacts Among Children Who Have Faced Challenges**



Levels of concern tend to be higher among parents who face more difficult economic circumstances – including those who are unemployed (particularly those who were laid off), lower-income households, renters, those without a college degree, and those living with a disability.

When asked about experiences with childcare in the last twelve months, 39% of parents said they found it more difficult to balance childcare and other responsibilities. A quarter said they missed out on professional opportunities because of childcare (25%) and a similar number were unable to find childcare either for affordability or availability reasons.

**Figure 23: Challenges Experienced with Childcare**



As shown in Figure 24 below, women were twice as likely as men to say they had missed out on a professional opportunity because of a lack of childcare (31% compared to 22%). Parents of color also reported being unable to pursue career opportunities for this reason at higher rates than did white parents. Parents with children under age five struggled with all the items tested at higher rates than did parents with school-age or older children.

**Figure 24: Challenges Experienced with Childcare, by Parent Gender and Age of Children**

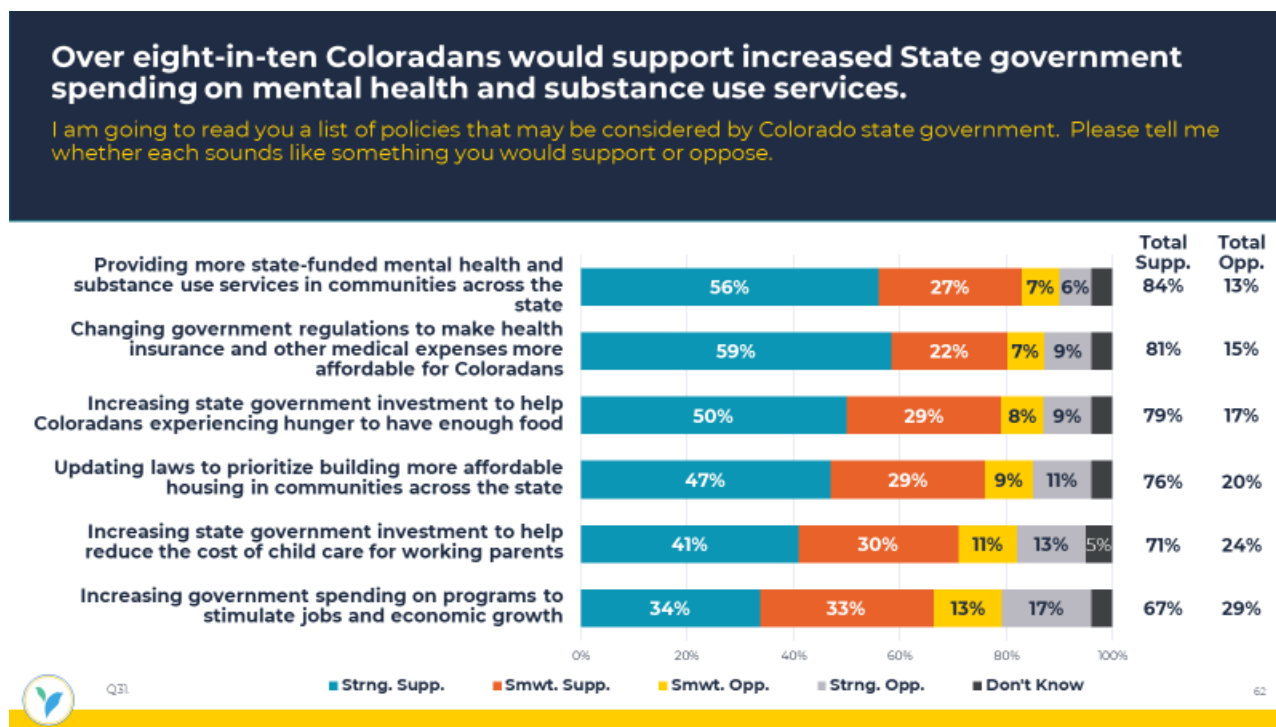
Mental Health Impact	All Respondents	Parent Gender		Children's Age	
		Men	Women	Ages 5 & Under	School-Age
Found it more difficult to balance child care and other responsibilities	<b>39%</b>	35%	42%	52%	37%
Been unable to find child care for all the hours you need it	<b>27%</b>	22%	31%	37%	23%
Missed out on or declined a professional opportunity or taking on more responsibility at work because of a lack of child care	<b>25%</b>	16%	34%	36%	23%
Been unable to find child care that is affordable	<b>24%</b>	26%	22%	44%	20%



## 8 POLICY PROPOSALS FOR COLORADO STATE GOVERNMENT

In response to the range of challenges that they identify as facing their state, Coloradans support a wide range of active approaches by state government to address them. As shown below in Figure 25, Coloradans were offered general descriptions of six policy approaches state government might pursue – and responded with resounding majority support for all of them. At least two-thirds or more back each policy proposal put forward; in fact, the most telling distinctions may come in the proportions that offer “strong support” for each policy tested. At least half of Coloradans strongly back changing government regulations to make health insurance and all other medical expenses more affordable for Coloradans; providing more state-funded mental health and substance abuse services across the state; and investing more into addressing hunger. Across the board, Coloradans welcome state government’s engagement in addressing some of the state’s challenges with affordability and economic development.

Figure 25: Support for State Government Policy Proposals



Of course, as with many elements of public policy in Colorado today, there are notable partisan divisions in the degree of support Coloradans offer for these actions by state government. Democrats overwhelmingly support almost every proposal, with roughly nine in ten in favor. Independents are only slightly less enthusiastic, with seven out of ten or more backing every policy tested save one (which had 65% support). Republicans are the only partisan subgroup that fails to offer majority support for one of the policies; just 48% of Republicans support more state government efforts to create jobs and stimulate the economy. But even among GOP voters, there are solid majorities that support a range of state actions to address the affordability of food, housing, health care and other concerns.

**Figure 26: Support for State Government Policy Proposals, by Party**

Policy	All Respondents	Party		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Changing government regulations to make health insurance and other medical expenses more affordable for Coloradans	<b>81%</b>	97%	80%	66%
Providing more state-funded mental health and substance use services in communities across the state	<b>84%</b>	97%	86%	72%
Increasing state government investment to help Coloradans experiencing hunger to have enough food	<b>79%</b>	96%	79%	64%
Updating laws to prioritize building more affordable housing in communities across the state	<b>76%</b>	95%	77%	59%
Increasing state government investment to help reduce the cost of child care for working parents	<b>71%</b>	93%	72%	51%
Increasing government spending on programs to stimulate jobs and economic growth	<b>67%</b>	88%	65%	48%

Differences by region are notably more modest, with majorities backing each of the six policy proposals in every major region of the state. Support is strongest in the Denver Metro region, where at least seven in ten voters back every policy put forward. In every region, the most popular concept is providing more state-funded mental health and substance use services.

**Figure 27: Support for State Government Policy Proposals, by Region**

Policy	All Respondents	Region					
		Eastern Plains	El Paso County	Pueblo County	Larimer Weld	Denver Metro	Western Slope
Providing more state-funded mental health and substance use services in communities across the state	<b>84%</b>	78%	80%	78%	84%	86%	78%
Changing government regulations to make health insurance and other medical expenses more affordable for Coloradans	<b>81%</b>	79%	76%	73%	73%	84%	79%
Increasing state government investment to help Coloradans experiencing hunger to have enough food	<b>79%</b>	69%	75%	75%	73%	84%	74%
Updating laws to prioritize building more affordable housing in communities across the state	<b>76%</b>	74%	73%	69%	73%	80%	68%
Increasing state government investment to help reduce the cost of child care for working parents	<b>71%</b>	64%	66%	64%	64%	75%	67%
Increasing government spending on programs to stimulate jobs and economic growth	<b>67%</b>	59%	60%	60%	58%	72%	62%

Although every policy tested received majority support across lines of race and ethnicity, Coloradans of color tend to be significantly stronger supporters than their White counterparts. Every community of color in Colorado offered at least 76% support for each of the six policies tested; in contrast, half the policies fell below that threshold among White Coloradans, though each policy still had solid majority backing. The largest gap in support between White Coloradans and Coloradans of color is on increasing government spending on programs to stimulate jobs and economic growth, with a 16-percentage-point gap in overall support (see Figure 28).

**Figure 28: Support for State Government Policy Proposals, by Race/Ethnicity**

Policy	All Respondents	Race/Ethnicity					
		White	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic/ Latinx	Indigenous/ Native American	All People of Color
Providing more state-funded mental health and substance use services in communities across the state	<b>84%</b>	82%	90%	87%	91%	82%	89%
Changing government regulations to make health insurance and other medical expenses more affordable for Coloradans	<b>81%</b>	78%	93%	96%	90%	80%	88%
Increasing state government investment to help Coloradans experiencing hunger to have enough food	<b>79%</b>	77%	88%	92%	89%	82%	87%
Updating laws to prioritize building more affordable housing in communities across the state	<b>76%</b>	73%	88%	90%	87%	82%	85%
Increasing state government investment to help reduce the cost of child care for working parents	<b>71%</b>	68%	81%	92%	84%	78%	83%
Increasing government spending on programs to stimulate jobs and economic growth	<b>67%</b>	63%	81%	79%	80%	76%	79%

## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The 2021 Pulse Survey was conducted by telephone and online from July 27 – August 16, 2021, among a random representative sample of 2,493 adults age 18 and older living in the state of Colorado. The sample included both landline (292) and cellular telephone (852) interviews, as well as 1,349 online interviews. Sampling and weighting were managed by Marketing Systems Group (MSG) and interviewing was conducted by GSK Research in close collaboration with the bipartisan research team of FM3 Research (D) and New Bridge Strategy (R).

The survey was funded by The Colorado Health Foundation, and FM3 and NBS researchers jointly led the survey design and analysis with frequent consultation with the CHF team. The survey included up to 44 questions, depending on the respondents' answers, with an average length for telephone respondents of 20 minutes and 39 seconds and for online respondents of 12 minutes and 50 seconds. Telephone interviews were administered in both English and Spanish.

The sampling and screening procedures were centered on Address-Based Sampling (ABS), generated by MSG and drawing from the United States Postal Service Delivery Sequence File (DSF). In order to increase the sampling of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) adults, the base sample was supplemented with 145 interviews in households identified on the state's voter file as containing at least one resident of those ethnicities. Sampled households were matched to public and commercial databases for landline phones, wireless phones and email addresses through MSG and Anchor Computing. Online interviews were obtained from emailed invitations and postcards with a URL mailed to a sampling of households for whom no other contact information was available. In addition, to obtain additional interviews among Indigenous/Native American and AAPI adults, 101 online interviews were completed with adults among those ethnic groups contacted through CHF partner organizations.

All respondents were screened to verify that they resided in Colorado. For the phone interviews, respondents were selected by asking for the youngest adult male or female currently at home based on a random rotation. Online interviews were conducted with the qualifying adult who answered the invitation.

A multi-stage weighting design was applied to ensure an accurate representation of the Colorado adult population. The sample was weighted to account for the multiple sources used to obtain additional responses among targeted communities of color. Demographic adjustments were applied to the sample to account for systematic non-response along known population parameters. Population parameters included gender, age, race, educational attainment, income, voter registration status and partisanship, and region. Weighting parameters were based on estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey and the Colorado Secretary of State's voter registration files.

The margin of sampling error including the design effect for the full sample is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval. For results based on subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. Sample sizes and margins of sampling error for subgroups are available by request. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll. Some percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

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