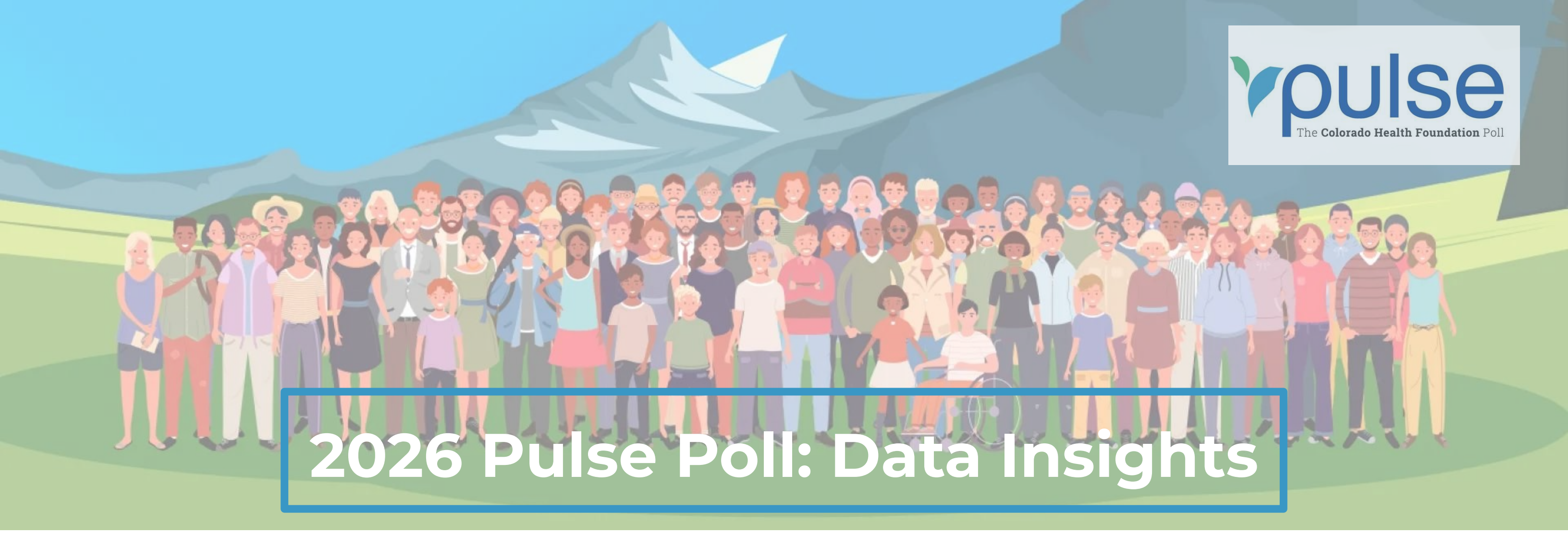


2026 Pulse Poll: Data Insights

Coloradans say cost of living pressures shape daily life, require tradeoffs and create anxiety about the future

A growing number of residents (76%) worry they may not be able to afford to live in Colorado; frustration with government surges

Rising costs are reshaping daily life across Colorado, forcing individuals and families to make difficult tradeoffs, cut back on spending and question whether they can afford to stay in the state long-term, according to findings from The Colorado Health Foundation's (CHF) 2026 Pulse Poll.

Economic challenges, reported in the first Pulse Poll in 2020 and the dramatic increases in daily living costs faced by most Coloradans beginning during the COVID pandemic, have reached peak levels and show no signs of receding based on results of CHF's 7th annual statewide survey of Colorado residents. Concerns about the cost of living, housing and health care dominate the issues Coloradans face and influence both individual and household decisions.

More on the Colorado Health Foundation Pulse Poll

- **What**: The Poll measures opinions, experiences, and attitudes related to health and well-being.
- **When**: Conducted by telephone and online from March 14 – April 9, 2026.
- **Who**: A random representative sample of 2,240 adults aged 18 and older living in Colorado.
- **A deeper look:** To dive deeper into the data and see analysis based on subgroups, visit: https://www.copulsepoll.org

Cost of living has become a defining issue across the state

The financial challenges related to daily living that spiked during the pandemic have remained consistently high with little to no signs of improvement.

- **85%+ of Coloradans rate cost of living and housing as serious problems**, once again putting those issues at the top of their concerns.
- Cost of living has been rated **a top-tier concern by ~85–90% since 2022**, showing sustained intensity.
- **90% of Gen Z and 94% of Millennials** say the cost of housing is a serious concern.

Pulse Poll findings also depict a population highly dissatisfied with state government and elected officials' responsibilities related to the economy. The combination of concerns and frustration are leading to a growing number of residents worried about their financial ability to stay in the state long term.

The forward looking lens reveals a state filled with residents hoping to see change in the remaining years of this decade as the primary economic strain and anxiety of the past seven years has grown into a wider, institutional frustration.

Cost issues rank highly in every part of the state.

Problem	Among All Coloradans	Region				
		Eastern Plains	Colorado Springs	Larimer/ Weld	Denver Metro	Western Slope
The rising cost of living	**85%**	72%	90%	89%	86%	72%
The cost of housing	**85%**	85%	83%	93%	87%	72%
The cost of healthcare	**82%**	91%	82%	84%	82%	80%
Homelessness	**76%**	70%	75%	72%	78%	70%
Wildfires or other natural disasters	**66%**	58%	50%	73%	70%	64%
Jobs and the economy	**65%**	74%	73%	61%	67%	52%
The cost of childcare	**58%**	48%	49%	54%	62%	53%
Mental health	**57%**	38%	58%	58%	60%	52%
Climate change	**56%**	71%	48%	49%	61%	46%
Drug overdoses	**54%**	68%	41%	52%	55%	60%
Violence and misconduct from federal immigration officials	**51%**	38%	39%	54%	58%	38%
Illegal immigration	**46%**	70%	46%	54%	41%	51%
Mistreatment of immigrants	**46%**	42%	37%	37%	53%	37%
Drug and alcohol abuse	**46%**	35%	61%	45%	42%	45%
Crime, in general	**43%**	48%	51%	45%	41%	38%
Hunger	**41%**	60%	38%	38%	43%	37%
Gun violence	**40%**	40%	44%	20%	46%	24%
Racial bias and discrimination	**34%**	26%	35%	29%	37%	24%
Restrictions on reproductive rights	**32%**	37%	27%	37%	32%	29%
Police violence and misconduct	**28%**	24%	21%	25%	32%	25%
Crime, in your neighborhood	**19%**	28%	30%	18%	18%	12%

"What we're hearing is that financial pressure is a daily reality for many Coloradans, including those with higher incomes," said Katie Peshek, senior communications officer with The Colorado Health Foundation. "Affordability challenges are creating persistent uncertainty, while frustration with government and political division continues to grow. The findings underscore how closely economic stability, health and well-being are connected."

Affordability concerns and their impact stretch across both residents and the nearly 750,000 small businesses operating in Colorado.

"Colorado's small business owners are navigating a perfect storm of economic challenges. Business owners want to offer competitive wages and benefits, but many are being squeezed by higher operating costs while their employees struggle with housing, health care and other basic expenses of daily living. When workers can't afford to live in the communities where they work or access the health care they need, it creates real challenges for recruitment, retention and long-term growth."

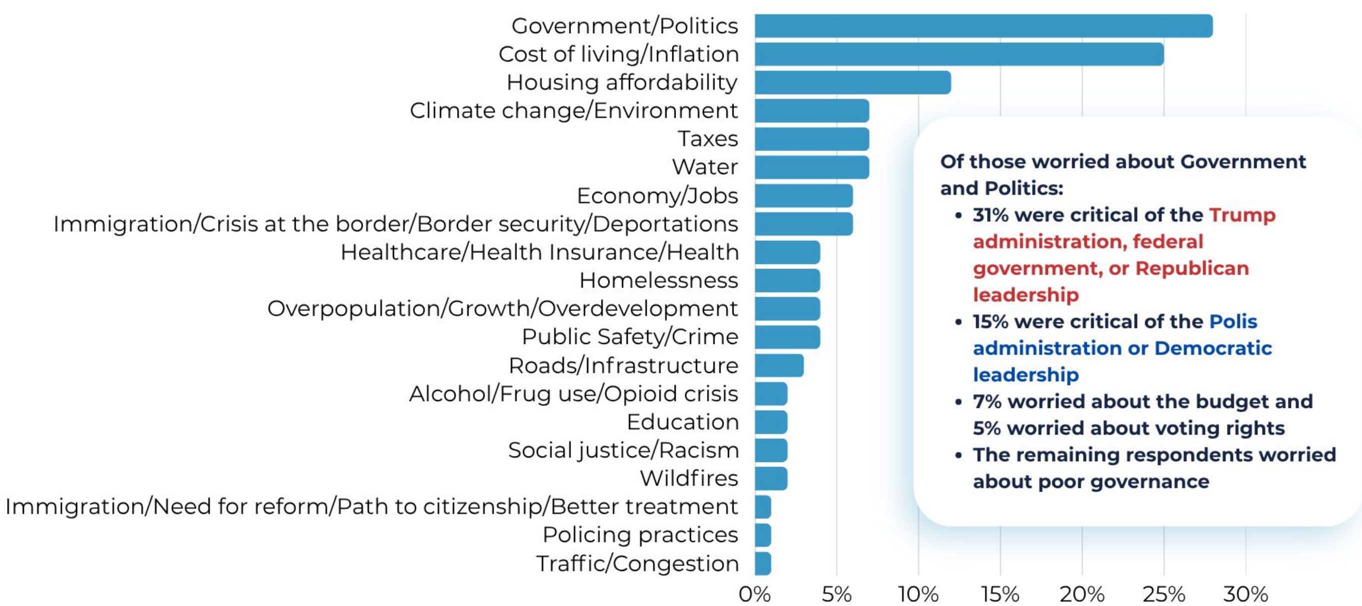
— Hunter Nelson of the Small Business Majority in Colorado.

Frustration with government and politics remains the top concern

Coloradans' concerns about the government are rising just as quickly. For the second year in a row, in an open-ended question, respondents identified government and politics as the top issue facing the state.

Politics and cost of living continue to be top issues according to Coloradans.

Q13. And in a few words of your own, what is the most important issue facing Colorado right now? (Open-ended)



On the doorstep of mid-term elections and growing promises for improvement, Coloradans cited politics as a direct driver of stress and mental health strain. Among those experiencing mental health strain, political issues (28%) are on par with financial issues (25%) as the top cause.

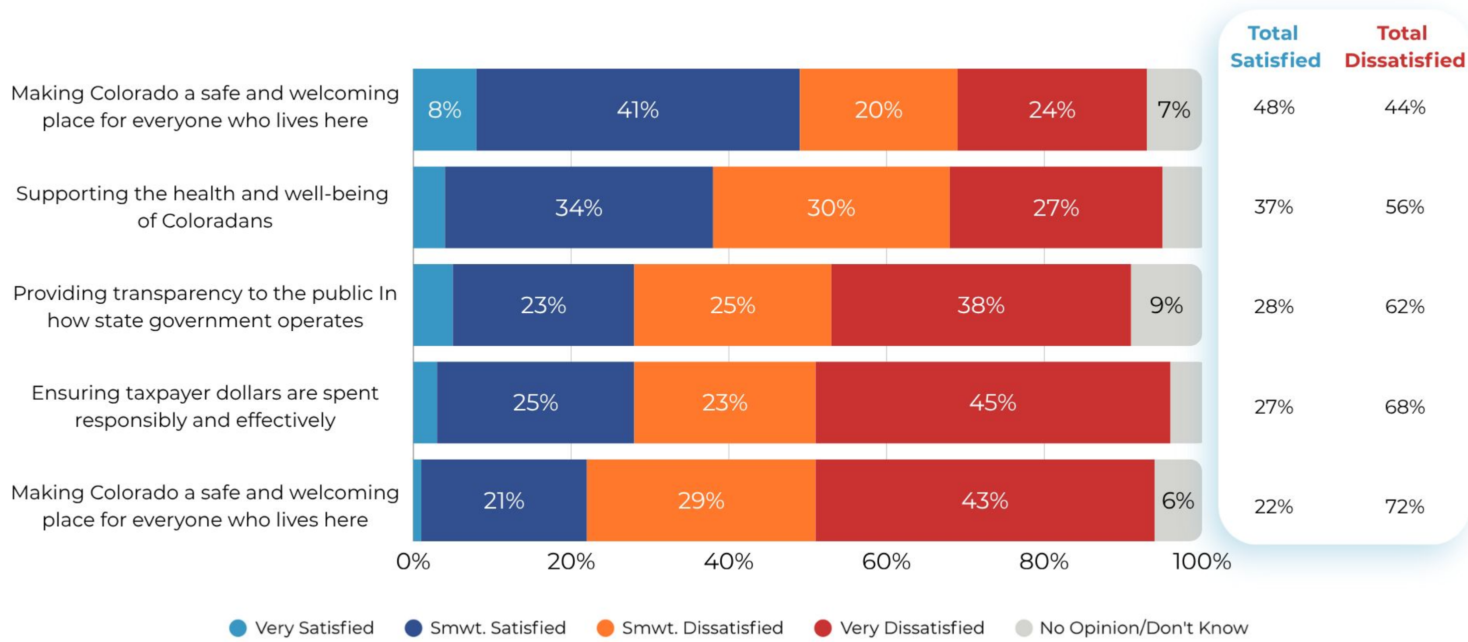
- In an open-ended question about top concerns, the **government/politics held its #1 position in 2026 (28%),** edging out the cost of living (25%) for the second straight year.
- Over the past two years, **the largest year-over-year increase of any issue was concern about government/politics**, up 21 points from 2024 (11%) to 2025 (32%). It dipped to 28% in 2026 however, it remains the top concern during this 2026 statewide election cycle.

Coloradans are deeply dissatisfied with how government is handling economic concerns

“Almost one-third of those who mentioned government/politics as their top concern commented on the President or actions of the federal government,” said Lucia Del Puppo, senior vice president with FM3 Research and Democratic pollster for Pulse Poll. “However, there is a clear call to action to address the cost of living pressures that Coloradans are experiencing, particularly when it comes to the key issues of housing and health care.”

Large majorities are also dissatisfied with transparency and overall operations of the government and it’s translating into a growing trust gap with the government.

Coloradans express dissatisfaction with the state government’s performance on many of the goals tested.



“The fact that three-in-five Coloradans have experienced a serious financial challenge in the last year – an eight point increase from one year ago – is the more ominous portent that frustration could turn to real anger. Coloradans are most dissatisfied with how the government responds to the economic concerns – fully 72% are dissatisfied which is the highest of any responsibility we tested.”

— Lori Weigel, Republican pollster for Pulse Poll and principal of New Bridge Strategy. “

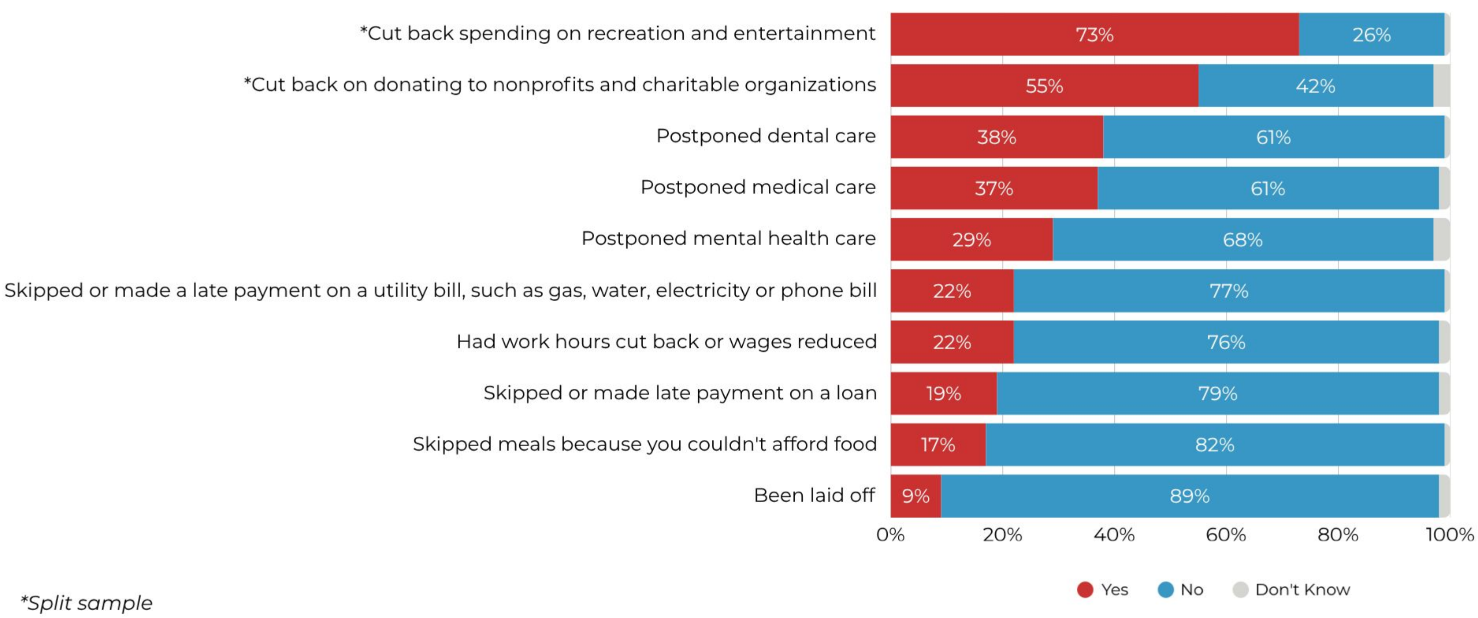
Insecurity across many basic needs remains a widespread problem

Cost pressures are shaping daily decisions, tradeoffs and the long-term outlook as a large number of residents are skipping meals, postponing medical, dental or mental health care, skipping or making late payments on utility bills, rent or mortgage payments.

- **Nearly one-third (31%) worry about affording enough food.** Among Latino respondents, that number jumps to 44% in 2026, up 15% from the 2025 Pulse Poll.
- **42% worry about losing health insurance**; 57% for Black and American Indian/Alaska Natives; and 53% for Latinos.
- **17% skipped meals due to cost** – up 5% from 2025; and nearly 40% postponed medical or dental care in the past 12 months, up 7% and 5%, respectively from a year ago.
- **Nearly one-in-three (29%) postponed mental health care** in the past 12 months.
- Food insecurity has improved slightly from peak highs during the pandemic but remains very elevated with **17% of respondents stating they had skipped a meal in the past year** because they couldn't afford food.

In addition, a closer analysis reveals racial and ethnic groups have even higher levels of concern and financial strain than the general population across nearly every measure of affordability and longer-term security including, health care, food, housing and finances.

In the past year, broad majorities have cut back on recreation and charitable giving; notable segments have sacrificed essentials to afford life in Colorado.



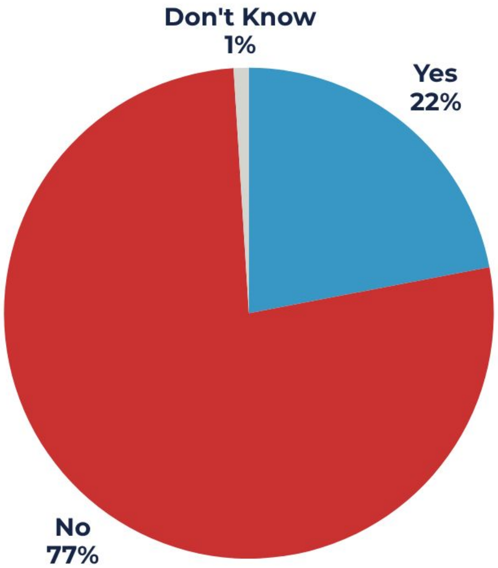
**Split sample*

Basic Household Bills Are Becoming Harder to Afford

Nearly one in four Coloradans report making late or missed utility payments, with the burden falling most heavily on lower-income households and communities of color. Several racial/ethnic groups are also more likely to report making difficult tradeoffs to keep up with basic expenses, including late or skipped utility payments compared to the general population.

Nearly one-quarter have skipped or made a late payment on a utility bill.

Q22i. In the last 12 months, have you experienced any of the following? Skipped or made a late payment on a utility bill, such as gas, water, electricity or phone bill



Demographic Group	% Yes
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian/Pacific Islander	22%
Black/African American	37%
Hispanic/Latino	34%
American Indian/Alaska Native	43%
Multiracial	37%
White	15%
Household Income	
<$30,000	49%
$30,000 - $49,999	46%
$50,000 - $74,999	34%
$75,000 - $99,999	18%
$100,000 - $149,999	14%
$150,000+	11%

"Rising costs are still a major concern for Coloradans," said Del Puppo. "After some slight improvements in 2025, those hardships have returned to 2024 levels, suggesting that recent cost increases have wiped out the benefits people saw when inflation eased."

In addition, discretionary spending is shrinking or has disappeared as people are forced to make tough decisions to help cover household basics.

- Nearly three in four (73%) have cut back on recreation and entertainment spending.
- And 55% of Coloradans reported that they reduced charitable giving.

"While this is the first time we've asked Coloradans about their recreational and entertainment spending, it is striking that 73% say they have cut back on it, with majorities across the income spectrum sharing this behavior."

—Lucia Del Puppo, Democratic Pollster,
Senior Vice President with FM3 Research

Housing costs are forcing financial sacrifices

- 32% of respondents said they are worried about losing their home in the coming year because they can't afford rent/mortgage and the numbers are even higher for several other racial/ethnic groups.

Demographic Group	Total Worried	Total Not Worried	Don't Know
Among All Coloradans	**32%**	**67%**	**1%**
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian/Pacific Islander	29%	71%	0%
Black/African American	40%	58%	1%
Hispanic/Latino	44%	55%	1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	47%	52%	1%
Multiracial	46%	54%	0%
White	26%	73%	1%

When it comes to the lack of housing, 76% of respondents blame wages not keeping up with rising prices as the "major cause."

- About one in four are taking on debt, working extra jobs, or falling behind on bills.
- About three in 10 renters report cutting back on essentials like food or health care just to pay rent.

Housing-related financial pressures are particularly severe among Latino renters and homeowners. Latino respondents are more likely to avoid requesting repairs from landlords out of fear of rent increases or eviction – 45% compared to 34% of the general population – and they are significantly more likely to report falling behind on bills or other financial obligations in order to keep up with rent or mortgage payments – 35% compared to 21% of the general population.

Health care costs are another significant and expanding problem

Concern has risen compared to prior years with costs rising fast and hitting families harder.

- 82% of respondents said **the cost of health care is a serious problem** - a figure that has grown consistently from 65% of respondents in 2021.
- **42% are worried that they or someone in their household will be without coverage** in the coming year. Now at its highest proportion of Coloradans recorded in the seven year history of Pulse Poll, the concern has grown significantly from the 27% in 2020.
- **Nearly two-thirds (65%) report their health care costs increased** in the past year.

"The Poll underscores the reality that Community Health Centers and patients face every day: when people lose access to affordable health coverage, they don't stop needing care," said Colorado Community Health Network President and CEO Ross Brooks. "We also know that access to affordable primary care improves overall health and reduces costly visits down the line. That's why protecting and expanding access to health coverage, like Medicaid, remains one of the most effective investments we can make in the health and economic well-being of Colorado families."

Health care satisfaction

A strong majority of Coloradans, regardless of where they live, expressed satisfaction when it comes to how far they need to travel to see a health care provider (77%); the quality of care received (75%); attitudes of health care providers/medical staff toward you/family (74%); and the ability to see a provider whenever needed (64%). Even the amount of time required to wait to see a provider when seeking an appointment reached 50% satisfaction.

In line with the rising concerns around health care costs, Coloradans were least satisfied (36%) with out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays and deductibles.

Health care affordability and coverage insecurity are especially acute for Latino households, up 11% relative to 2025.

Relative to 2025, concern has increased among Latino Coloradans.
Q20. Thinking ahead over the next year, how worried are you that you or someone else in your household will be without health insurance coverage?
(% Total Worried)

Demographic Group	2021	2024	2025	2026	Difference (2025-2026)
Among All Coloradans	**27%**	**35%**	**38%**	**42%**	**+4%**
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian/Pacific Islander	34%	40%	37%	33%	**-4%**
Black/African American	22%	41%	55%	57%	**+2%**
Hispanic/Latino	41%	47%	42%	53%	**+11%**
American Indian/Alaska Native	42%	56%	61%	57%	**-4%**
White	22%	32%	33%	36%	**+3%**

Financial wellbeing - many Coloradans are just getting by or falling behind

Although short-term pressures may be stabilizing or easing slightly for some Coloradans, long-term confidence is declining. The share of those reporting that they are "just getting by" has increased in recent years (29%), while those who say they are "thriving" remain a minority.

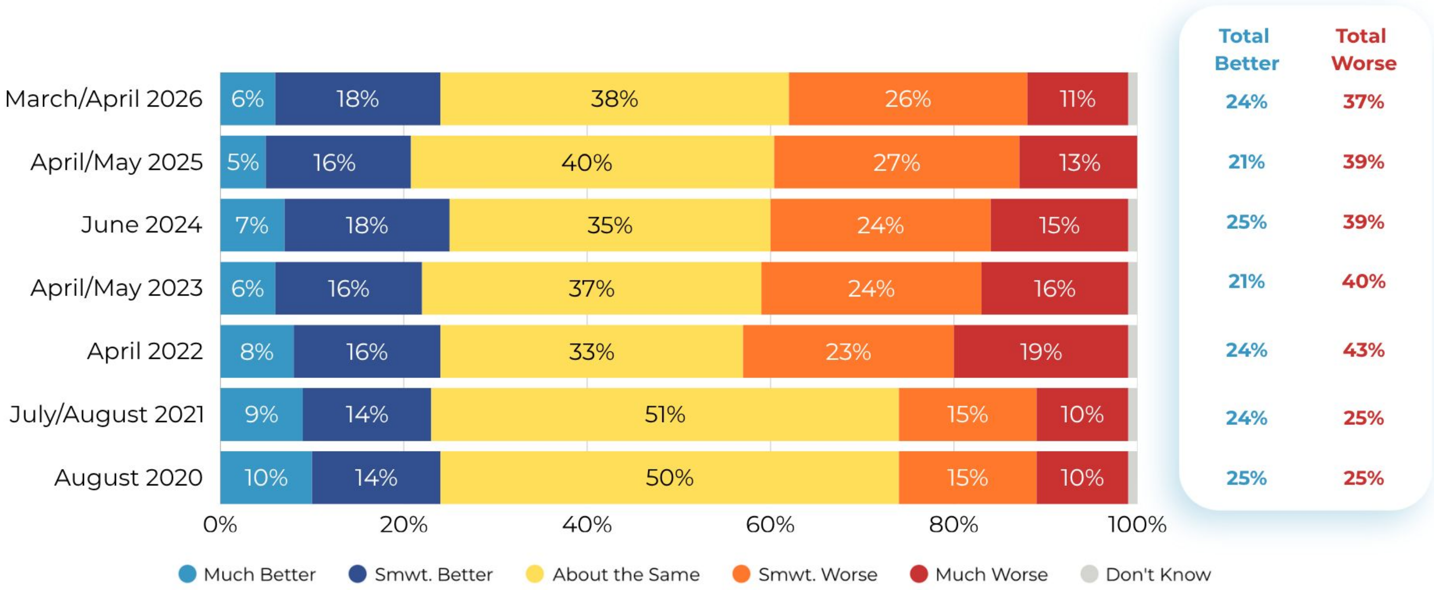
- **One-in-four (25%) say they are living comfortably** and increasing savings.
- **37% say they are worse off financially than a year ago.** This figure is better than it was in 2022-2023 but worse than 2020-2021.

Many Coloradans Feel Stuck or Falling Behind

More than one-third say they are worse off financially than a year ago, while only a minority report living comfortably with savings.

Roughly one-quarter say they are better off financially than a year ago and nearly two in five say they are worse off.

Q18. Would you say you are better off, or worse off financially than you were a year ago, or is your financial situation about the same?



Is Colorado the place to be?

What were once concerns for some are now shared experiences, feelings and anxieties of a large majority of people across the state. Those concerns are impacting not just Coloradans' daily lives but their belief in their future abilities to live in the state and their desire to recommend Colorado as a place to be for family/friends.

- Anxiety about future affordability has increased. 76% of the respondents said they were somewhat worried (43%) or very worried (33%) about their ability to afford living in Colorado in the future.

"While not a huge increase from a year ago, we're now seeing Colorado's out-migration numbers connect this concern to our reality," said Weigel.

Coloradans are divided on whether they would recommend Colorado as a place to live. However, despite concerns surrounding cost of living and affordability, a majority are likely to recommend the state to family or friends as a place to live with an average rating of 6.2 on a scale where 1 means "not at all likely" and 10 means "extremely likely." A total of 38% responded with a 5 or less rating.

“Financial challenges continue to rise as trust in institutions and government falls. Access to health care, affordable housing, food security and economic stability are becoming more urgent, not less,” said Janiece Mackey, Ph.D., co-founder and CEO of Young Aspiring Americans for Social & Political Activism (YAASPA). “What gives us hope is the next generation of Coloradans. Young people across our state are deeply engaged, eager to be part of the solution and using their voices to advocate for change in their communities. They understand that civic participation matters and that the future will be shaped by those who show up, speak out and stay involved.

“This moment calls for interracial and intergenerational commitments to move toward the world we envision. We as communities, philanthropic partners, and policymakers need to step forward, listen to communities and prioritize the investments and solutions that will strengthen health, opportunity and well-being for all Coloradans. The need is clear, and so is the responsibility to act."

About the Pulse Poll:

The Colorado Health Foundation Pulse Poll is an annual, statewide survey of Colorado residents that measures opinions, experiences, and attitudes related to health and well-being.

The 2026 Pulse Poll was conducted by telephone and online from March14 – April 9, 2026 among a random representative sample of 2,240 adults age 18 and older living in Colorado including oversamples of Black/African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian American Coloradans. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-3.2% at the 95% confidence level. For results based on subgroups, the margin of sampling error is higher. For more information, visit https://www.copulsepoll.org.