The Colorado Health Foundation™

Political challenges top the list of concerns in the 6th annual Pulse Poll, surpassing cost of living and housing

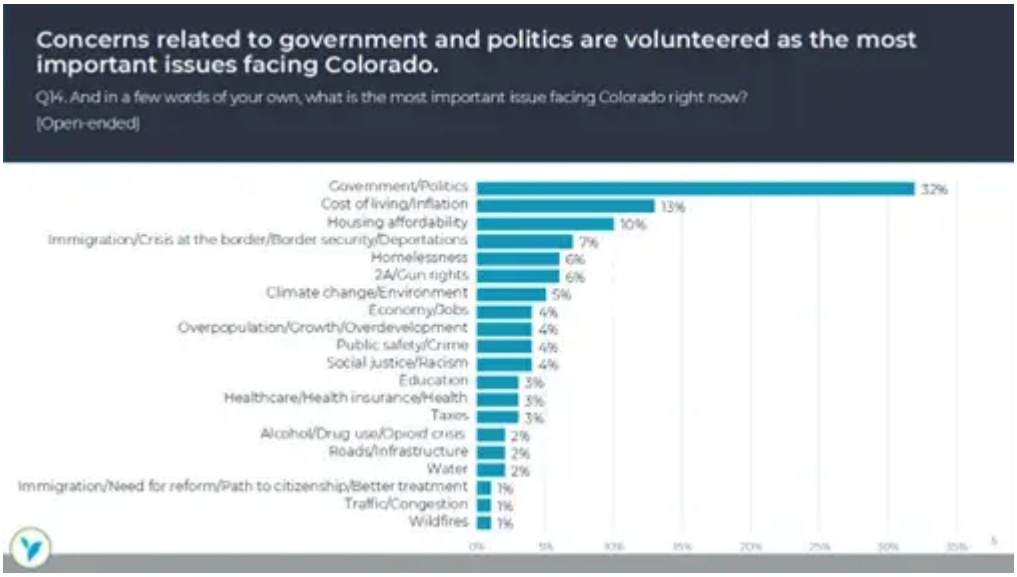
The Colorado Health Foundation's sixth annual Pulse Poll revealed that while Coloradans love their state for its natural beauty, outdoor activities, and sense of community, they remain concerned about being able to afford living here long term. In addition, many Coloradans are also worried about increased political discord —an overwhelming number of respondents cited government and politics as their top concern. Respondents also shared answers demonstrating crosscutting intersections of political and economic challenges and sacrifices impacting and straining their mental health.

The poll, conducted by a bipartisan team of researchers between April 19 and May 18, 2025, surveyed 2,333 Coloradans throughout the state. Compared to previous years, survey respondents continue to report a wide range of economic concerns, including worries about their ability to afford living in the state long-term, though this year there were modest changes in how many people were living on the margins.

A lot to like, but more to worry about

Asked what they value most about the state, Coloradans appreciate a range of attributes, including the state's scenery (34%), outdoor activities (30%) and feeling a strong sense of community (16%).

However, when turning their attention to the top concerns they are facing today, the cost of living and housing affordability continue to drive the conversation. And, in an open-ended question, respondents to this year's survey emphatically identified political dysfunction as the top issue facing the state right now. It is the first time in the six-year history of Pulse Poll that "government/politics" has been ranked as Coloradans top concern.



Roughly one-third of respondents (32%) cited "government/politics" with "cost of living" and "housing affordability" ranked second and third at 13% and 10%, respectively. The 2025 response is nearly triple the number who cited government/politics as their top concern in 2024 and is 12% higher than the previous peak for that topic dating back to the first Pulse Poll in 2020.

At the same time, "cost of living" and "housing affordability" fell 6% and 7%, respectively from 2024 to 2025 but remain the only other double-digit responses to the open-ended question in this year's Poll.

"Politics permeates almost everyone's views on the direction of their state or how they view the economy," said Lori Weigel, Republican pollster for the Pulse Poll and principal of New Bridge Strategy. "Many are feeling uncertain, and the

underlying concerns that respondents have been expressing over the past several years have not gone away. We just added a layer of uncertainty about the direction of the country on top of these underlying concerns."

Coloradans lack a sense of agency to improve their communities

Despite the dramatic rise in concern about government and politics, most respondents report lacking a sense of agency to improve their communities. For the first time, the Pulse Poll explored several civic actions that people can take to improve their community — like publicly expressing support for social causes or candidates, speaking at local government meetings and directly engaging with policymakers — and gauged whether respondents view these actions as effective.

Respondents deemed most of the options as ineffective**,** a few were deemed effective, but "volunteering with organizations working on the social causes you care about" was a notable exception, with people feeling it was the most impactful.

"We've heard for years that people do not believe political leaders listen to them or act in the best interest of the voters," added Weigel. "Trust in government has eroded and people don't have confidence that their efforts to influence government will make a difference."

Rising Costs and Housing Affordability Continue to Dominate State's Challenges

Concerns related to rising costs of living, housing and healthcare remain notably high and overall, the level of concern has shifted only modestly from year to year.

- 89% of respondents say the rising **cost of living** is very or extremely serious with 57% of those saying it's an extremely serious problem – a 3% increase since 2024.

- 84% of respondents say the **cost of housing** is very or extremely serious with 55% of those saying it's an extremely serious problem - a 5% decrease since 2024.
- 75% of respondents say the **cost of healthcare** is very or extremely serious with 44% of those saying it's an extremely serious problem – a significant 7% increase since 2024 and over the typical sixtieth percentile reported over the prior four years.
- 74% of respondents say **homelessness** is very or extremely serious with 37% of those saying it's an extremely serious problem – a 5% decrease since 2024.

Also staying in the forefront, the percentage of Coloradans who say they've experienced mental health strain in the last year — such as anxiety, depression, loneliness or stress — has stayed relatively consistent since 2022 with 56% now saying they've experienced such strain. Among them, 32% cite political issues as the primary contributor, followed by 29% who point to financial concerns.

With at least four of the five top concerns relating to the rising cost of living, its impact continues to be felt across Colorado. Concern about these issues dramatically increased during the pandemic and has remained high since.

This year, however — marking the first since the pandemic — results show a modest decline in the number of overall respondents reporting significant financial sacrifices, identifying as worse off financially, and saying they are really struggling financially. On the other side of the financial spectrum, there were slight decreases in the number of people who say they are living comfortably with increasing savings or are better off financially than they were a year ago.

The rising cost of living is rated an acute problem even among more affluent residents of the state. Ninety-four percent of those making $75,000-$100,000

rank the cost of living as an extremely or very serious problem; while 90% of those making $100,000-$150,000 rank it similarly. The number only dips to 84% for people making more than $150,000 a year.

Rising Costs of Living: The Continued Impact

In the first year since the pandemic, Pulse Poll findings reflected a small drop in the number of Coloradans making significant sacrifices to pay household bills, identifying as worse off financially, or reporting that they are really struggling financially. Conversely, for those living on higher incomes, Poll revealed slight drops in the number of people who say they are living comfortably with increasing savings or are better off financially than a year ago.

In 2025, 38% of Coloradans say they are struggling financially, while 60% are living comfortably. These numbers remain consistent from 2024, though results show more of a concentration in the middle of the financial spectrum with a slight decrease in those describing themselves as “really struggling financially” (-2%) or “living comfortably with increasing savings” (-4%).

Similarly, poll results showed a growing group of Coloradans with ambivalent feelings about their financial situation, as the number of people reporting their financial situation as about the same increased 5%. Meanwhile, people saying they are better off financially dropped 4% from 2024, back to the 2023 total of 21%.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents say they are worried they might not be able to afford enough food to feed themselves or their families. This is a 4% drop from last year and an 8% drop since 2022.

Seven in 10 people are worried they will not be able to afford to live in Colorado in the future, a worry that remains consistent from 2024. The number is much higher for people living on low incomes (84%), renters (83%), young people ages

18-29 (80%), those without health insurance (80%), people experiencing mental health strain (78%), as well as those in Adams (79%), Weld (79%) and Larimer (77%) counties.

Making Sacrifices Due to a Lack of Affordability

Although easing slightly in some areas, Pulse Poll respondents continue to make daily sacrifices due to financial challenges, though some of those scenarios have also shown slight improvements:

- 12% say they have skipped meals because they couldn't afford food — a 5% drop from 2024 and a return to pre-2022 levels.
- 30% say they postponed medical care and 33% said they postponed dental care, a dip of approximately 10% compared to previous years in which a combined question about medical and dental care was posed. It is the lowest reported number in Pulse Poll history.
- Those who postponed mental health care dropped 6 points to 21% which is 4% less than the total from the first time Pulse Poll asked the question in 2024.

When it comes to paying rent and mortgage costs, many Coloradans are making hard choices that may have negative impacts on their overall health and well-being.

- 25% are working multiple jobs or more than they want to, a 9% drop from 2024, and 19% reported their work hours or wages were reduced in the last year.
- Among renters, 25% have avoided asking their landlord to address problems because they feared having their rent increased or being evicted, a 7% drop from 2024.
- 25% of respondents have cut back or gone without other needs, like food or health care, a 5% drop from 2024.

Healthcare Costs and Fear of Losing Coverage

Concerns about the rising cost of healthcare, as well as the ability to maintain healthcare in the year ahead continue to rise.

Respondents who are worried that they or someone in their household will be without health insurance rose 4 points to 38%.

When asked, in an open-ended question, why respondents are worried about losing health insurance coverage, most reflect on the cost of insurance (31%), as well as the potential loss of a job (18%) or being cut from Medicaid access (15%). This worry increases substantially for people living on low incomes (59%).

These are just a few of the highlights from the first phase results of the 6th Annual Pulse Poll. Join us as we take a deeper dive into the findings with our Phase II release and briefing where we'll share additional demographic focused results and insights from our research teams and the professionals at CHF.

Register now for our other briefings:

Beyond the Numbers: Where Coloradans Stand & How Their Experiences Diverge

(Presented in English with live interpretation in Spanish)

Regionally-specific data will also be available and provided upon request

Data available online at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, August 12
Briefing on Wednesday, August 13 at 10 a.m. | Register

Deep Dive with an Emphasis on Responses from Hispanic and Latino People in Colorado

(Presented in Spanish and English. Simultaneous interpretation will be available)

Data available online at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, September 9
An evening briefing will be held on Wednesday, September 10 at 5:00 p.m. (for in person guests) and 5:30 p.m. (for virtual guests) | Register

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