



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

DEMOGRAPHICS REPORT

Demographics Summary

The Colorado Springs **Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** is different than the United States in many ways and is rapidly changing in terms of demographic composition. A variety of data sources and timeframes illustrate where we have been, where we are today and where we are headed. Check out the sources section at the bottom for an explanation of the different sources, and the best places to use them.

More Details—Demographics Summary

- In 2023, El Paso County (744,215) and Teller County (24,617) combined comprise the Colorado Springs MSA, with a total population of 768,832, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- El Paso County is the largest county by population in the state.
- In 2023, the City of Colorado Springs, a component of El Paso County, had a population of 488,664.
- Between 2013 and 2023 in the Colorado Springs MSA, population increased 13.3%, whereas the State of Colorado increased 11.6% and the overall U.S. population increased 6.0%.
- Between 2024 and 2050, El Paso County is projected to add 250,000 people and top 1 million in population; Teller County is projected to have an increase of approximately 2,700 people.
- The median age in 2023 was 35.4 in El Paso County and 51.1 in Teller County, while it was 37.9 in Colorado and 39.2 in the U.S.
- The two largest age cohorts in our region (El Paso and Teller Counties combined) using 2023 estimates were ages 30 to 39 (16.1%) and 20 to 29 (15.6%).
- The Colorado Springs MSA continues to get older—the age group of 65 and over increased from 13.1% of the population in 2018 to 14.8% in 2023 and accounts for one in four Teller County residents.
- The Colorado Springs MSA Hispanic population increased 14% between 2018 and 2023, while White non-Hispanics decreased 1% during that same time span.
- For people aged 16 and over who are in the labor force, El Paso County has a higher percentage (9.0%) in the U.S. Armed Forces than peer counties (American Community Survey 2023).
- The Colorado Springs MSA was home to 29% of all veterans living in Colorado in 2023.

EL PASO COUNTY

LARGEST COUNTY BY POPULATION IN COLORADO

768,832

TOTAL POPULATION

OF COLORADO SPRINGS MSA



251,068

ANTICIPATED GROWTH
FOR EL PASO COUNTY FOR 2024-2050



51.1

MEDIAN AGE
OF TELLER COUNTY



14%

HISPANIC POPULATION INCREASE
BETWEEN 2018 and 2023 IN COS MSA

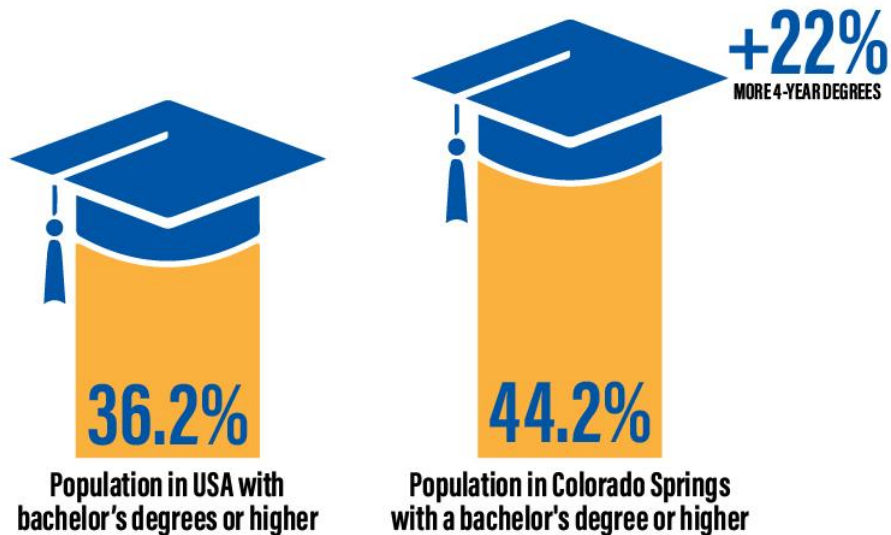


29%

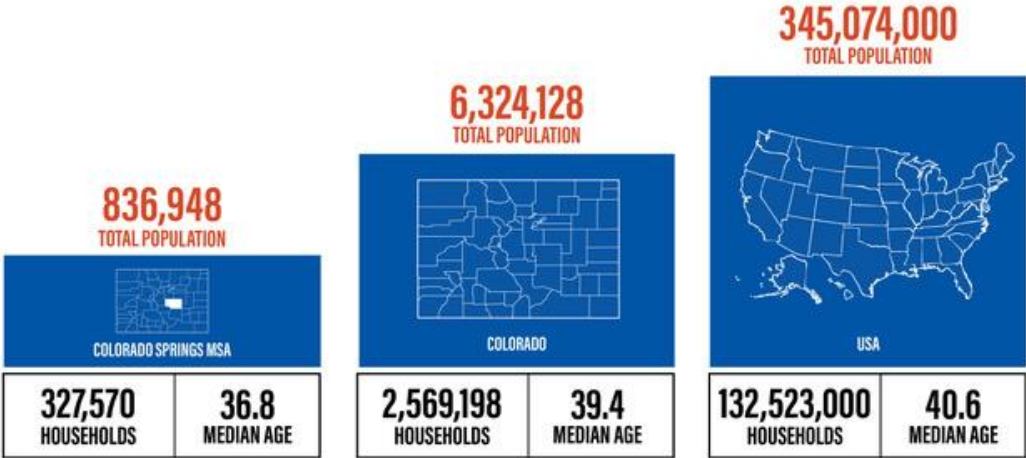
OF ALL VETERANS IN COLORADO
LIVED in COS MSA in 2023

How Do We Compare?

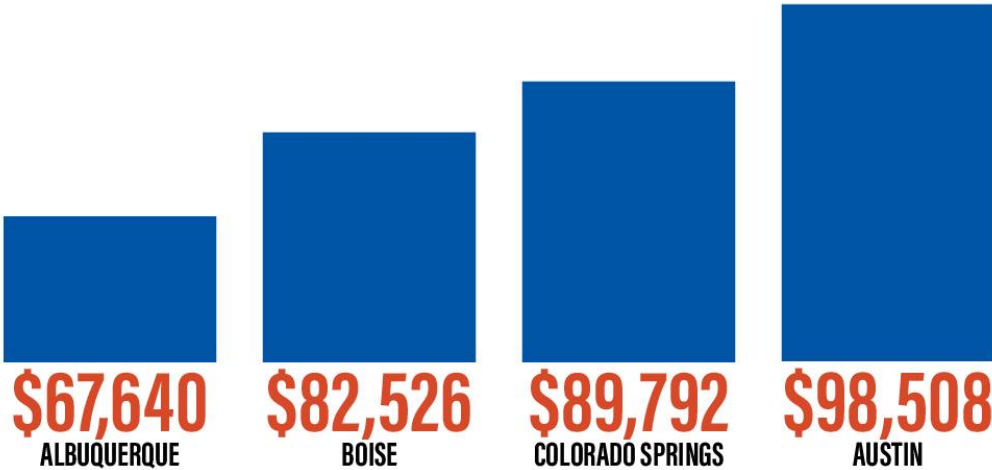
COLORADO SPRINGS EDUCATION (MSA) VS USA (2023)



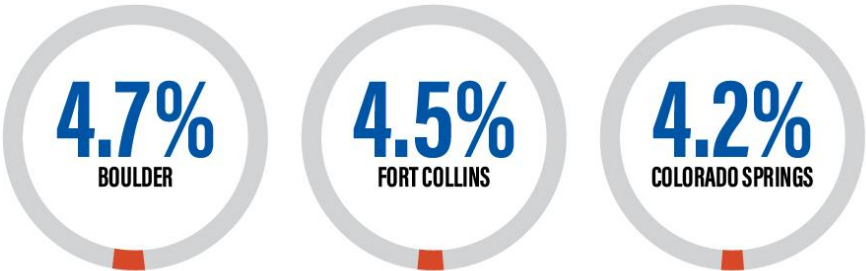
PROJECTED 2030 POPULATION



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME COMPARISON



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY CITY



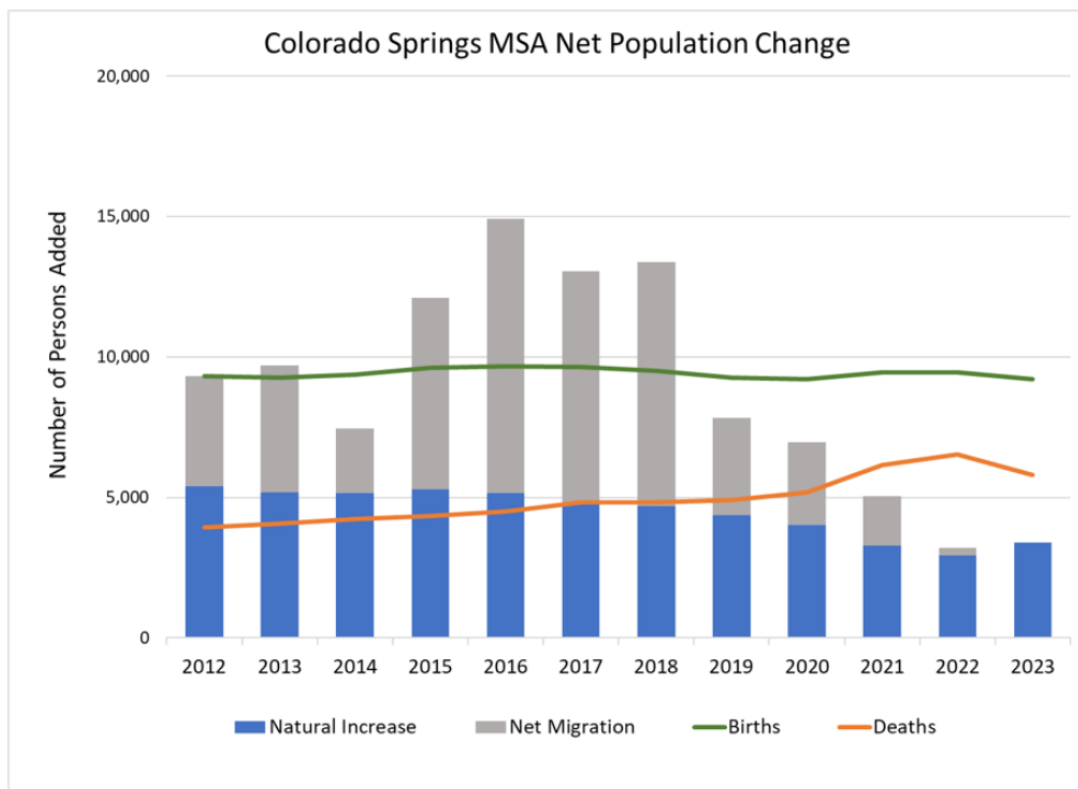
Colorado Springs MSA Stats: Slower-Growing Population

Between 2018 and 2019, Colorado was among the top 10 states for numeric and percentage growth (Johnson, 2019). In 2023, Colorado’s population was 5,876,300, an increase of slightly more than 36,000 residents from the previous year, based on state estimates. (Military personnel domiciled in Colorado are included in population numbers.)

Over the past five years, Colorado Springs MSA has grown at about the same rate as Colorado (0.7% annually). Teller County’s population is nearly unchanged during that time, with slight decreases recorded in 2022 and 2023. According to the State Demography Office, El Paso and Teller Counties hit their peak population increases in 2016 and have seen smaller increases since, with growth falling below 1.0% in 2020 and below 0.5% in 2022.

Why Is This Important?

Population growth of any kind has a significant impact upon quality of life. It influences the labor market, education and other infrastructure needs, the tax base, future planning, and conservation of resources, as well as the health of the economy in general. Planning for growth is important for quality of life, but also to pursue economically and socially sustainable policies.



Source: Table B01003, American Community Survey, 5 year estimates

Diversity

Community diversity includes racial and ethnic identity, languages spoken, immigration status, religion, beliefs, backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender, age, and social class. There are hundreds of variances in individuals that demonstrate the array of peoples within a community. These charts provide snapshots of some of the area's diverse characteristics.

Age

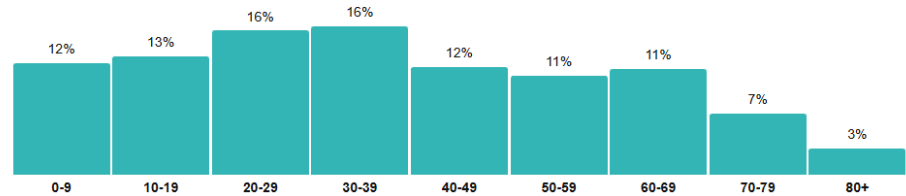
35.8 ±0.2

Median age

about 90 percent of the figure in United States: 39.2

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

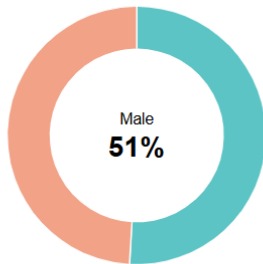
Population by age range



Census Reporter

Sex

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area



Male Female

Census Reporter

Education

95.4%

High school grad or higher

a little higher than the rate in United States: 89.8%

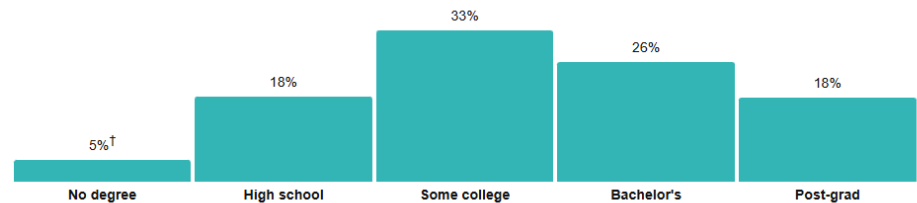
44.2%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about 25 percent higher than the rate in United States: 36.2%

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

Population by highest level of education



* Universe: Population 25 years and over

Census Reporter

Income

\$46,474

Per capita income

about 10 percent higher than the amount in United States: \$43,313

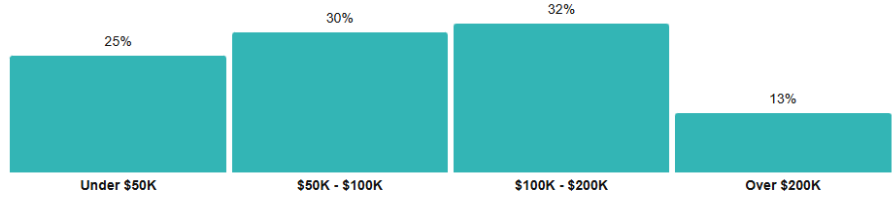
\$89,792

Median household income

about 20 percent higher than the amount in United States: \$77,719

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

Household income



Census Reporter

Proportions of household composition (e.g., married, single parent, nonfamily household) changed slightly since 2018, with nonfamily households rising nearly 1% and female householders dropping by more than 1%. Recognizing the variety among the MSA’s household composition guides the community in considering ways to support the well-being of its residents.

Households

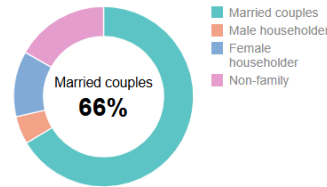
2.4

Persons per household

a little less than the figure in United States: 2.5

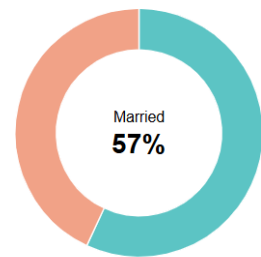
Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

Population by household type



Census Reporter

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area



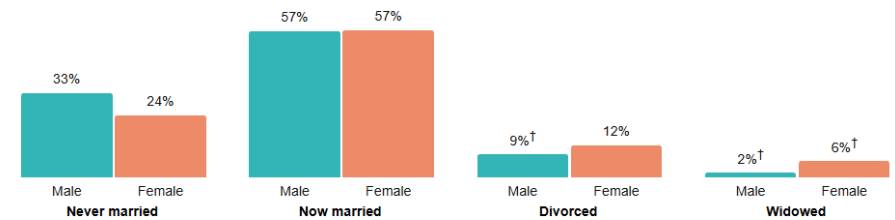
Married Single

* Universe: Population 15 years and over

Census Reporter

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

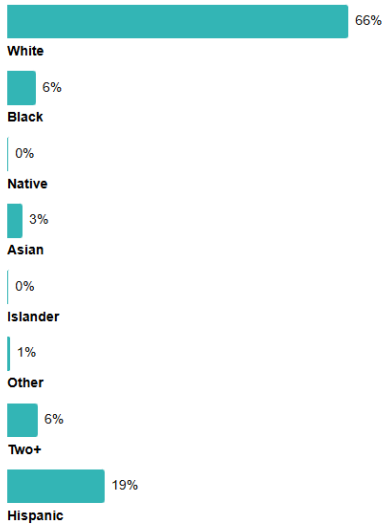
Marital status, by sex



Census Reporter

Race & Ethnicity

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area



* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.

Census Reporter

Source: 2023 ACS 1 Year estimates

From 2019 to 2023, Colorado Springs' non-white population rose by 3% and now reflects more than a third of the community. Those identifying as Hispanic rose from 17% to 19%; those indicating multiple ethnicities rose from 5% to 6%. According to the State Demography Office, our MSA is expected to see a significant increase in both the Hispanic and Asian populations by 2050 and a significant decrease (approximately 13.5%) in the White population.

NOTE: According to the State Demography Office, race and ethnicity in the U.S. Census are self-identification data items in which residents choose the race or races with which they most closely identify, indicating whether they are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are considered separate and distinct identities.

Place of Birth

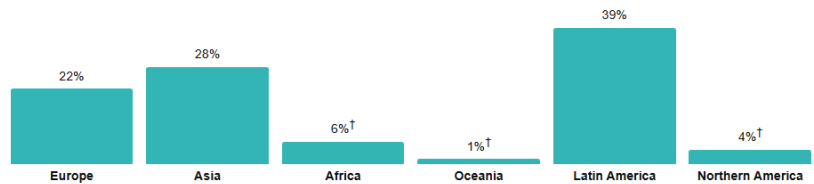
6.8% (52,227 ±5,374)

Foreign-born population

about half the rate in United States: 14.3%

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

Place of birth for foreign-born population



* ACS 2023 5-year data

Census Reporter

Veteran Status

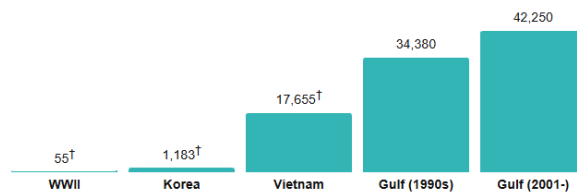
15.3%

Population with veteran status

more than double the rate in the United States: 6.1%

Colorado Springs, CO Metro Area

Veterans by wartime service



* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

Census Reporter

85,085 Total Veterans

69,867 Male

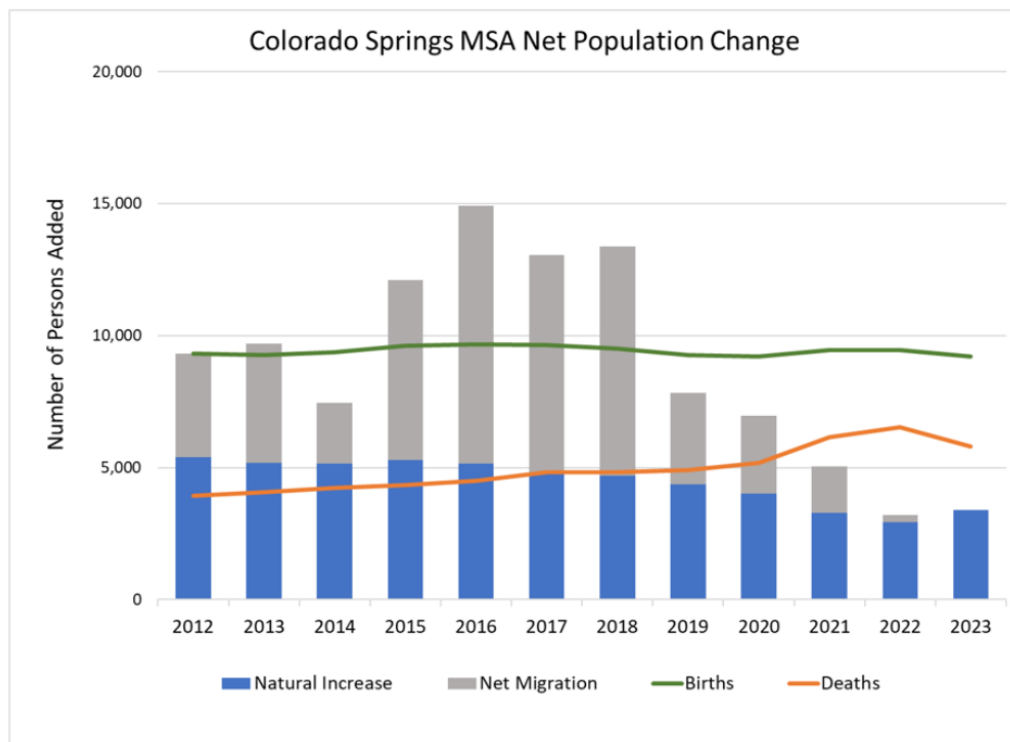
15,218 Female

Components of Change

The Colorado Springs MSA, located on the fast-growing Front Range, reflects the popularity of the state for employers and residents. In 2022, El Paso County’s population experienced the fifth-largest growth in Colorado (after Weld, Douglas, Adams and Larimer counties), increasing by 3,350. While births have remained relatively steady over the last several years, natural increase has slowed due to increasing deaths as the population ages. Net migration has also decreased since 2018, when El Paso County was the fastest-growing county in the state. Colorado Springs MSA’s growth rate is expected to rebound, with projected additions of 10,000 to 12,000 people annually over the next decade.

How Is Change Calculated?

Population change comes from natural increase (births minus deaths) and from net migration (people moving in minus those moving out of a region). The sum of these components is the change in population. Colorado varies considerably in growth trends, with some rural counties experiencing both out-migration and more deaths than births.



Source: Colorado State Demography Office

Population Trends

Overall, our population is expected to age and to become more diverse over the course of the next five years according to the State Demography Office. From 2025 to 2030, the population of those aged 70 and over is projected to increase by **22.5%** in the MSA. There will also be double-digit growth in the 30-to-49-year-old group, which is economically favorable, given that those are prime working ages. A smaller increase will be seen in the age 20-to-29 cohort, while there is a projected decrease for the age 50-to-69 cohort. The five-year forecast for population growth is 1.4% in the United States and 6.2% in the state of Colorado, with Colorado Springs at **7.6%** (Colorado Office of State Planning).

Sources: Using American Community Survey Data

The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted and managed by the United States Census Bureau. The ACS provides many benefits:

- Offers help for local officials and businesses to better understand the demographic makeup of their communities which enables them to better and more accurately plan for the future.
- Dives deeper than the Decennial Census in 2010 and 2020.
- Provides data about occupations, educational attainment, homeownership, income and other topics.
- Conducts monthly surveys, produces a variety of data products such as ACS 1-year and ACS 5-year estimates.
- Uses smaller samples of the population for ACS 1-year surveys, but best for point-in-time information and comparisons.
- Uses a larger sample size and an average view of the data over the specific time intervals for ACS 5-year estimates.
- Ensures that all data gathered in multiple regions is comparable. (Local governments, agencies, and school boards, for example, do not collect or disseminate data in the same manner or timelines.)

Just as there are many data products available from the US Census Bureau, there are also other valid sources for population estimates and other demographic variables.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/> and list Jan. 31, 2025.

References

Total Population Trend (2012-2023): Colorado State Demography Office, County & State data from <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/county.html>; City data from <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/muni.html>, both accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Components of Change (Population): Colorado State Demography Office, <https://storage.googleapis.com/co-publicdata/components-change-county.csv>, from <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/coc.html>. Both accessed Nov. 12, 2024

Projected Data for Colorado and Colorado Springs 2030, 2050: Colorado State Demography Office, <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/population.html>.

Projected Median Age by County, 1990-2050 file:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1dkMzqRTA5jYamm5MZu6ZT8oUoCBLrpeF/export?format=xlsx>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

U.S. Census Bureau at-a-glance geographic profiles via Census Reporter:

Albuquerque: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US10740-albuquerque-nm-metro-area/>

Austin: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US12420-austin-round-rock-san-marcos-tx-metro-area/>

Boise: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US14260-boise-city-id-metro-area/>

Boulder: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US14500-boulder-co-metro-area/>

Colorado Springs: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>

Fort Collins: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US22660-fort-collins-loveland-co-metro-area/>

Colorado: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/04000US08-colorado/>

United States: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/01000US-united-states/>

All accessed Nov. 12, 2024

Age & Sex data: U.S. Census Bureau table B01001, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Race & Ethnicity data: U.S. Census Bureau table B03002, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Personal & Household Income data: U.S. Census Bureau table B19001, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Population by household type data: U.S. Census Bureau table B11002, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Home Value data: U.S. Census Bureau table B25075, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Educational attainment: U.S. Census Bureau table B15002, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Foreign-born Population: U.S. Census Bureau table B05006 (American Community Survey 2022, 5-year data), accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>, accessed Nov. 10, 2024.

Veteran population: U.S. Census Bureau table B21002, accessed through Census Explorer, <https://censusreporter.org>. Colorado Springs MSA data: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US17820-colorado-springs-co-metro-area/>. Note that the Veterans Administration has its own estimate of the veteran population (https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp) that estimates an even larger proportion of the Colorado Springs population with veteran status. All sites accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Unemployment rate: U.S. Census Bureau table DP03, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2023.DP03>, calculated on the basis of the civilian age 16+ population. For Colorado Springs MSA and peer metro areas, see <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2023.DP03?g=310XX00US10740,12420,14260,14500,17820,22660>. All sites accessed Nov. 12, 2024.

Disability & Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau table B18130, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Age%20and%20Sex&t=Disability>. For Colorado Springs MSA and peer metro areas, see https://data.census.gov/table?q=Age%20and%20Sex&t=Disability:Poverty&g=010XX00US_310XX00US10740,12420,14260,14500,17820,22660. All accessed, Nov. 12, 2024.

Johnson, S. L. (2019). <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/new-estimates-show-us-population-growth-continues-to-slow.html>, accessed Nov. 12, 2024.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

GOVERNMENT REPORT

Government Summary

Local governments provide vital resources to the community. Studying the government is vital in developing communities that are healthy, safe and engaged. Explore this page to learn about the government in the Pikes Peak region.

Local governments provide vital services to develop communities that are healthy, safe, and vibrant. The Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is comprised of El Paso and Teller counties.

In Colorado, counties are not independent governmental units but political subdivisions of state government that are authorized to carry out the will of the state. El Paso and Teller counties possess only such powers as are conferred by the state. This report examines key measures for monitoring local government effectiveness, including voter participation, budget integrity, credit rating, debt load, and tax burden.

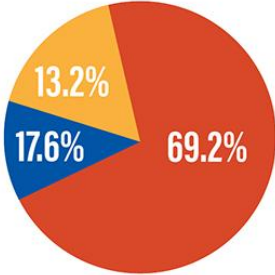
- \$6,699 Estimated per capita state and local taxes paid by Colorado residents in 2022
- 2020 Voter behavior:
 - 69.2% registered and voted
 - 13.2% registered but did not vote
 - 17.6% did not register to vote
- **82.5%** of adults in the Colorado Springs MSA were registered to vote in 2022.
- **69.2%** of adults in the Colorado Springs MSA voted in the 2020 general election (turnout rate of 84.0% of those registered to vote). In the 2022 general election, local turnout was 62.0%
- In 2023 El Paso County total general fund expenditures per capita were \$349 and Teller County's were \$913.
- Since 2015 El Paso County has had a credit rating of Aa1 and the city of Colorado Springs is rated Aa2 – obligations for both are of high quality and subject to very low credit risk.
- In 2022, Colorado residents were estimated to pay **\$6,699 per capita** in state and local taxes.

COLORADO SPRINGS GOVERNMENT



\$6,699

ESTIMATED PER CAPITA
STATE AND LOCAL TAXES
PAID BY COLORADO
RESIDENTS IN 2022

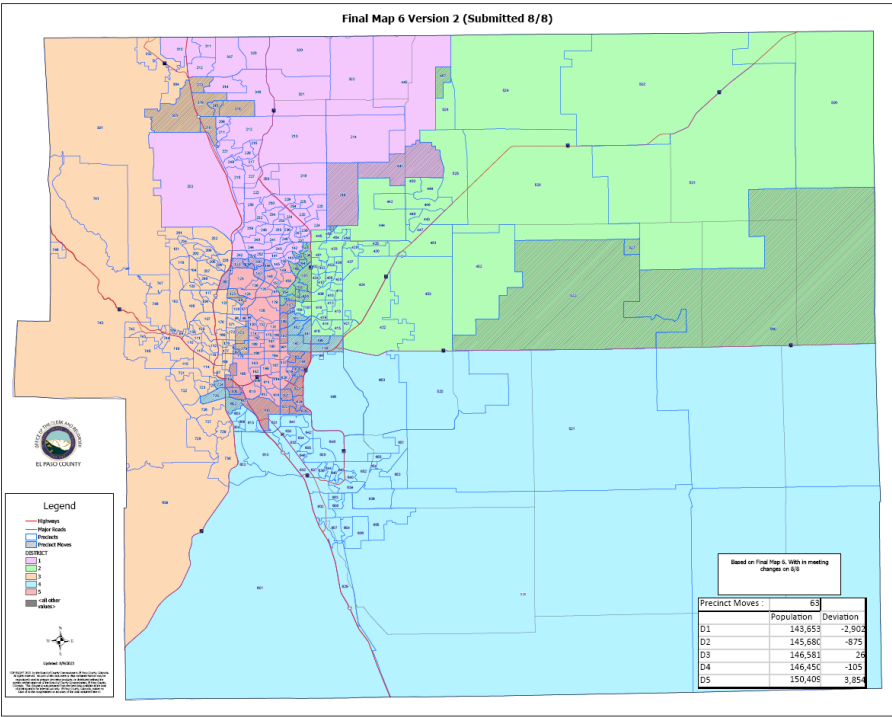


69.2% REGISTERED AND VOTED
13.2% REGISTERED BUT DID NOT VOTE
17.6% DID NOT REGISTER TO VOTE

Key Indicators

The Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is comprised of El Paso and Teller counties. In Colorado, counties are not independent governmental units but political subdivisions of state government that are authorized to carry out the will of the state. El Paso and Teller counties possess only such powers as are conferred by the state.

El Paso County is the most populous in the state. Colorado counties may have a three or five-member board of commissioners. El Paso County voters chose in 1976 to have a five-member board, with each commissioner representing a district of equal population; district boundaries are adjusted by the board every two years. The most recent adjustment was made in 2023. The board meets weekly on Tuesdays at 9 a.m. at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Suite 100, in Colorado Springs.



¹ El Paso County

Teller County was created from portions of El Paso and Fremont counties in 1899, at the end of a decade when the gold boom saw the population of the Cripple Creek mining district grow from a few dozen people to more than 50,000. Cripple Creek is the county seat, while Woodland Park is its largest city. Teller County has three commissioners who are elected at large from the members of three geographic districts. They serve up to two four-year terms. Meetings are normally held on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month at the Centennial Building, 112 North A St. in Cripple Creek.²

More than half of the metropolitan area residents live in the city of Colorado Springs. Since 2011 the city government has used a mayor-council system. The mayor serves as the chief executive for the city’s government and the city council is the legislative branch. The mayor is not a member of the city council but may participate in city council meetings. The Colorado Springs City Council is made up of nine officials who are elected for four-year terms. Citywide residents elect three council members at-large. Citizens in each of six equally-populated precincts elect an additional council member to represent them.³

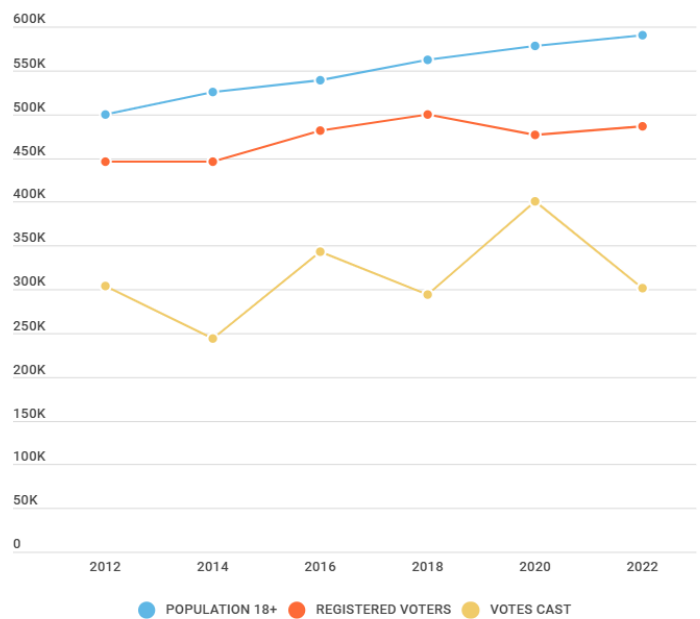
This report examines key measures for monitoring local government effectiveness, including voter participation, budget integrity, credit rating, debt load, and tax burden.

Voter Registration & Participation

An engaged and vibrant community is characterized by a high rate of participation in the democratic process. Voting is a fundamental way to become involved with this process. Combined, El Paso and Teller counties have nearly half a million registered voters.

The proportion of Colorado Springs MSA adults who were registered to vote in November 2022 was 82.5%, almost identical to 2020 but lower than in 2016, when it was **82.3%**.⁴ Colorado Springs ranked 4th of 6 peer communities in the proportion of adults registered to vote.⁵

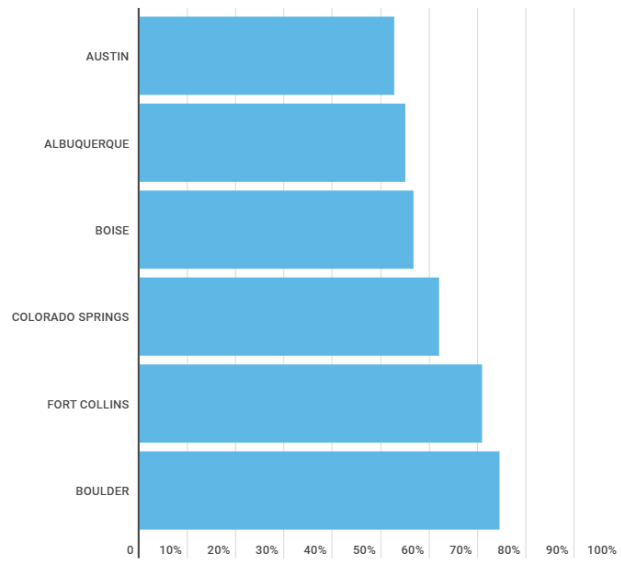
COLORADO SPRINGS MSA VOTER TREND



⁴ El Paso County Clerk & Recorder, Teller County Clerk & Recorder, U.S. Census Bureau

Between El Paso and Teller Counties, 62.0% of registered voters took part in the 2022 general election. This ranked **3rd among 6** peer communities.

2022 GENERAL ELECTION TURNOUT
(% OF REGISTERED VOTERS)



¹¹ Colorado Secretary of State, El Paso County Clerk & Recorder, Idaho Secretary of State, New Mexico Secretary of State, Texas Secretary of State

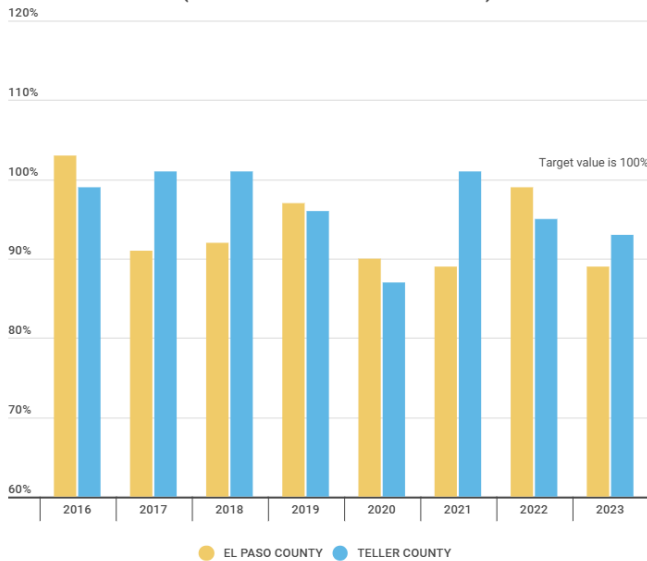
Budgeting Ratio

As governments collect and spend money on behalf of the public, they must do so responsibly. They should not dramatically overspend, such that the public debt increases, nor should they dramatically underspend, such that public monies are withheld from being spent for the public good.

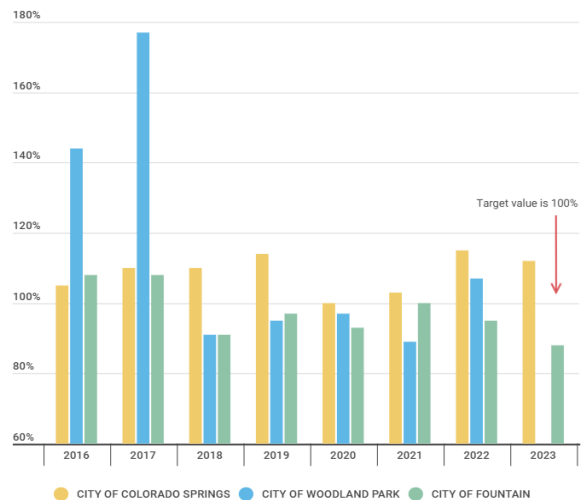
How well governments achieve this balance is described by the **budgeting ratio**, which is calculated by dividing the general fund expenditures by general fund revenues. The closer to 100%, the better the balance.

Budgeting ratios were calculated over several years for both Colorado Springs counties as well as three cities in the region, using data from their comprehensive annual financial reports.

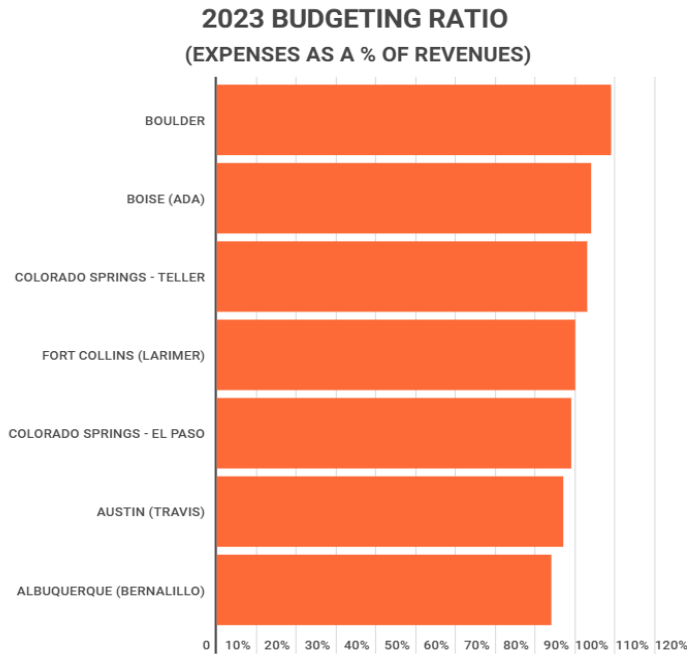
BUDGETING RATIO TREND - COUNTIES
(EXPENSES AS A % OF REVENUES)



BUDGETING RATIO TREND - CITIES
(EXPENSES AS A % OF REVENUES)



Budgeting ratios were also calculated for 2023 for the largest county in each peer community. All counties' revenue exceeded expenses by at least 6%.



El Paso County total general fund expenditures per capita were \$349 in 2023 and Teller County's were \$736.²²

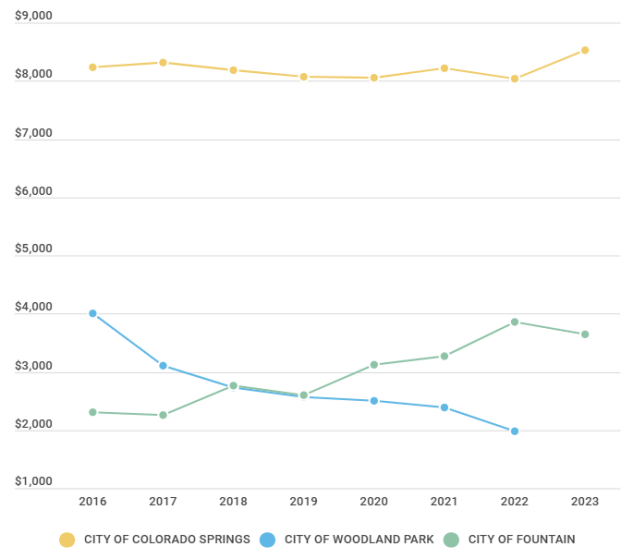
²¹ County Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports

Debt Per Capita

City and county governments, school districts, fire districts, utilities, and other public entities commonly take on long-term debt. This allows the construction cost of buildings and other infrastructure to be paid back over time by those who use or are served by the facilities. Due to jurisdictions overlapping, many cities and counties publish statements of “direct and overlapping debt” to report the share of public debt borne by residents.

In Colorado Springs MSA, three cities provide this calculation in their comprehensive annual financial report. In the city of Colorado Springs, per capita local debt is slightly greater than the most recent available state average of \$8,143 (2021). In Fountain and Woodland Park, per capita debt is well below the state average.²²

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEBT PER CAPITA TREND



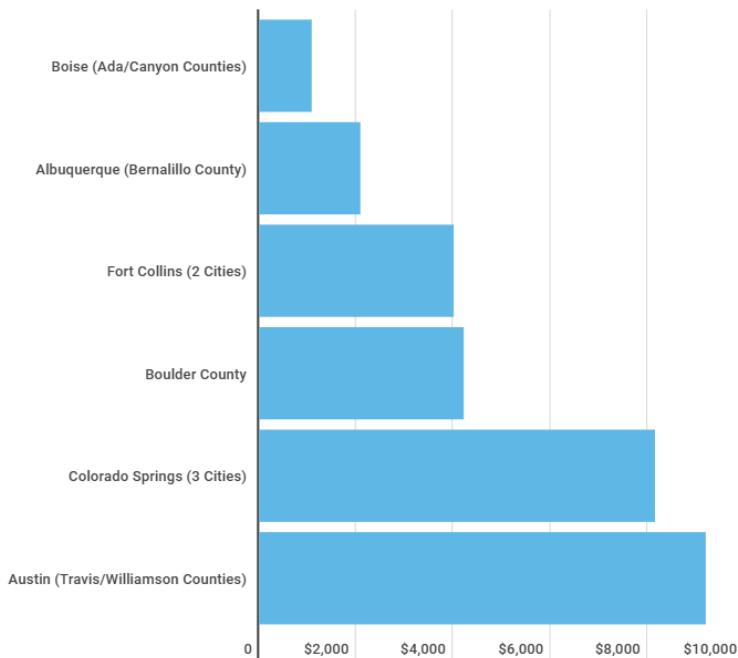
²³ City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, Colorado State Demography Office

²⁴ City of Fountain Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, U.S. Census Bureau, City Planning Department

²⁵ City of Woodland Park Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, U.S. Census Bureau, Colorado State Demography Office

A weighted average of those cities, which comprise 69% of the metro population, is used in the following peer comparison chart as an estimate for Colorado Springs MSA. For peer communities, the largest available cities or counties that cited overlapping debt calculations are used. In 2023, Colorado Springs ranked **5th of 6** communities for lowest local government debt. However, if area residents living outside municipal boundaries had been included, total per-capita debt would likely have been lower.

2023 LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEBT PER CAPITA



Counties with a higher per-capita gross product can sustain a higher level of per-capita debt. As a percentage of per-capita gross product, Colorado Springs MSA’s local government debt in 2023 was 13.0%, which ranked **6th of 6** peer communities.

³² 2020 City and county Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, U.S. Census Bureau

Credit Rating

As with individuals and companies, the creditworthiness of local governments impacts the rate at which they can borrow, whether by commercial loans or bond issues. Three credit bureaus—Moody’s Investors Service, S&P Global (formerly Standard & Poor’s), and Fitch Ratings—assign ratings to various bond issues and sometimes assign a long-term credit rating to the issuer itself. In 2011, Moody’s upgraded the City of Colorado Springs’ rating from Aa3 to **Aa2**, a rating that was affirmed in November 2022. El Paso County was issued a rating of **Aa1** in 2010, which was affirmed most recently in November 2022. The following table explains the investment-grade Moody’s ratings tiers and how local governments compares to peers.

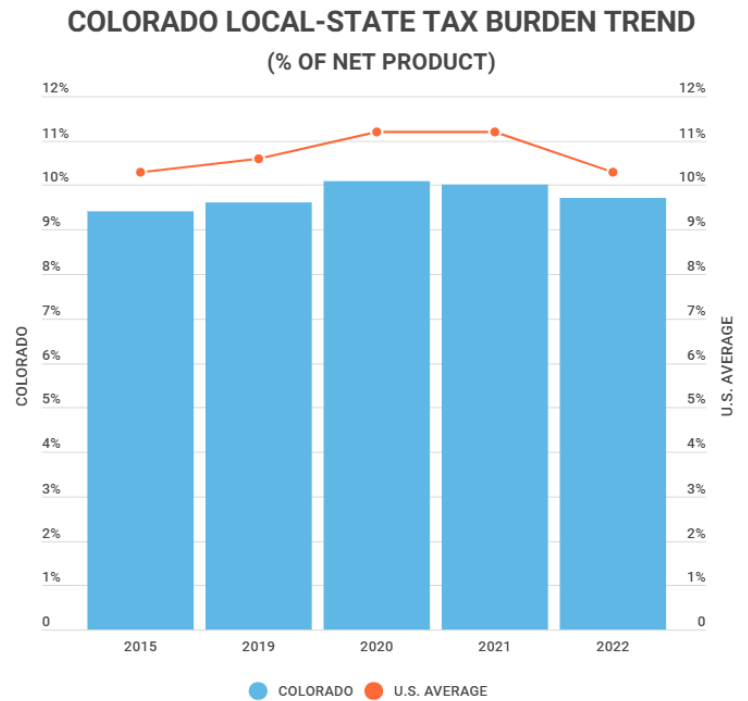
Moody's Credit Rating ³³	Communities with Long-term Issuer Rating	Definition
Aaa	City of Boulder ³⁴ City of Fort Collins ³⁵ Bernalillo County (NM) ³⁶ Larimer County (CO) ³⁷ Travis County (TX) ³⁸	Obligations rated Aaa are judged to be of the highest quality, subject to the lowest level of credit risk.
Aa1	City of Austin ³⁹ City of Boise ⁴⁰ Ada County (ID) ⁴¹ El Paso County (CO) ⁴²	Obligations rated Aa are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risk.
Aa2	City of Colorado Springs ⁴³	
Aa3	City of Albuquerque ⁴⁴	
A1		Obligations rated A are judged to be upper-medium grade and are subject to low credit risk.
A2		
A3		
Baa		Obligations rated Baa are judged to be medium-grade and subject to moderate credit risk and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.

⁴⁵ Moody's Investor Service

State & Local Tax Burden

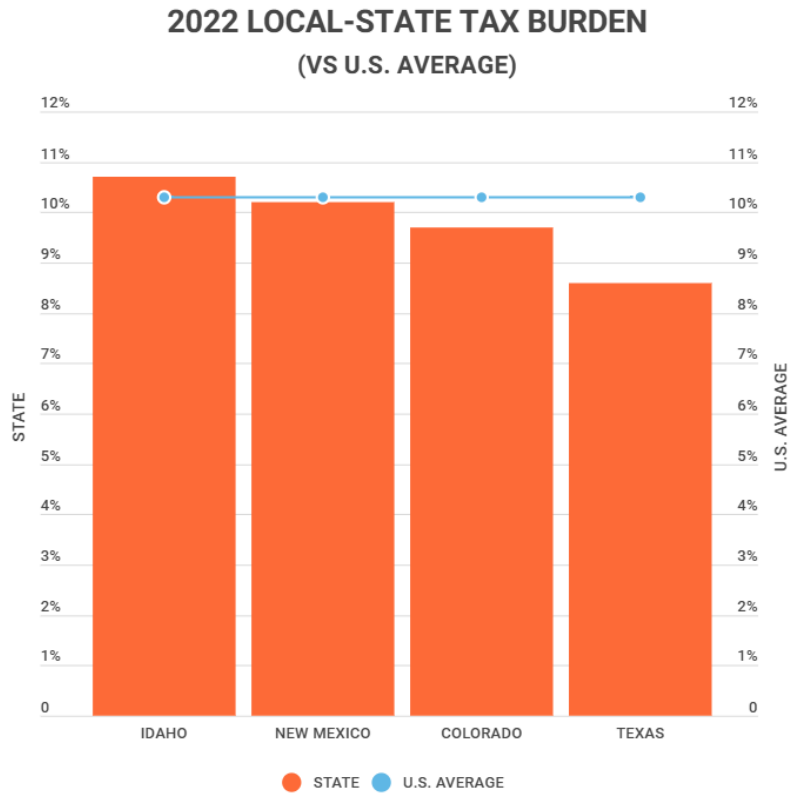
Data on the effective rate of state and local taxes is primarily available at the state level. Tax Foundation's calculations are favored because they account for "tax exporting," which adjusts for the portion of taxes—20% nationally—that is paid by out-of-state residents.⁴⁶ This includes sales tax paid by tourists, property tax on vacation homes, and severance tax on oil and mineral extraction.⁴⁷

In 2024, Colorado residents are projected to pay **\$6,387 per capita** in state and local taxes. As a percentage of economic output, the Colorado state-and-local tax burden was **9.7%** in fiscal 2022, which was less than the U.S. average of **10.3%** and ranks as the 17th lowest of 50 states.⁴⁸



⁴⁹ Tax Foundation

A published amount for Colorado Springs MSA is not available. The region’s net product in 2022 was 74.4% of the state average;⁵⁰ and the effective property tax rate for El Paso County was 104% of the statewide average.⁵¹



⁵²Tax Foundation

Compared to the nation as a whole, Colorado and all but one of the peer-community states have a lower-than-average tax burden. Colorado ranks 27th nationally for overall tax climate—7th for corporate tax, 13th for individual income tax, 38th for property tax and 40th for sales tax.⁵³

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² Teller County website, <https://www.tellercounty.gov/395/Teller-County-History>, <https://www.tellercounty.gov/Board-of-County-Commissioners-BOCC>, accessed July 31, 2024.

³ City of Colorado Springs website, <https://coloradosprings.gov/mayors-office/page/mayor-council-form-government>, accessed July 31, 2024.

⁴ Population age 18+ from U.S. Census Bureau (see note 5); Registered voters from El Paso County Clerk, https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/CO/El_Paso/115926/web.307039/#/summary, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Wlmgm-BhDqHKaL7agNnrj9kNpsB2fchn> and <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wa-7fFKxYP6CyyPr8OLHoIlFOBdoArY5/edit#gid=1301826200> (2012-2018); also from Teller County Clerk & Recorder, <https://www.tellercounty.gov/318/Previous-Election-Results>, accessed Oct. 19, 2024. Colorado state data (<https://www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/elections/Results/Archives.html>) records slightly fewer registered voters for Colorado Springs year over year (and therefore slightly higher turnout percentages); that data is not used in this report.

⁵ While not everyone in the U.S. 18+ population is eligible to vote (non-citizens and incarcerated people among them), the adult population provides a proxy that is available and comparable across MSAs. U.S. Census Bureau estimates by county and year from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/counties/asrh/cc-est2023-agesex-08.csv> and <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2010-2020/counties/asrh/CC-EST2020-AGESEX-08.csv>, accessed Sept. 2, 2024.

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⁷ Registered voters from Texas Secretary of State, <https://www.sos.texas.gov/elections/historical/nov2022.shtml>; accessed July 31, 2024; population age 18+ from U.S. Census Bureau (see note 5).

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¹⁰ Ibid.

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Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Built Environment Summary

The Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) includes the city of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, and Teller County, lending itself to a great variety in the structures, features, and facilities that the community members live and work in. The MSA is made up of a well-rounded group of infrastructure types which are detailed below.

This report provides measures related to status and changes in planning, land use, commercial and residential real estate, historical sites, and overall built environment in the Colorado Springs MSA.

- The Colorado Springs MSA has 106 listed historic properties.
- 28% of El Paso County's land is agricultural (ranching or farming), including 16% that is held by the State Land Board.
- While commercial real estate growth slowed in 2023-2024, rents rose. Among 5 peer communities, Colorado Springs' rent growth ranked 2nd for office space (+2.1%) and 3rd for industrial (+2.7%) and retail (+4.5%).
- The Colorado Springs MSA experienced dramatic increases in housing costs from mid-2020 to mid-2022 that far outpaced growth in household incomes. Prices since have been mostly flat but the situation remains difficult for those seeking to become first-time home buyers.
- As of 2023, Colorado Springs had **317,797 housing units**.
- In 2023, housing growth in the Pikes Peak region outpaced population growth for the 4th time in 5 years. Multi-unit housing represented 29% of 2023 construction permits, continuing a 3-year boom.
- More housing is on the way, but new starts are slowing—the number of new housing units authorized in 2023 was 1.7% of 2022 inventory.
- Effective rent per unit in Q1 of 2024 was **\$1,449**. That amount reflected a decrease of 1.6% over the previous 12 months. Colorado Springs ranked as the most affordable of 6 peer communities, with rent reflecting 14.8% of the annual wages of two adults.

COLORADO SPRINGS BUILT ENVIRONMENT



317,797

HOUSING UNITS IN COLORADO SPRINGS
AS OF 2023



+38%

HOME VALUES IN COLORADO SPRINGS
FROM MID-2020 TO MID-2022 BUT
HAVE BEEN FLAT SINCE



\$499,000

MEDIAN SALE PRICE OF A HOME IN
COLORADO SPRINGS AS OF JUNE 2024



28%

OF EL PASO COUNTY'S LAND IS
AGRICULTURAL (RANCHING OR FARMING)

Key Indicators

The “built environment” of a community consists of human-made structures, including buildings, homes, and stores, as well as streets, open spaces, and other types of infrastructure. The built environment impacts how and where people work, shop, study, gather, and access services. It enables job creation and provides the basis for property taxes, which provides a large portion of local government funding.¹ The built environment changes in response to needs and opportunities. Therefore, communities plan and monitor the built environment to ensure that it fulfills its purposes.

This report provides measurements related to status and changes in planning, land use, commercial and residential real estate, and historical sites in the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

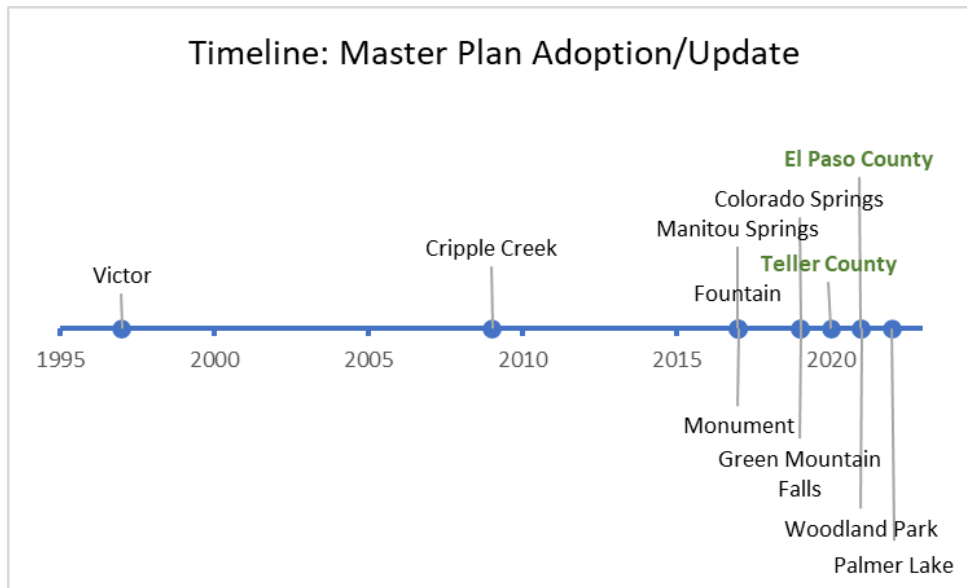
Comprehensive Planning

The Colorado General Assembly requires that all municipalities in certain categories adopt a master plan to achieve “coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare” of citizens.²

Comprehensive plans address the built environment and related issues, including:³

- land use
- water supply and conservation
- energy
- urban design
- capital improvements
- affordable housing
- economic development
- efficiency in government
- transportation
- hazards
- environment
- parks and open space
- natural and cultural resources
- sustainability
- recreation and tourism

Of county, city, and statutory town jurisdictions, **11 of 13** have an accessible master plan⁴ and **9 of 13** have adopted or updated their plan in the past 7 years.



Jurisdiction	Year Adopted or Amended	Webpage/Link ⁵
El Paso County	2021	https://elpaso.hlplanning.com/pages/documents
Teller County	2020	https://www.tellercounty.gov/241/Community-Plans
City of Colorado Springs	2019	https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos
City of Cripple Creek	2009	http://cityofcripplecreek.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Cripple-Creek-MasterPlan-062009-Optimized.pdf
City of Fountain	2005, amended 2017	https://www.fountaincolorado.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6004363/File/Planning%20&%20Zoning/Amended%202017%20Comp%20Plan.pdf
City of Manitou Springs	2017	https://www.manitouspringsgov.com/DocumentCenter/View/1263/Plan-Manitou-Community-Master-Plan-and-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan-2017-PDF
City of Woodland Park	2021	https://www.city-woodlandpark.org/DocumentCenter/View/3280/Woodland-Park-Comprehensive-Plan-2022
Town of Green Mountain Falls	2019	https://greenmountainfalls.colorado.gov/departments/planning-land-use/comprehensive-plan
Town of Monument	2017	https://www.townofmonument.org/DocumentCenter/View/681/CompPlan_2017
Town of Palmer Lake	2013, updated 2022	https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/bc-pc/page/master-plan
Town of Victor	1992, updated 1997	https://www.cityofvictor.com/land-developmentzoning/page/forms-checklists

Historic Sites

Recognizing historic sites reflects a concentrated effort to remember and share the legacy of those who founded and developed our community. Preserving historic buildings on the National Register of Historic Places protects the identity of the community, fosters learning, and fosters a vision to create new places of significance. Listing properties on the registry also opens opportunities for tax credits and grant funding to preserve or restore properties.

Nearly 100,000 properties nationwide have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since its authorization in 1966. The Colorado Springs MSA has 106 listed historic properties, or **13.8 per 100,000 residents**. That rate ranks **6th of 6** peer communities, four of which have at least 25 listings per 100,000 people.⁶

Of Colorado Springs' historic properties, **9.4%** have been listed since 2010, which ranks **5th of 6 peer communities** for rate of recent additions.⁷

	Listings	# per 100,000 population	% Registered Since 2010
Fort Collins	113	30.5	19.5%
Boise	239	29.0	7.1%
Boulder	92	28.1	9.8%
Albuquerque	254	27.5	9.8%
Austin	456	18.4	13.4%
Colorado Springs	106	13.8	9.4%

8 National Park Service, U.S. Census Bureau

Below are photos of a few of the area's historic sites. A full listing is available in the Supplement on Historic Sites.



Cutler Hall, Colorado College, early 1900s



Hornbek House

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cutler_Hall,_Colorado_College,_about_1901.jpg, public domain; uploaded by user Carole Henson. See also image on CC's website: <https://photos.coloradocollege.edu/Campus/Historic-Buildings/Cutler-Hall/n-C5pR2/i-2ppJB2R/A>

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hornbek_House_NPS.jpg image credit: National Park Service



Goldfield City Hall & Firehouse



Stratton's Independence Mine and Mill

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goldfield_City_Hall_and_Fire_Station_02.JPG
“Creative Commons credit: Eric Ross (ERoss99).”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IndependenceMine_Stone347.jpg Public domain image from the George H. Stone Collection of Colorado geological features and views, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.

[Supplement: Colorado Springs Area Registered Historic Places](#)

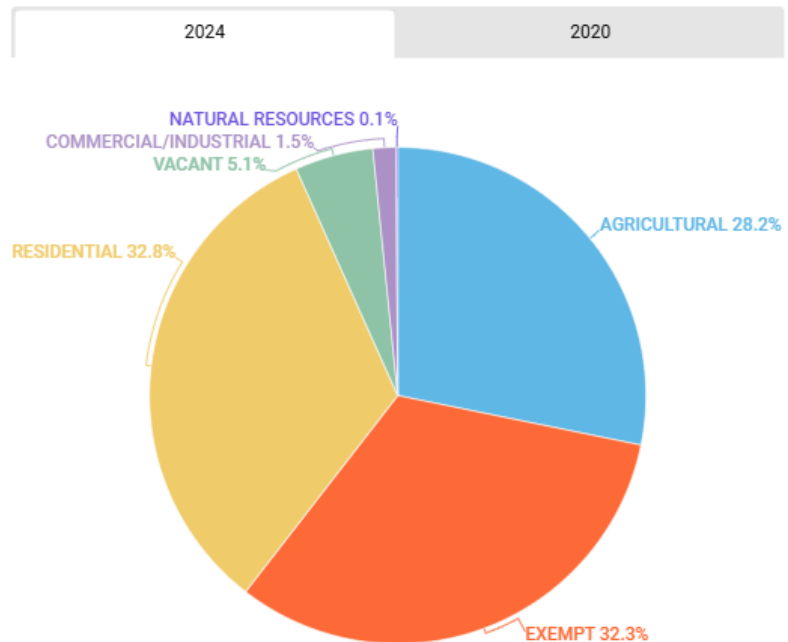
Land Use

Land in El Paso and Teller counties is categorized based on how it is used. This differs from zoning, which establishes permitted uses and dimensional requirements, such as setbacks, lot coverage, and building height. Effective community planning can manage and control development, which can be measured by noting how parcels are reclassified over time.

Since 2022, El Paso County reclassified more than 170,000 acres of land from agricultural to residential, reducing the share of agricultural land from 43% to 28% and increasing residential land from 18% to 33%. Of the remaining agricultural land, more than half (16% of all county land) is held by the State Land Board.⁹ Proportions as of July 30, 2024, are noted in the following chart.¹⁰

As land is developed, it is typically reclassified from Agricultural to Vacant in anticipation of a certain kind of development. It is again reclassified into one of the developed categories when construction takes place. “Exempt” land includes military installations, religious institutions, state parks, and other tax-exempt institutions.

EL PASO COUNTY LAND USE 2020



¹¹ El Paso County Assessor.

Commercial Real Estate

Commercial real estate is sub-categorized as office, industrial, or retail space. At the end of the first quarter of 2024, Colorado Springs had:

- **30.7 million** sq. ft. of office space¹² (including 7.8 million of Class A/B¹³)
- **42.4 million** sq. ft. of industrial space¹⁴
- **44.9 million** sq. ft. of retail space¹⁵

The market for office space experienced upheaval during the pandemic, as many office workers transitioned to working from home. The market recovered quickly and Colorado Springs fared well compared to other regions.

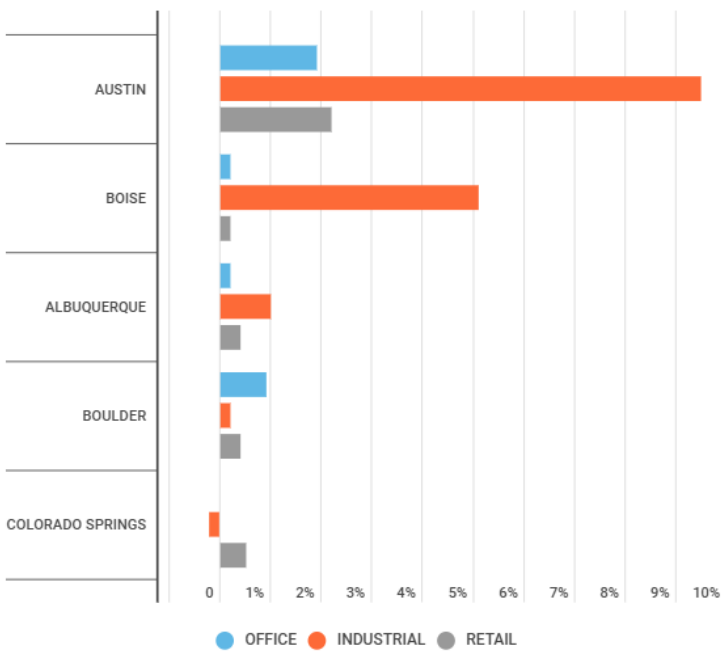
The industrial market saw a huge boost in the summer of 2021 with the opening of the Amazon distribution center adjacent to the airport. The 3.7 million square feet of new space represents more than a tenth of the community’s industrial inventory, and it helped create upward of 4,000 jobs.¹⁶

For the 12 months ending in the first quarter of 2024, commercial real estate growth in Colorado Springs was quiet. Industrial inventory was unchanged (lowest growth among 5 peer communities for which data was available). Office space shrank by 0.2% (5th of 5) and retail space grew by 0.5% (2nd of 5).

Industrial vacancy in Colorado Springs is 4.2% as of Q1 2024 (2nd of 6 peer cities). Vacancy rates for retail (4.4%) and office space (11.5%) both rank 4th among 6 peers.

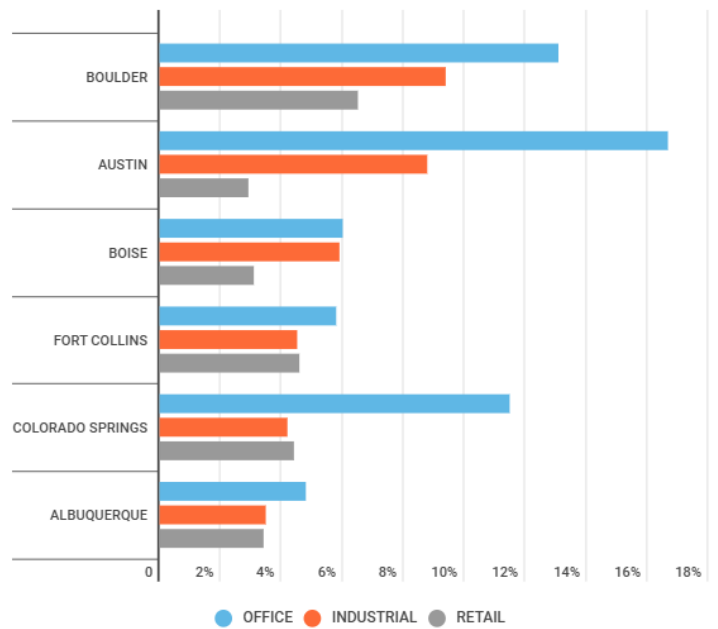
Among five peer communities, Colorado Springs' growth in commercial rent rates ranked 2nd for office space (2.1%) and 3rd for industrial (2.7%) and retail (4.5%) for the 12 months ended in Q1 of 2024.

COMMERCIAL SQUARE FOOTAGE ADDED 2023-2024 (Q1)
(% OF INVENTORY)



19 Ibid.

COMMERCIAL VACANCY RATE Q1 2024



20 Ibid.

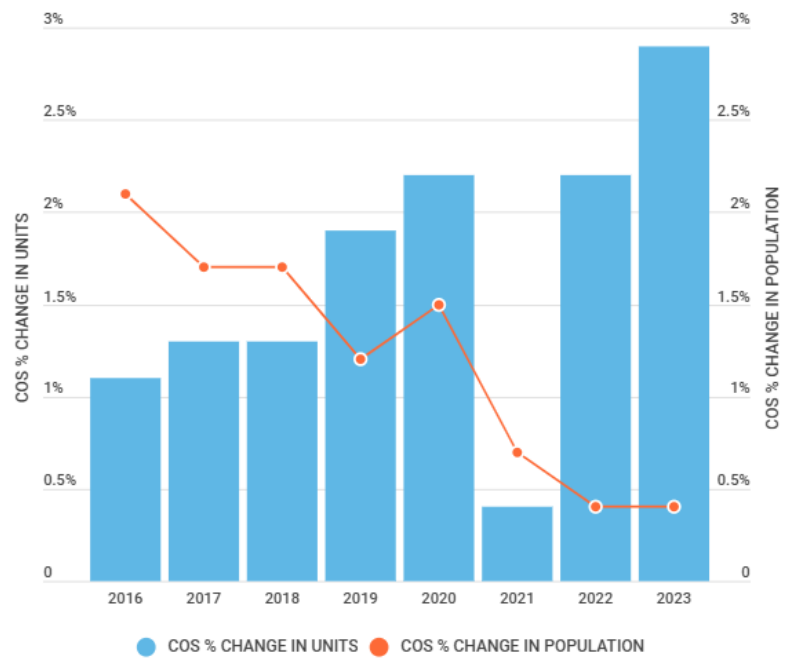
Residential Real Estate

Inventory

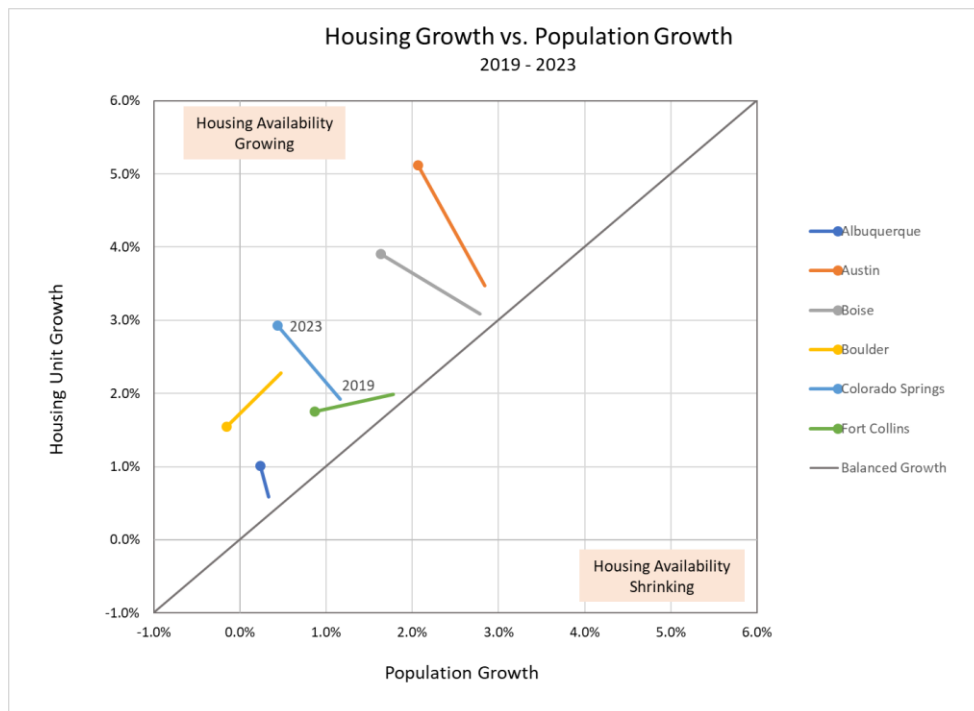
As of 2023, Colorado Springs had **317,797 housing units**.²⁰ Ideally, housing supply should increase in proportion to household growth. New housing construction, however, tends to vary with the economy. Following the 2008 recession, home construction in Colorado Springs lagged behind population growth in almost every year from 2010 to 2018. In 2019, the balance shifted due to increased construction and slowing population growth. Aside from COVID-affected 2021, construction growth has continued to outpace population growth, which has continued to slow, in part due to increased mortgage rates.²¹

Peer communities experienced a similar pattern. In 2016, housing growth lagged behind population growth in all cities but Albuquerque. By 2019, however, all peer communities saw a net gain in housing growth relative to population growth. Since then, Colorado Springs has seen further gains in housing availability, as have the three out-of-state peer communities.

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA HOUSING GROWTH VS POPULATION GROWTH



22 U.S. Census Bureau



24 U.S. Census Bureau

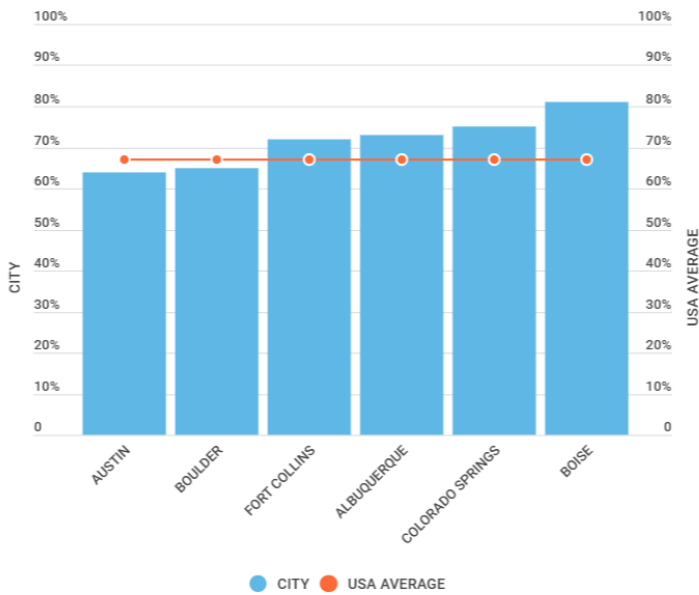
Recent gains have helped regain the ground lost over several prior years, made worse due to investment buying,²⁴ an increase in the institutional buyer market share,²⁵ vacation properties, and marijuana businesses, which use real estate as a functional bank for profits that cannot be deposited in traditional banks.

Housing Variety

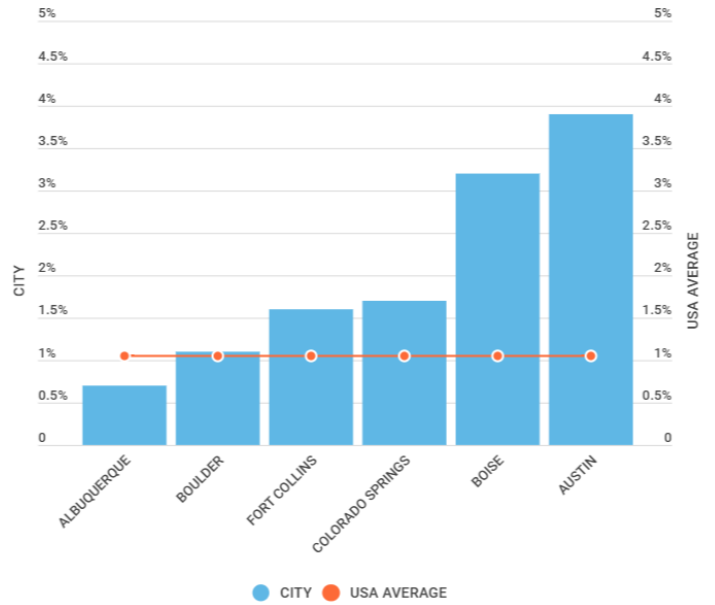
In 2022, single-family housing comprised **75%** of all dwellings in the Pikes Peak region, which represents a slight decrease, as several new apartment complexes opened.²⁶ That proportion is still greater than the national average and is 5th lowest of 6 peer communities.

Housing Variety	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Single unit	75%	75%	76%	75%	75%	76%	77%	75%
Multi-unit	22%	21%	20%	21%	22%	21%	20%	21%
Mobile home/Other	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

SINGLE-UNIT HOUSING 2022
(% OF ALL HOUSING UNITS VS NATIONAL AVERAGE)



HOUSING CONSTRUCTION GROWTH 2023
(change from prior year in permits authorized)



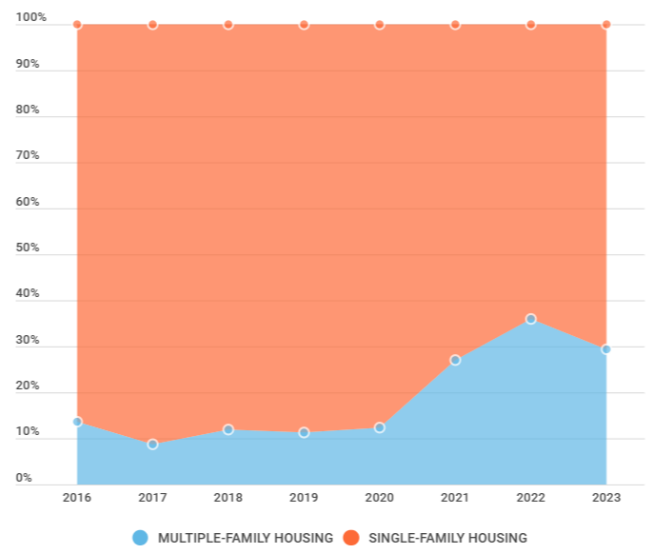
27 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

Construction

More housing is on the way in the Pikes Peak region—the number of new housing units authorized in 2023 was **1.7%** of 2022 inventory. However, that is the lowest growth rate since 2016. It ranks **3rd among 6 peer communities**.²⁸

Additionally, nearly 30% of the value of those permits were for multiple-unit housing—continuing a surge that began in 2021.²⁹

**NEW HOUSING CONSTRUCTION TYPE TREND
COLORADO SPRINGS MSA**



30 U.S. Census Bureau

Supply & Demand—Multi-family

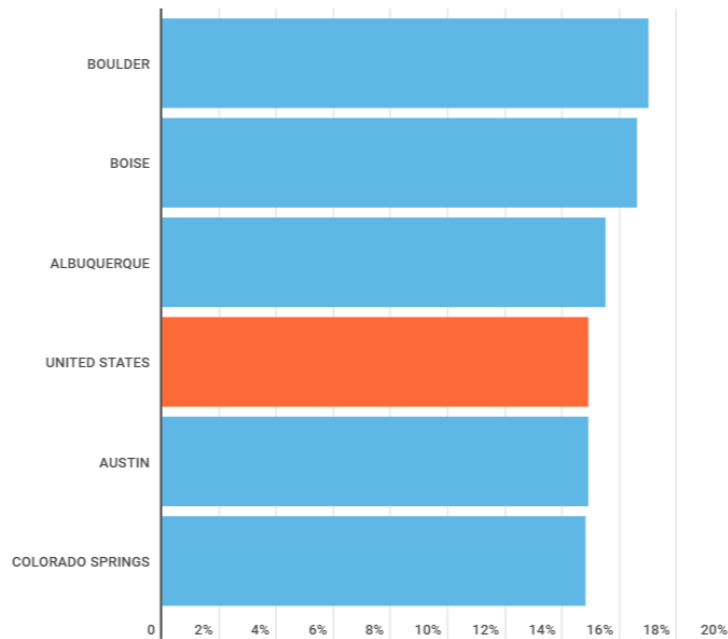
In the first quarter of 2024, **11.8%** of multi-family units in Colorado Springs MSA were vacant, almost double the rate in 2022 and well above the U.S. average of 7.8%, which itself is a 10-year high. While absorption rates are high due to the challenges of home-buying, new construction has still left a supply surplus.

Effective rent per unit at the end of Q1 2024 was **\$1,449**. That amount reflected a 1.6% decrease over the previous 12 months, again due to new construction. Colorado Springs ranked as the **most affordable of 5 peer communities**, with rent reflecting 14.8% of the annual wages of two adults.³²

Q1 2024	Multi-family Vacancy Rate
Boulder	8.8%
Albuquerque	9.5%
Boise	10.5%
Colorado Springs	11.8%
Austin	14.4%
United States	7.8%

31 National Association of Realtors, citing CoStar®, US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis

MULTI-FAMILY UNIT RENT 2024 Q1 (% OF 2-PERSON INCOME)

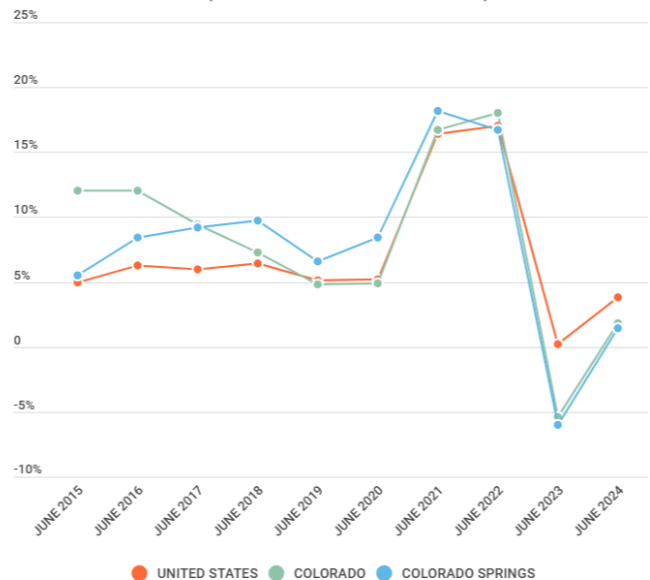


33 National Association of Realtors

Supply & Demand— Single-family

The same dynamics were true for single-family dwellings. Home values rose 38% from mid-2020 to mid-2022, then have been mostly flat since. As of June 2024, the typical home in Colorado Springs was on the market for 30 days, the 2nd-shortest time of 6 peer communities,³⁴ and sold for \$499,000.³⁵ Home values in Colorado Springs were nearly identical to those in Austin, 3% lower than those in Boise, and 17% lower than those in Fort Collins.³⁶

TYPICAL HOME VALUE (% CHANGE FROM PRIOR YEAR)



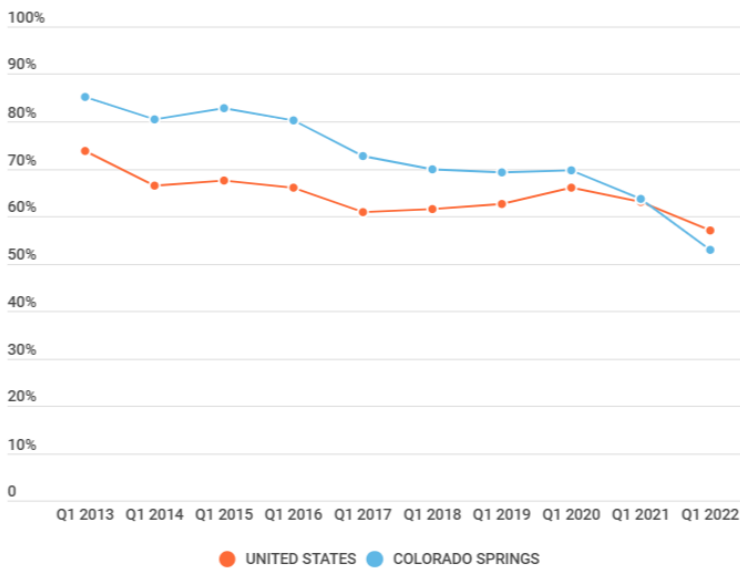
37 Zillow

Affordability

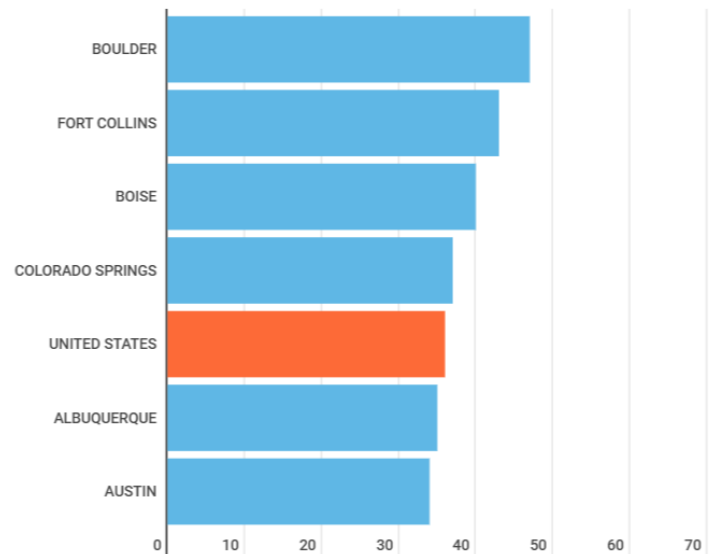
Housing in Colorado Springs and other communities has become much less affordable for both buyers and renters. Between 2017 and 2023, home prices rose by **60%** in the Pikes Peak Region and rents increased by **44%**, but average wages rose by only 31%.³⁸ As a result, the percentage of homes affordable to a family earning the local median income dropped from more than 80% in 2013 to only about half in 2022.³⁹

As of Q1 2024, a Colorado Springs family making the median household income would spend 37% of that income on a mortgage for a median-priced home. However, housing in Colorado Springs is still comparatively affordable. The Pikes Peak region ranked **3rd of 6 peer communities** for housing affordability.⁴⁰

TREND: % OF HOMES AFFORDABLE TO FAMILY WITH MEDIAN INCOME



NAHB/WELLS FARGO COST OF HOUSING INDEX (Q1 2024)



41 National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Cost of Housing Index

Next Steps

The comprehensive plans of the area's cities and counties include policy recommendations and strategies. Some of those in Colorado Springs PlanCOS that relate to built environment include:

- Strategy VN-1.B-1: Create and implement state-of-the-art, transparent, clear and cost-effective methods to inform and involve neighborhoods and affected property owners in development applications and planning initiatives.
- Strategy VN-2.A-3: Support land use decisions and projects that provide a variety of housing types and sizes, serving a range of demographic sectors, and meeting the needs of residents and families through various life stages and income levels.
- Strategy VN-2.A-4: Allow for zoning residential bonuses that result in the provision of additional attainable housing, such as increased heights or densities.

- Strategy VN-2.A-5: Amend the City’s zoning code to allow attainable housing in multi-family and commercial zoning districts in order to maximize the availability and distribution of this housing option in the city.
- Strategy VN-3.A-4: Modify City Code and create incentives to encourage redevelopment of underperforming buildings to include higher-density housing, mixed-use, civic services, gathering areas, and additional employment opportunities.
- Strategy VN-3.E-1: Focus incentives for mixed-use development within parts of the city that have been identified as priority redevelopment areas or corridors that have the potential for enhanced multimodal access and walkability.
- Strategy VN-3.E-2: Encourage vertical mixed-use design in neighborhood focal points along with neighborhood design meant to encourage a sense of community and provide a walkable environment. Vertical developments, where the various uses are “stacked” on top of each other, are typically used in areas with limited space, while larger sites allow those different components to be built next to each other—such as an apartment building adjacent to a grocery store.⁴²

References

¹ Property taxes accounted for 61% of local government funding nationwide in 2017; in Colorado, it was 36.2%. Pew Trusts, “How Local Governments Raise Their Tax Dollars,” July 27, 2021. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2021/how-local-governments-raise-their-tax-dollars>, accessed August 2, 2024.

² Colorado Revised Statute 31-23-207, revised 2023 Title 31 – Government – Municipal Powers and Functions of Cities and Towns, Article 23 – Planning and Zoning, Part 2 – Planning Commission. <https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/olls/crs2023-title-31.pdf>, p. 260, accessed August 2, 2024.

³ Colorado Department of Local Affairs, “Comprehensive Plans,” <https://cdola.colorado.gov/community-development-planning/comprehensive-plans>, accessed August 3, 2024.

⁴ County and city websites. Plans for the towns of Calhan and Ramah could not be identified. Other communities in the region (e.g. Security-Widefield) are Census Designated Places but not statutory towns or cities.

⁵ County and city websites. All web links accessed August 3, 2024.

⁶ National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/national-register-listed-20240710.xlsx>. Accessed via <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>, August 6, 2024. Population data for per-capita calculation from U.S. Census Bureau, Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas Totals: 2020-2023. Data downloaded from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html>, accessed August 6, 2024.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Colorado State Land Board. As a proportion of total land, the state’s holdings in El Paso County are its largest in the state. State trust land is primarily in the south and southeast of the county (Bohart Ranch and Chico Basin Ranch). Revenues are used to support public education. <https://slb.colorado.gov/county> and <https://slb.colorado.gov/stewardship-report>, accessed August 6, 2024.

¹⁰ Data provided for Teller County included different land use categories than data reported in 2016.

¹¹ El Paso County Assessor. Parcel data with acreage and use codes are available to the public via <https://assessor.elpasoco.com/assessordata/>, accessed August 6, 2024. The July 30, 2024 data set of 271,352 parcel records was grouped according to the 2022 Abstract of Assessment

categories, <https://assessor.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/2022-Abstract-of-Assessment.pdf>, accessed August 6, 2024.

¹² National Association of Realtors, Commercial Real Estate Metro Market Reports (Q1 2024) for Colorado, citing CoStar®, US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2024-q1-commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports-co-05-20-2024.pdf>, accessed from <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports>, accessed August 7, 2024.

¹³ Cushman & Wakefield, Colorado Springs Office MarketView 2024 Q1, downloaded from <https://coscommercial.com/research/>, accessed August 7, 2024.

¹⁴ National Association of Realtors, Commercial Real Estate Metro Market Reports (Q1 2024) for Colorado, citing CoStar®, US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2024-q1-commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports-co-05-20-2024.pdf>, from <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports>, accessed August 7, 2024.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Heilman, Wayne, “Amazon hiring 2,500 for Colorado Springs distribution center,” The Gazette, June 9, 2021, updated Mar. 24, 2022, https://gazette.com/premium/amazon-hiring-2-500-for-colorado-springs-distribution-center/article_2e9a99f4-c94c-11eb-9a6f-5fc8592fbb0e.html; Heilman, Wayne, “Amazon’s rapid growth in Colorado Springs continues with plan to hire thousands more,” The Gazette, Sept. 14, 2021 Updated Oct. 23, 2021, https://gazette.com/business/amazons-rapid-growth-in-colorado-springs-continues-with-plan-to-hire-thousands-more/article_bacbb4de-14b6-11ec-8944-cfa39e7bc0db.html, accessed August 9, 2024.

¹⁷ National Association of Realtors, Commercial Real Estate Metro Market Reports (Q1 2024) for Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico & Texas citing CoStar®, US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2024-q1-commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports-co-05-20-2024.pdf>, from <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports>, accessed August 7, 2024. Fort Collins vacancy data from City of Fort Collins, <https://fortcollins.clearpointstrategy.com/economic-health/commercial-vacancy-rates/>, citing data from Cush & Wakefield (retail, industrial) and Commercial Edge National Office Report (office).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2023 data. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-housing-units.html>, accessed August 9, 2024.

²¹ Statewide, housing shortfalls were recorded every year from 2008 to 2016. Colorado State Demography Office, “Census Data, Population Trends and Housing Data,” 2020, slide 26. https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=1RE2DLSYdtVeNkFzYCF8g3_PB3mfWUAYE, accessed August 10, 2024.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2021 data (through 2019) & Vintage 2023 data (2020-2023). Housing data from Table HU-EST2020, downloaded from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-housing-units.html>, accessed May 20, 2022, and from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-housing-units.html>, accessed August 9, 2024. Population trend data downloaded from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>, accessed March 13, 2022 and from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>, accessed August 9, 2024.

²³ *Ibid.*, excluding 2021 data for comparative purposes

²⁴ Katz, Lily, and Sheharyar Bokhari, “Real-Estate Investors Bought a Record 18% of the U.S. Homes That Sold in the Third Quarter,” Redfin, Nov. 15, 2021, updated Apr. 6, 2022, <https://www.redfin.com/news/investor-home-purchases-q3-2021/>, accessed August 10, 2024. Nationally, the rate of investor purchases averaged spiked to 18.2% in Q3 of 2021. Denver’s rate was 16.8%.

²⁵ “Institutional buyers” refer to companies, corporations, or LLCs based on property deed records. Colorado’s Institutional buyer market share increased 3.2% from 2020 to 2021, the fifth-largest increase among states. National Association of Realtors Research Group, “Impact of Institutional Buyers on Home Sales and Single-Family Rentals,” May 2022, p.7. <https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2022-impact-of-institutional-buyers-on-home-sales-and-single-family-rentals-05-12-2022.pdf>, accessed May 27, 2022 (no longer available). NAR analysis used sales records from Black Knight, Inc.

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Housing Characteristics Table DP04, Vintage 2022, 1-year estimates provided for population centers of 65,000 or more, https://data.census.gov/table?q=units%20in%20structure&g=010XX00US_310XX00US10740,12420,14260,14500,17820,22660&y=2022. (For earlier years replace “2022” in link with corresponding year.) All accessed August 9, 2022.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau Business Permits Survey, permits by CBSA <https://www.census.gov/construction/bps/msamonthly.html>, accessed August 10, 2024.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ For context on where apartments are being built, and for permit applications under review for future years, see Kerridge, Kasia, “Thousands of apartment units under construction in Pikes Peak region, more than double permitted in 2021 than 2020”, Dec. 20, 2021, <https://www.kktv.com/2021/12/20/thousands-apartment-units-under-construction-colorado-springs-more-than-double-permitted-2021-than-2020/>, accessed August 12, 2024.

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits Survey, 2019-2023 data tables linked from <https://www.census.gov/construction/bps/>. Historical data prior to 2019 linked from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-housing-units.html>. All accessed August 12, 2022.

³¹ National Association of Realtors, Commercial Real Estate Metro Market Reports (Q1 2024) for Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico & Texas, citing CoStar®, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/commercial-real-estate-metro-market-reports>, accessed August 9, 2024. National data from NAR’s April 2024 Commercial Market Real Estate Insights report, from <https://www.nar.realtor/commercial-real-estate-market-insights/april-2024-commercial-real-estate-market-insights>, accessed August 10, 2024.

³² Ibid., with comparison to 2023 Q1 Commercial Real Estate Metro Market Reports for the same geographies, accessed August 9, 2024.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Zillow mean days to pending, June 2024. “Days to pending” reflects days on the market as computed by how long it takes homes to change to pending status on Zillow.com after first being shown as for sale. The measure excludes the in-contract period before a home sells. Data file https://files.zillowstatic.com/research/public_csvs/mean_dozen_pending/Metro_mean_dozen_pending_uc_sfrcondo_sm_month.csv?t=1723348345, accessed from <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>, August 11, 2024.

³⁵ Pikes Peak Association of Realtors, <https://ppar.com/Documents/stats/MarketTrends/Prices.jpg>, accessed December 11, 2024.

³⁶ Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI), June 2024. ZHVI is a smoothed, seasonally adjusted measure of the typical amount paid for the 35th to 65th percentile range (similar but not identical to median) of all fixed homes. Data file https://files.zillowstatic.com/research/public_csvs/zhvi/Metro_zhvi_uc_sfrcondo_tier_0.33_0.67_sm_sa_month.csv?t=1733522172, accessed from <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>. Detail on ZHVI methodology available at <https://www.zillow.com/research/zhvi-methodology-2019-highlights-26221/>, both accessed December 11, 2024.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Zillow, change from 12/2016 to 12/2023 for home value (ZVHI, all homes, smoothed, seasonally adjusted) & rent (ZORI, all homes plus multifamily, smoothed) via <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>, accessed August 11, 2024. ZVHI data file: https://files.zillowstatic.com/research/public_csvs/zhvi/Metro_zhvi_uc_sfrcondo_tier_0.33_0.67_sm_sa_month.csv?t=1723348344; ZORI data file: https://files.zillowstatic.com/research/public_csvs/zori/Metro_zori_uc_sfrcondomfr_sm_month.csv?t=1723348344, accessed August 11, 2024. Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2017, 2023 annual mean wages, data from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed August 11, 2024.

³⁹ National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index, which takes into account home prices (from CoreLogic) and median family income, using standard 30-year mortgage financing terms and assumption that affordable housing does not exceed 28% of gross income. Data was formerly available at <https://www.nahb.org/news-and-economics/housing-economics/indices/housing-opportunity-index>, accessed June 6, 2022. However, the measure was retired at the end of 2022 and replaced by the NAHB/Wells Fargo Cost of Housing Index.

⁴⁰ National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Cost of Housing Index, which considers the percentage of income required for a median-income household to purchase a median-priced house, assuming a standard 30-year mortgage with 10% downpayment at current PMI. The measure was introduced by NAHB in 2023 to replace the Housing Opportunity Index. <https://www.nahb.org/news-and-economics/housing-economics/indices/cost-of-housing-index>, accessed August 11, 2024.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² City of Colorado Springs, PlanCOS: Leading the Way to Our Future, Comprehensive Plan, Jan. 2019, pp. 35-38. https://coloradosprings.gov/sites/default/files/inline-images/plancos_2020.pdf, downloaded from <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/page/plancos-downloads>. See also <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/book/vibrant-neighborhoods-goals-and-policies>. All accessed August 7, 2024



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

ECONOMY REPORT

Economy Summary

Colorado Springs continues to draw people evidenced by the increase in population of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by more than a third over the past two decades.

Population growth is good when accompanied by growth in productivity, quality jobs, employment, and personal income. Such growth creates a base of support so that public services and infrastructure can also grow and be sustained. However, without economic growth, population growth increases stress on community assets. Several measures show the quality of Colorado Springs' growth.

- In 2023, the total Gross Metropolitan Product of Colorado Springs in current dollars was \$53.1 billion.
- In 2022, Colorado Springs had 19,614 employers, which is 26 employers per 1,000 residents.
- In 2022, 63.5% of the Colorado Springs population (all ages) was employed, which includes active-duty military and self-employed proprietors.
- Over the past decade, substantial job increases have been seen in: Natural resources and mining +41%; Education and health services +36%; Construction +34%.
- In 2023, median household income for the Colorado Springs MSA was \$89,792.
- From 2018 to 2023, average weekly wages in Colorado Springs rose 28%; personal expenses rose 17%.
- In 2023, the cost of rent in Colorado Springs was 23% more than the national average.

COLORADO SPRINGS ECONOMY



7 STRAIGHT YEARS OF
PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY
GROWTH
(2017-2023)



\$89,792
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
FOR THE COLORADO SPRINGS MSA
(IN 2023)



28% MORE
5-YEAR RISE
IN WEEKLY WAGES
(2018-2023)



19,614 EMPLOYERS
26 EMPLOYERS
PER 1,000 RESIDENTS
(IN 2022)

Key Indicators

There are many factors to consider when assessing the vitality of a local economy. The quantitative measurements included in this section affect, and are affected by, many indicators throughout the report. The Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has experienced fluctuations in the areas of economic production, employment, income, and cost of living impacting their overall economic performance.

Economic Productivity

What Is This?

Gross Metropolitan Product (GMP) is a measure of the goods and services produced by labor and property in a community. It is the local version of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures the economic output of a country. Per capita GMP is a measure of individual economic productivity for a community. It is calculated by dividing the GMP by the population of the community.

How are we doing?

Adjusted for inflation, Colorado Springs' economy grew an average of 3.0% annually from 2013 to 2023. In 2023, the total GMP of Colorado Springs in current dollars was \$53.1 billion, which reflected strong growth over the previous year (+9.8%). Colorado Springs showed much greater economic stability during COVID-19 than the state and country as a whole. This may have been due to the large concentration of military installations, which makes Colorado Springs less susceptible to downturns than other communities.

Sustainable growth requires individual productivity to keep up with population growth. From 2012 to 2016 it did not, as real (inflation-adjusted) per-capita gross product declined almost every year. That flipped in recent years, with personal productivity increasing every year since

2017.¹ Between 2018 and 2023, Colorado Springs ranked 3rd of 6 peer communities in per-capita productivity growth.

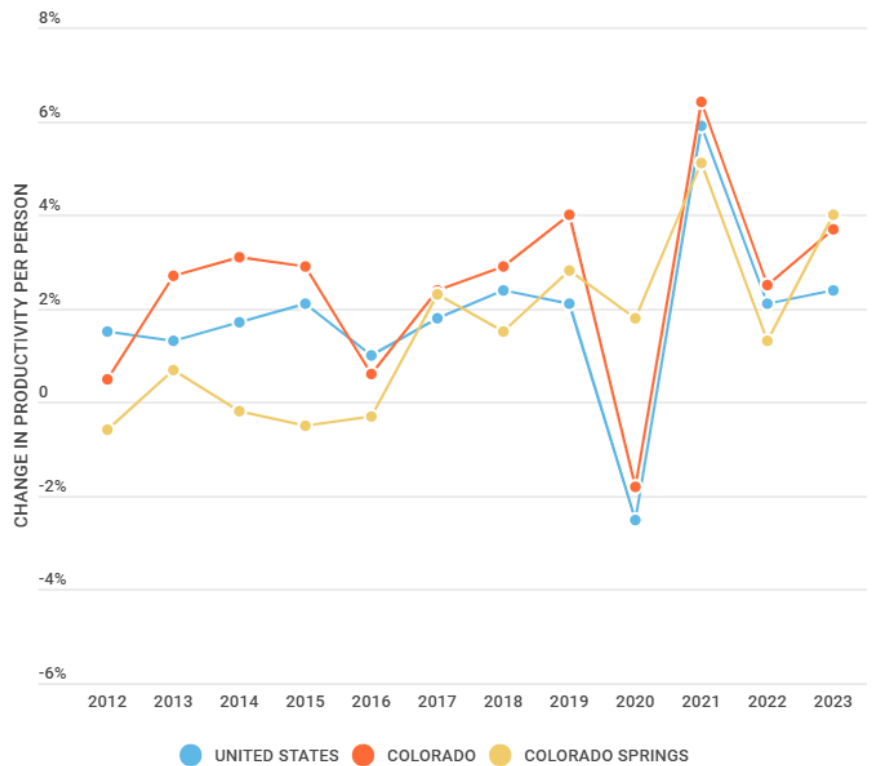
Why Is It Important?

GMP per capita shows how efficient members of a community are in delivering goods and services. Increasing per capita productivity creates a healthy tax base to support public services and infrastructure to keep pace with population growth. High productivity also results in higher wages, a sustainable standard of living, and wealth creation. Low productivity requires more people to achieve the same output. This drives a need for more housing, roads, schools, etc.

Potential Actions

A robust assessment of the local economy would determine how well the current tourism/military/service industry economic base can support, sustain, and improve quality of life. It is likely that significant effort will be required to grow and attract high productivity jobs to achieve high levels of economic output without the need to build significantly more infrastructure.

CHANGE IN REAL PRODUCTIVITY PER PERSON



2 Bureau of Economic Analysis

Employer Size, Growth & GDP

What Is This?

Employer size looks at the average size of an employer in terms of employee headcount. Employment growth reflects the total number of new jobs created in a given period of time.

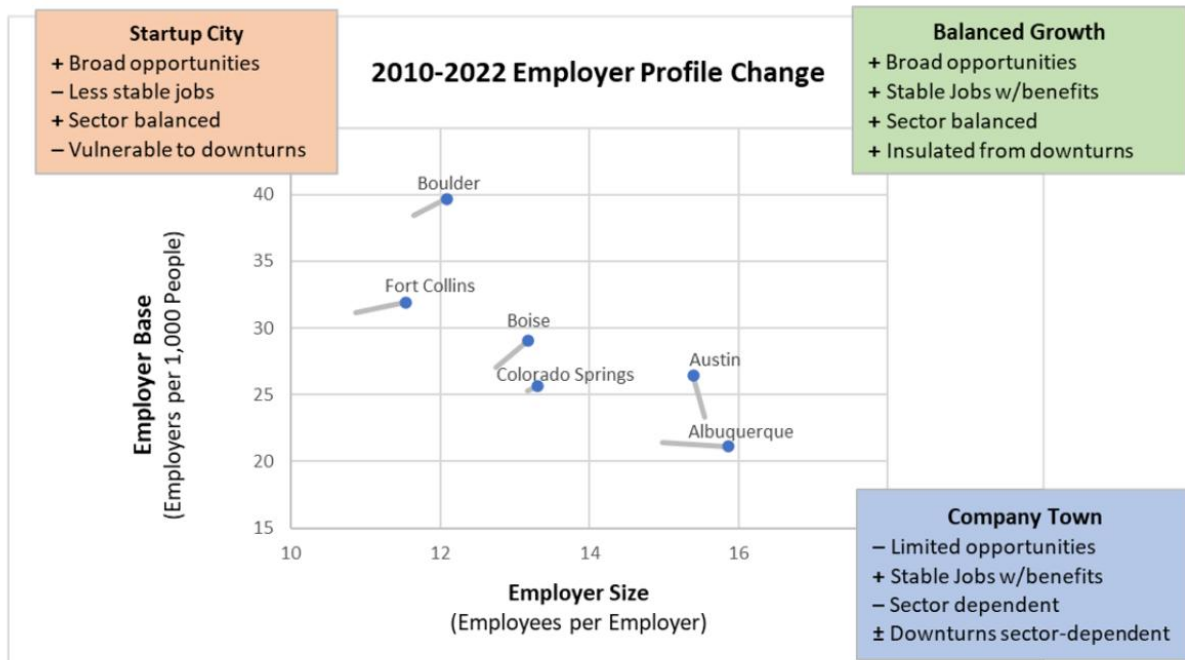
How Are We Doing?

In 2022, Colorado Springs had 19,614 employers, with 26 employers per 1,000 residents.³ The number of employers in Colorado Springs grew by 18.5% over a 12-year period. That growth rate ranked 4th of 6 peer communities, exceeding that of Boulder and Albuquerque. Colorado

Springs had 130 employers with at least 250 employees, up from 97 in 2010. Healthy growth requires growth in the overall number of employers and also the number of larger employers. Both are shown in the graph below, with total employer base on the vertical axis and the relative size of employers on the horizontal axis. Over the past 12 years, Colorado Springs' profile has been stable. Growth in the number of employers has kept pace with the area's population growth.

Why Is It Important?

A robust economy requires a growing base of employers—providing a wide variety of jobs—anchored by a set of large employers that typically offer stable jobs with benefits and strong salaries. Coupled with employment growth, employer size can indicate if the workforce is experiencing growth or contraction. Larger employers will also typically offer higher salary ranges and benefits that small to medium companies struggle to match, thus creating higher paying jobs in the MSA. Increasing employer count would suggest a more varied employer base and growing economy. It also highlights an MSA's success in attracting new employers. A growing employer base should drive population increases through job creation.



4 U.S. Census Bureau

Potential Actions

Colorado Springs' growth in small-to-mid-sized employers has outpaced the national average. However, growth in large employers has only matched the national average, while other peer communities have seen greater growth. (Note: This data does not include federal government employers). Colorado Springs has done well in attracting new employers over the past 20 years and has maintained an even mix of small to large employers. However, Colorado Springs has very few nationally known large employers with significant, high paying jobs. This likely results in Colorado Springs wages being suppressed compared to that of peer communities. Attracting

larger companies would be likely to drive up employee wages to keep pace with increased costs of living.

Employment & Population

What Is This?

Workforce participation is the proportion of the population that is working. It provides an alternative to traditional unemployment statistics that exclude people who are neither employed nor looking for a job.

How Are We Doing?

In 2022, 63.5% of the Colorado Springs population was employed, which includes active-duty military and self-employed proprietors. The proportion of the population that works grew consistently between 2012 and 2022 (from 56.7% to 63.5%) except for a brief dip in 2020 due to COVID-19. Colorado Springs ranks 5th of 6 peer cities in terms of the employment-to-population ratio.

Over the past decade, the proportion of Colorado Springs MSA employees who are active-duty military personnel has dropped from 10.4% to 8.2%. In 2022, military accounted for 8.2% of employees in the area, or 1 in 12 employed residents.⁵

Why Is It Important?

The number of people working in a community drives economic output and provides income to individuals and families to pay for housing, groceries, education, savings, healthcare, etc. A certain level of income is required to afford a reasonable standard of living. If people cannot secure employment, they may not be able to afford housing or food and in turn will have to rely on social services.



⁶ Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau

The worker population shown above includes sole-proprietor work (such as those engaged part-time in the “gig” economy). Were these workers not counted, each community would drop further below the diagonal, with population growing faster than wage and salary employment.

Potential Actions

The Colorado Springs MSA would benefit from continued actions to support growth in job opportunities to maximize employment, economic output, and incomes. This would support a secure and enjoyable lifestyle for all residents and improve tax collections to fund infrastructure and regional amenities to enhance quality of life.

Employment by Industry

What Is This?

Employment by industry, reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is calculated by using data collected by employers in all industry sectors in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas in every state and the District of Columbia.

How are we doing?

Over the past decade, we have seen substantial job increases as well as job reductions in the following sectors:

Why Is It Important?

Communities benefit financially from a healthy mix of industry. By reviewing industry employment data, economic development activities can be more focused on companies that support the culture of the community, the skillsets of the available workforce, and the geographic assets of the region.

Potential Actions

The data reflects that, from 2014 to 2023, job growth in Colorado Springs MSA (2.5% average per year) has outpaced that of Fort Collins (2.2%) and Boulder (1.7%).

Continuing to diversify the employment base in the Colorado Springs MSA should be a

priority, with an increased focus on the attraction and retention of technology and manufacturing industries.

Income

What Is This?

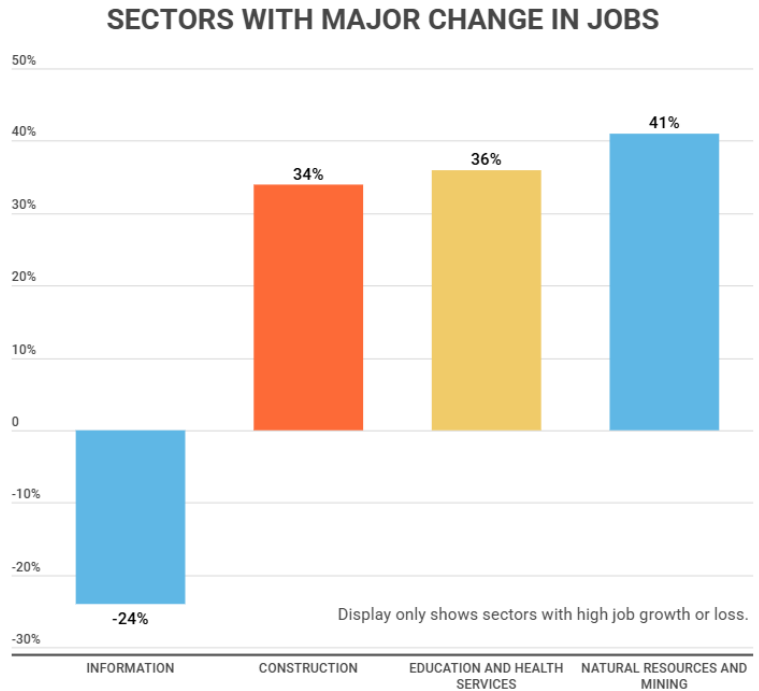
The section on Productivity considered the total value of goods and services produced by a community (gross product). This section considers the income that local people derive from that production. Per capita income is calculated by taking the total income derived in a community and dividing it by the total number of people in the community. This includes all forms of income salaries, wages, social security, pensions, interest, and dividends but it excludes capital gains. Median household income is the income of the “typical” household—that is, equal numbers of households have more and less income.

How Are We Doing?

In 2023, median household income for the Colorado Springs MSA was \$89,792.⁸ Per capita income—that is, all personal income divided by all residents—was \$65,775.⁹ Average individual weekly wages—job earnings of those employed by private employers—were \$1,264.¹⁰

Why Is It Important?

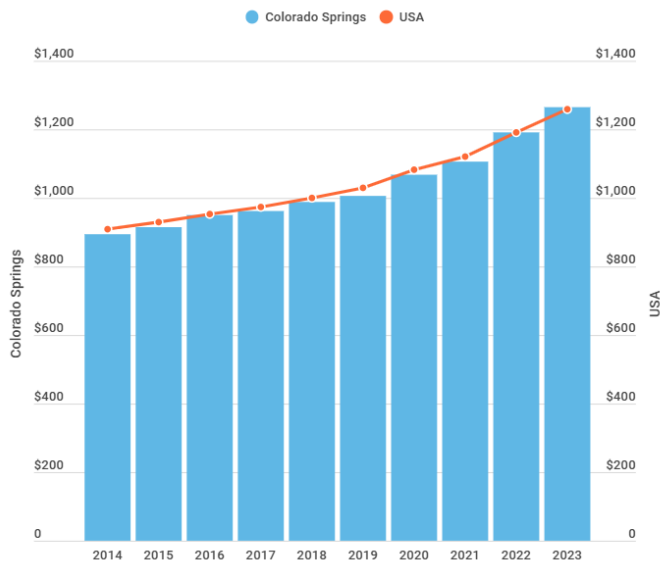
Personal income is the amount that people earn from a variety of sources, including work and investments. It is one measure of the wealth or prosperity of a community. At an individual level, income ensures the affordability of essential elements for a reasonable quality of life, including healthcare, education, and housing.



7 Bureau of Labor Statistics

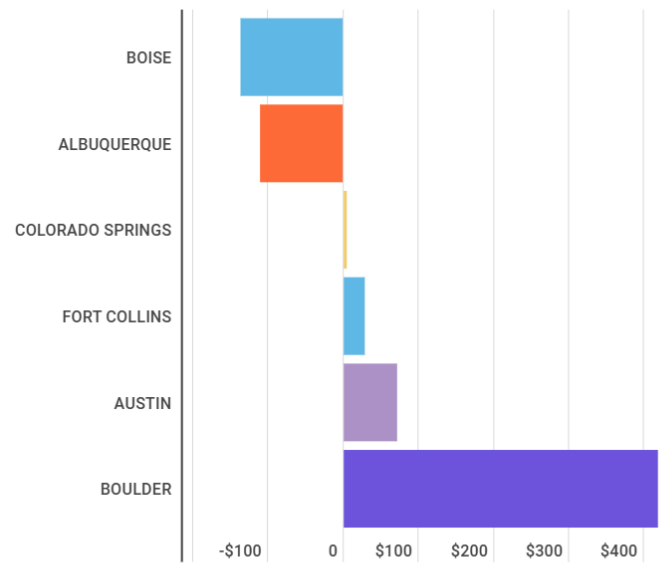
In all three categories, Colorado Springs ranked 4th of 6 peer communities. Median household income ranged from as low as \$66,392 (Albuquerque) to as high as \$96,079 (Boulder). Per capita income ranged from as low as \$38,150 (Albuquerque) to as high

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES



10 Bureau of Labor Statistics

2023 AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES
DIFFERENCE FROM U.S. AVERAGE (CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES)



11 Bureau of Labor Statistics

as \$56,506 (Boulder).

Potential Actions

The recent growth in Colorado Springs is encouragement that it is on the right path. Efforts taken in these years should be emulated moving forward. Attracting better-paying jobs, particularly in technology and manufacturing, should be a priority for Colorado Springs, as should keeping restrictions reasonable for home-based businesses.

Cost of Living

What Is This?

Cost of living for a metropolitan statistical area is captured by the Regional Price Parities data collected by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional price parities (RPPs) are regional price levels expressed as a percentage of the overall national price level for a given year. The price levels are determined by the average prices paid by consumers for the mix of goods and services consumed in each community. Taking the ratio of RPPs shows the difference in price levels across communities.

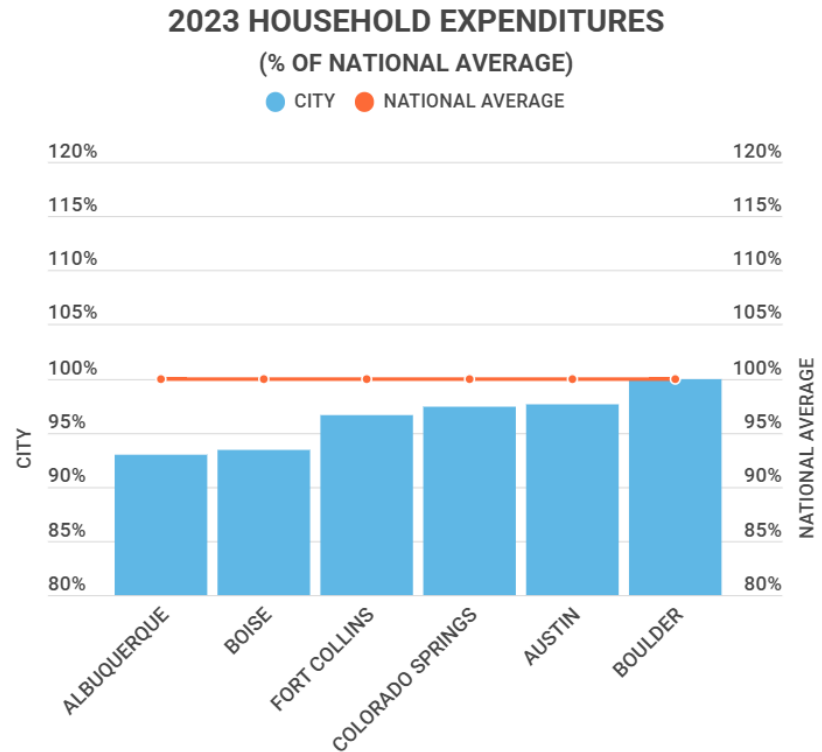
How Are We Doing?

For many years, Colorado Springs' cost of living, based on all household expenditures, has closely matched the overall USA average, running between 98% and 102% of the U.S. average.¹² After dipping below 97% in 2021 and 2022, as costs in Colorado Springs rose at a slightly lower level than the 9% national rate, the 2023 figure was 97.4%. Costs in Colorado Springs are also lower than the state of Colorado as a whole.

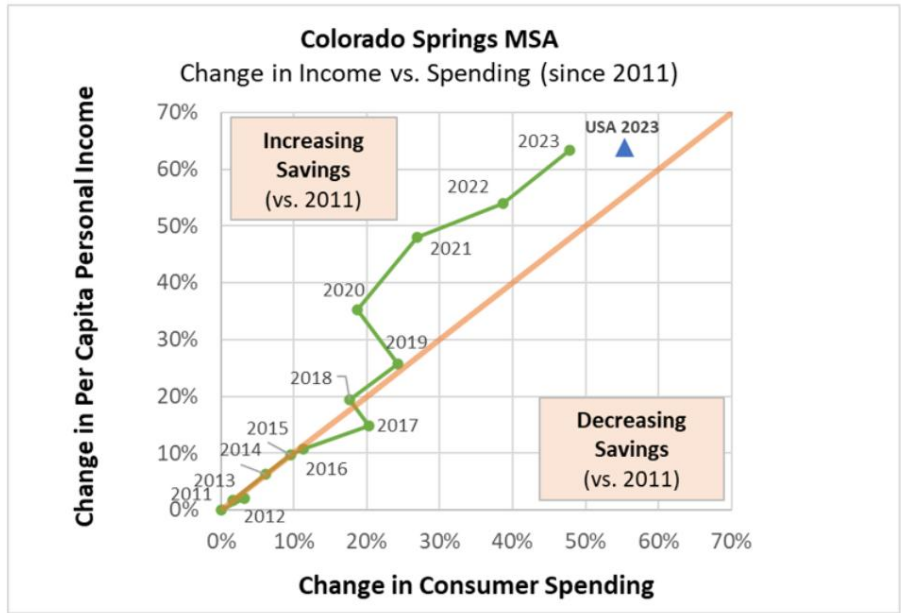
Why Is It Important?

Cost of living reflects how affordable housing, rent, utilities and other household expenses are in a community. (Note, however, that increases in housing costs tend to lag because most homeowners' mortgages were set at the time of purchase.) A higher cost of living makes it more expensive to live in an area, while a lower cost of living reflects a community that is more affordable.

The following chart shows how the "typical" Colorado Springs resident's income and spending changed—usually increasing—through the 2010s. Points above the diagonal show years when savings increased (or debt was reduced). Points below the diagonal show years when savings decreased (or debt increased). In 2020, as travel decreased and income uncertainty rose due to COVID-19, consumer spending declined significantly in spite of job transitions, both in Colorado Springs and nationally. Median personal income has continued to increase significantly since 2020, resulting in increased savings or reduced debt) for many households.

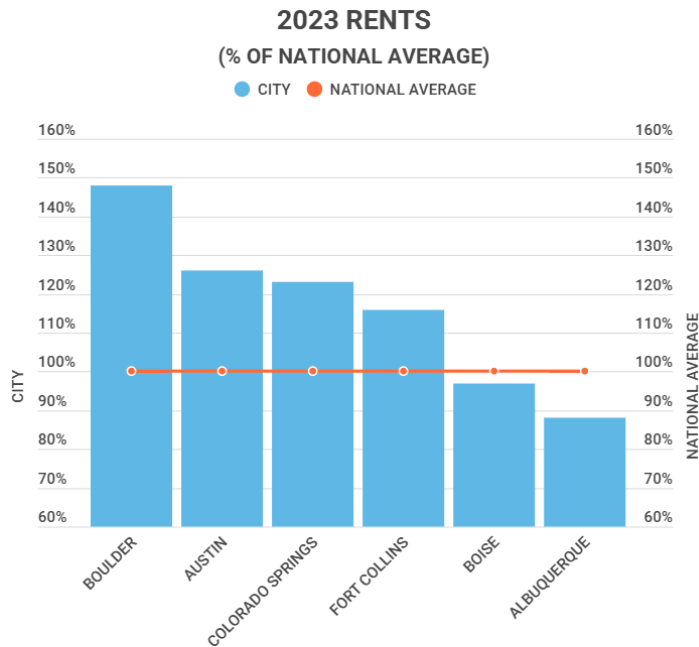


¹³ Bureau of Economic Analysis



14 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis

In 2010, Colorado Springs housing rental costs were virtually identical to the national average (101%). Regional costs increased significantly during the decade, and in 2023 rent in Colorado Springs was 23% more than the national average.



15 Bureau of Economic Analysis

The median home price in Colorado Springs rose by half between Dec. 2019 and May 2022 (to \$475,000). Since then, prices have stabilized. The median price of a single-family home in June 2024 was \$499,000, according to the Pikes Peak Association of Realtors.¹⁶

For additional detail on housing data trends, see the [Built Environment](#) chapter.

Potential Actions

The HUD Office of Policy Development and Research noted that “land use policies and zoning regulations constrain the supply of affordable housing.”¹⁷ One response is the use of “by right” development to enable “timely completion of projects while also reducing regulatory expenses, thereby reducing development costs and encouraging the construction of less-expensive housing.”¹⁸ Additionally, zoning incentives can encourage development of affordable units in public transit corridors.¹⁹ Finally, the Pikes Peak Housing Network recommends the use of community impact funds to enable private citizens, public entities, and nonprofit organizations to allocate surplus land and other resources for affordable housing, in partnership with for-profit and nonprofit developers.²⁰

The City of Colorado Springs 2024-2028 city plan includes a “strategic doing” framework that recommends actions to help reduce barriers to affordable housing development. They include:

- Partnering with the City Council “to expand incentives and rebates to include missing-middle housing and single-family homeownership, targeting households up to 120% area median income (AMI)” and
- Exploring incentive-based programs “to include entry level and workforce housing in mixed income developments and newly annexed land.”²¹

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2 Ibid.

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Selections—Table Heading: Personal Income and Employment by County and Metropolitan Area, Table: CAINC30, Major Area: Metropolitan Statistical Area, Statistic: Total Employment (number of jobs) for selected MSAs, (Levels), Years 2012 & 2022. Growth in working population from U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2023 data (2020-2022) and Vintage 2020 data (2010-2019), County Population by Characteristics, 2010-2022, field AGE16PLUS_TOT minus field AGE65PLUS_TOT, aggregated across MSA component counties, from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2024/population-estimates-characteristics.html> and <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-county-detail.html>, accessed Dec. 15, 2024.

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Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

SOCIAL WELL-BEING REPORT

Social Well-Being Summary

The well-being of a community as a whole is contingent in part upon the social well-being of its community members. Studying the well-being of the individuals in our community helps us understand where support is needed to better the quality of life for all.


The well-being of a community as a whole is contingent in part upon the social well-being of its community members.


The social well-being of community members depends on a complex interplay of the other indicators mentioned in this report.

However, how people are able to meet their own needs as well as recognize the needs of others and their ability and willingness to offer support to those in need feeds the overall community's strength, leading to a better quality of life for all.


- 34,000+ local service inquiries to Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1 in 2023-2024
- 12% of people in the Colorado Springs MSA have a disability
- 8.2% 2022 poverty rate in Colorado Springs
- 33% of households paid more than 30% of their income on housing
- In fiscal year 2023-2024, Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1 had over 34,000 inquiries, including 18,000+ categorized requests for service.
- In 2022, the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) poverty rate (8.2%) was the lowest of all peer communities and far lower than Fort Collins MSA (11.6%) and Boulder MSA (12.3%).
- While 11.5% of Colorado Springs residents experience food insecurity, approximately 36% of these 86,000 people are ineligible for any federal nutrition programs.
- More than 1 in 4 Colorado Springs households functioned below the Self-Sufficiency Standard in 2018.
- In 2022, 1 in 3 Colorado Springs households (33%) paid more than 30% of their income on housing.
- In 2022, Colorado Springs had the 3rd -lowest rate of persons experiencing homelessness of 6 peer communities.
- In the Colorado Springs MSA, 1 in 8 people (12.5%) has a disability.
- Close to 1 in 5 Colorado Springs adults (19.2%) between the ages of 18 and 64 with disabilities lives below the poverty line.

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA SOCIAL WELL-BEING

 **34,000+**
LOCAL SERVICE INQUIRIES TO
PIKES PEAK UNITED WAY 2-1-1
IN 2023-2024

 **12%**
OF PEOPLE IN THE
COLORADO SPRINGS MSA
HAVE A DISABILITY

 **8.2%**
2022 POVERTY RATE
IN COLORADO SPRINGS

 **33%**
OF HOUSEHOLDS PAID MORE THAN
30% OF THEIR INCOME ON HOUSING

Key Indicators

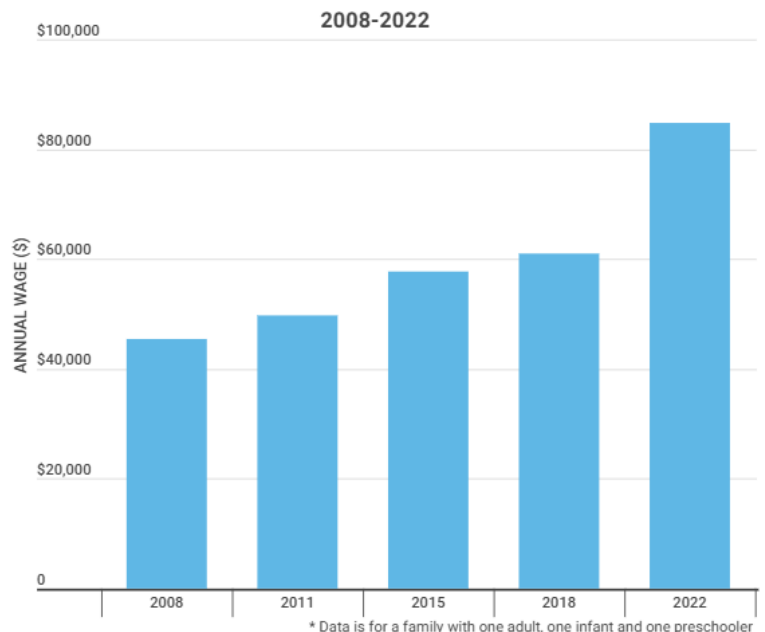
The social well-being of a community and its members is reflected in the manner in which members recognize, care for, and show each other respect. Community members represent a vast spectrum from the most vulnerable to the most capable, with ever-evolving needs and strengths. Providing support, care, and resources for those experiencing distress and hardship, strengthens the community as a whole.

Self-Sufficiency

Self-Sufficiency Standard

The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a measure of income adequacy that is based on the costs of basic needs for working families: housing, childcare, food, health care, transportation, and other miscellaneous items, as well as the cost of taxes and the impact of tax credits. The Standard is an affordability and living wage economic security measure that provides an alternative to the official poverty measure. In 2018, more than one in four households functioned below this Self-Sufficiency Standard in Colorado Springs as well as in Fort Collins and Boulder. Updated proportions for 2022 are not available, but are likely to be even higher as spiking inflation significantly increased the income required to meet basic needs.

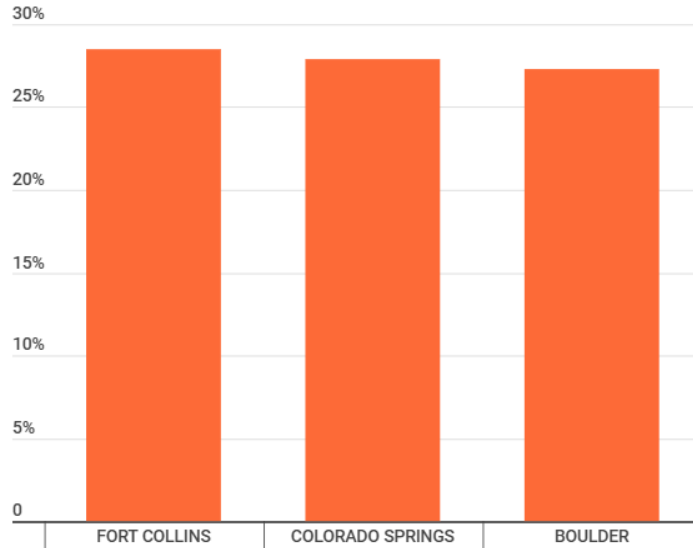
COLORADO SPRINGS MSA SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD - ANNUAL



* Data is for a family with one adult, one infant and one preschooler

% OF HOUSEHOLDS BELOW SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD

2018



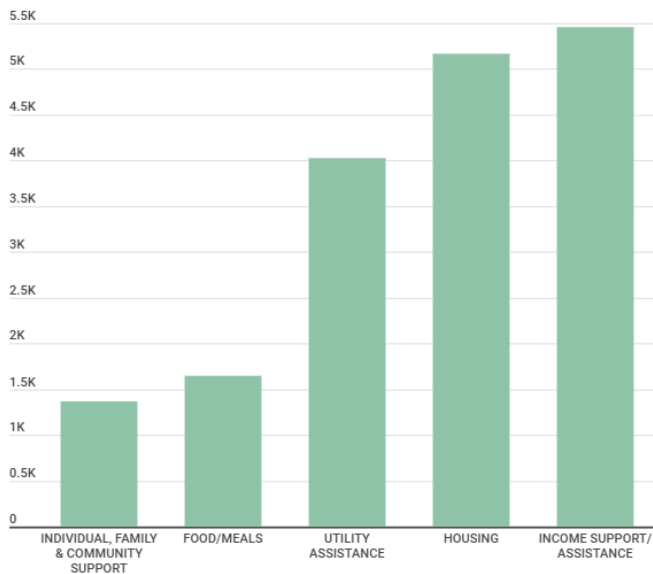
1,2 Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington

Community Member Needs

Identifying Needs: 2-1-1 Requests

Staffed by community resource experts, 2-1-1 is a free, confidential, and bilingual phone line that compassionately connects callers in need with personalized referrals for help. 2-1-1

TOP COMMUNITY MEMBER NEEDS



collaborates with hundreds of local health and human service agencies. For many of the people who use 2-1-1, it is a lifeline, sometimes a lifesaver. In the fiscal year of 2023-2024, Pikes Peak United Way received over 34,000 calls, which included more than 18,000 categorized service requests from residents in a 12-county area.

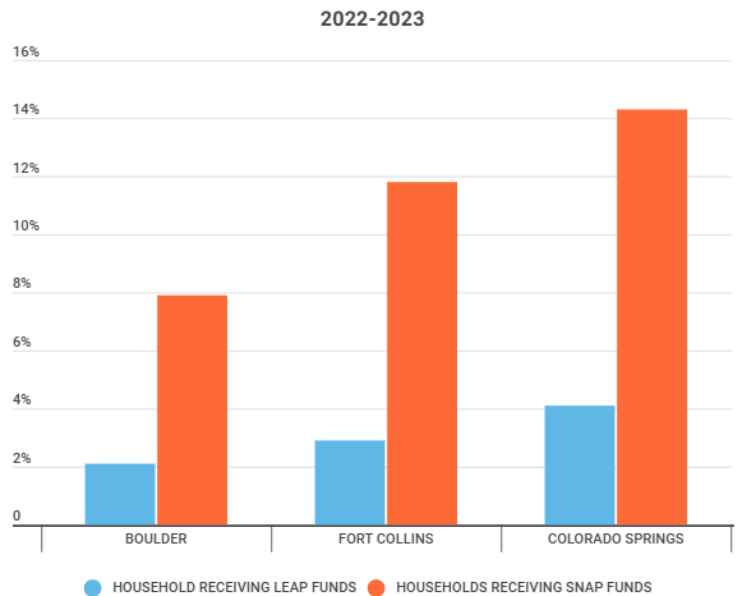
2-1-1 requests from El Paso and Teller Counties provide a snapshot of the community's needs and where assistance may be lacking. Since 2-1-1 began in 2004, utility bill assistance has remained the top need of community members, followed by rental assistance. Need-specific assistance programs help households extend their income by covering a portion of basic needs.

Food & Utility Assistance

The Colorado Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) is a federally funded program that pays a portion of winter home heating costs to families making less than 60% of the state median income. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is part of a federal program to help lower-income households (less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level) purchase food using cards similar to debit cards. County human services departments are responsible for determining eligibility and authorizing SNAP.

In 2022, Colorado Springs MSA poverty rate (8.2%) was the lowest of six peer communities and far lower than Fort Collins MSA (11.6%) and Boulder MSA (12.3%). However, Colorado Springs had higher rates of households receiving LEAP and SNAP funds, which suggests that local entities are effective in connecting people in need with public resources for assistance.

HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD & UTILITY ASSISTANCE



4 Colorado Department of Human Services, U.S. Census Bureau

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity refers to USDA’s measure of a lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household’s need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

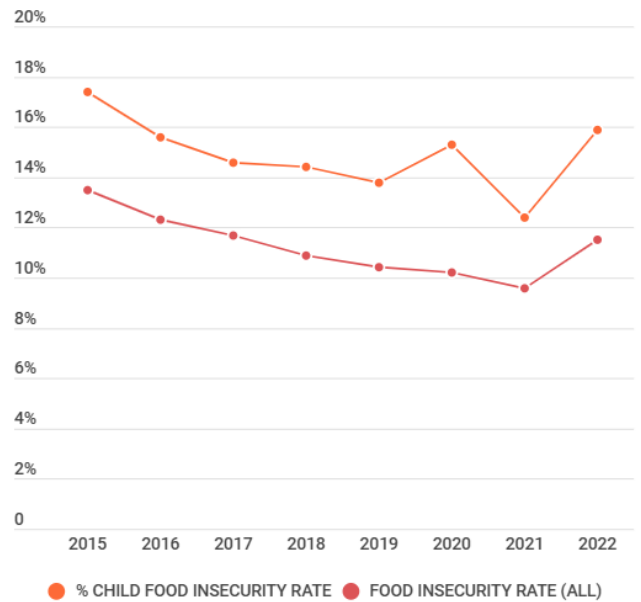
Food insecurity is particularly devastating among children due to their increased vulnerability and the potential for long-term consequences. Several studies have demonstrated that food insecurity impacts cognitive development among young children and is linked to poorer school performance.⁵

Other data show negative health consequences of food insecurity among children, including increased illness and higher associated health costs.

While 11.5% of Colorado Springs residents experienced food insecurity in 2022, an estimated 36% of these 86,000 people were ineligible for any federal nutrition programs. This disparity speaks to the importance of local food banks such as Care and Share and Meals on Wheels, among others.

The percentage of people experiencing food insecurity in the area declined by nearly a third between 2015 and 2021, before jumping in 2022 as inflation took a toll on the vulnerable. Feeding America estimated that \$69 million would be needed to fully meet the area’s 2022 food needs.

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA FOOD INSECURITY



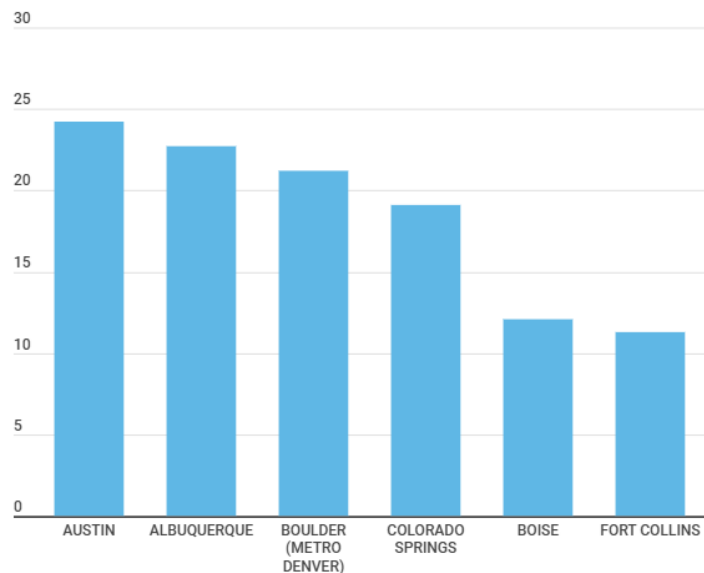
6 Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap Survey

Experiencing Homelessness:

The social costs of homelessness are enormous, as are the financial costs. About one-third of all visits to emergency rooms are made by people experiencing chronic homelessness, who have higher rates of chronic health problems than the general or impoverished population.¹¹ The vast majority of these costly visits could have been addressed through preventive care. As people obtain stable housing, their dependence on emergency services drops, and health outcomes improve.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that all Continuums of Care (CoC) conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. This includes transitional housing programs, emergency shelters, and those who were unsheltered that night. Trend data by state and community is maintained by the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#).¹²

2022 RATE OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (PER 10,000 GENERAL RESIDENTS)



13 National Alliance to End Homelessness

Between 2012 and 2022, Colorado Springs’ total population of those experiencing homelessness increased by 25%, but the population of those unsheltered decreased by 3%. In 2022, 1,406 persons were experiencing homelessness. In 2022, Colorado Springs had the **3rd-lowest rate of persons experiencing homelessness** of 6 peer communities.

Rapid Rehousing Systems use affordable housing identification, rent assistance, and case management to help homeless people develop a level of stability that leads to improved health outcomes and reduces the likelihood of a return to homelessness.¹⁴

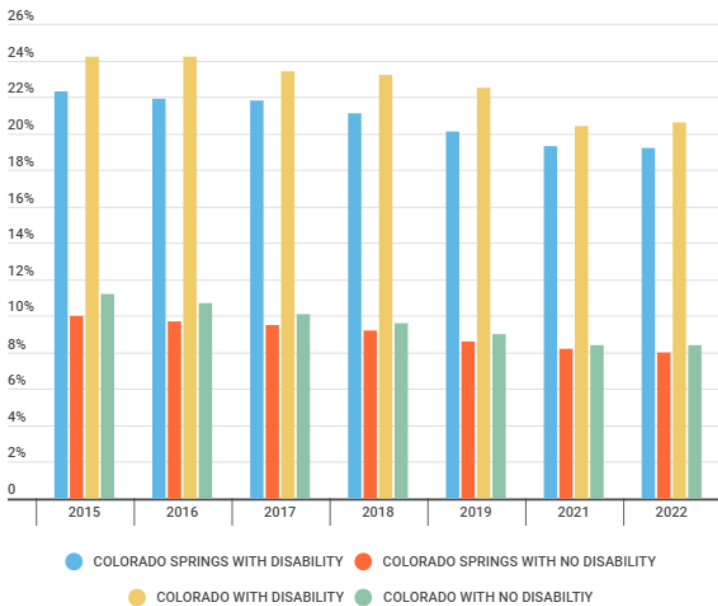
Serving Those With Disabilities

It is imperative that we as a community be especially cognizant of those members in our community that may be more vulnerable or face more disparity than others due to characteristics that place them at a higher risk of experiencing hardship or being mistreated and therefore needing assistance.

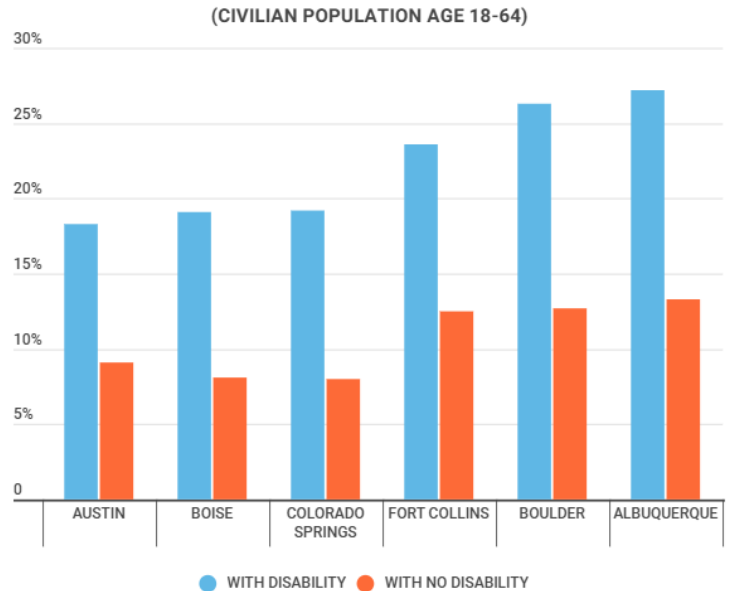
In the Colorado Springs MSA, one out of every eight people (12.5%) has a disability. This is a higher percentage than that of the state as a whole and that of peer counties in Colorado.

One in five (19.2%) adults between the ages of 18 and 64 with disabilities in Colorado Springs lives below the poverty line. That percentage is below the state average and below that of most peer communities. The percentage of those with disabilities who live in poverty has also decreased for six consecutive years.

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA POVERTY RATES
(CIVILIAN POPULATION WITH/WITHOUT DISABILITY, AGES 18-64)



2022 POVERTY RATES OF THOSE WITH A DISABILITY & THOSE WITHOUT A DISABILITY
(CIVILIAN POPULATION AGE 18-64)



15 U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Institute on Disability

Quality of life for persons with disabilities includes physical access to goods and services in the community as well as accommodations to use those goods and services, such as large print, sign language interpreters, and captioning for virtual meeting platforms. For those with significant physical disabilities, difficulties may lead to living in an institution, although receiving care in the home from paid staff, family members, or friends is greatly preferred by most individuals. It is also more cost effective. Having a choice of where one lives in a space that meets one's needs as well as the ability to participate in community life can be vital to physical and mental health for persons with disabilities.

Supplement: Disability Care

In the early 1980s, people with disabilities and seniors in Colorado started to pressure federal and state policy makers to move away from institutionalizing those who could not safely live at home because of a physical or mental health disability.¹⁷ The cost of nursing homes was becoming prohibitive, and few people wanted institutionalization.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the United States policy on caring for persons with disabilities and seniors who could not live independently pivoted away from nursing homes and toward what is now known as Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Priority was given to helping people with disabilities of all ages receive services to support daily activities in their homes and the community rather than in institutions. Many of these services are paid by Medicaid for those who are enrolled. The federal Medicaid program shares the cost of HCBS with the state Medicaid program. In Colorado, advocates from both the aging and disability communities work with the state's Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, the home of Colorado's Medicaid program.

Currently there are several state waivers that allow for additional services to enable those with disabilities and seniors to live, go to school, work, and socialize in the community. Six waivers are adult-focused and four are child-focused.¹⁸ Additional services include the following:

Nursing home facilities for seniors and adults with disabilities who don't want to live in the community or cannot, due to health complications. This is the default program under Medicaid. The PACE program (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), which provides care services for older adults who qualify.¹⁹ This service is provided in the home as opposed to a live-in facility.

Other payment options for senior services include long-term care insurance and private pay. Currently, Medicare in Colorado does not assist with in-home care costs but in other states the Medicare program does support that cost.

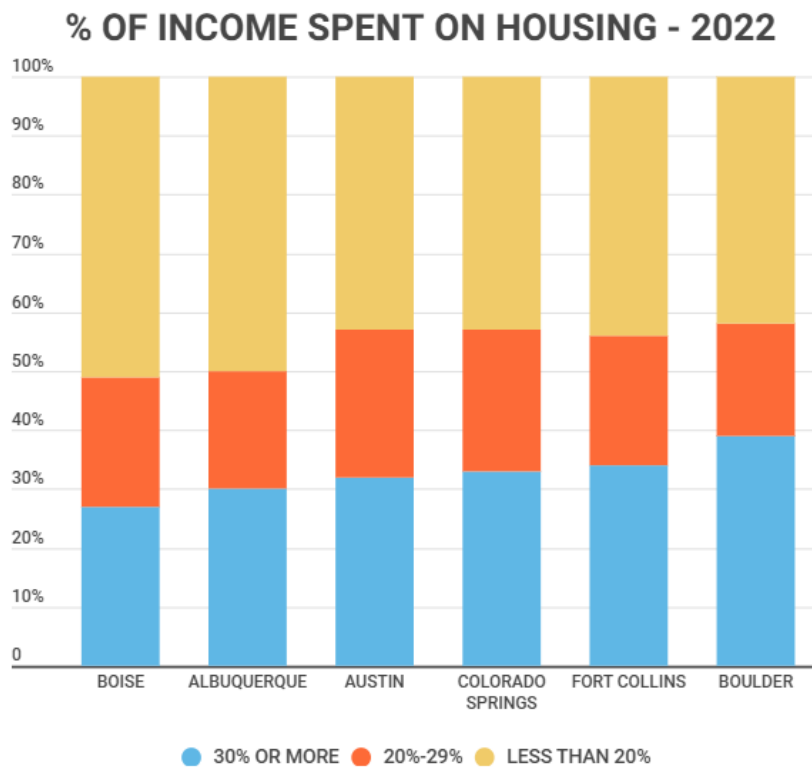
As the opportunity for those with disabilities to live in a home rather than an institution has grown in recent years, there has been a significant increase in persons with disabilities who are living at home rather than in an institution.

One of the key frustrations for those who serve people with disabilities in our community is the lack of accessible data related to their well-being. Although access to services is arguably the

greatest need, it is very difficult to find relevant data. This includes utilization measures that factor in the percent of people who are eligible for the service as well as more detailed measures, such as access to transportation services because someone may have a disability waiver but be unable to access the service without transportation. Community leaders know the difficulty faced by many disabled individuals and their families as they try to access services, but it is difficult to tell this story in a compelling way without relevant data.

Housing Cost Burden

Households burdened by housing costs are at high risk of being evicted or foreclosed on should they experience a job loss or other unanticipated financial hardship. Those that spend more than 30% of their income on housing often struggle to meet other basic needs, such as healthcare, food, childcare, and transportation. In Colorado Springs, nearly one-third of households pay more than 30% of their income on housing.



Social Well-Being References

1 Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women’s Welfare, University of Washington, <https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/Colorado>. Colorado Springs amount for a household with one adult, one infant, and one preschooler is calculated as a weighted average of El Paso County and Teller County amounts based on population according to U.S. Census mid-year population estimate (2020 vintage for years prior to 2020; 2023 vintage for 2022), <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-counties-total.html> and <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/metro/totals/cbsa-est2023-alldata.csv>. Both accessed April 26, 2022.

2 Ibid.

3 2-1-1 Colorado online reporting tool, <https://www.211colorado.org/reports/>, filtered for El Paso and Teller counties for the period July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024. Accessed Sept. 23, 2024.

4 Colorado Department of Human Services, Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) statistical information about LEAP applications, <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1W8WbJsb5Mgb4CUkte2SCuDnqigqkmaO3LC0KSfhEdGg>, accessed via <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/leap>; Colorado Department of Human Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/snap-data>, (Case, client and issuance reports, ‘Average caseload_SFYZ.xlsx’, tab ‘SFYZ’); U.S. Census Bureau Vintage 2023 data used to calculate percentage of residents and households. All sites accessed August 28, 2024.

Poverty rate data for Colorado: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, Table S1701, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=colorado%20poverty&g=310XX00US10740,12420,14260,14500,17820,22660>, accessed July 17, 2024.

5 One review of available research is Royer, M.F.; Guerithault, N.; Braden, B.B.; Laska, M.N.; Bruening, M. Food Insecurity Is Associated with Cognitive Function: A Systematic Review of Findings across the Life Course. *International Journal of Translational Medicine*. 2021, 1, 205–222. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijtm1030015>, accessed August 28, 2024.

6 Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap Survey, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/colorado/county/el-paso> and <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/colorado/county/teller>. Food insecurity estimates are derived based on a combination of need and cost. Need is assessed through the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates; cost is measured through Nielsen’s Cost of Food Index. County figures are estimates modeled from state-level food insecurity data using the socioeconomic profile and food purchasing behavior of individual counties. More info about the methodology is available at <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/how-we-got-the-map-data>. All sites accessed August 28, 2024.

7 Ibid.

8 Those who are both food insecure and ineligible for federal nutrition programs comprise those who are food insecure as determined through Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap Survey (see note 6), but whose income exceeds the qualifying income threshold of SNAP and other government nutrition programs (200% of the Federal Poverty Level).

9 Percent of children who are food insecure (see note 8) but whose family income exceeds the qualifying income threshold for federal nutrition programs for children (estimated at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level).

10 The total annualized additional dollar amount that food-insecure individuals report needing, on average, to purchase just enough food to meet their food needs. This amount, from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap Survey (<https://map.feedingamerica.org/>), is based on responses in the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and the USDA estimation that individuals in households that are food insecure experience food insecurity, on average, seven months out of the year. This amount has been adjusted to reflect local food prices and relevant taxes. See note 6.

11 Garrett, Daniel G. "The business case for ending homelessness: having a home improves health, reduces healthcare utilization and costs." *American health & drug benefits* vol. 5,1 (2012): 17-9. Accessed at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4046466/>, accessed August 28, 2024.

12 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *State of Homelessness: 2023 Edition*. 2022 data from HUD and the U.S. Census Bureau. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>, accessed July 20, 2024.

13 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *State of Homelessness: 2023 Edition*. 2022 data from U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and the U.S. Census Bureau, <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>, accessed July 20, 2024. Historic point-in-time data: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/xls/2007-2022-PIT-Counts-by-CoC.xlsx>, from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2022-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>, accessed July 20, 2024. Local point-in-time count conducted by Pikes Peak Community Health Partnership, <https://www.ppchp.org/homelessness/data/>, accessed July 20, 2024.

14 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Rapid Rehousing Toolkit*, 2022. https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NAEH_RapidRehousingToolkit.pdf, accessed August 28, 2024.

15 U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, Table C18130, county data using 5-Year estimates, <https://data.census.gov/all/tables?q=c18130>, accessed August 28, 2024. Assistance and historical data provided by the Institute on Disability, <https://www.researchondisability.org/research>. All accessed August 28, 2024.

16 U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey, Table S2503 1-Year Estimates. Includes all occupied units (renters and homeowners). Households paying no rent or for which the percentage was unknown were included with the “less than 20%” group. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers those who spend more than 30% of income on housing to be “cost burdened” and those who spend more than 50% to be “severely cost burdened.” https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_092214.html, accessed July 19, 2024.

17 According to Julie Reiskin, Colorado Cross Disability Coalition, private conversation, May 7, 2021.

18 Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waivers, <https://hcpf.colorado.gov/long-term-services-and-supports-programs#Waivers>, accessed August 28, 2024.

19 Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, Program of All-Inclusive Care For The Elderly (PACE), <https://hcpf.colorado.gov/program-all-inclusive-care-elderly>, accessed August 28, 2024.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

HEALTH REPORT

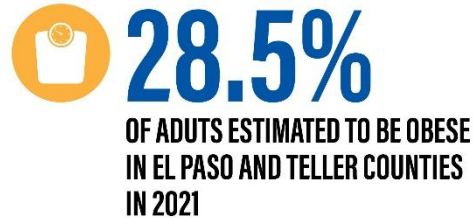
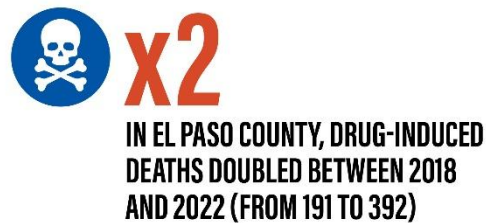
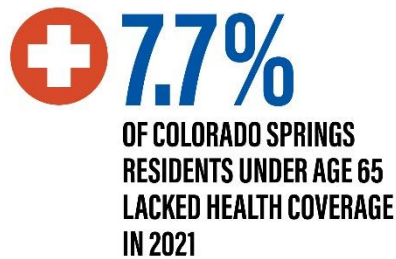
Health Summary

While Coloradans have traditionally enjoyed good health compared to residents of other states, we are developing more complex physical and mental health problems which, if not addressed, will influence the health of our community in the future. Data can better help us understand critical indicators surrounding our health and influence our trajectory. Those indicators include adult and childhood obesity, behavioral health (particularly suicide and substance use), and access to care.

Understanding the Pikes Peak region's health is a complex endeavor. Historic and current day policies and practices influences a complex interplay of factors that shape our health status and outcomes. As a result, it is difficult to make sensible generalizations about a community's health. Instead, this complexity invites us to look more closely at the different factors influencing health to understand our region's strengths and opportunities for improvement. This often involves analyzing health issues in a disaggregated fashion to detect health disparities among demographic groups or geographic regions, which we have reflected in the presentation of health data in this section.

- 7.7% of Colorado Springs residents under age 65 lacked health coverage in 2021
- X2 In El Paso County, drug-induced deaths doubled between 2018 and 2022 (from 191 to 392)
- >34% of Colorado Springs MSA residents have contracted COVID-19
- 28.5% of adults estimated to be obese in El Paso and Teller counties in 2021
- El Paso and Teller Counties have a significantly higher rate of premature death relative to the state overall.
- In El Paso and Teller Counties, the proportion of the adult population estimated to be obese was 28.5% in 2021, an increase from 21% in 2015.
- Data from 2020 indicates that 15% of El Paso County individuals (ages 5+) reported 14 or more days of poor mental health within the previous 30 days.
- In El Paso County, drug-related deaths jumped from 191 to 392 between 2018 and 2022.
- Colorado Springs has a higher age-adjusted suicide rate than the state overall as well as peer communities in Colorado.
- In 2019, Colorado Springs had 62.3 primary care physicians per 100,000 population or 1 for every 1,600 residents.
- 7.7% of Colorado Springs residents under age 65 lacked health coverage in 2021.
- The pandemic affected primary care utilization, resulting in a 25% drop in visits to care providers.
- More than 34% of Colorado Springs MSA residents have contracted COVID-19.

COLORADO SPRINGS HEALTH



Key Indicators

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”¹ Good health allows us the opportunity and ability to pursue and achieve life’s delights, interests and goals. Five determinants of health that are widely accepted as influencing length and quality of life include the following:²

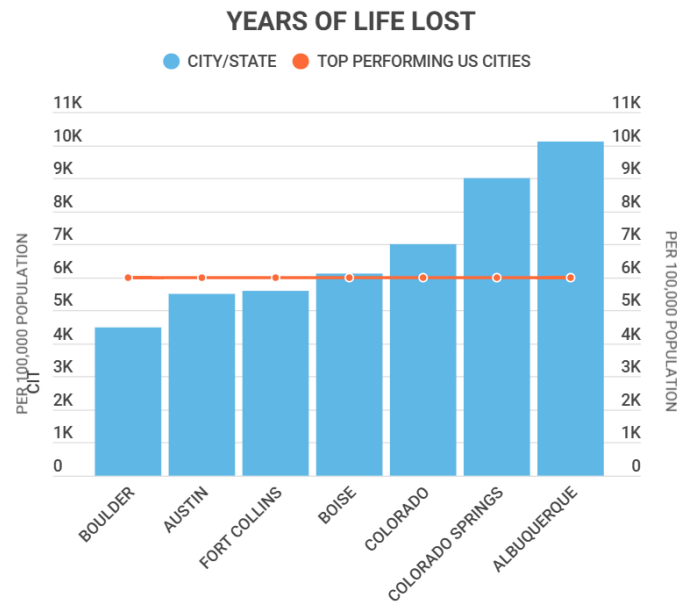
- Health behavior (such as nutrition, physical activity, and substance use)
- Healthcare access and quality
- Genetics
- Social and economic factors
- Physical environment

This report looks at length of life, along with health behaviors and healthcare access.

Length of Life

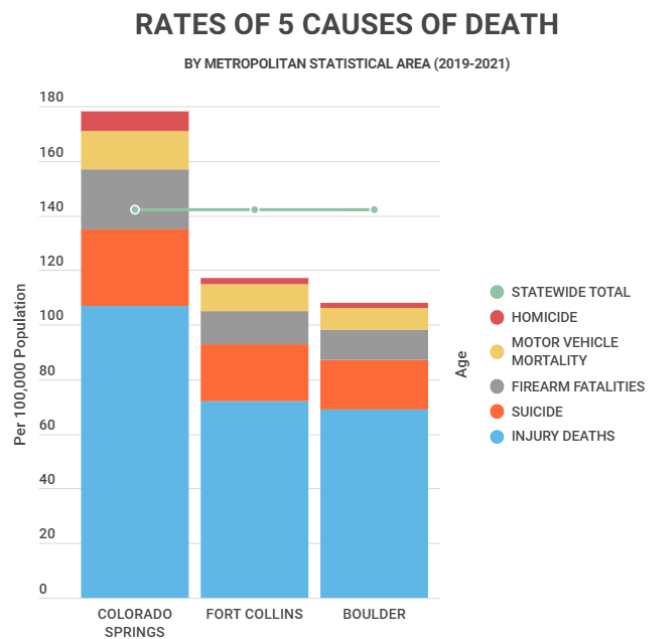
A key measure of community health is the rate of premature deaths—that is, the years of potential life lost before age 75.³ The fewer premature deaths experienced, the healthier the community.

This measure focuses attention on preventable causes of death among people in their younger and middle years. Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has a significantly higher rate of premature death than the state overall. It ranks 5th of 6 peer communities.



4 National Center for Health Statistics – Mortality Files, as cited by County Health Rankings

Between 2019 and 2021, Colorado Springs fared worse than peer Colorado communities in rates of preventable deaths. Additionally, Colorado Springs’ COVID-19 death rate up to December 2023 has exceeded Boulder’s by 57% and Fort Collins’ by 42%.

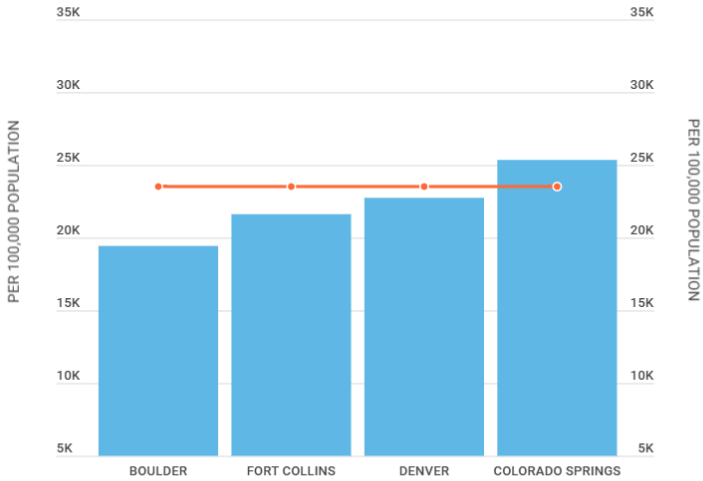


5 National Center for Health Statistics – Mortality Files, as cited by County Health Rankings

COVID-19 RATES

(SINCE INCEPTION)

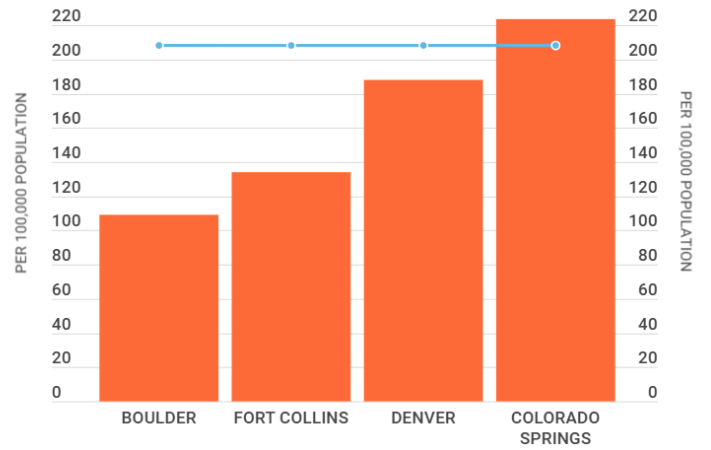
● CASES ● COLORADO



COVID-19 DEATHS

(SINCE INCEPTION)

● CITY ● COLORADO



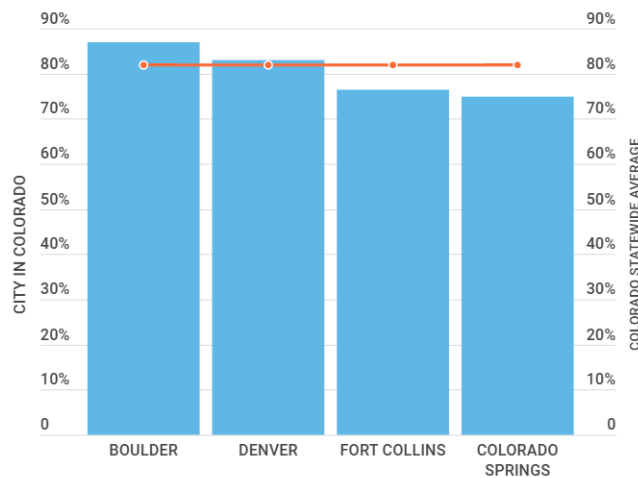
6 CDPHE/Colorado State Emergency Operations Center

Vaccine availability has been extremely helpful toward protecting people from infection, serious illness, and death; however, a significant portion of the Colorado Springs community remains unvaccinated.

COVID-19 VACCINATION RATE

(AGE 5+, AT LEAST ONE DOSE)

● CITY IN COLORADO ● COLORADO STATEWIDE AVERAGE



Share

made with infogram

For more about the impact of COVID-19, read the [COVID-19 supplement button](#) below.

Learn More: COVID-19

This report was updated following the May 11, 2023 expiration date for the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19. As of December 2023, El Paso County had experienced 254,969 COVID-19 cases, 7,498 COVID-19 hospitalizations and 1,977 COVID-19 deaths.ⁱ More than 34% of Colorado Springs MSA residents have contracted COVID-19. Case rates and death rates for Colorado Springs are higher than in Colorado peer MSAs.

More information about how COVID has affected our region is available on the websites of El Paso County Public Health and Teller County Public Health and Environment.ⁱⁱ

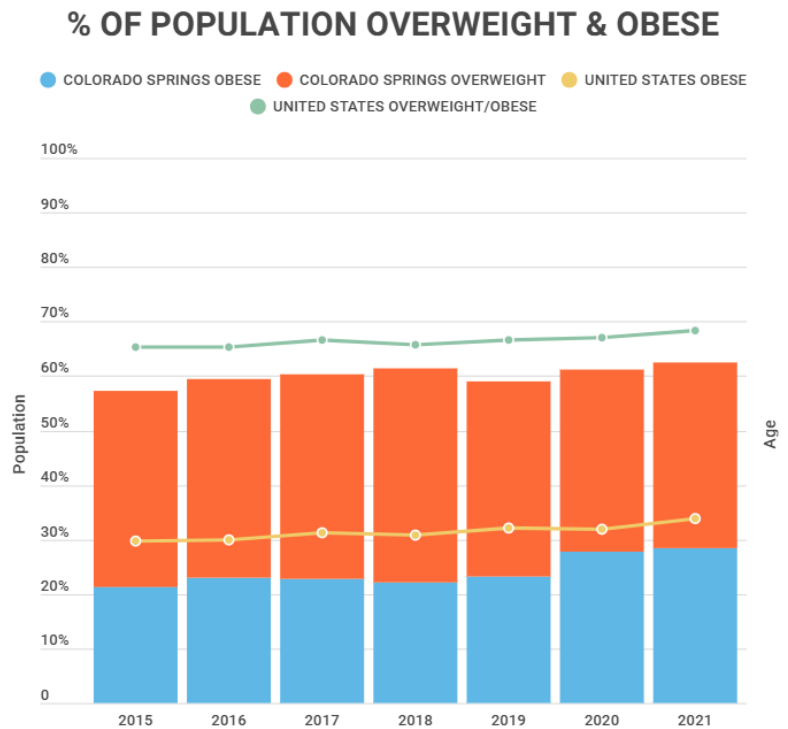
Health Conditions & Behaviors

Many health factors are within an individual’s control, including diet, exercise, personal hygiene, and preventive care. People can also avoid unhealthy behaviors such as overeating, substance abuse, and self-harm. Health behavior is estimated to account for at least 36% of health outcomes. Social circumstances—including where in the community people live—influence 24% of health outcomes.⁷

Complicating Factor: Obesity

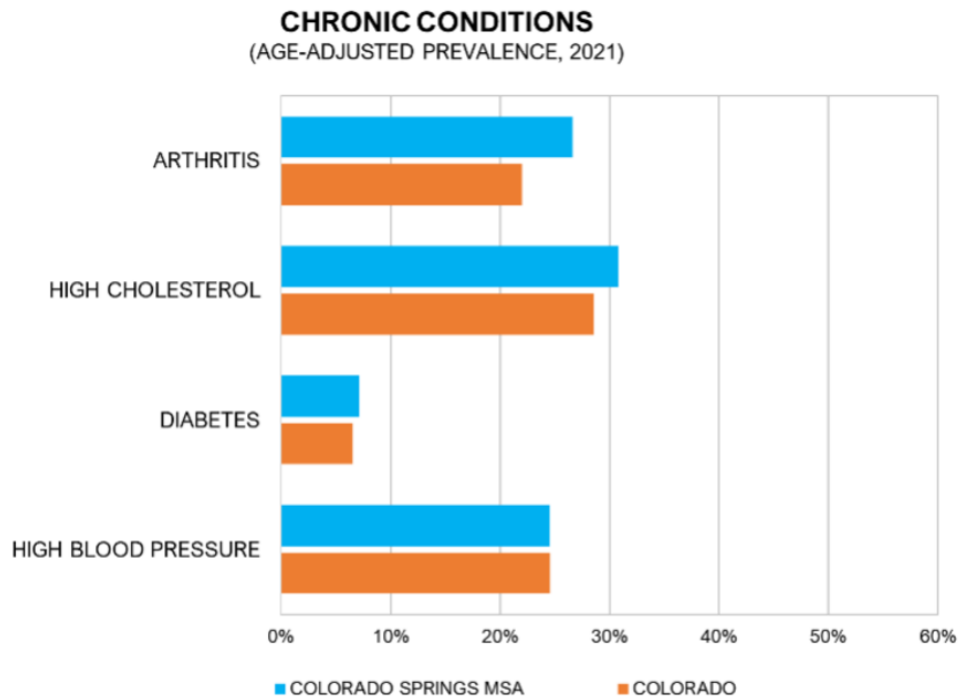
Being overweight or obese increases the risk of chronic disease, cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other metabolic diseases. Body Mass Index (BMI) is used to measure this factor.⁸ Though Colorado Springs and the state of Colorado historically have been among the healthiest in the nation, more people in the community are becoming overweight and obese. In 2021, more than six in 10 adults in the community were in an unhealthy weight category,⁹ and 28.5% were estimated to be obese,¹⁰ up from 23% in 2016.¹¹

Obesity leads to many chronic conditions. The incidence of these in Colorado Springs and peer communities can be found in the Chronic Conditions supplement button below.



Learn More: Chronic Conditions

Elevated BMI and being overweight and/or obese increases the risk of chronic disease and morbidity (incidence of other diseases) and decreases life expectancy. The risk of cancers, heart disease and stroke, as well as other cardiovascular conditions such as hypertension, atherosclerosis, angina, and myocardial infarction are at an increased risk due to being overweight or obese. The rates of metabolic diseases, such as diabetes and hyperlipidemia, are increased with a BMI of 25 or more. Quality of life is also affected due to degenerative changes in the joints resulting in arthritis and pain that limit mobility and functionality.ⁱⁱⁱ The graph below highlights the prevalence of four of these chronic conditions in our community and state.



iv CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

It is important to recognize that the prevalence of conditions increased by elevated BMI correlate with many of the top causes of mortality and morbidity within the country, Colorado, and El Paso and Teller Counties. Being overweight and/or obese threatens quality and duration of life, but also strains the healthcare system. The seriousness of obesity has been further highlighted by COVID-19 – individuals who have elevated BMIs are at increased likelihood of hospitalization and death.^v

Nutrition

Obesity can be combatted by good nutrition, including a diet that matches calories consumed with calories burned. [The Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) promote eating foods that are nutritionally dense and low in calories such as vegetables, whole fruits, and whole grains.

The Healthy Eating Index (HEI) is a measure of diet quality. Since 2015 HEI scores have indicated poor diet quality across all populations.¹³ In 2021, 84% of Colorado Springs adults reported consuming one or more vegetables a day.¹⁴ That proportion exceeds the state and national rates and ranked **first out of 4** peer communities for which data was available. Those

with household income below \$50,000 had a much lower rate of vegetable consumption than those making \$50,000 or more.¹⁵

Exercise

For substantial health benefits, children should have one hour of activity daily for at least five days per week, and adults should have 30 minutes or more of activity at least five days a week to maintain a healthy lifestyle and decrease the risk of cardiovascular and chronic disease.

As of 2019, only 46% of high school students in El Paso County reported being sufficiently physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day for five or more days within the past week.¹⁶

Next Steps

Each individual has the responsibility to eat healthy and exercise, but policy makers, local organizations, employers, and elected leaders can all help to create an environment that supports healthier lifestyles and that reduces risk factors. Steps can be taken to increase access to exercise options (trails, open space, safe neighborhoods) and affordable healthy foods (fresh fruits and vegetables in stores accessible by walking and/or public transportation), and to improve education about nutrition. Public policy should support regular physical activity, increase affordable dietary choices, promote reduction of sugar, fat, salt, and preservatives in processed and fast foods, and restrict marketing to youth of foods and beverages high in sugar, fats, and salts.

Behavioral Health

Behavioral health “refers to the promotion of mental health, resilience, and well-being; treatment of mental and substance use disorders; and support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities.”¹⁷ In short, behavioral health includes both mental health and substance use, and this section will review those topics along with suicide.

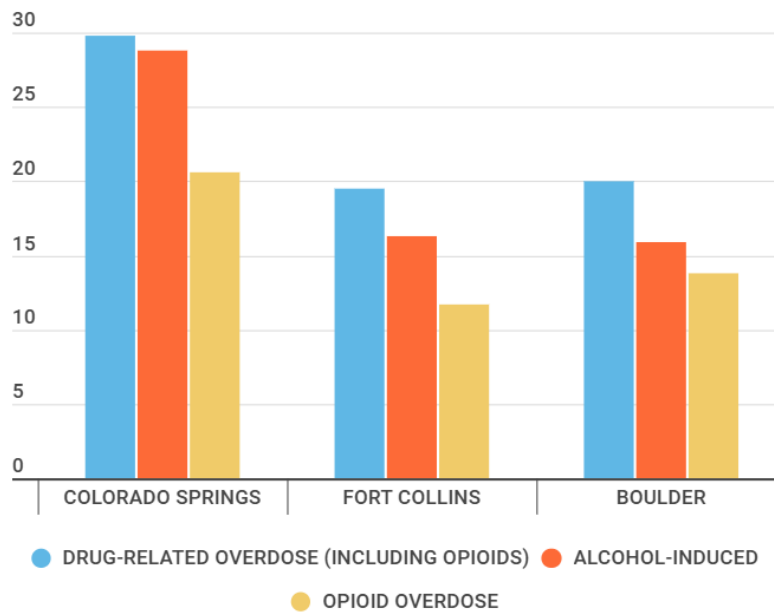
Mental Health

Self-reported health status, specifically poor mental health days, is often used as a general measure of health-related quality of life in a population.¹⁸ Data from 2021 indicate that 15.8% of Colorado Springs individuals (ages 5+) reported 14 or more days of poor mental health within the previous 30 days, which is higher than the State level of 14.6%. Among peer communities for which data was available (Albuquerque, Austin, and Boise), Colorado Springs ranked 3rd of 4.¹⁹

Substance Use Disorder

SAMHSA’s 2022 [National Survey on Drug Use](#) and Health (NSDUH) reports that approximately 25.4 million people aged 18 or older had a substance use disorder in the past year.²⁰ In El Paso County, drug-related deaths jumped from 186 to 206 between 2020 and 2022.²¹ Among Colorado peer communities, Colorado Springs ranked 3rd of 3 in each of three key categories of drug-related deaths.

DRUG & ALCOHOL-RELATED DEATHS 2023 PER 100,000 POPULATION, AGE-ADJUSTED



22 Colorado Health Information Dataset (COHID)

Alcohol

Alcohol is the most used substance nationally and in the state. In 2021, 18% of adults in the Colorado Springs MSA reported binge drinking or heavy alcohol consumption.²³ That ranked 2nd best of 6 peer communities.

In 2019 the percentage of El Paso County high school students reported binge drinking in the previous 30 days was 10.6%, compared to 14.2% statewide.²⁴ That ranked 1st of 3 Colorado peer communities for least binge drinking among high school students. For more information and local statistics, see the Substance Use Disorder Supplement button below.

Learn More: Substance Use Disorder

Substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. [SAMHSA’s 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (NSDUH) reports that approximately 48.7 million people aged 12 or older had a substance use disorder in the past year.^{vi} The primary types of substance use disorders include:

- Opioid Use Disorder
- Marijuana Use Disorder

- Nicotine Use Disorder
- Stimulant Use Disorder
- Sedative Use Disorder
- Hallucinogen Use Disorder
- Alcohol Use Disorder

Alcohol

In 2022, according to the NSDUH report, 49% of Americans aged 12 or older (or 137.4 million people) used alcohol in the past month (i.e., current alcohol users) and of those, 44% were classified as binge drinkers. The percentage of people who were past month binge alcohol users was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 (29.5%) compared with 22.6% of adults aged 26 or older and 3.2% of adolescents aged 12 to 17.^{vii}

In our region and of those self-reporting, the use of alcohol remains high. Alcohol is the most used substance nationally and in the state. In 2021, 18% of adults in the Colorado Springs MSA reported binge drinking (having five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women within the past 30 days) or heavy alcohol consumption (more than two drinks for males and more than one drink for females per day).^{viii} Colorado Springs ranked 2nd of 6 peer communities for least binge drinking.

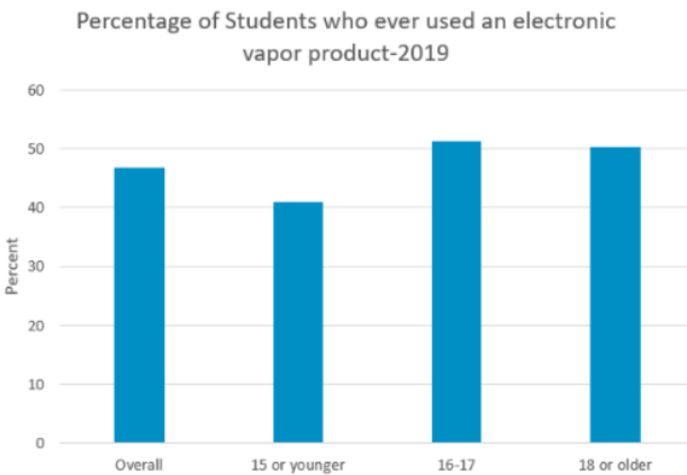
Marijuana

According to SAMHSA, “marijuana is the most commonly used illegal substance in the U.S. and its use is growing. Marijuana use among all adult age groups, both sexes, and pregnant women is going up. At the same time, the perception of how harmful marijuana use can be is declining. Increasingly, young people today do not consider marijuana use a risky behavior.”^{ix}

It is difficult to compare Colorado marijuana use to the rest of the country because many states have not legalized marijuana; however, we do know that approximately 1 in 10 people who use marijuana will become addicted. If they begin to use marijuana before the age of 18, the rate of addiction rises to 1 in 6 people.^x From 2013-2019, marijuana use increased across all demographics in El Paso County. For example, in 2013 14.7% of youth reported having used marijuana in the past 30 days. That percentage had increased to 21.5% by 2019. An increasing proportion of females reported usage over this time period, while there was only a slight increase in reported usage among males.^{xi} Year-over-year data from Healthy Kids Colorado shows an upward trend in usage for all demographics, and youth identifying as LGB+ demonstrate a higher use rate overall.^{xii}

Vaping

In 2023, according to the Healthy Kids Survey, 9% of surveyed Colorado high schoolers said they currently vape nicotine, defined as having smoked an electronic cigarette in the last 30 days.^{xiii} That figure has dropped by nearly two-thirds since 2019. El Paso County data is not available for 2023 but local usage closely mirrored state rates in 2019 and 2021. The same survey indicated that most students try vaping by the time they are 15 years old; in 2019, 40% of students 15 years old or younger reported they had used an electronic vape, and that percentage



jumped to 50% by age 17. The graph below shows that in El Paso County, almost 50% of students surveyed in 2019 had used a vaping product.

Access to vaping supplies is relatively easy. In 2019, 45% of youth under 15 years old and 80% of young adults 18 years or older were confident they could get an electronic vape. Students reported it was slightly easier to get e-vapes in 2019 than in 2017, although students 15 or younger reported it was much harder.^{xiv}

Opioid Use and Overdoses

Opioid overdose deaths in Colorado in 2023 were 21.7 per 100,000 people (age adjusted). The rate for El Paso County was slightly lower at 20.3. According to the El Paso County Coroner,^{xv} drug-related deaths increased from 130 in 2019 to 227 in 2021 before dropping slightly to 216 in 2022. The table below summarizes the types of substances that were found during autopsy and the associated increase in deaths between 2019 to 2022. Forty-four percent of drug-related deaths in El Paso County were due to a combination of substances.

	2019	2022	Annualized Rate of Change
Methamphetamine	66	116	+ 20.7%
Fentanyl	21	115	+ 3.5%
Cocaine	20	29	+ 0.4%
Heroin	35	27	- 2.8%
Prescription Opioids	15	25	- 6.2%

Recent data has shown a growing prevalence in substance use due to the extended isolation and stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{xvi} Seventeen percent of Americans now indicate they have a substance use disorder (SUD)^{xvii}, while in Colorado, the percentage is closer to 12%.^{xviii}

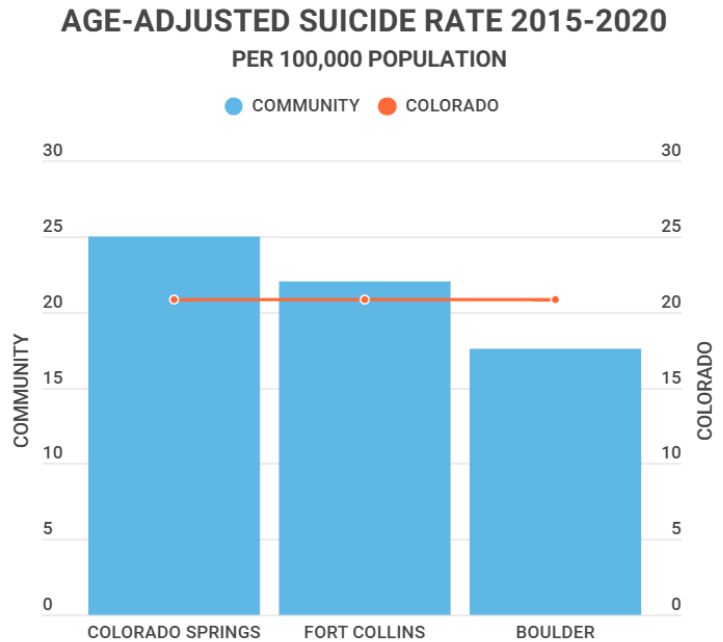
This underscores the critical need for substance use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery programs in the region. This is especially true for those who are served by Colorado’s Medicaid program. Lack of a full continuum-of-care often forces residents to seek care outside of the region or state, or, worse yet, forgo treatment.

Reducing barriers to accessing help, including same-day treatment, medication-assisted treatment, and residential treatment when appropriate, can help reduce opioid and drug overdose deaths. Educating the community on Narcan and expanding safe needle exchange programs in the community are evidence-based practices that can help reduce opioid use and deaths.

Suicide

Colorado Springs MSA lost 202 people to suicide in 2023; El Paso County accounted for 196 suicide deaths and Teller County accounted for six. The 2020 El Paso County Coroner’s Report indicated that firearms were responsible for 61% of local deaths by suicide in 2022.²⁵ Colorado Springs has a higher age-adjusted suicide rate than the state overall as well as peer communities in Colorado.²⁶

According to the United Health Foundation, Colorado had the highest increase in the teen suicide rate in the U.S. between 2014 and 2017.²⁷ For more, please click on the Youth Suicide link below.

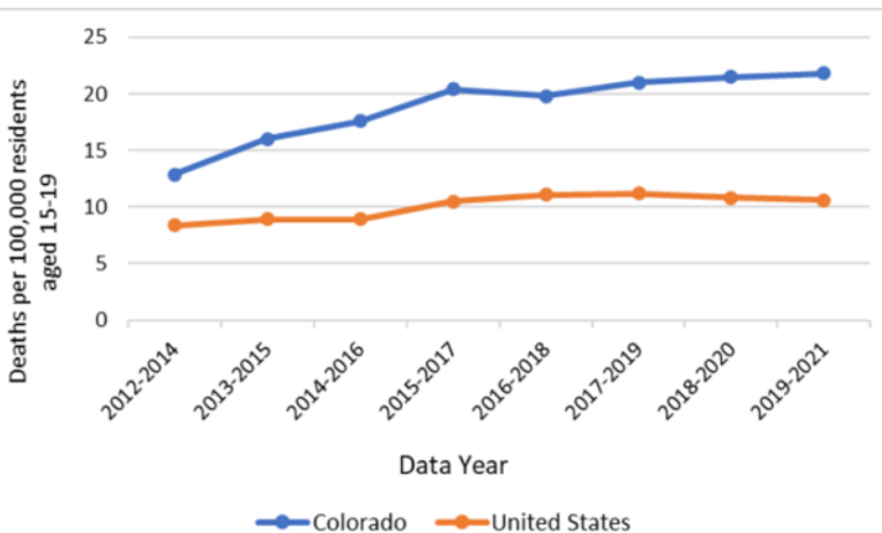


28 CDPHE/Colorado Center for Health and Environmental Data

Learn More: Youth Suicide

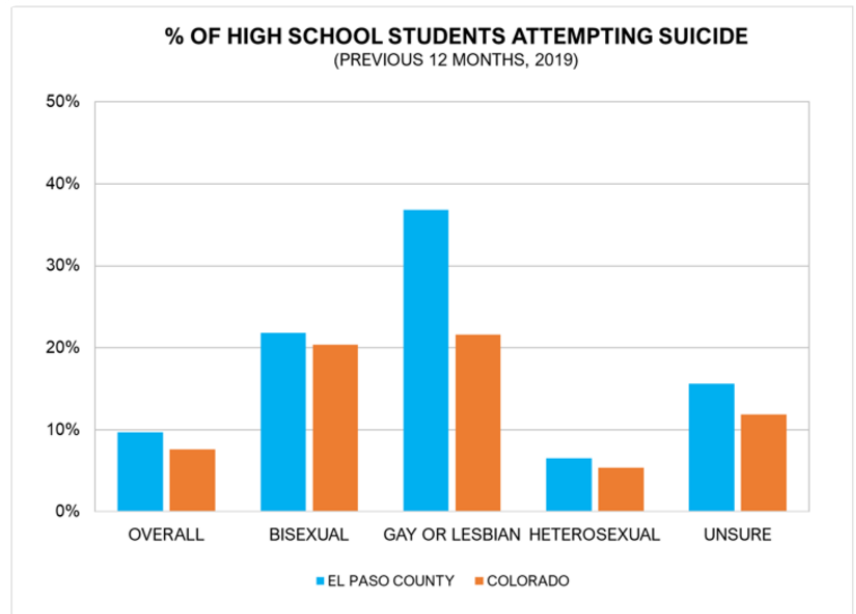
According to the United Health Foundation’s Health of Children and Women Report 2019, Colorado had the highest increase in the teen suicide rate in the U.S. between 2014 and 2017.^{xix} The graph below demonstrates the year-over-year trend comparing Colorado to the nation overall.

Between 2014 and 2021, teen suicide in Colorado rose from 12.9 to 21.8 deaths per 100,000 adolescents ages 15-19,



adolescents ages 15-19, according to the 2023 report. Overall, that rate put Colorado as the eighth-worst state in the country. Colorado’s 2019-2021 rate is more than double the national rate of 10.6 per 100,000 adolescents ages 15-19.^{xx} While trend data for younger youth are not available, the suicide attempts in 2019 were higher in El Paso County and Health Statistics Region 4 (Teller, Park, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties)

than the state average according to the 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, and females considered, planned or attempted suicide more often than males. Suicide attempts and deaths are significantly higher for youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual and for transgender youth. The following graph presents a clear picture of variations in 2019 suicide attempts by different demographic groups.



xxi Colorado Healthy Kids Survey 2019

Data in the 2023 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health further underscores these disparities, noting that nearly 20% of transgender and non-binary youth attempted suicide; 54% of LGBTQ+ youth reported symptoms of major depressive disorder; and that 56% wanted mental health care, but didn't get it. ^{xxii} Stress resulting from prejudice and discrimination (e.g., family rejection, bullying, violence) is a known risk factor for suicide attempts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. ^{xxiii}

Lastly, several studies have documented the need for culturally-competent providers with specific training in addressing the behavioral health needs of LGBTQ+ persons. ^{xxiv xxv xxvi} Although the need to develop a culturally and linguistically competent workforce is ever more important, it is compounded by the ongoing challenges with shortages in most mental health provider types. Behavioral health organizations are working to rapidly build or partner with organizations that can provide unique specialized training to work toward better supporting this need.

The efficacy of suicide-prevention education and specific interventions among teens is uncertain. ^{xxvii} However, expanded access to behavioral health services is vital for improving mental health, with the goal to reduce deaths by suicide. Evidenced-based practices and programs like Mental Health First Aid and CALM – Counseling Access to Lethal Means provide community members, and other healthcare providers, with resources and tools to support upstream prevention work in an effort to decrease deaths by suicide. ^{xxviii}

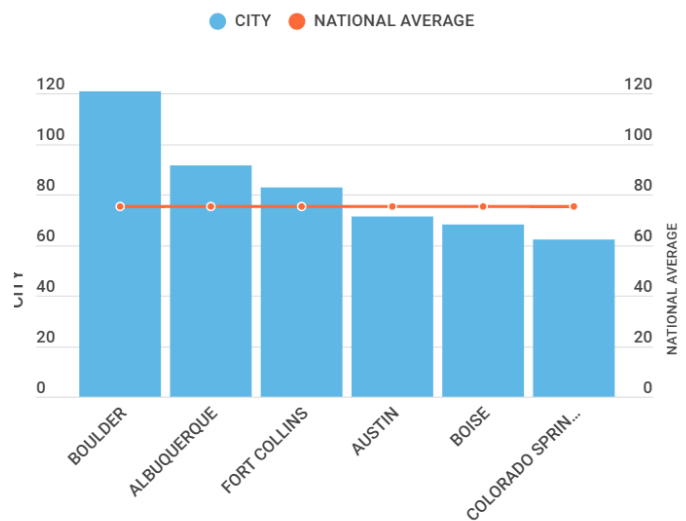
Access to Health Care

Clinical medical care (access and quality) accounts for 10 to 20% of a person’s total health.²⁹ Access to care, especially primary care, is a key resource for individuals to meet their potential.

Primary Care Access

In 2021, Colorado Springs had 62.3 primary care physicians per 100,000 population (1 for every 1,600 residents). While that measure has improved in most of the past 10 years, Colorado Springs still had fewer primary care doctors, relative to population, than the state (82.9) and nation (75.2). Colorado Springs also ranked 6th out of 6 peer communities.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS PER 100,000 POPULATION
(VS NATIONAL AVERAGE, 2021)



In 2014, the Colorado Health Institute identified the regions containing El Paso and Teller counties as state “hot spots,” that needed more than 120 primary care physicians both for the overall population as well as for people covered by Medicaid.³¹

³⁰ Health Resources & Services Administration

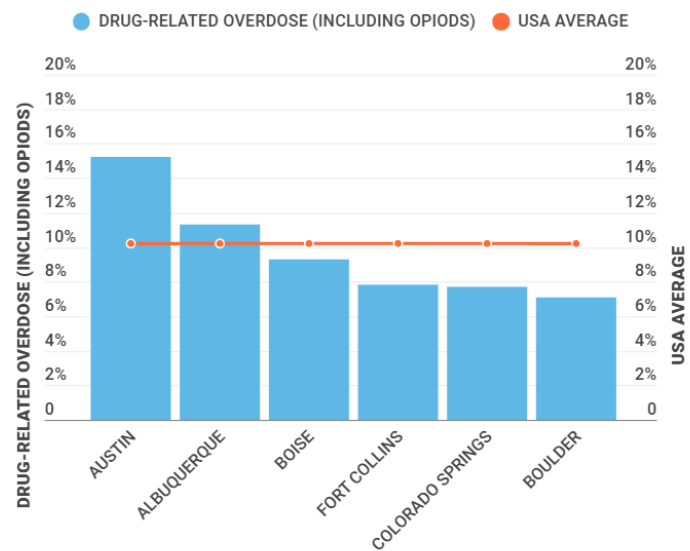
Colorado Springs also has a shortage of mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals. As of 2023, Colorado Springs had a mental health professional for every 230 residents, which ranked 4th of 6 peer communities.³²

Health Insurance

Health care costs may be covered through employer-sponsored insurance, individual plans purchased through the Health Insurance Exchange, other insurance and government-sponsored programs such as Medicare for adults aged 65 and over, Medicaid for low-income families, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program for young people in low-income settings.

In 2022 Colorado Springs’ rate of residents under age 65 who lacked health coverage was 8.1%, which was better than state (8.4%) and the national (9.5%) rates.³³ Colorado Springs ranked 3rd of 6 peer communities for lowest rate of uninsured residents. The Colorado Health Institute reported that 2023 marked the lowest rate of uninsured Coloradans in history.³⁴

% OF RESIDENTS UNINSURED IN 2021
(UNDER AGE 65)



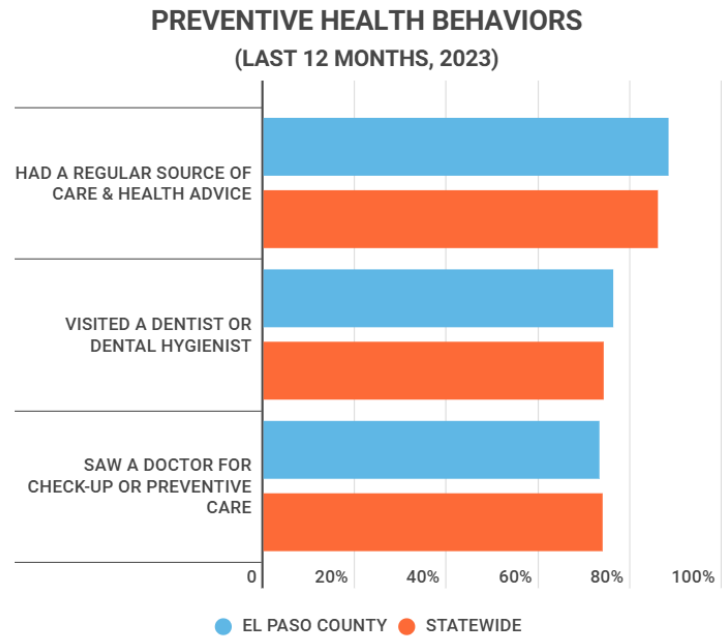
³⁵ U.S. Census, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

The Colorado Health Institute has estimated coverage for all Coloradans. Between 2019 and 2023 the number of commercially insured El Paso County residents decreased by almost 6 percentage points, while Medicaid enrollment increased from 19.4% to 28.9% of the county’s population.³⁶ El Paso County’s Medicaid enrollment rate is 4% higher than the national average.

Health Care Utilization

According to the Colorado Health Access Survey 2023, El Paso County falls in the middle of the pack for Colorado regions for accessing health services such as primary care and dental care. El Paso County ranked 3rd of 3 Colorado peer communities for proportion of the population making preventive care visits and dentist visits. However, the county ranked 1st of 3 Colorado peer communities for having a regular source of care and health advice.³⁷

The pandemic affected primary care utilization, resulting in a 25% drop in visits to care providers. Once people felt safe enough to return to their providers, their conditions were more serious and required more invasive interventions in many cases.³⁹ Additionally, 300,000 Coloradans have been affected by long COVID.⁴⁰ For information on the impact of the pandemic on health workers, read the supplement on Healthcare Workforce below.



38 Colorado Health Access Survey 2023

Learn More: Healthcare Workforce

Healthcare and social assistance is the largest employment sector in Colorado Springs, with more than 50,000 employees. While the pandemic placed a substantial burden on healthcare labor recruitment, retention, and training, employment in the sector has bounced back, with net growth of 25% between 2017 and the end of 2023.^{xxix} Between 2022 and 2032, nine of the top 15 occupations projected to be fastest growing in the region (with at least 300 total jobs) are in the healthcare sector.^{xxx}

The sector is also expected to be well insulated from AI impacts. As Tatiana Bailey, Health Care Economist and Executive Director of the UCCS Economic Forum, stated in a June 11, 2021, article from the Colorado Springs Business Journal, “Health care is a very labor-intensive industry. There’s only so much you can automate.”^{xxxi}

A 2021 forecast of healthcare labor shortages in Colorado was revised in 2024 to show surpluses through 2028 in several roles, including physicians, registered nurses, and nursing assistants.

Deficits are still projected for nurse practitioners (330 needed) and personal-care aides and home-health workers (1,000 needed).^{xxxii}

On the positive side of behavioral healthcare access, the use of telehealth increased significantly during the pandemic. Behavioral health care services accounted for 38% of all telehealth services provided in Colorado.^{xxxiii} The rapid and broad adoption of telehealth has allowed for more creative and efficient use of staffing to meet client needs. This mode of delivery, however, is not appropriate for all types of care and diagnoses, and poor internet access, especially in rural portions of Teller County, has limited this resource as a “meets all needs” solution.

Another promising approach to addressing access issues is the use of peer support specialists, which are seen as innovative and impactful members of treatment teams.^{xxxiv} Peer specialists can meet people’s mental health and substance use recovery needs in the community without further burdening licensed and medical professionals that are already stretched thin.

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- ⁶ CDPHE. Data at <https://covid19.colorado.gov/data> and <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/covid-19/data>, both accessed October 7, 2024.
- ⁷ Choi, Edwin, and Sonin, Juhan. Meta-analysis of seven published studies of relative contributions of determinants of health. Nov. 15, 2018 (v. 3). <https://www.goinvo.com/vision/determinants-of-health/>, accessed October 7, 2024. More on health determinants can be found at CDPHE's Health Disparities and Community Grant program, <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hdcgp>, and in the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's County Health Rankings, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measure-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model>, both accessed October 7, 2024.
- ⁸ BMI is calculated by comparing weight measured in kilograms to height measured in meters squared (kg/m²). The World Health Organization considers adults with a BMI of 25 or greater to be overweight; it considers those with a BMI of 30 or greater as obese. Children under the age of two are considered overweight if their BMI is at least two standard deviations above WHO Child Growth Standard Medians; they are considered obese if they are three standard deviations above. Children ages 5-19 are considered overweight if they are one standard deviation above the median and obese if two standard deviations above.

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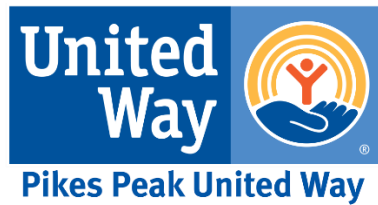
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Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Community Engagement Summary

What is the process by which community organizations and individuals build ongoing, permanent relationships for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the benefit of the community?

Individuals and groups may connect and engage with their community traditionally – in person or digitally, the latter of which has seen quite an increase since the onset of the pandemic. Healthy and vibrant community members seek out ways to become involved. Organizations, businesses, and agencies within a community actively seek to involve community members in their processes and support their needs. Community engagement in the Colorado Springs MSA is reflected in community members' participation in groups and as individuals in the ways listed below.

- Colorado Springs ranks **3rd of 6** peer communities for participation in membership associations.
- Pikes Peak Library District is one of the most-visited places in the Pikes Peak region and accounts for 96% of library resource circulation in the metro area.
- In 2021, **35%** of Colorado Springs-area residents said they regularly attended worship services, either in person or online.
- Colorado Springs ranked **1st of 5** peer communities for total United Way volunteers and volunteer hours.
- Colorado Springs' charitable giving compares favorably to peer communities, **ranking 1st of 6** for charitable giving relative to income.
- Colorado Springs' creative economy supports more than **11,000** jobs that **yield \$812.3 million in earnings**.
- **95%** of Colorado Springs residents accessed at least one local source of news in 2022.

Neighborhood Councils

Healthy neighborhoods are at the core of regional city planning, such as [PlanCOS](#) (approved in 2019) and [Envision Woodland Park 2030](#) (adopted in 2021), and is a key consideration in county master plans, such as the [Your El Paso Plan](#) (adopted in 2021) and Teller County's [2020 Amended Growth Management Plan](#).

Engaged citizens know and talk to their neighbors and are aware of neighborhood needs and issues. Healthy neighborhoods develop structures to intentionally identify priority needs and to work together to address them. Neighborhood networks include, but are not limited to, formal homeowner's associations (HOAs), informal groups, and nonprofit organizations that work with community members to connect them to their neighborhoods.

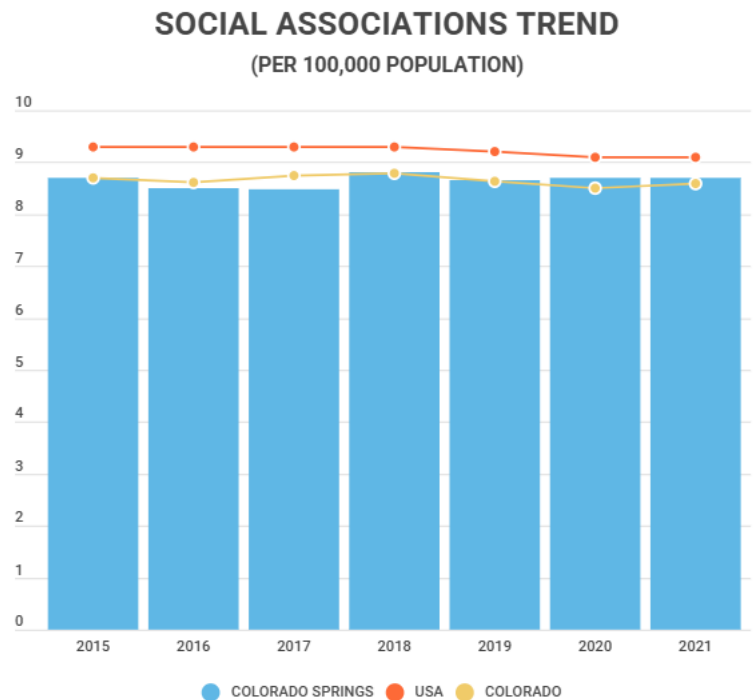
The city of Colorado Springs works with nonprofit organization [Council of Neighbors and Organizations \(CONO\)](#) to coordinate neighborhood networks, monitor the creation and progress of neighborhood plans, and train and resource neighborhood leaders.

As of September 30, 2021 listed 868 active organized neighborhood communities in El Paso County, including 74 neighborhood associations and 794 HOAs.¹ While CONO's database does not include Teller County, 18 HOAs with Teller addresses were recently listed in the state HOA registry,² which brings the total of known neighborhood associations in Colorado Springs MSA to **886**. New registrations accounted for **2.1%** of all El Paso and Teller HOA listings in the state registry.³

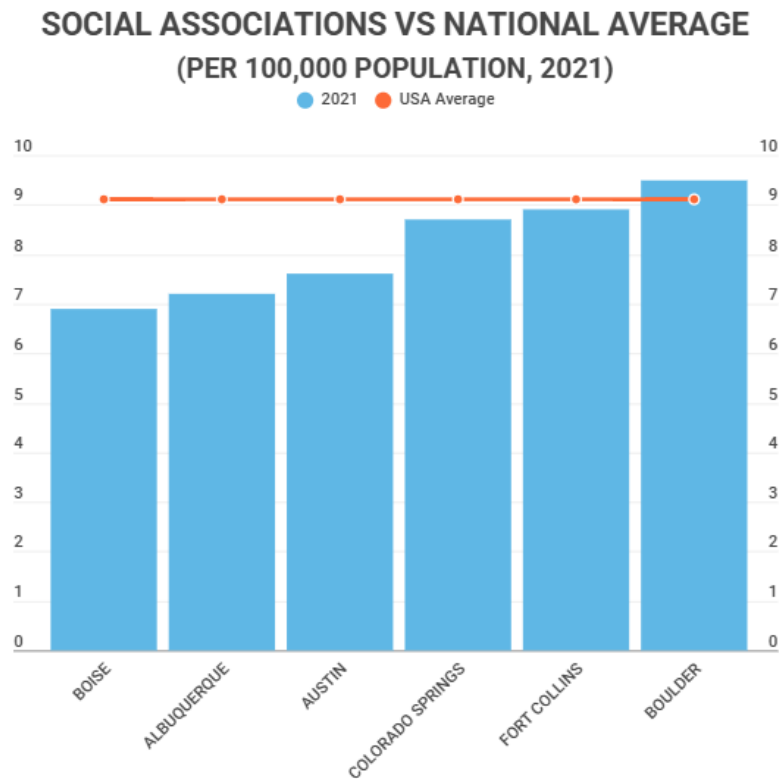
Social Associations

Participation in voluntary groups and membership associations is linked to a variety of positive outcomes, including increased civic participation, engagement with community problems, social trust, and personal health.^{4, 5} The Census Bureau provides an available, trackable measure of membership associations per 10,000 residents through its [County Business Patterns](#) data.

Colorado Springs residents' participation in associations closely mirrors statewide levels, although communities in the West tend to lag behind the national average.



In 2021, Colorado Springs ranked **3rd of 6 peer** communities for participation in membership associations.



7 U.S. Census Bureau

Library Usage

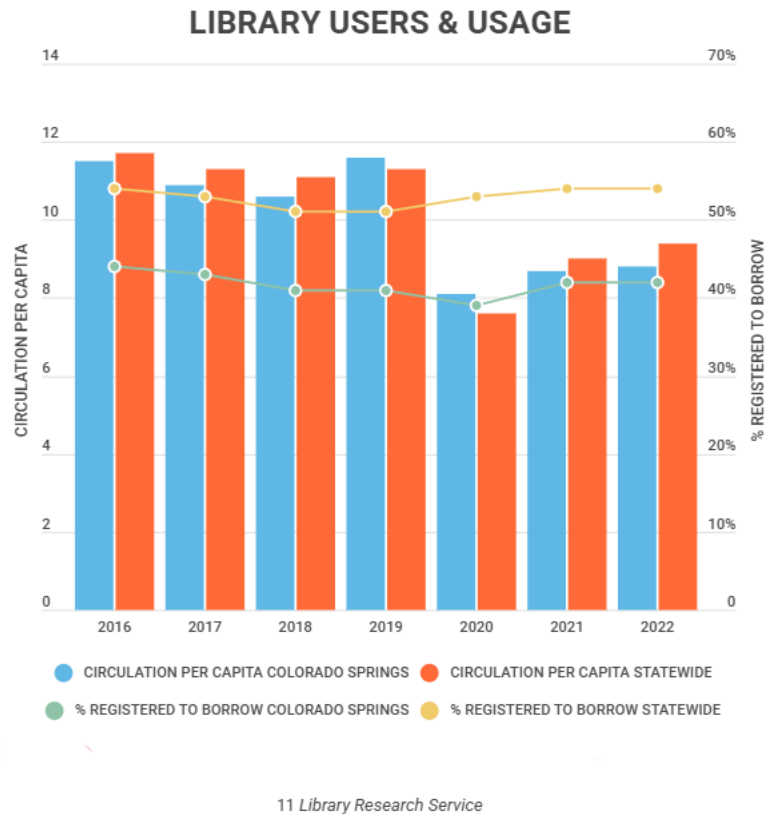
Libraries are welcoming public spaces that are hubs of learning, education, collaboration, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and entertainment for people of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and aspirations. More than nine in 10 adult Americans have used a library, and 63% feel that the loss of a library would have a “major” impact on their community. Library services are especially valued by families with children, people of color, the unemployed, the elderly, and those with disabilities.⁸

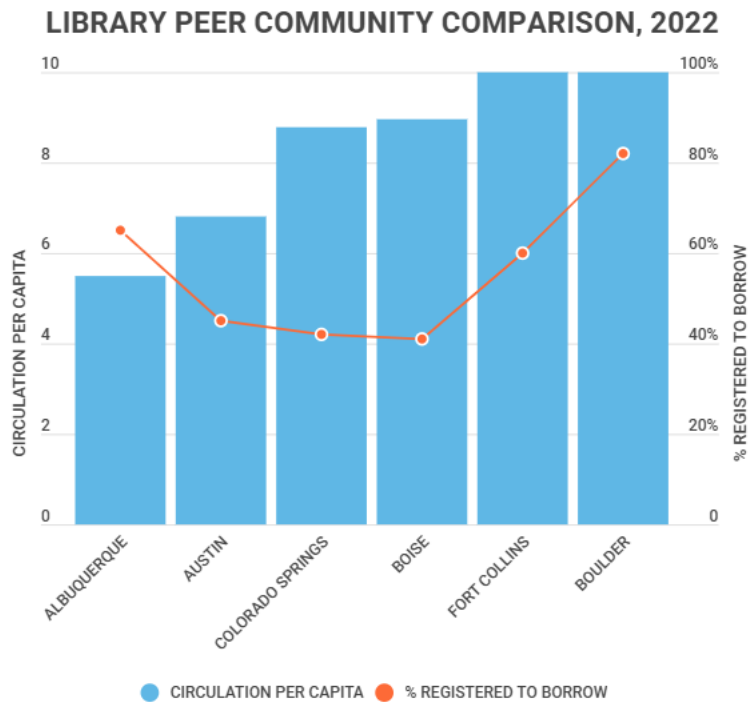
Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) is the third-largest library system in Colorado by circulation, with 370 full-time equivalent staff and 350 volunteers.⁹ PPLD is one of the most-visited places in the Pikes Peak region and accounts for 96% of library resource circulation in the metro area. Three other public library systems that also serve the community include: Security Public Library, Rampart Regional Library District (Woodland Park), and Southern Teller County School/Public Library District (Cripple Creek).

Community involvement in libraries is reflected in three measures: Circulation (resource engagement), Library Visits (physical engagement), and Registered Borrowers (percentage of people prepared to engage). Colorado Springs' per-capita circulation has been close to the state average in recent years. Registered users are fewer than the state average (42% vs. 54% statewide in 2022), but the smaller proportion is made up for with greater activity per user.¹⁰

COVID-19 had only a small effect on the proportion of registered users in Colorado Springs, but circulation dropped by almost a third and library visits fell by two-thirds. Activity has seen a slow and incomplete recovery following COVID-19, and Colorado Springs' recovery has been slower than the statewide average. In 2022, Colorado Springs libraries recorded circulation of 6.7 million resources, or 8.8 per resident, recorded among 321,243 registered borrowers.

In peer communities, suburban library systems shoulder a larger relative share of library activity than in Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs ranked **4th of 6** communities in circulation per capita in 2022; it ranked **5th of 6** in terms of proportion of registered borrowers. Colorado Springs has achieved this standing even while PPLD has ranked last in community funding among the 10 largest library systems in Colorado, with local revenue per capita of \$49 in 2022.¹²





13 Institute of Museum and Library Services, Library Research Service, Idaho Commission for Libraries, New Mexico State Library, Texas State Library & Archives Commission.

Increased community funding (median among the 10 largest libraries is \$82 per resident) would allow PPLD to expand on its record of innovation and collaboration to reach new areas and audience segments. Recent examples of innovation include the Pikes Peak Culture Pass for PPLD cardholders, PowerPass partnerships for local school districts, and a co-location partnership with the Manitou Art Center.

Religious Service Attendance

Attendance at religious services directly reflects engagement with faith communities. Additionally, for residents of the United States and other countries, regular attendance of services is linked to increased voting in elections, increased joining of community groups and other voluntary organizations, and increased happiness.¹⁴

Elevated Insights is a Colorado Springs-based market research firm that monitors aspects of community engagement, including religious service attendance, through its annual AskCOS® syndicated tracking survey. In 2021, **35%** of Colorado Springs-area residents said they regularly attended worship services, either in person or online. That proportion was nearly unchanged from 2017, when 36% of AskCOS® respondents said they regularly attended religious services.¹⁵

Some private research companies monitor religious service attendance, but direct comparison data at the peer-community level was not freely available.

Volunteerism

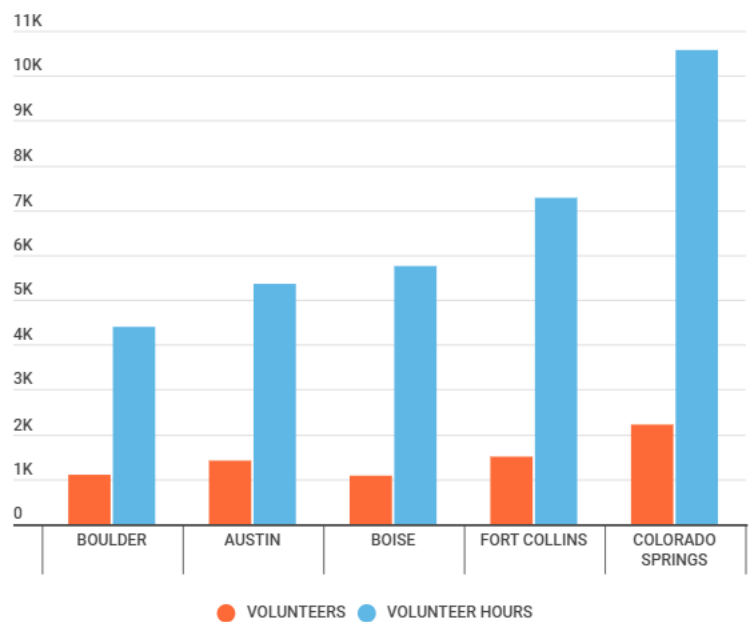
Charitable organizations benefit communities in numerous ways. They...

- ...improve lives
- ...are building blocks of democracy
- ...are where Americans come together to solve problems
- ...are laboratories of leadership
- ...are promoters of civic engagement
- ...are economic engines¹⁶

Nationally, 23% of Americans volunteered their time to serve a charitable organization in 2021, in the midst of COVID, down from 30% in 2019.¹⁷ Data for Colorado Springs MSA and peer communities has not been included in reports since 2017. At that time, based on pooled data from 2012 to 2015, **30.7% of Colorado Springs** residents volunteered, which ranked **4th of 6** peer communities (ahead of Albuquerque and Austin).

United Way serves a large number of charitable organizations in every community. At a micro level, more recent comparative data is available from individual United Ways. Among five peer communities reporting volunteer data in a recent year, Colorado Springs ranked **1st** for both total volunteer hours and total volunteers.¹⁸

UNITED WAY VOLUNTEERS & VOLUNTEER HOURS
(MOST RECENT AVAILABLE YEAR)



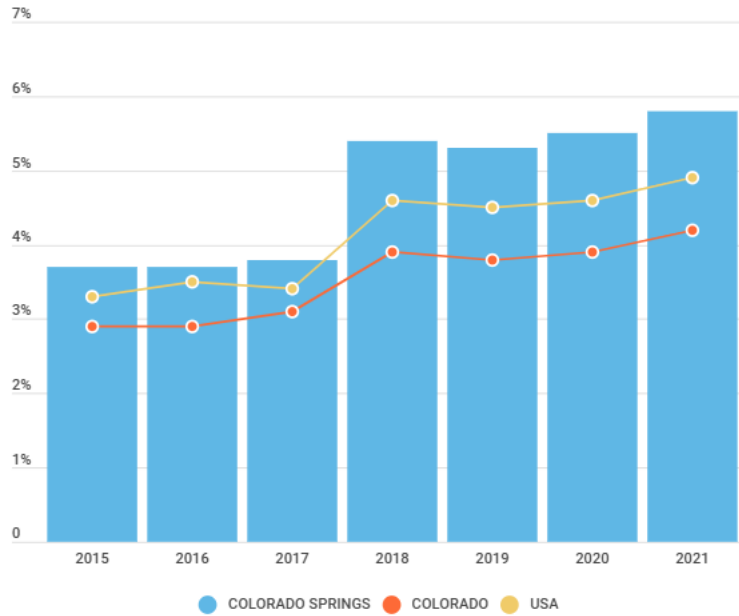
19 Pikes Peak United Way, other United Way websites

Charitable Giving

In 2021, individuals and families in the United States gave \$390 billion to charitable organizations. Most of that giving (64%) came from taxpayers who itemized charitable contributions on their tax returns. Researchers analyze county-level IRS data for patterns of generosity and civic engagement.²⁰

While giving levels vary by economic conditions and changes in tax policy, Colorado Springs residents have consistently given above state and national averages. In 2021, they gave **5.8%** of their adjusted gross incomes to charity.

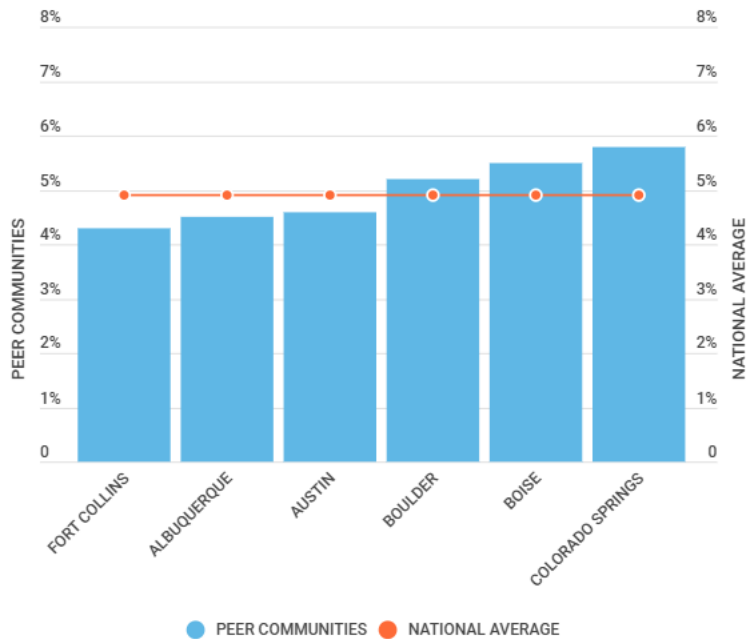
CHAIRITABLE GIVING TREND (% of Adjusted Gross Income)



21 Internal Revenue Service

Colorado Springs’ charitable giving also compares favorably to peer communities, ranking **1st of 6** for charitable giving relative to income.

2021 CHARITABLE GIVING VS NATIONAL AVERAGE (% OF ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME)

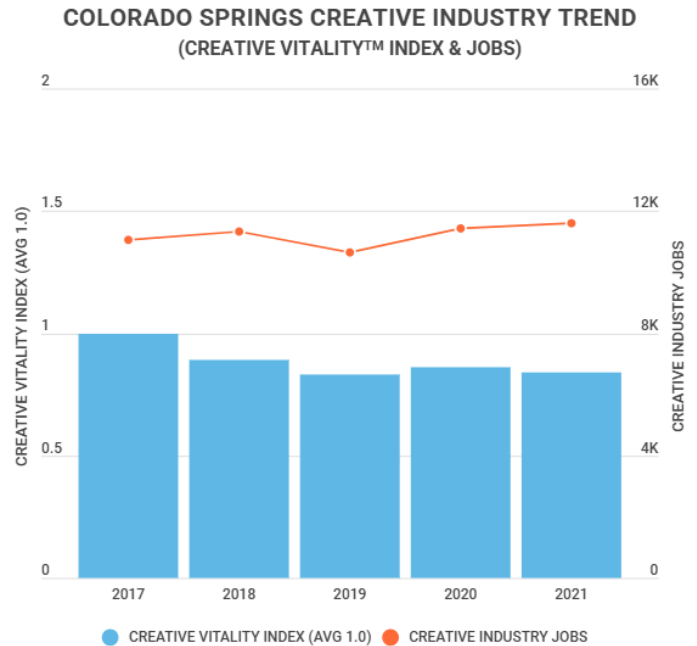


22 Internal Revenue Service

Creative Vitality

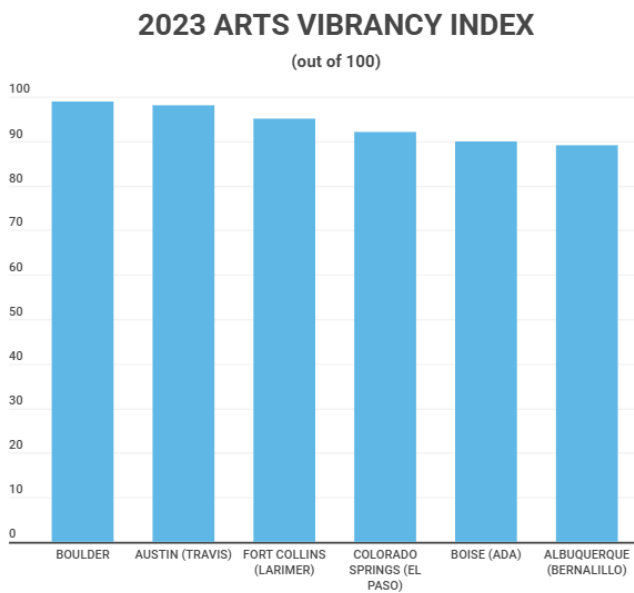
According to local development experts, “Arts and culture...play a crucial role in increasing, diversifying, and sustaining public participation; navigating contentious issues; and fostering productive public dialogue and decision making.”²³ To measure the overall quality of a community’s creative vitality, the Western States Arts Federation developed the Creative Vitality™ Index (CVI), which combines per-capita data on creative industries, occupations, and cultural nonprofit revenues into a single measure that can be compared across communities.²⁴ Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs’ monitors the community’s CVI. The city has established a goal to see it increase.²⁵

Colorado Springs’ creative economy supports more than 11,000 jobs that yield \$812.3 million in earnings. In recent years, CVI values the metro areas close to the national average. In 2017, Colorado Springs’ CVI mirrored the national average. In 2021, Colorado Springs’ CVI was **0.84**, or 16% below the national average. Local jobs in the creative sector numbered **11,589**.



²⁶ Western States Arts Federation, Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs

While updated Creative Vitality Index data was not available for all peer cities, a similar measure, SMU’s Arts Vibrancy Index, provides figures for all U.S. counties. In 2023, El Paso County scored 92 out of 100, which ranked 4th of 6 peer communities (considering only the county with the largest population).



Media Engagement

People who are well engaged in their community stay abreast of local news. Colorado Springs research firm Elevated Insights monitors local media usage as part of its AskCOS[®] syndicated tracking survey. In 2022, it found that **95%** of Colorado Springs residents accessed at least one local source of news.²⁸

Newspapers are no longer the dominant form of media—*The Gazette* ranked fourth among local media sources on the 2022 AskCOS[®] survey—but comparative readership data is available. For the October 2023 to March 2024 audit period, *The Gazette's* average Sunday circulation (print and digital combined) was 30,730, which reflected distribution to the equivalent of **10%** of households in the metro area.²⁹ That ranked **4th out of 6** peer communities for circulation as a percentage of households.

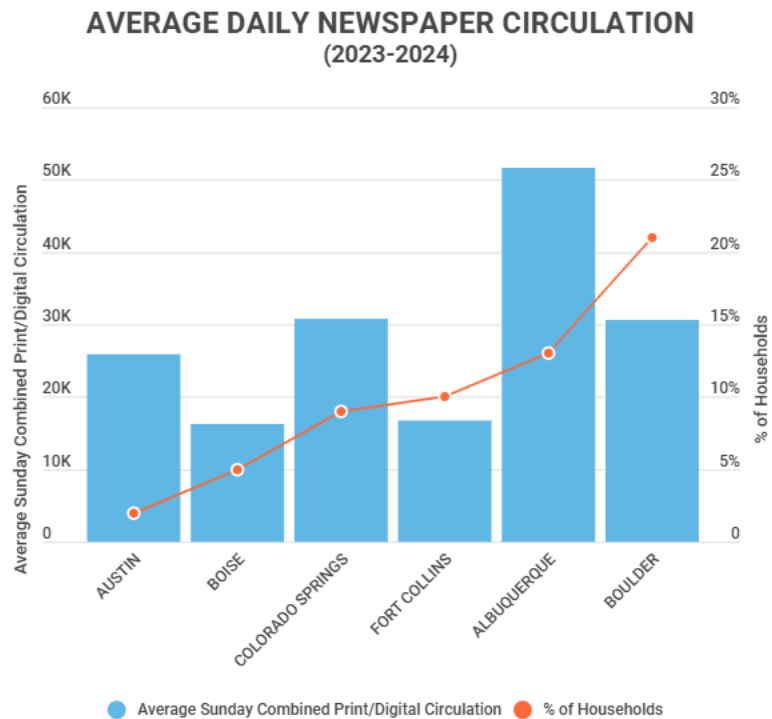
Due to re-sharing, a newspaper's total readership is much wider than its circulation. *The Gazette's* total readership during the audit period was estimated at 242,809, or **40.6%** of its newspaper-defined market, which closely approximates the Census Bureau's estimate of the 18-and-over population of the Colorado Springs MSA.³¹

Engaging Local Government Online

One indicator of citizen engagement with local government is web traffic. Municipalities and other government entities track unique site visitors³² over time. While not all visitors will be community members, relative levels of activity can be calculated by per-capita visits by dividing visits by community population.

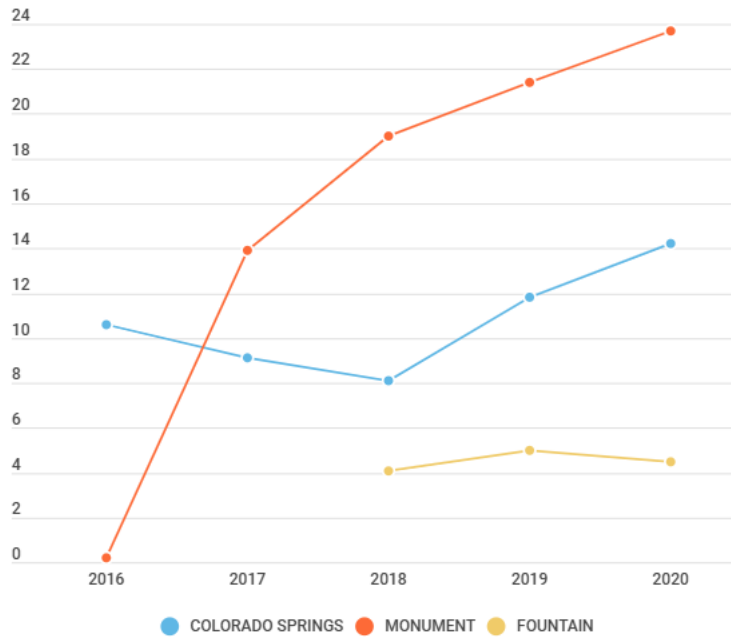
Trend data was obtained from three Colorado Springs-area municipalities. Monument's activity from 2016 to 2020 showed a consistent upward trend; Colorado Springs' traffic over the same period showed a slight decline followed by a two-year increase. Fountain's three-year trend was relatively stable.

In 2020, across all communities, the average per-capita site visitors was 14.2.



30 Alliance for Audited Media, U.S. Census Bureau

UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS PER CAPITA (PER YEAR, ALL MUNICIPAL SITES)



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² Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies, Division of Real Estate. File downloaded from <https://apps2.colorado.gov/dre/licensing/lookup/generateroster.aspx>, “Homeowners Associations – Active.”. Accessed August 12, 2024.

³ Ibid. Of 656 active licenses with an El Paso or Teller County address, 14 were issued for the first time between August 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024.

⁴ Kwak, Novin, Shah, DV, & Holbert, Lance, “Connecting, Trusting, and Participating: The Direct and Interactive Effects of Social Associations,” *Political Research Quarterly*, v.57, no. 4, December 2004. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3219825> and <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3219825>, accessed August 12, 2024.

⁵ County Health Rankings summarized research that links participation in social association with improved health outcomes, as well as its opposite, the health costs of social isolation, at <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model/health-factors/social-and-economic-factors/family-social-support/social-associations>, accessed August 12, 2024.

⁶ US Census Bureau, Community Business Pattern tables, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cbp/data/tables.html>. MSA data aggregated from county-level data, using total number of associations divided by estimated MSA population per U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/pepest/datasets/2020-2023/metro/totals/cbsa-est2023-alldata.csv>. Both accessed August 12, 2024.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pew Research Center, “How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities.” Research report published Dec. 11, 2013. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/12/11/libraries-in-communities/>, accessed August 24, 2024.

⁹ Staff full-time equivalent and size by circulation from Library Research Service, Public Library Annual Report Data. <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/public-libraries/annual-statistics/>; volunteer figure is taken from Pikes Peak Library District, 2022 Annual Report, p.1, <https://ppld.org/financial-annual-reports>; both accessed August 14, 2024.

¹⁰ Library Research Service, Public Library Annual Report Data. <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/public-libraries/annual-statistics/>, accessed August 14, 2024. Per-capita figures are computed as total circulation, visits, or registered borrowers, divided by the sum of all residents in the service area of the library system or systems.

¹¹ Library Research Service, Public Library Annual Report Data. <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/public-libraries/annual-statistics/>, accessed August 14, 2024.

¹² In Boise and Boulder, the largest library accounts for less than half of metro circulation. Albuquerque and Austin each has more than 20 active public library systems.

¹³ Public libraries report data using relatively standardized terms and definitions. Sources include Library Research Service (Boulder, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins), <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/public->

libraries/annual-statistics/; Idaho Commission for Libraries (Boise); <https://libraries.idaho.gov/idaho-library-statistics/>; New Mexico State Library (Albuquerque), <https://nmstatelibrary.org/services-for-new-mexico-libraries/statistical-reports/>; Texas State Library & Archives Commission (Austin), <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ldn/statistics>. All accessed August 14, 2024. Each source lists the county where each library system is based. Data aggregated for all libraries located in counties in the Statistical Metropolitan Area of each peer community. The number of libraries/systems by metro include: Colorado Springs 4, Boulder 6, Fort Collins 6, Boise 18, Albuquerque 23, Austin 30.

¹⁴ Pew Research Center, “Religion’s Relationship to Happiness, Civic Engagement and Health Around the World,” Jan. 31, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/01/31/religions-relationship-to-happiness-civic-engagement-and-health-around-the-world/>, accessed August 24, 2024.

¹⁵ Elevated Insights, AskCOS® 2021 Findings Excerpt, Dec. 2, 2021, p.43. Online survey of 1,380 local residents sourced from Elevated Insights’ EIAsks® panel, social media posts, and sharing from local organizations. 2021 question: “How often do you view/participate in worship services either in person or streaming? n=1,307. 2017 question: “How often do you attend religious gatherings? (such as church, synagogue, temple, etc.)” n=1,009. Response choices for both questions: “Regularly,” “Infrequently” and “Never.” See <https://elevatedinsights.com/ask-cos-2/>, accessed May 9, 2022 and used with permission. Elevated Insights has since closed and its website is inactive.

¹⁶ National Council of Nonprofits. Nonprofit Impact Matters: How America’s Charitable Nonprofits Strengthen Communities and Improve Lives, 2019. <https://www.nonprofitimpactmatters.org/site/assets/files/1/nonprofit-impact-matters-sept-2019-1.pdf>, accessed August 24, 2024.

¹⁷ AmeriCorps, Office of Research and Evaluation. Volunteering and Civic Life in America, 2023. <https://www.americorps.gov/about/our-impact/volunteering-civic-life>, accessed May 8, 2022. Data taken from U.S. Census Bureau’s 2021 Current Population Survey: Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement. See <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/civic-engagement-volunteering-supplement.html> and https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-volunteer.html, accessed August 24, 2024.

¹⁸ Data was not adjusted for per-capita rates of either volunteers or volunteer hours. Colorado Springs data was provided by Pikes Peak United Way in a spreadsheet. Austin reflects data from the United Way for Greater Austin, which absorbed United Way of Williamson County. Boulder data refers to Foothills United Way, which served Boulder and Broomfield counties. (Broomfield is not part of the Boulder MSA.) Reporting years were fiscal 2021-2022 for Treasure Valley (Boise), fiscal 2022-2023 for Pikes Peak (Colorado Springs) and Greater Austin, 2020-2021 for Boise, fiscal 2019-2020 for Larimer County (Fort Collins), and 2018 for Foothills (Boulder). Foothills volunteer data is believed to be calendar 2018 as report references the 2018 Day of Caring (fiscal 2018-2019). Foothills has since folded into Mile High United Way. See https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/United-Way-ATX_2021-Impact-Report.pdf, https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/United-Way-for-Greater-Austin-Impact-Report_2024.pdf, https://www.unitedwaytv.org/sites/unitedwaytv.org/files/2022_UW%20CommunityImpactReport_4.27.pdf, <https://uwcnm.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Impact-Report-2021-compressed.pdf>, <https://unitedwaydenver.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/4.-Fiscal-2018-Annual-Report.pdf> and <https://uwaylc.org/2019-20-annual-report/>, all but Austin accessed May 5, 2022; Austin accessed August 30, 2024.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Examples include Davis, Tyler, Lindsay, Drew and O’Leary, Brian. “How America Gives Data: Leaders and Laggards, Giving Opportunities, and More,” *Philanthropy.com*, Oct. 2, 2017. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/how-america-gives-data-leaders-and-laggards-giving-opportunities-and-more/>, accessed May 5, 2022 (registration required); John, Steven. “The 25 most charitable counties in the US,” *Insider*, Jan. 24, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/most-charitable-counties-us-income-tax-data-2019-1>, accessed May 5, 2022.

²¹ Internal Revenue Service historical data for counties and metropolitan areas accessed at <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-county-data>, accessed August 15, 2024. Proportion of income given charitably is calculated by dividing amount of total charitable contributions by total adjusted gross income (AGI) of those itemizing deductions.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Catherwood-Ginn, Jon, and Bob Leonard, “Playing for the Public Good: The Arts in Planning and Government.” *Animating Democracy*, a program of Americans for the Arts, 2012, p. 1. <https://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/BLeonard&JC-G%20TrendPaper.pdf>, accessed August 16, 2024.

²⁴ WESTAF Creative Vitality Suite, <https://cvsuite.org/help-center/creative-vitality-index/>, accessed May 13, 2022. The components of the index include the relative number of jobs within creative occupations (40%), industry sales from specific industries (40%), and arts-and-culture nonprofit revenues (20%).

²⁵ City of Colorado Springs, PlanCOS Chapter 6, “Renowned Culture Indicators.” <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/book/renowned-culture-indicators>, accessed August 15, 2024.

²⁶ Creative Vitality™ Index (CVI) is a product of Western States Arts Federation. Both CVI and creative industry jobs are charted; jobs are one of the weighted CVI components documented at <https://cvsuite.org/help-center/creative-vitality-index/>. Trend data for Colorado Springs MSA was provided through the Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs, <https://downtowncs.com/>. That data supersedes prior CVI data published by the City of Colorado Springs at <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/book/renowned-culture-indicators>. All accessed Nov. 1, 2024.

²⁷ SMU DataArts’ 2023 Arts Vibrancy Index, <https://dataarts.smu.edu/ArtsVibrancyMap/>. The AVI is a composite of 13 measures related to “supply, demand, and public support for arts and culture...adjusted for cost of living and for population size,” <https://dataarts.smu.edu/ArtsVibrancyMap/faq.html>. Both accessed Nov. 1, 2024.

²⁸ Elevated Insights, AskCOS® 2022 Findings Excerpt, p.51. Online survey of 1,220 local residents sourced from Elevated Insights’ EIAsks® panel, social media posts, and sharing from local organizations. Question: “What sources do you use to stay informed on local news or local events in a typical week? (This could be reading or accessing information from news programs, apps, podcasts, social media posts, newspapers, etc.)” n=1,151. Report provided to Peak Progress QLI via email, August 20, 2024; unavailable online. Used with permission.

²⁹ Alliance for Audited Media, News media statements for most-recent available six-month period, <https://auditedmedia.com/analysis-and-training/released-reports/>, accessed August 30, 2024 (purchase required). Fort Collins combines circulation of the Fort Collins Coloradoan and the Loveland Reporter-Herald. Boulder combines circulation of the Boulder Daily Camera and Longmont Times-Call. The end date for the audit period was March 31, 2024. Used with permission. Number of households for percentage calculation sourced from U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Table DP03,

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<https://data.census.gov/table?q=dp03&g=310XX00US10740,12420,14260,14500,17820,22660>, accessed August 30, 2024.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Alliance for Audited Media, News Media Statement, 6 months ended March 31, 2024. Net combined print (7-day) and online (30-day) readership in market, as calculated by Nielsen Scarborough. Used with permission.

³² “Unique site visitor” is equivalent to “unique browser,” as defined by the International Federation of Audit Bureau of Certification (IFABC) as a unique and valid identifier. Validity is typically fulfilled with an IP address plus a cookie or registration ID. See <https://www.ifabc.org/resources/metrics/website-metrics/browser-metrics>, accessed May 13, 2022 (no longer available as of August 30, 2024).

³³ Data provided by the Peak Progress Community Engagement Council, 2021



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

EDUCATION REPORT

Education Summary:

According to The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Education plays a key role in providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to participate effectively in society and in the economy.”

OECD also notes: “Having a good education greatly improves the likelihood of finding a job and earning enough money to have a good quality of life. Highly educated individuals are less affected by unemployment trends, typically because educational attainment makes an individual more attractive in the workforce. Lifetime earnings also increase with each level of education attained.”¹

In addition, education may improve people’s lives in such areas as health, civic participation, political interest, and happiness.

- Colorado Springs’ early-education enrollment percentage (9.5%) is very close to that of Boulder (9.8%) and Fort Collins (9.5%).
- In English/Language Arts, in 2023, 39% of Colorado Springs third graders met or exceeded expectations, as did 49% of seventh graders. In Math, scores were lower, with 33% of fourth graders meeting or exceeding expectations, and 33% of seventh graders doing the same.
- Across Colorado Springs MSA, the 2023 four-year high school graduation rate was 75.3%.
- In 2022, the proportion of Colorado Springs MSA graduates who enrolled in college or career education the following fall was 49%, which was two percent below the state average.
- Pikes Peak State College’s graduation rate was 23% in 2022, compared to the state average of 35% for similar institutions.
- In 2020-2021, base teacher salaries across the Colorado Springs MSA averaged \$54,562, which was above the median wage for the community (111%). However, in terms of total base salary and as a percentage of the median wage, Colorado Springs ranked 5th of 5 peer communities (data for Albuquerque unavailable).
- In Colorado Springs, per-pupil spending ranked 5th among 6 peer communities in 2020-2021, the most recent year for which comparative data is available.
- The 2023-2024 student-teacher ratio across all Colorado Springs MSA schools was 16.6 to 1, reflecting a decrease (improvement) from 2021-2022.

COLORADO SPRINGS EDUCATION



75.3%

4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION RATE ACROSS
COLORADO SPRINGS MSA
IN 2023



33%

OF 8TH GRADERS MET OR
EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS
IN MATH IN 2023



16.6 : 1

STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO
ACROSS ALL COLORADO
SPRINGS MSA SCHOOLS
IN 2023-2024



49%

OF 7TH GRADERS MET OR EXCEEDED
EXPECTATIONS IN ENGLISH/
LANGUAGE ARTS IN 2023

Key Indicators:

The Pikes Peak region provides a variety of educational experiences for students. The area is home to 17 public school districts along with several charter schools and private schools. The public schools provide open enrollment to any student but primarily serve their local students. Each district varies greatly from the largest serving 26,000 students to the smallest serving fewer than 50. In addition, the districts range in the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students, special education students, and gifted and talented students they serve. While each district is diverse, each works to meet the needs of their local community.

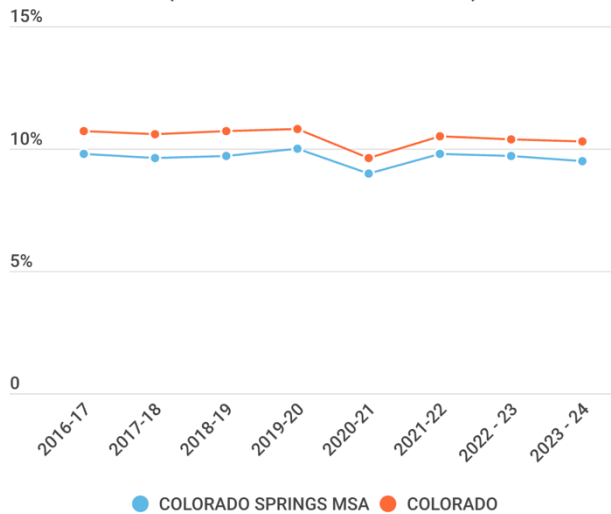
Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten

A key indicator for student success measures is participation in early education, which is associated with increases in grade advancement and in high school graduation rates. Public support of early childhood education can help reduce the overall cost of education and promote child well-being.²

For the 2023-2024 academic year, kindergarten and pre-kindergarten enrollment in Colorado Springs MSA public schools was 9.5% of total enrollment. The level has been relatively consistent over the years but has dropped a bit following a bounce-back from a pandemic-related dip.

Colorado Springs' early-education enrollment percentage is **very close to that of Fort Collins (9.5%) and Boulder (9.8%)**. The earlier the investments and interventions (age/stage-wise), the better. It is important for Colorado Springs to continue to support early-childhood education, institutionally and especially in the home.

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA KINDERGARTEN & PRE-K ENROLLMENT
(% OF ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED)



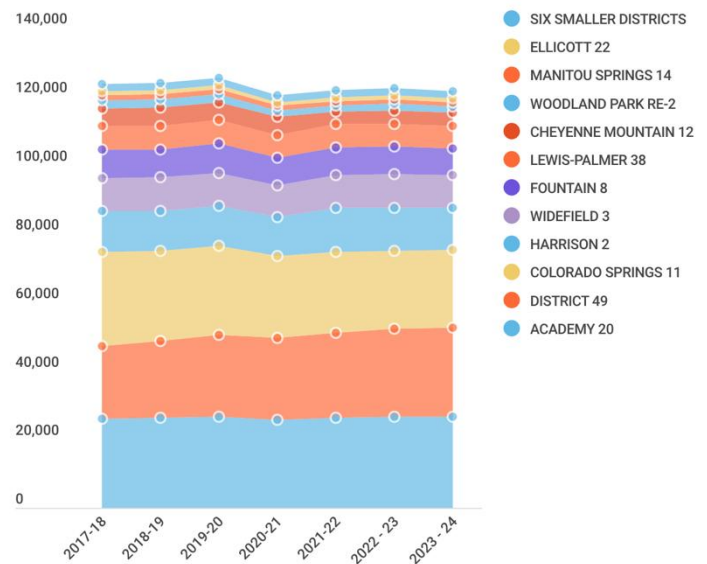
Public school enrollment for all grades in the Colorado Springs MSA grew by 11% from 2010 to 2019, which was less than total population growth in the region (16% or just over 100,000 people).⁴ Growth mirrored that of the city’s development, with public school districts in outlying areas growing and those in established areas declining slightly as the population aged. After a COVID-19 related dip in 2020-2021, area public school enrollment saw two years of increases before dropping again in 2023-2024 to 97 percent of the pre-COVID level. Six of 17 area districts have seen declines exceeding 10 percent since 2019.

³ Colorado Department of Education.

Throughout the 2020s, the area population is again expected to grow by 100,000, but most of the growth is expected in the over-75 age category as aging accelerates. The under-18 population should be stable, with growth anticipated at just 4%, but districts in mature neighborhoods should see significant declines.⁶

Maturing districts can expect to need to repurpose facilities as their school-age population drops. Budgets may also be affected as a significant number of property owners qualify for the senior property tax exemption. Collaboration across districts and among government structures is recommended, along with increasing public-private partnerships.

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT TREND
2018-2024



⁵ Colorado Department of Education

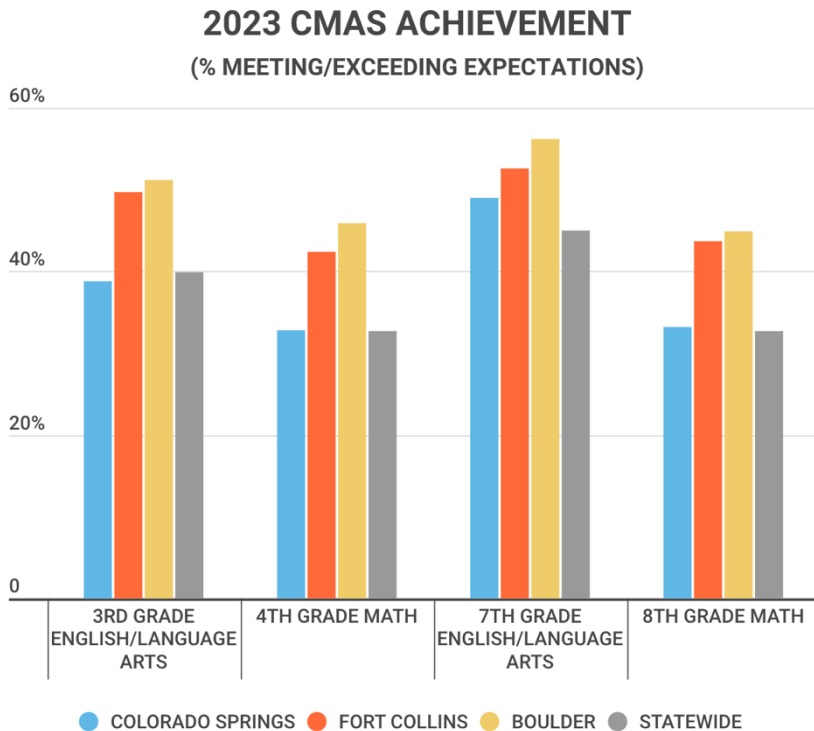
Elementary & Middle School

As students enter elementary years, the focus shifts from participation to proficiency. Test scores are compared to educational standards, which reflect expectations for students and teachers. In middle school, test scores remain important. Scores are not only measured against objective standards but also compared to results from earlier years—the level of progress that students make.

Research has shown that third grade reading skill affects long-term academic achievement, particularly students’ likelihood of graduating from high school.⁷ Colorado public school students’ scores on English/Language Arts and Math tests are grouped into five categories:

- Did not yet meet expectations
- Partially met expectations
- Approached expectations
- Met expectations
- Exceeded expectations

In English/Language Arts, in 2023, 39% of Colorado Springs third graders met or exceeded expectations, as did 49% of seventh graders. In Math, scores were lower, with 33% of fourth graders meeting or exceeding expectations, and 33% of eighth graders doing the same.⁸



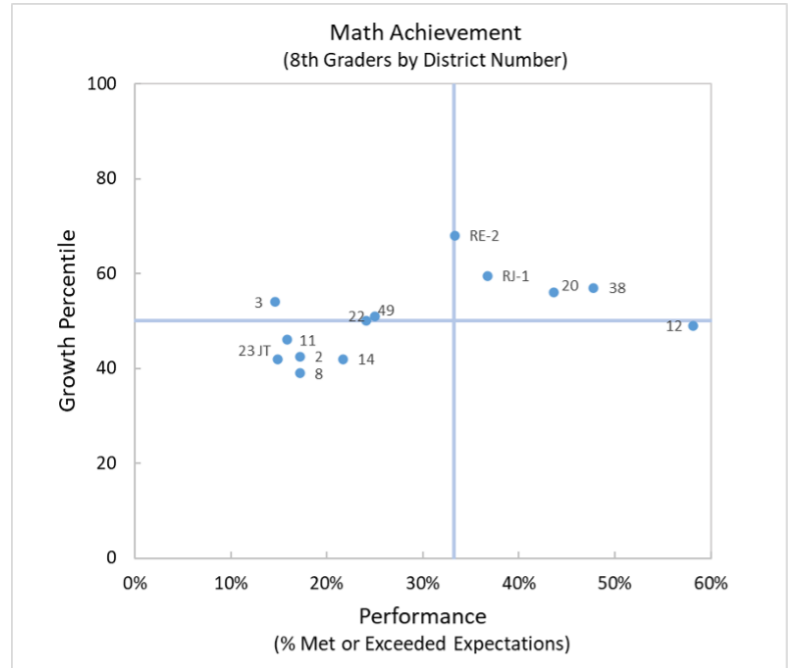
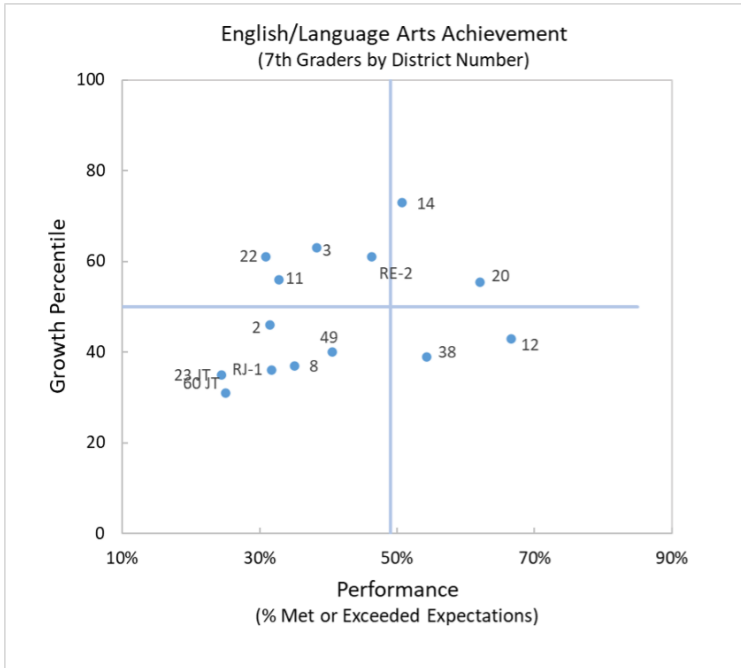
For Colorado Springs, three of four proportions were at or above the state average; all scores were somewhat lower than those of Colorado peer communities—each of which is centered around a large university.

⁹ Colorado Department of Education

Middle School Growth

Student Growth Percentile measures how a student, or group of students, has grown by comparing their scores over time. Growth data is important as it can reveal the quality of teaching and learning experiences. It reflects how far students have progressed, relative to other students.

At the district level, growth scores can be presented alongside achievement scores, to provide context. The following charts show absolute achievement levels from left to right, and relative growth levels from bottom to top. Districts are labeled by number; those on the right half earned higher test scores than the district average; those in the upper half showed better-than-average growth over time.



¹⁰ Colorado Department of Education

In both subject areas, a diagonal trend can be seen. It indicates that those who start well usually get further ahead over time, while those who fall behind early often lose further ground. This supports the importance of early childhood education, both at home and in the classroom.

Equity issues also emerge, as districts in wealthier parts of the community tend to have higher test scores and stronger growth. Still, some districts stand out for above-average growth rates, suggesting an effective learning environment. As in 2021, Woodland Park District RE-2 stood out for strong growth in Math. Also as in 2021, Manitou Springs District 14 had very high growth in English/Language Arts. On the other end of the spectrum, Miami/Yoder had the lowest growth rate in English; Fountain had the lowest growth in math.

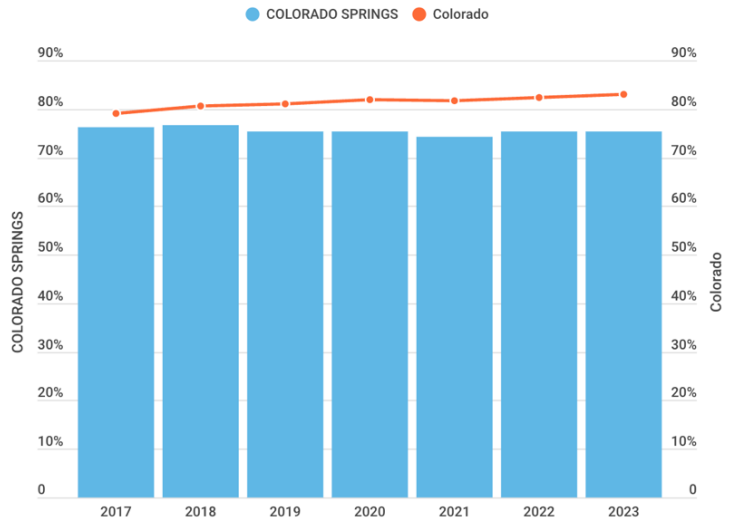
High School

In high school, the focus shifts once again, this time to completion of a broad course of study. Students who earn a high school diploma not only can expect to earn a higher income, but also to

have better physical health and a lower risk of premature death.¹¹ Across Colorado Springs MSA, the 2023 four-year high school **graduation rate was 75.3%**. While Colorado Springs' graduation rate has been roughly stable since 2017, statewide rates have risen in every year but one during that same period. The gap between Colorado Springs' graduation rate and the state average grew from **2.7% in 2017 to 7.8% in 2023**.¹²

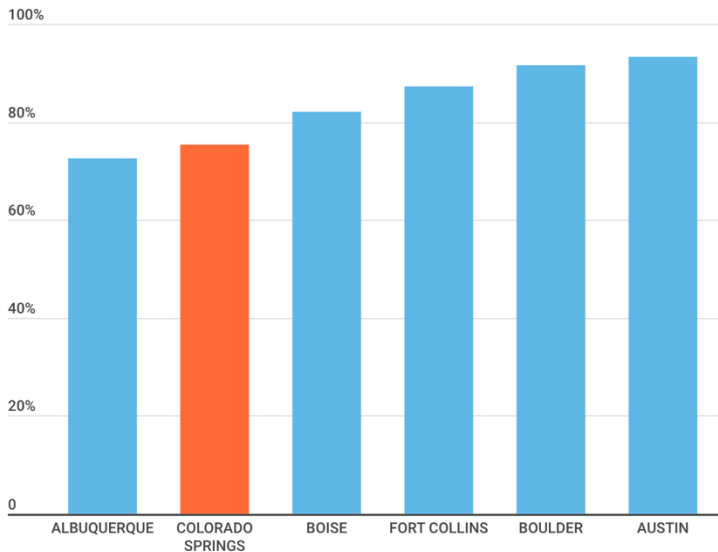
Colorado Springs' graduation rate also compares unfavorably to peer communities, ranking **5th of 6** in 2022 and trailing three communities by 11 points or more.¹³

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION TREND (COMPLETION IN 4 YEARS)



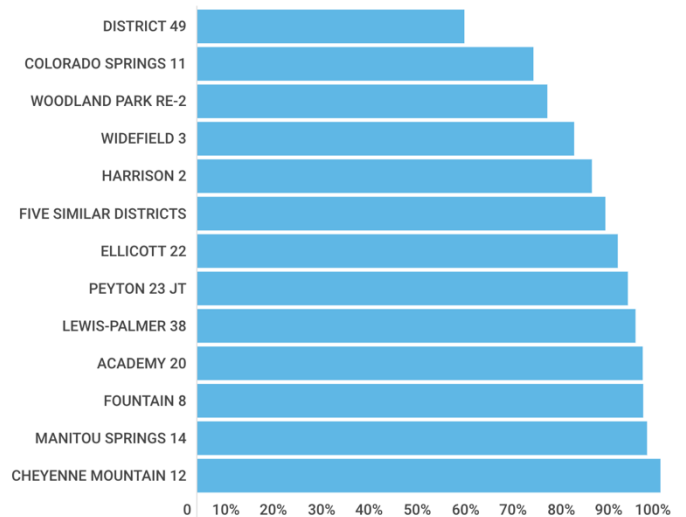
¹⁴ Colorado Department of Education

2022 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES (COMPLETION IN 4 YEARS)



¹⁵ Colorado Department of Education, New Mexico Public Education Department, Idaho State

2023 DISTRICT GRADUATION RATES (VS REGION AVERAGE OF 75.3%)



¹⁶ Colorado Department of Education

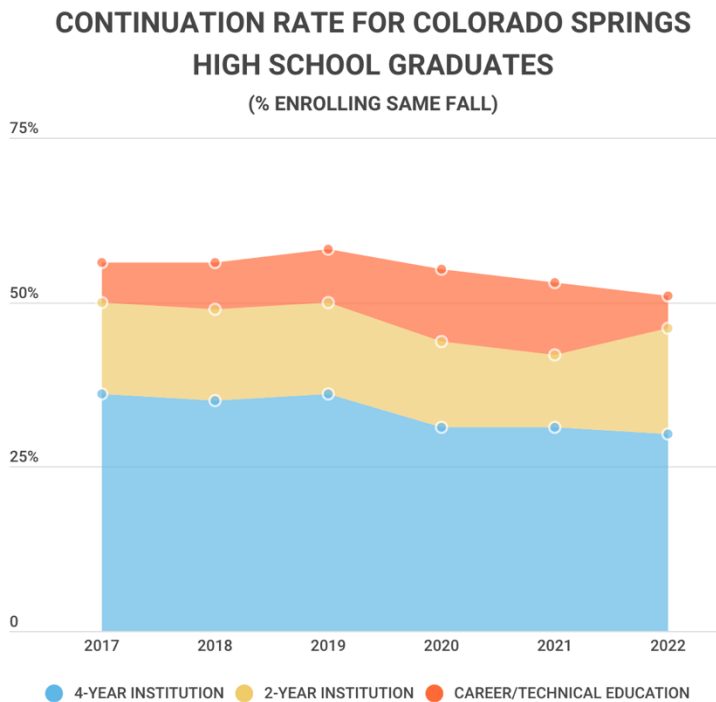
Higher Education:

Higher education delivers many benefits beyond a brighter financial outlook—but the monetary value of post-secondary education is striking. A 2011 analysis by the Pew Research Center found the following median earnings for a 40-year work life:

- High school graduate with no further education \$770,000
- Worker with a (two-year) associate degree \$1.0 million
- Worker with a bachelor’s degree & no advanced degree \$1.4 million

Pew estimated that, after deducting the cost of college and foregone earnings, the difference between the first and last categories is still more than \$500,000.¹⁷

Educators closely track the proportion of high school graduates who continue their education. In 2022, the proportion of Colorado Springs MSA graduates who enrolled in college or career education the following fall was 49%, which was two percent below the state average.¹⁸ COVID-19 led to a dip in four-year college enrollment, which was partially offset by a substantial increase in career/technical education enrollment, as students stayed closer to home. Being that virtual learning options are likely to expand and become a teaching specialty to their own, it would behoove Colorado Springs to invest in training for virtual education specialties. Career and technical education are also likely to continue expanding. Cooperation with local industry to meet its needs will enhance this for students and employers.

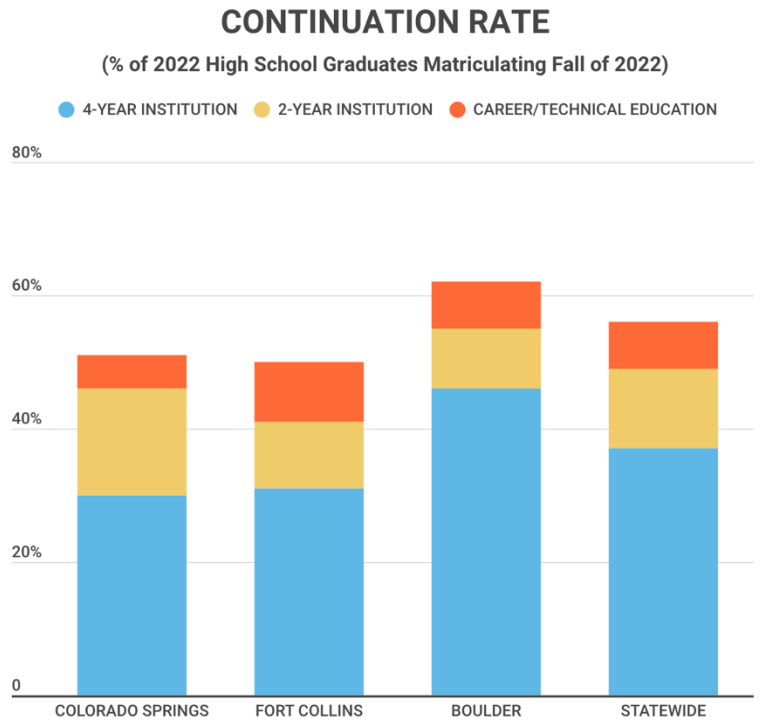


By comparison, 46% of Fort Collins 2022 graduates and 60% of Boulder-area graduates pursued post-secondary education. Due to a small degree of overlap due to a few students matriculating to more than one kind of institution, the totals of all three categories in the two prior graphs slightly exceed the total proportion of all matriculating students.

College Retention (first year)

The University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) tracks first-year retention and graduation rates within six years of initial enrollment. First-year retention has seen a slight upward trend over the past two decades; since 2011 it has varied between 65% and 70%. In 2022, first-year **student retention was 67%**.²⁰ The state average for four-year public institutions with physical campuses was 73% in 2022. That year, UCCS ranked 8th of 12 in first-year retention.²¹

Many two-year colleges track a different statistic, called transfer-out rate, which is the percentage of the full-time, first-time students who transfer to another institution without completing at the current institution. The lower this statistic, the better. For Pikes Peak State College, the most recent transfer rate (for students beginning in 2017) was 25%, compared to the state average for similar institutions of 21%.²²



¹⁹ Colorado Department of Education

College Graduation

UCCS tracks how many of its first-time, first-year, full-time students graduate from UCCS within six years of enrolling. In 2022 that proportion of students (out of those who began six years prior) was **45%**.²³ Statewide, the average among 12 similar public, four-year institutions was 50%. In 2022 UCCS ranked **7th of 12** institutions.²⁴

Pikes Peak State College uses a similar measure for graduation with an Associates Degree or relevant certificate (within three years of initial enrollment). PPCC's graduation rate was 23% in 2022, compared to the state average of 35% for similar institutions.²⁵

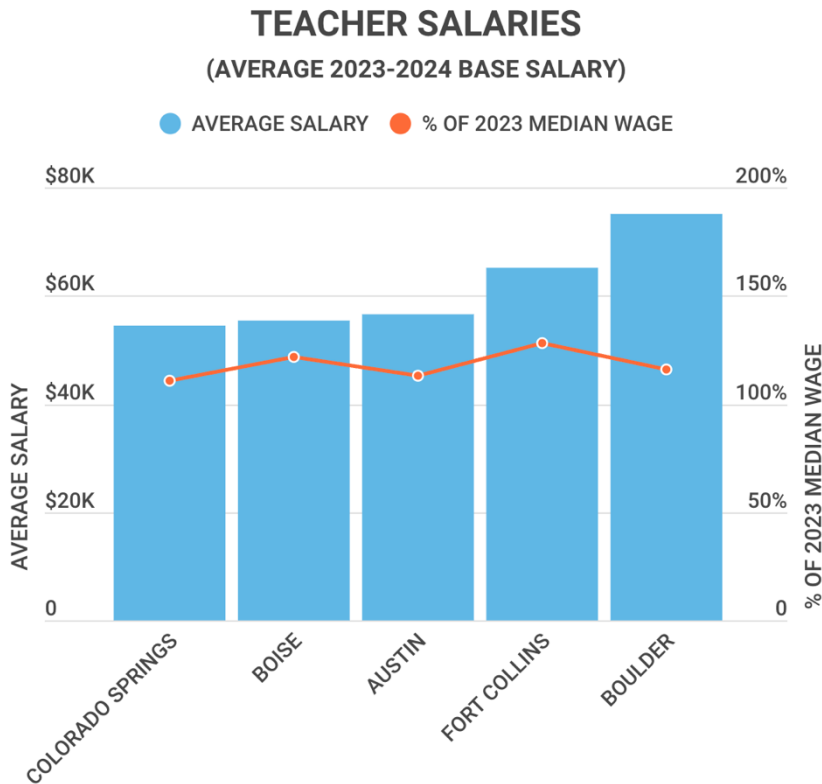
Investment in Education

Local school boards determine how resources are allocated, including how many teachers to hire, how much teachers are paid, and how school budgets are structured. Investing more resources in public education does not guarantee successful education outcomes, but investment usually has a positive outcome.

Teacher Salary

In 2023-2024, base teacher salaries across the Colorado Springs MSA averaged **\$54,562**, which was above the median wage for the community (111%). However, in terms of total base salary and as a percentage of the median wage, Colorado Springs **ranked 5th of 5 peer communities** (data for Albuquerque unavailable). Competition for quality teachers can be expected to increase, so districts will need to work to retain the best teachers in a tight labor market. It would be prudent to consider policies that provide incentives to teachers to delay retirement or return to the profession.

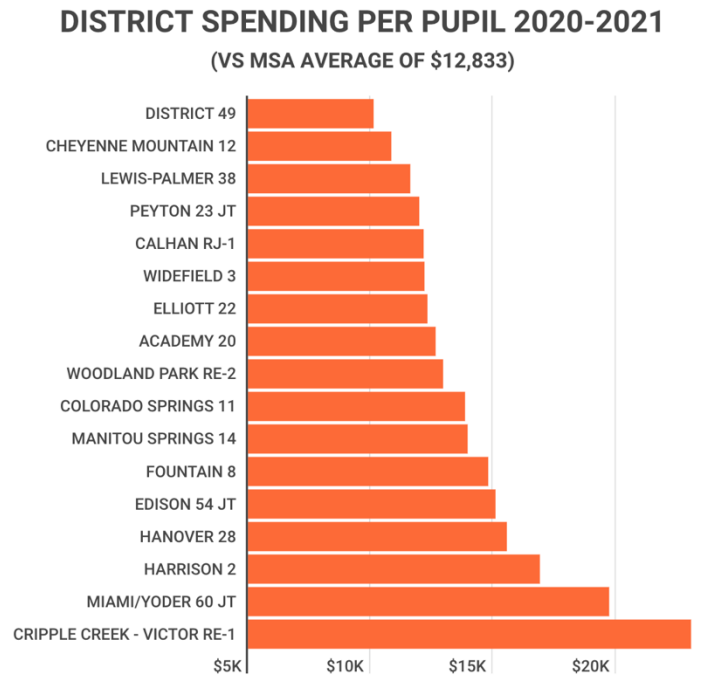
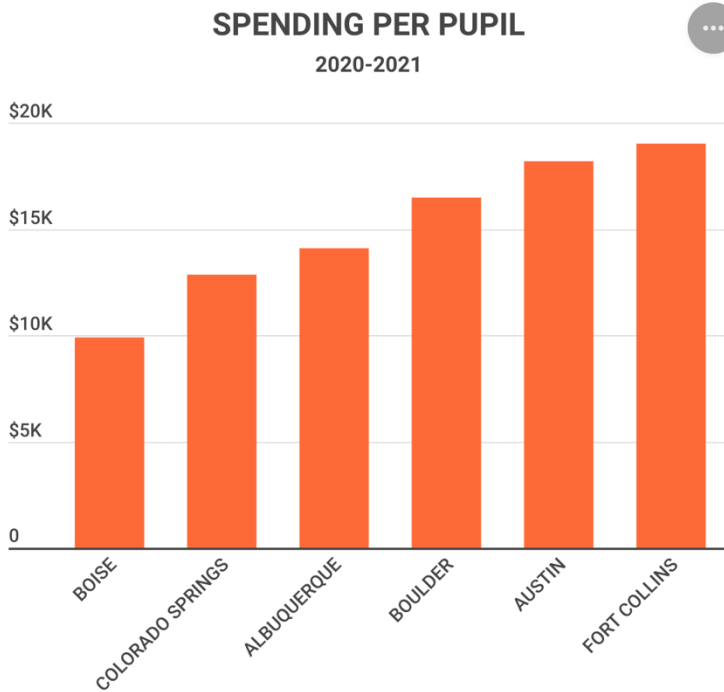
Increasing teacher pay, for example, has been found to reduce teacher turnover, which in turn leads to increased student achievement. Additionally, countries with higher starting salaries for teachers tends to attract more and better-qualified teachers into the profession.^{27,28} National Center for Education Statistics & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



²⁸ National Center for Education Statistics & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Expenditures per pupil

In multiple studies, increases in per-pupil spending have been positively linked to improved student successes, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.²⁹ In Colorado Springs, per-pupil spending ranked **5th among 6 peer communities** in 2020-2021, the most recent year for which comparative data is available.³⁰

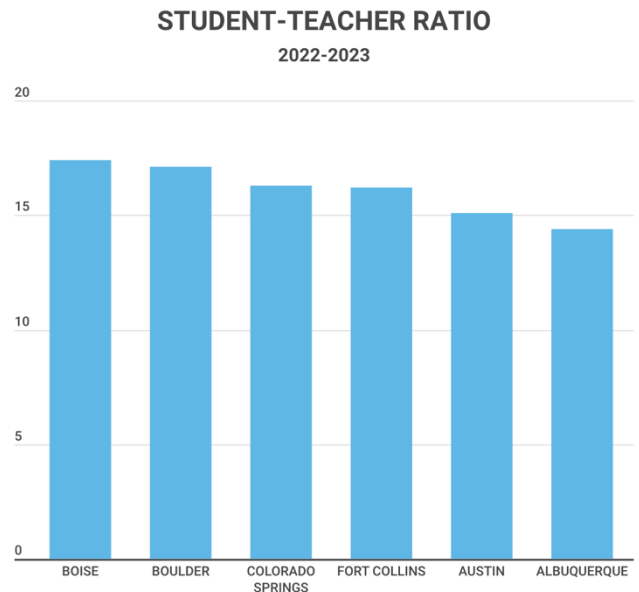


³¹ National Center for Education Statistics

At the district level, spending per pupil in the highest-spending district more than doubled that in the lowest-spending district.

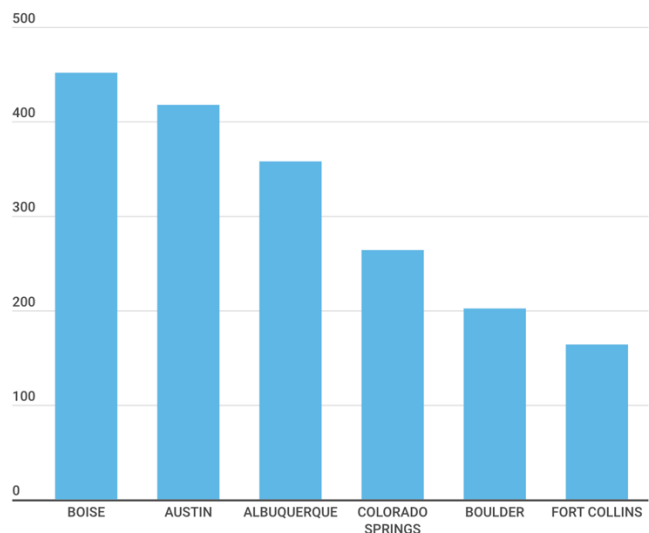
Student-Teacher Ratio

Due to teacher compensation being the largest portion of school budgets, boards, and administrators carefully consider how many teachers to hire. The more teachers, the lower the student-teacher ratio, which typically reduces average class size and increases teachers' capacity to give students personal attention. Although the connection between class size and student performance is weak, research suggests that students with disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from smaller class sizes, and lower ratios are associated with greater teacher satisfaction.³²



³⁵ National Center for Education Statistics

STUDENT-COUNSELOR RATIO 2023-2024



The 2023-2024 student-teacher ratio across all Colorado Springs MSA schools was **16.6 to 1**, up from 16.3 in 2022-2023, but reflecting a decrease since 2021-2022.³³ For peer-community comparisons, 2022-2023 data is used.

Colorado Springs ranked 4th of 6 peer communities, ahead of Boulder and Boise. While teacher shortages have decreased following the post-pandemic trend that some have called the “Great Resignation,” area schools still reported a shortage of 321 teachers on the 2023-2024 Colorado Educator Shortage Survey.³⁴

³⁶ National Center for Education Statistics

Student-Counselor Ratio

Research shows that increased contact with school counselors is positively associated with college enrollment, even when controlling for differences in student intentions and background.³⁷ The link is stronger among those from less-advantaged backgrounds. Counseling also plays a key role in students’ mental health. Fewer than two-thirds of children with mental health issues obtain professional help,³⁸ but of those who receive mental health services, at least 70% do so through school.³⁹

The American School Counselor Association recommends that schools maintain a ratio of no more than 250 students per school counselor.⁴⁰ In 2020-2021, schools in metro Colorado Springs did not quite meet that standard, with a ratio of **263.8 to 1**. That ranked **3rd of 6** peer communities.⁴¹

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¹ OECD Better Life Index, <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/education/>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

² McCoy, Dana Charles et al. “Impacts of Early Childhood Education on Medium- and Long-Term Educational Outcomes.” *Educational researcher* (Washington, D.C. : 1972) vol. 46,8 (2017): 474-487. Abstract at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6107077/>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

³ Colorado Department of Education. Calculated as the total number of students in K/Pre-K programs across all districts in the MSA divided by the total number of students from Pre-K to 12th grade across all districts. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupildcurrent> and <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryearpmdata>, both accessed Oct. 21, 2024. Colorado Springs MSA includes 17 districts; Boulder MSA includes two districts; Fort Collins MSA includes three districts.

⁴ Public school enrollment data from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupildcurrent> and <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryearpmdata>, with Colorado Springs data aggregated across 17 area districts. State growth data from Census Bureau <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2010-2019/metro/totals/cbsa-met-est2019-cumchg.xlsx>. All accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

⁵ Colorado Department of Education, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupildcurrent> and <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryearpmdata>, both accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

⁶ Colorado State Demography Office 2022 Population Summary, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c81462dd7bc44924b4876a4d016c1194>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

⁷ Hernandez DJ. “Double jeopardy: how third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation.” New York: The Annie E. Casey Foundation; 2011. Cited by HealthyPeople.gov, <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

⁸ Colorado Department of Education, CMAS Math and ELA District and School Overall Results, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024. Metro-level results were calculated in each category by summing the number in each category for each district and dividing by the total number of test takers across all districts. Districts that did not report results due to small numbers were excluded.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Colorado Department of Education growth data current year accessed from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performance-framework-flat-files-from-prior-years>. Trend data available at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performance->

[framework-flat-files-from-prior-years](#). Explanation of growth concepts at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/coloradogrowth>. All accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

¹¹ Oreopoulos P. “Do dropouts drop out too soon? Wealth, health and happiness from compulsory schooling.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 2007;91(11):2213–29. Cited by HealthyPeople.gov, <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

¹² Colorado Department of Education Graduation Rates, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent> and <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryeargraddata>, both accessed Oct. 21, 2024. Total MSA rate calculated as an average of component schools, weighted by 12th grade enrollment. That is, total number of graduates divided by total number of 12 graders.

¹³ Colorado Department of Education, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent>; Idaho Department of Education, <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/>; New Mexico Department of Education, <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/graduation/>; Texas Education Agency, <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-performance/accountability-research/completion-graduation-and-dropout/completion-graduation-and-dropout-data>. All accessed Oct. 21, 2024. Peer community data is aggregated from district-level public-school data from national and state sources. Averages are weighted by enrollment For some measures, districts may have included or excluded charter schools. Full data from districts headquartered in respective MSAs were used, in Boulder, for example, a small portion of one district lies outside the Boulder MSA. Number of districts aggregated by city: Albuquerque 10, Austin 28, Boise 18, Boulder 2, Fort Collins 3.

¹⁴ Colorado Department of Education Graduation Rates, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent> and <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvprioryeargraddata>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

¹⁵ Colorado Department of Education, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent>; Idaho Department of Education, <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/>; New Mexico Department of Education, <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/graduation/>; Texas Education Agency, <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-performance/accountability-research/completion-graduation-and-dropout/completion-graduation-and-dropout-data>. All accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

¹⁶ Colorado Department of Education Graduation Rates, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent>, accessed Oct. 21, 2024.

¹⁷ Pew Research Center. “The Monetary Value of a College Education.” Chapter in *Is College Worth It?* Report published May 15, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2011/05/15/chapter-5-the-monetary-value-of-a-college-education/>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

¹⁸ The proportion of 2022 Colorado Springs graduates who matriculated into a higher-education institution (49%) is less than the sum of the percentages for those matriculating into each type of institution, due to a small amount of overlap. The prior edition of this project did not account for this overlap. It thus over-reported the 2020 matriculation percentage for Colorado Springs as 55% and the statewide rate as 59%. The correct figures for 2020 were 51% for Colorado Springs and 55% statewide.

¹⁹ Colorado Department of Education Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Flat Files. Data aggregated from district-level data (graduates enrolling divided by all graduates). Current-year data accessed via <https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/datafiles>; prior year data via <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performance-framework-flat-files-from-prior-years>; files accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

²⁰ Data for UCCS student retention: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/uccs.institutional.research/viz/UCCSFTFCohorts/Documentation> from <https://ir.uccs.edu/studentdata>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

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²² National Center for Education Statistics, College Navigator, Retention & Graduation rates, public 2-year colleges (excluding online only) <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=CO&ct=1&ic=2>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

²³ UCCS Institutional Research, Graduation Rate Chart for first-time freshmen cohort graduating within six years of enrollment, <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/uccs.institutional.research/viz/UCCSFTFCohorts/Documentation> from <https://ir.uccs.edu/studentdata>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

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²⁵ National Center for Education Statistics, College Navigator, Retention & Graduation rates, public 2-year colleges (excluding online only) <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=CO&ct=1&ic=2>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

²⁶ Matthew D. Hendricks, "Does it pay to pay teachers more? Evidence from Texas." *Journal of Public Economics*, Volume 109, 2014, pp. 50-63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2013.11.001>. Abstract accessed at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272713002119>, Oct. 22, 2024.

²⁷ Peter Dolton & Oscar D. Marcenaro Gutiérrez, "If You Pay Peanuts Do You Get Monkeys? A Cross-Country Analysis of Teacher Pay and Pupil Performance." *Economic Policy* 26(65):5 –

55, January 2011. Accessed at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227660116> *If You Pay Peanuts Do You Get Monkeys A Cross-Country Analysis of Teacher Pay and Pupil Performance*, Oct. 22, 2024.

²⁸ National Center for Education Statistics, obtained from queries via <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/index.asp>. Metro teacher salary average aggregated from district data as the total summed payroll of all districts divided by the total FTE teacher count across all districts. Some district payroll amounts determined from FTE count and average salary. Median metro wages from Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Both sites accessed May 1, 2024.

²⁹ Barnum, Matt. “Does money matter for schools? Why one researcher says the question is ‘essentially settled.’” ChalkBeat, Dec. 17, 2018. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2018/12/17/21107775/does-money-matter-for-schools-why-one-researcher-says-the-question-is-essentially-settled>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024. Article links to research abstracts.

³⁰ National Center for Education Statistics, obtained from queries via <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/index.asp> (Fiscal, Total expenditures, Amount), divided by summed total enrollment across all constituent districts, also obtained via NCES. Accessed May 1, 2024.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Class size & Student-teacher ratio,” <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41720&filter=all> accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

³³ Colorado Department of Education, from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/staffcurrent>, with metro amounts computed as sum of all students (Pre-K through Grade 12) across all districts divided by all teachers (FTE) across all districts. Accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

³⁴ Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Educator Shortage Survey results (teachers only), <https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/educatorshortage-surveyresults>, accessed May 31, 2024.

³⁵ For comparative purposes, data from the National Center for Education Statistics are used from district-level queries run at <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/index.asp>, aggregate MSA figures weighted by district enrollment.

³⁶ O’Dell, Isaac. “Colorado Springs-area school districts battle teacher shortage.” April 4, 2022. https://gazette.com/premium/colorado-springs-area-school-districts-battle-teacher-shortage/article_298f9f5e-b1d1-11ec-a8fc-73cd2c46b63e.html (subscriber-only content), accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

³⁷ Dimmitt, Carey, “Assessing the Relationship Between School Counseling and College Enrollment” (2015). *Research Briefs*. 4. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cscore_briefs/4, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

³⁸ Radez, J., Reardon, T., Creswell, C. et al. “Why do children and adolescents (not) seek and access professional help for their mental health problems? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies.” *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 30, 183–211 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01469-4>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

³⁹ Atkins, M., Hoagwood, K. E., Kutash, K., & Seidman, E. (2010). “Toward the integration of education and mental health in schools.” *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 37, 40–47. Cited in American School Counselor Association position statement, “The School Counselor and Student Mental Health” (2009, 2020). <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Student-Mental-Health>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

⁴⁰ McCann, Meghan, with Mary Fulton and Tiffany McDole. “State Approaches to Addressing Student Mental Health American School Counselor Association.” Education Commission of the States policy brief, May 2021, <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Approaches-to-Addressing-Student-Mental-Health.pdf>, accessed Oct. 22, 2024.

⁴¹ National Center for Education Statistics. Data for total Guidance Counselors summed across all constituent districts and divided by sum of Total Enrollment across all districts. Queried from <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/index.asp>, accessed May 31, 2024.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

SAFETY REPORT

Safety Summary

Strong communities are built on a foundation of respect for persons and property. That respect is visible through an effective, just system of public safety that protects people and property, preserves life, and provides citizens with a sense of security and well-being.

Effective public safety systems enable people to live fruitfully and without fear of harm through a shared commitment to the rule of law, to institutions and processes that prevent and deter crime and respond in emergencies, and that preserve people's health and property. Investments in public safety reduce the need for expensive private security and help keep insurance rates reasonable.

- In 2023, area law enforcement recorded **539 violent crimes** per 100,000 residents compared to the national average of 364.
- Considering victim losses, justice system costs and other costs, the estimated cost of crime in the Pikes Peak region in 2023 was \$1,371 per person.
- For the 2021-2023 period, the local rate of hate crimes was **2.5 incidents per 100,000 population**, which is less than half of the statewide average. Colorado Springs ranked **2nd of 6** peer communities for fewest hate crimes per capita.
- In 2023, CSPD cleared **60% of murder cases, 48% of aggravated assault cases, and 33% of robbery cases.**
- In 2023, El Paso and Teller counties together processed 18,147 child welfare calls, with 5,850 (32%) of them accepted for assessment.
- TESSA, El Paso, and Teller counties' largest dedicated provider of services for domestic and sexual assault victims, processed a record high of **13,574 calls in 2020.**
- In El Paso and Teller counties, 3,568 DUI cases were filed in 2021, a rate of **586 per 100,000 residents** aged 16 and up. The 2021 local rate was nearly unchanged from 2017, even as the statewide rate dropped by more than 20% over the same period.
- CSFD has a published goal of seeking to reach incidents within eight minutes from the time of the call, 90% of the time. The department approached or reached that goal every year from 2011 through 2019 (86-90%) but has fallen short since (65% in 2023).

COLORADO SPRINGS SAFETY

539
 VIOLENT CRIMES
 PER 100,000 RESIDENTS
 IN 2023

+160%
 RISE IN DOMESTIC-VIOLENCE
 DEATHS FROM 2020-2023

18,147
 CHILD WELFARE CALLS PROCESSED IN
 2023 IN EL PASO AND TELLER COUNTIES

\$1,371
 ESTIMATED COST OF CRIME PER PERSON
 IN THE PIKES PEAK REGION IN 2023

Crime Rates

In the Colorado Springs MSA, violent crime has been mostly stable after rising sharply between 2015 and 2018. In 2023, area law enforcement recorded **539 violent crimes** per 100,000 residents.¹

Nationally, property crimes dropped by nearly 30% between 2015 and 2021. In the Colorado Springs MSA, property crime rates have also fallen, though a bit more slowly. Since 2019 the rate has declined by nearly 20%; the 2023 rate was **2,850 property crimes per 100,000 people**.²

Considering victim losses, justice system costs and other costs, the estimated cost of crime in the Pikes Peak region in 2023 was **\$1,371 per person**.⁴

While the FBI has worked to encourage consistency in the way crimes are defined and reported through its National Incident-based Reporting System (NIBRS), comparing crime rates to those of other communities—and even to national averages—is discouraged by the FBI due to differences in reporting standards among local agencies. The Colorado Springs Police Department explained why reported local crime rates may be higher than those of other communities or national averages:

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA CRIME RATE TREND
 (RATES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS, ESTIMATED)



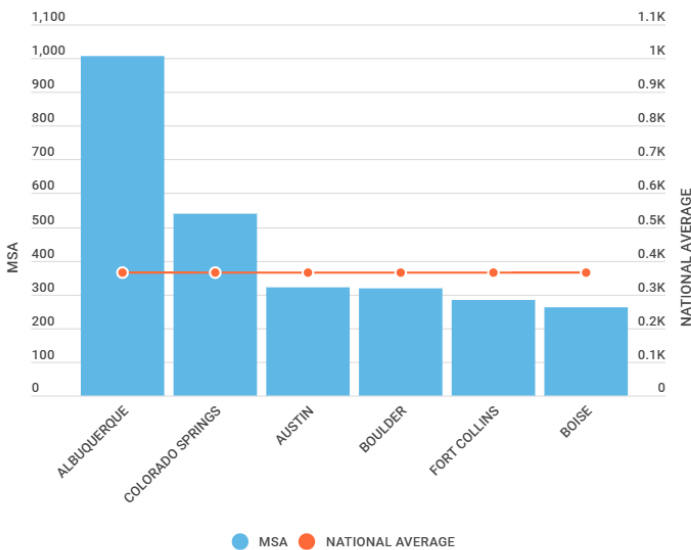
The FBI's Uniform Crimes Reporting (UCR), used through 2020, was hierarchical, only counting "the most serious offense in a multiple-offense criminal incident." The Colorado Springs Police Department is an incident-based reporting (IBR) agency, which means that it counts every offense in a multiple-offense criminal incident and therefore will have higher crime counts than reported in UCR for comparable incidents.⁵

Analysis by the National Crime Statistics Exchange in 2019 estimated that 10.2% of incidents in communities of 200,000 or more were multiple-incident offenses.⁶

The cautions about comparisons apply to the previous chart and the following two charts. In 2023, among six peer communities, Colorado Springs MSA had the **2nd-highest rate of both property crime and violent crime**.

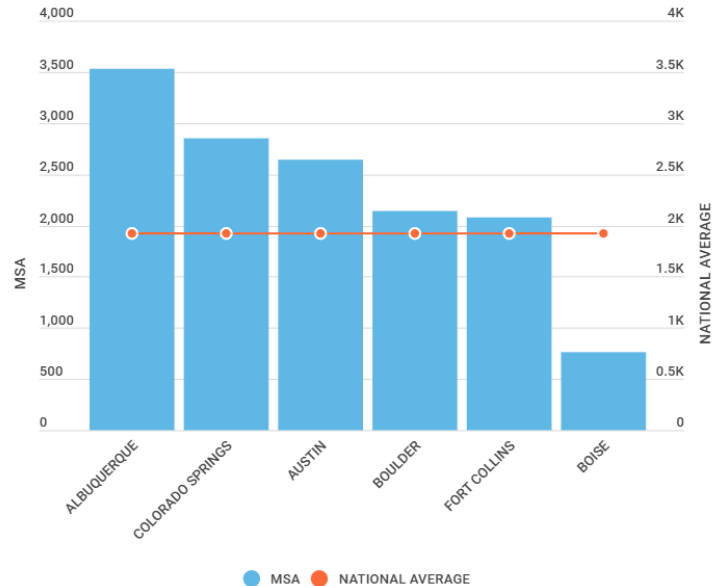
2023 VIOLENT CRIME RATE

(PER 100,000 INHABITANTS, VS NATIONAL AVERAGE)



2023 PROPERTY CRIME RATE

(PER 100,000 INHABITANTS, VS NATIONAL AVERAGE)



7 Federal Bureau of Investigation

Hate Crimes

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program defines hate crime as a committed criminal offense that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against one or more of the following.⁸

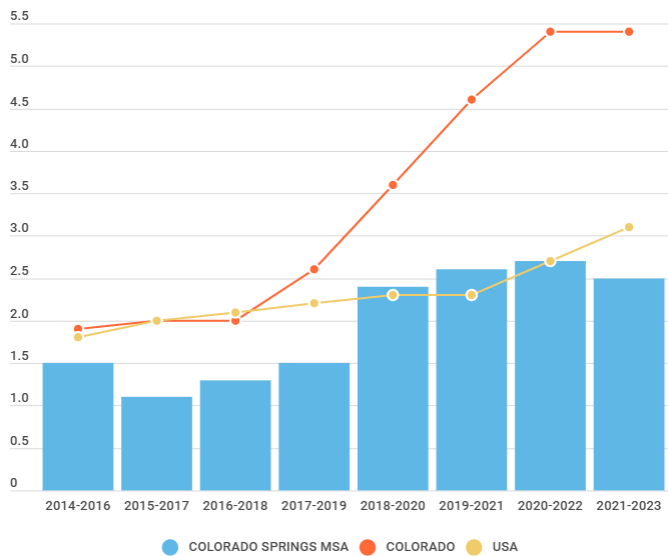
- race
- religion
- disability
- sexual orientation
- ethnicity
- gender
- gender identity

In 2023, law enforcement agencies representing 95% of the population participated in reporting hate crimes.⁹ Because not all agencies participate, results may be under-reported. Due to the small number of incidents recorded per year at the community level, three-year rolling averages are used.

Hate crimes nationally and in Colorado rose consistently from 2017 to 2022. The Colorado Springs MSA’s level of hate crimes has been well below the state average; since 2020, it has been close to the national average. In 2023, the local rate was **2.5 incidents per 100,000 population.**⁹

Despite the recent increase, Colorado Springs MSA still ranked **3rd of 6** peer communities for fewest hate crimes per capita.

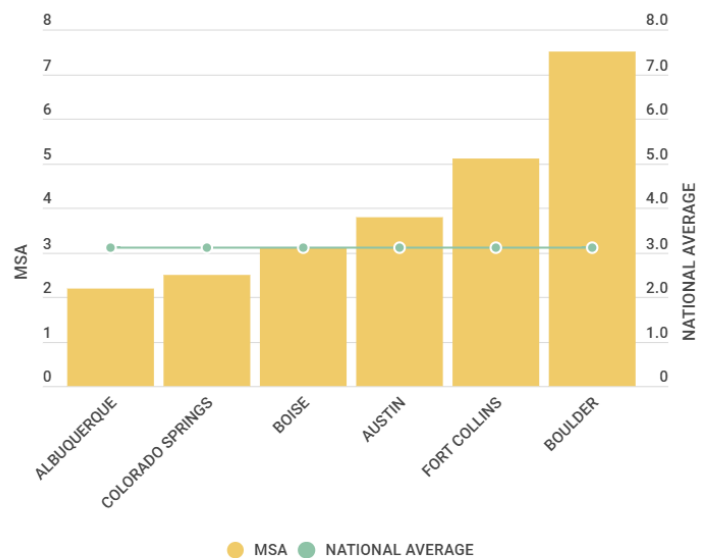
HATE CRIME TREND
(INCIDENTS PER 100,000 POPULATION, 3-YEAR ROLLING AVERAGE)



10 FBI, U.S. Census Bureau

2021-2023 HATE CRIMES

(PER 100,000 POPULATION, VS NATIONAL AVERAGE)



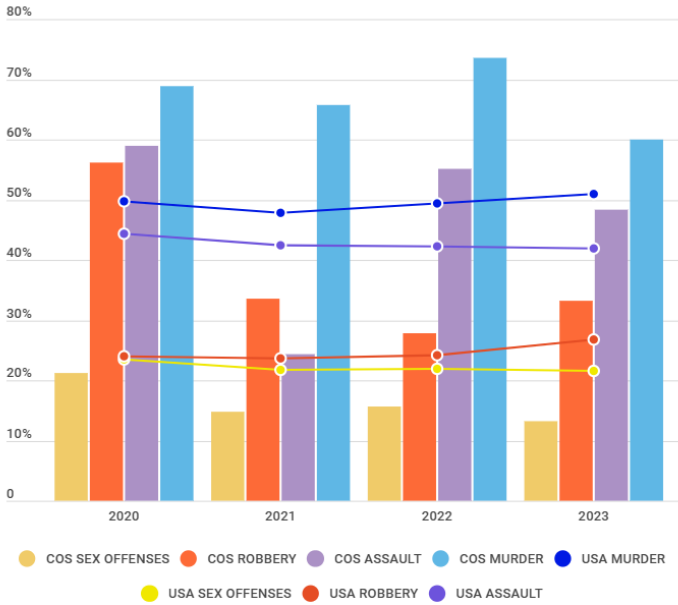
11 FBI, U.S. Census Bureau

Crime Clearance Rates

One measure of police effectiveness is the rate at which crimes are cleared. Clearance of a crime generally requires fulfillment of three criteria: (1) an arrest is made; (2) a charge is brought; (3) the case is turned over to prosecution. Cases can also be cleared through “exceptional means.” This typically occurs when prosecution is not possible due to the offender’s death or inability to be extradited, or when victims are unwilling to cooperate with prosecutions.¹²

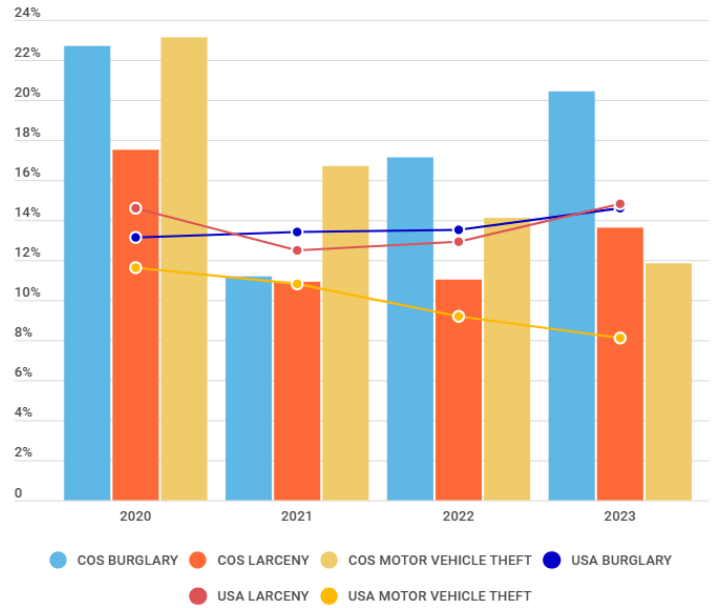
Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) has submitted its internal fulfillment rates for major crime categories for the past several years. From 2021 to 2023, CSPD’s clearance rates were better than the national average in **5 of 7 categories**. In 2023, CSPD cleared **60% of murder cases, 48% of aggravated assault cases, and 33% of robbery cases.**¹³

CLEARANCE RATE TREND - VIOLENT CRIME



14 Colorado Crime Statistics, FBI

CLEARANCE RATE TREND - PROPERTY CRIME



15 Colorado Crime Statistics, FBI

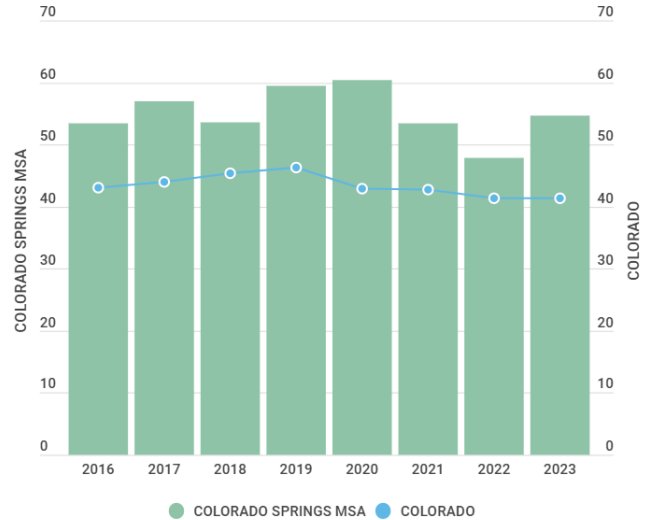
Child Abuse/Neglect

Colorado’s Department of Human Services’ Division of Child Welfare “works to strengthen the ability of families to protect and care for their own children, minimize harm to children and youth, and ensure timely permanency planning.”¹⁶ This involves processing complaints received through the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 844-CO-4-KIDS. Calls are routed to the county where a child resides.

In 2023, El Paso and Teller counties together processed 18,147 child welfare reports, with 5,850 (32%) of them screened in for assessment. From those, the welfare of 9,505 children was assessed, a rate of **54.7 children per 1,000 population**. That rate exceeded the state average (41.4), as well as the assessment rates of Boulder (43.3) and Fort Collins (36.9).¹⁷

Historically, the vast majority of assessments have been processed using a high-risk assessment (HRA) approach, with concerns judged as substantiated (leading to intervention) or unsubstantiated. Each year from 2016 to 2019, between 25 and 30% of assessments in the Colorado Springs MSA were substantiated.¹⁹ Since then,

CHILDREN ASSESSED FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT (PER 1,000 UNDER-18 POPULATION)



18 Colorado Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division; U.S. Census Bureau

however, low-to-moderate risk referrals are increasingly being offered the less-adversarial option of Family Assessment Response (FAR), which does not result in a determination of substantiated abuse or neglect.²⁰

For lower-risk cases, the process benefits families and case workers, but it complicates calculation of abuse and neglect rates. Use of FAR in Colorado Springs MSA rose from less than 2% in 2019 to 26% in 2023. In Boulder MSA 59% of 2023 referrals were processed through FAR; in Fort Collins MSA, the figure was 72%.²¹

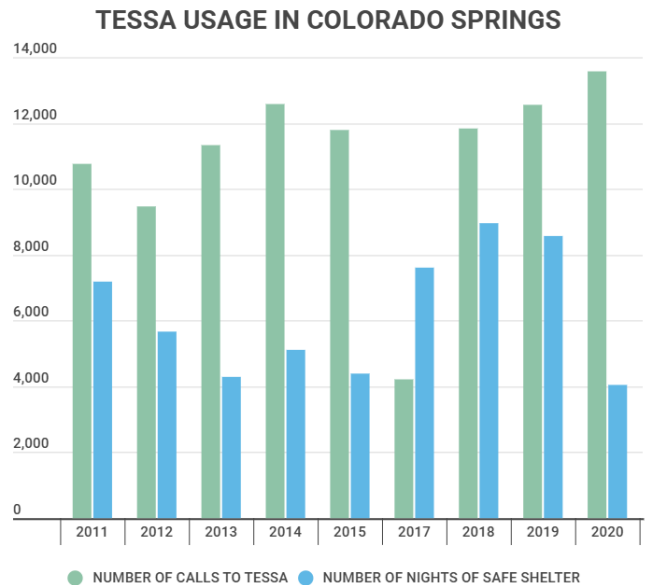
Another measure tracked by counties is the rate at which abuse or neglect recurs in cases where the state has intervened (whether inside or outside of the foster care system). From 2021 to 2023, **six-month recurrence in Colorado Springs MSA averaged 2.2% of cases**, a lower rate than that of Boulder (2.8%) and Fort Collins (2.9%).²²

Domestic Violence

TESSA is El Paso and Teller counties’ largest provider of services for domestic and sexual assault victims. TESSA provides a safehouse for the immediate safety for women, children and others escaping abuse. It operates a children’s program and a clinical program, and it provides advocacy and counseling through offices in central Colorado Springs, Calhan, Hanover, Cripple Creek, within Memorial Hospital, and at county Department of Human Services offices.²³

In 2020, TESSA processed a record high of **13,574 calls**. Call growth from 2015 to 2020 increased an average of 2.9% per year, while area population growth over the same period averaged 2.0%. In 2020, TESSA also provided **4,049 nights of shelter**, a COVID-19 related decrease of more than half from 2018 and 2019 levels, when more than 8,500 nights of shelter were provided.²⁴

The Colorado Attorney General’s office analyzes domestic violence fatalities each year. Due to the small numbers at the local level in any one year, three-year averages are presented for Colorado Springs MSA and the state as a whole.²⁶ Domestic violence fatalities spiked in 2021 and 2022, with the three-year average rising 40% statewide and 160% in Colorado Springs MSA.



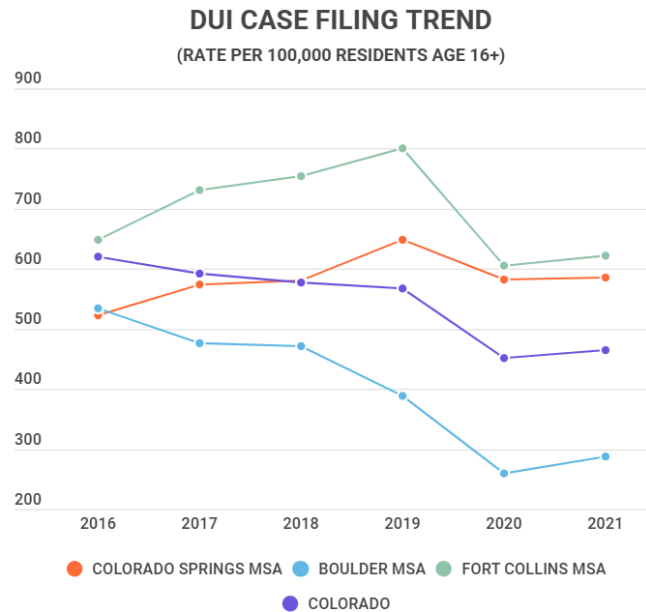
25 TESSA

Years	Colorado Springs MSA		Colorado	
	Annual Average Domestic Violence Fatalities	Annual rate per 100,000 population	Annual Average Domestic Violence Fatalities	Annual rate per 100,000 population
2018-2020	7.7	1.0	58.7	1.0
2021-2023	20.0	2.6	81.3	1.4

Driving Under The Influence (DUI)

Nationally, in 2022, a fatality resulting from alcohol-impaired-driving occurred once every 39 minutes.²⁸

A key measure for the rate of DUI offenses is the number of cases filed by prosecutors. In El Paso and Teller counties, **3,568** DUI cases were filed in 2021, a rate of **586 per 100,000 residents** aged 16 and up.²⁹ Aside from a spike in 2019, the local rate remained largely stable between 2017 and 2021, even as the statewide rate dropped by more than 20 percent. Among Colorado peer communities, Colorado Springs MSA ranked **2nd of 3** in 2021.



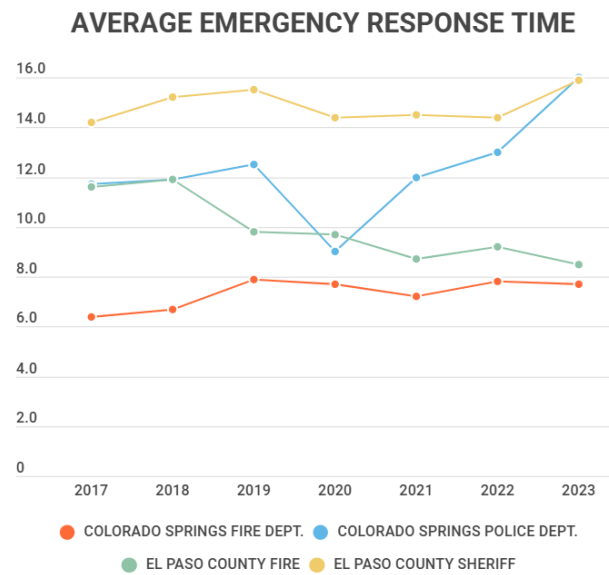
30 Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, U.S. Census Bureau

Emergency Response Time

Timely response to emergencies is essential to preserve life and property, especially in a semi-arid steppe environment with frequent lightning strikes, like that of Colorado Springs. In medical emergencies, response time is linked to mortality rates.³¹

Agencies reporting in the Colorado Springs MSA for law enforcement response times include Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) within the city of Colorado Springs and El Paso County Sheriff's office for unincorporated areas of El Paso County only. The Sheriff's office does not report response times in any of the municipalities that provide their own law enforcement response, such as Fountain, Calhan, Widefield, etc. Agencies reporting emergency response times for fire in the Colorado Springs MSA include the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) and El Paso County Fire, which includes 22 separate fire agencies within El Paso County with dispatch provided by El Paso County Sheriff's office. Higher response times for the county compared to the city reflects the county's size and the distance covered by First Responders. Each agency has its own list of "[Priority 1](#)" emergencies for which response times are tracked.³²

Response time trends for these agencies appear in the following chart.



33 CSFD, CSPD, El Paso County Sheriff's Office

Colorado Springs Fire Department has a published goal of seeking to reach incidents within eight minutes from the time of the call, 90% of the time.³⁴ The department approached or reached that goal every year from 2011 through 2019 (86-90%) but has fallen short (73% or lower) each year from 2020 to 2023.

Next Steps

The Colorado Springs Police Department's 2023-2025 strategic plan includes several strategies to improve policing and public safety.³⁵ Among those are the following:

- Institutionalize the use of an intelligence-led policing model that prioritizes crime hot spots, prolific offenders, pattern crimes, and criminal groups.
- Prioritize efforts to address violent offenders who use firearms to commit crime.
- Improve response time through efforts in staffing, call management, technological improvements, resource allocation, and related areas.
- Evaluate and implement additional opportunities for officers to engage community members in proactive, positive, and non-enforcement interactions. (Use of Force Study)

In 2017, the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) created a Public Safety Initiative to provide practical training in public safety measures and access to current research. More information is available at <https://psi.uccs.edu/>.

Volunteers also have a role to play. Citizens 18 years or older can volunteer in the Community Advancing Public Safety (CAPS) program in partnership with the Colorado Springs Police and Fire Departments. Roles include victim advocacy, photography, data entry, parks monitoring, impound facility assistance and monitoring handicapped parking. Program information is available at <https://springscaps.org/>.

References

1 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Crime in the United States (CIUS) reports, 2023, Table 6 (Metropolitan Statistical Area). Data downloaded from <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#> . Selections: Crime in the United States Annual Reports, Year 2023, CIUS Estimations. Accessed Nov. 20, 2024. FBI estimates account for non-reporting and partial-reporting agencies based on available data for each agency and its near neighbors. For rate calculations, the FBI makes its own population estimates by applying estimated growth rates to prior-year Census Bureau data.

2 Ibid.

3 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Crime in the United States (CIUS) reports, 2015-2023, Table 6 (Metropolitan Statistical Area). Data for 2020-2023 downloaded from <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#>. Selections: Crime in the United States Annual Reports, Years 202X, CIUS Estimations. Data for 2015-2019 downloaded from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s>. Selections [Year], Offenses Known to Law Enforcement, Offense Tables, Table 6. Accessed Nov. 20, 2024. FBI cautions that year-over-year comparisons from Crime in the U.S. reports may not be appropriate due to changes in agency definitions, reporting, and methodology.

4 Sum of the per-capita crime rate for each of seven classes of crimes multiplied by the relative cost of those crimes according to RAND Corporation cost estimation, adjusted for inflation. Cost per crime (average of 3 valuation methods in 2007 dollars) from Heaton, Paul, Hidden in Plain Sight: What Cost-of-Crime Research Can Tell Us About Investing in Police, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010, p.5. https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP279.html. Inflation adjustment to 2023 dollars based on Implicit Regional Price Deflator (using 2008 prices as proxy for 2007 due to availability) from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/IRPD17820>., Both sites accessed Nov. 20, 2024.

5 Statement from Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) analytical supervisor Molly Miles, 2021. The quote contained in the statement is from the FBI, 2018 Crime in the United States report, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/topic-pages/violent-crime>, accessed Nov. 25, 2024. The CSPD statement was updated to reflect the FBI's transition from the Universal Crime Reporting (UCR) system to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The FBI stated that the transition was complete at the beginning of 2021, although many agencies had yet to transition to incident-based reporting. By 2023, 85% of agencies reported crime data, and 73% did so through the NIBRS (CIUS 2023, Table 1, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#>, accessed Nov. 25, 2024.

6 National Crimes Statistics Exchange (NCS-X), "Multiple Offense Incidents in the National Incident-Based Reporting System," Oct. 2019, p. 1, https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/NCSX_MOI_REPORT.pdf, accessed Nov. 25, 2024. NCS-X is an initiative of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the primary statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. For more, see <https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/national-crime-statistics-exchange>, accessed Nov. 25, 2024.

7 Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States (CIUS) report, 2023, Tables 1 & 6. Data downloaded from <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#>. Selections: Crime in the United States Annual Reports, Year 2023, CIUS Estimations. Accessed Nov. 20, 2024.

8 FBI, Hate Crime Definition, <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/hate-crime#Definition-of%20a%20Hate%20Crime>, accessed Nov. 23, 2024.

9 FBI, "FBI Releases 2023 Crime in the Nation Statistics," Sept. 23, 2024, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2023-crime-in-the-nation-statistics>, accessed Nov. 23, 2024.

10 FBI, U.S. Census Bureau. FBI Hate Crime Statistics Annual Reports, Table 13 (MSAs), Table 12 (State), & Table 10 (USA). Data file (2023) downloaded from <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/downloads#datasets>. Prior year data via <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime>. Sites accessed Nov. 23, 2024. For USA and state per-capita rate calculations, FBI population estimates from tables were used. For MSAs 2020 and later, U.S. Census Bureau Vintage 2023 mid-year population estimates were used for each geography for each year, downloaded via https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/tables.2023.List_58029271.html. For prior years, Vintage 2021 data was used from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>. Three-year average based on unweighted average of yearly rates was used due to low incidence. Sites accessed May 25, 2024.

11 Ibid.

12 Definition and a description of challenges in clearance measurement in Baughman, Shima, “How Effective Are Police? The Problem of Clearance Rates and Criminal Accountability” (2020). Utah Law Faculty Scholarship, vol. 213, p.58. <https://dc.law.utah.edu/scholarship/213>, accessed Nov. 25, 2024.

13 Colorado Springs Police Department clearance data from Colorado Crime Statistics, <https://coloradocrimestats.state.co.us/tops/report/violent-crimes/colorado-springs-police-department/2023>. National data from FBI’s Crime Data Explorer, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/downloads>. Settings: NIBRS, Clearances, [Year]. Both accessed Nov. 24, 2024. CSPD processed 79% of agency-reported cases in the Colorado Springs MSA. El Paso County Sheriff processed 15% of cases, with somewhat higher clearance rates.

14 Ibid.

15 Colorado Springs Police Department clearance data from Colorado Crime Statistics, <https://coloradocrimestats.state.co.us/tops/report/property-crimes/colorado-springs-police-department/2023>. National data from FBI’s Crime Data Explorer, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/downloads>. Settings: NIBRS, Clearances, [Year]. Both accessed Nov. 24, 2024.

16 Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) website, <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/our-services/child-and-family-services>, accessed Nov. 16, 2024.

17 CDHS Community Performance Center, Number of Children Assessed in Child Welfare, queries by state and county for calendar years from 2016 through 2023. Colorado Springs MSA data aggregated from El Paso and Teller county data, <https://colorado.rom.socwel.ku.edu/reports/206>. Under-18 population from U.S. Census Bureau 2020 and 2023 Vintage population estimates by county and age, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2010-2020/counties/asrh/CC-EST2020-AGESEX-08.csv> (through 2020) and <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/counties/asrh/cc-est2023-agesex-08.csv> (2021-2023). All accessed Nov. 16, 2024.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 For more on Family Assessment Response, see the Colorado Department of Human Service’s Differential Response Program webpage (<https://cdhs.colorado.gov/differential-response-program>), accessed Nov. 16, 2024.

21 CDHS Community Performance Center, Number of Children Assessed in Child Welfare, queries by county and calendar year for 2023, <https://colorado.rom.socwel.ku.edu/reports/1053>, accessed Nov. 16, 2024.

22 CDHS Community Performance Center, Absence of Abuse or Neglect After Services, queries by county and calendar year for 2023, <https://colorado.rom.socwel.ku.edu/reports/206>, accessed Nov. 16, 2024.

23 TESSA stands for Trust, Education, Safety, Support and Action. Its crisis phone line is 719-633-3819.

24 Data was provided by in 2021 and 2024 by TESSA Colorado Springs' current and former Executive Directors, Anne Markley and Sherri Lynne Boyles. Data is not checkable via published sources. Due to a data system change, 2016 info is not available and 2017 is only a partial set.

25 Ibid.

26 Colorado Attorney General Office, U.S. Census Bureau. Fatalities include those of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, as well as collateral deaths. Because of small numbers, three-year averages were compiled from Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Reports, 2019-2024, pp. 16-17 (2019, 2020, 2021) pp. 19, 32 (2022), pp. 18, 33 (2023), pp. 17, 30 (2024), downloaded from <https://coag.gov/office-sections/division-community-engagement/office-of-community-engagement-state-impact-programs/domestic-violence-fatality-review-board/>, accessed Nov. 14, 2024. Count data provided by county for all years except 2020. Remaining data calculated using U.S. Census Bureau Vintage 2023 and 2020 mid-year population estimates for the state and each county, averaged across each three-year period, downloaded via <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-counties-total.html> (2018-2020), accessed June 11, 2022, and from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/metro/totals/cbsa-est2023-alldata.csv> (2021-2023), accessed May 25, 2024.

27 Ibid.

28 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, *Traffic Safety Facts 2022 Data*, p. 1, <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813643>, accessed Nov. 14, 2024.

29 Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (CDCJ), Office of Research & Statistics (ORS), Driving Under the Influence—Court Filings, County Statistics and Demographics tab, <https://dcj.colorado.gov/dcj-offices/ors/dashb- DUI-court1>, accessed Nov. 14, 2024. Rate per 100,000 as published by county; for multi-county MSA, rate was calculated as a weighted average based on population, as calculated from CDCJ cases and rates. Where slight differences in cases occurred in charts and maps, the smaller figure was used.

30 Ibid.

31 Wilde, ET. "Do emergency medical system response times matter for health outcomes?" *Health Economics*, July 2013;22(7), pp. 790-806. PMID: 22700368. Abstract at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22700368/>, accessed Nov. 14, 2024.

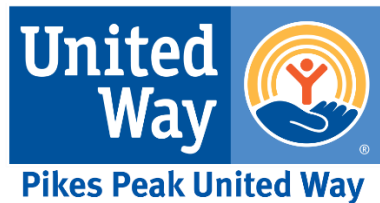
32 Data and definitions provided by each agency: Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD), Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD), El Paso County Fire, El Paso County Sheriff's Office. Response times are measured for specific, "Priority 1" emergencies, the list of which differs by agency. For CSFD, they include false alarms, fire, good intent, hazardous conditions, hazmat, medical, natural disasters, rescue, and service calls. For CSPD, they include active shooter, assault in progress, urgent assist, bomb threat, explosion, home invasion,

missing/found child, carjacking, found explosives, officer needing assistance, kidnapping, panic alarm, robbery alarm, robbery in progress, robbery with weapon in progress, sexual assault in progress, shooting, and stabbing. For El Paso County Fire, they include fire problem incident types including structure, wildland, medical, traffic accident with injury, hazmat, miscellaneous, arson, traffic accident without injury, 9E1, fire alarm, RR & ACC, rescue, rescue motorist, small outside fire, Waldo rockslide, technical and ice rescue, EOC emergency notification, and MOCOM request. For El Paso County Sheriff's Office, they include aircraft emergency, hold up alarm, panic alarm, assault in progress/just occurred, burglary in progress/just occurred, bomb threat, child abuse in progress, child neglect in progress, disturbance, domestic violence in progress/just occurred, explosive ordinance device, explosion, fight, hostage situation, kidnapping, menacing, missing child, officer needs immediate assistance, pursuit, robbery, restraining order violations in progress/just occurred, sexual assault in progress/just occurred, shooting, shots fired, suicide attempt, suicidal welfare check, tornado, stabbing, riot, and barricaded subject.

33 CSFD, CSPD, El Paso County Sheriff's Office. Data and definitions provided to Peak Progress by each agency. Note: CSPD's 2020 response time of 9.0 minutes differs from the 11-minute figure published in the city's 2020 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report operating section, https://coloradosprings.gov/sites/default/files/inline-images/2020_acfr_co_springs_0.pdf (p. 294; pdf p 316), accessed June 9, 2022. The higher figure is closer to the historical trend.

34 City of Colorado Springs, <https://coloradosprings.gov/colorado-springs-fire-department/page/emergency-services?mlid=5776>, accessed Nov. 14, 2024.

35 CSPD Strategic Plan, 2023-2025, pp. 2-5, <https://coloradosprings.gov/document/strategic-plan-2023-2025.pdf>, accessed August 17, 2024.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Transportation Summary

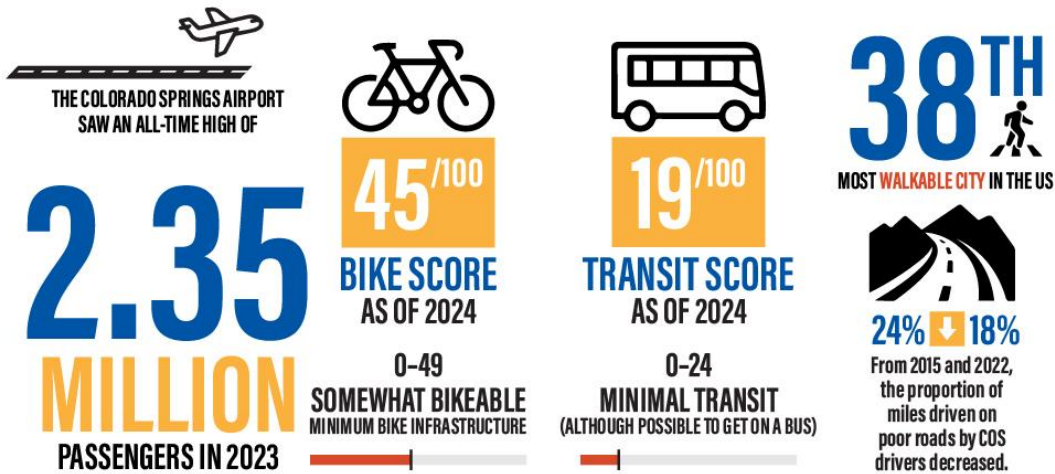
Transportation for individuals in a community can have a great impact on their quality of life. A core element of modern life is having the ability to leave one's home and travel to a desired location. Transportation is a necessity for access to essentials like healthcare, employment, grocery shopping, and social activities.

However, reliance on a personal vehicle restricts the movement of some older people, those under age 16, people with a disability that prevents safe driving, and people who are not able or willing to spend thousands of dollars per year to own and operate a motor vehicle.

Increasing transportation options and connectivity offers a less expensive, healthier, and more enjoyable lifestyle for those who do drive. Everyone, including people who drive as their primary mode of transportation, is a pedestrian at one point or another.

- Colorado Springs airport saw 2.35 million passengers in 2023
- Bike Score as of 2024: 45/100 (0-49 "Somewhat bikeable" – minimum bike infrastructure)
- Transit Score as of 2024: 19/100 (0-24 "Minimal transit" (although possible to get on a bus))
- 38th most walkable city in the U.S.
- 24% to 18% -- From 2015 to 2022, the proportion of miles driven on poor roads by COS drivers decreased
- As of 2020, Colorado's transportation infrastructure was in mediocre condition, rated C- by the American Society of Civil Engineers. That status was generally in line with the grades of our-comparison city's states, where Texas scored a C, and Idaho scored a C-. Colorado is also in line with the nation's grade of C-.¹
- In 2022, the proportion of miles driven on poor roads by Colorado Springs drivers was 18%, down from 24% in 2015. The 2022 level ranked 4th among 6 peer communities.
- In 2023, Colorado Springs Airport saw 2.35 million passengers, setting a record high for the third consecutive year.
- Colorado Springs commuters lost an average of 53 hours due to traffic in. That ranked 5th among the group of 6 peer cities.
- Colorado Springs is considered the 38th most walkable large city in the United States
- Colorado Springs' Bike Score® is 45 out of 100 as of August 2024. Scores between 0 and 49 are considered "somewhat bikeable" with minimum bike infrastructure.
- Colorado Springs' Transit Score® is 19 out of 100 as of August 2024. Scores between 0 and 24 are considered "minimal transit," though it is possible to get on a bus.

COLORADO SPRINGS TRANSIT



Key Indicators

Transportation options contribute to quality of life in many ways. Indicators address various modes of travel: driving, walking, biking, public transit and air travel. They consider conditions, use, safety and efficiency.

Some aspects of transportation discussed within this section (e.g., air travel) relate to the full Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area while others are rated/ranked on the basis of the urbanized area of the two-county MSA area.

Air Travel

Air travel describes airport usage and access and is measured by the number of passengers and number of nonstop destinations.

Air travel can play an important role for residents and increases accessibility to the region for tourists. The travel and tourism industry are heavily dependent on quality air service. Local companies also rely on accessible and efficient air travel service in order to maximize productivity and minimize travel time. These factors influence a company's decision to locate or expand within a particular area.

The Colorado Springs Airport saw an all-time high of 2.35 million air passengers in 2023. It was the third consecutive year that the airport set a new record high.

How are we doing?

In 2020, passenger traffic declined 56%, which was in line with peer-community airports, all of which lost more than half of their 2019 passenger load. While most airports took two years to regain their pre-COVID passenger levels, Colorado Springs bounced back to set a record high in 2021.

Comparative data for Colorado Springs is challenging because of the dominance of the regional hub, Denver International Airport (DIA), which is only 90 miles away. Albuquerque and Boise provide the best comps of what Colorado Springs could be with no draw-off from Denver. Colorado Springs' 2023 passenger load was 3.1

passengers per metro-area resident, which was 53% of Boise’s 5.7 passengers per capita and 54% of Albuquerque’s 5.6 passengers per capita.²

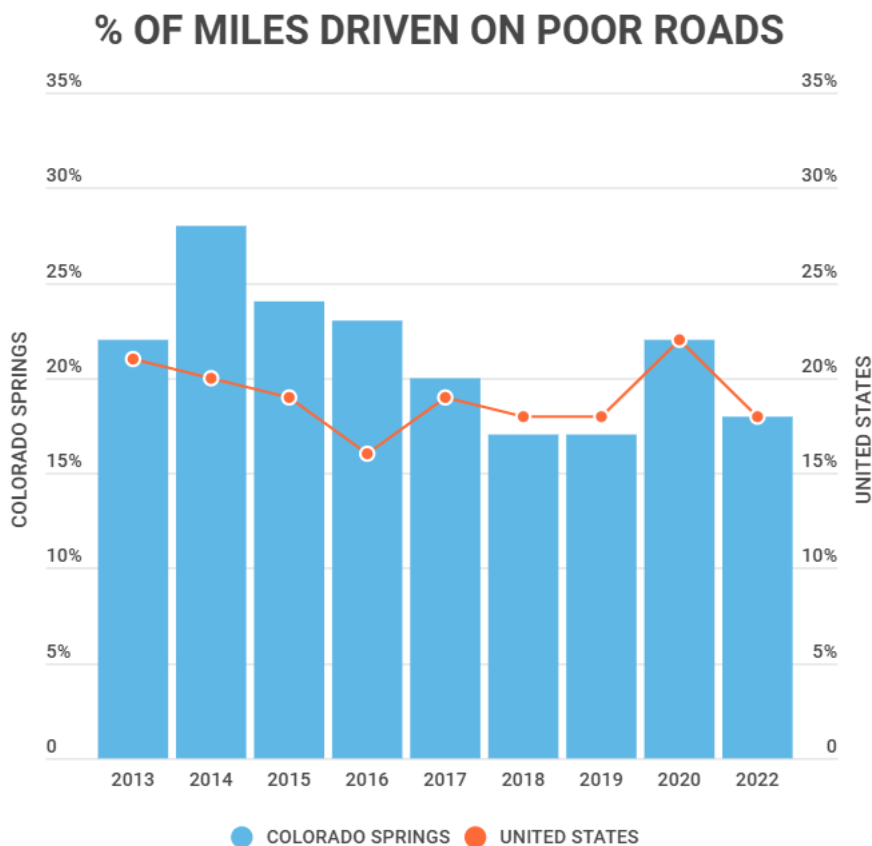
Potential Steps

Continued investment into Colorado Springs will allow it to continue growing air service through several developmental improvements: airport access via public transit and rideshare services, additional roadway access, and air service development.

Road Conditions

The condition of roadways is linked to the overall assessment of transportation in an area. The maintenance, or lack thereof, impacts commuters in the form of time to navigate damaged roads as well as monetarily if the adverse conditions inflict damage to the vehicle.

The Federal Highway Administration tracks the proportion of miles driven on substandard pavement within urbanized areas. Pavement conditions are not only associated with vehicle maintenance costs and insurance claim costs, but also road maintenance costs, which increase dramatically as pavement conditions deteriorate.



³ Federal Highway Administration

How are we doing?

COVID-19 impacted congestion in a positive way. As numerous professions found that remote working (teleworking) is a viable tool to reduce overhead and improve employee productivity and morale. In 2015, Colorado Springs voters passed road-improvement tax initiative 2C. In 2019, voters extended it through 2025, and in 2024 they extended it through 2035. From 2015 to 2019, the proportion of miles driven on poor roads by Colorado Springs drivers decreased from 24% to 17%. After an increase due to COVID-related changes in driving patterns (fewer miles driven, especially on major arterial roads),³ the proportion of miles driven on poor roads in Colorado Springs in 2022 was 18%, which ranked 4th among 6 peer communities. A 2024 report by the non-profit organization TRIP estimated the average annual cost of deteriorating roads to be \$816 per Colorado driver.⁴

Potential Actions

Colorado Springs has seen clear benefits through road-improvement initiative 2C. With the recent extension of 2C to 2035, Colorado Springs will be able to continue communication of the net savings and other benefits of this road-improvement tax initiative.

Traffic Congestion

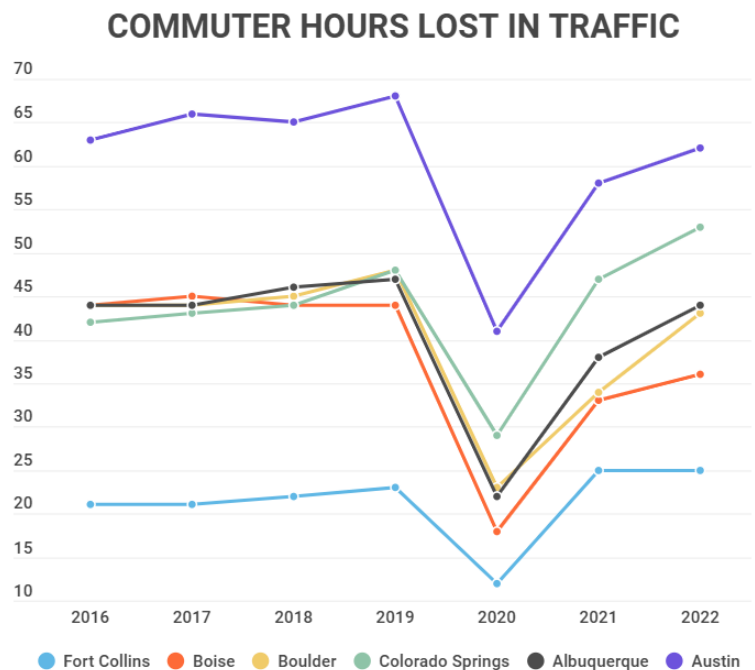
Congestion data looks at the subgroup of the population that commutes to work during the heaviest-volume hours of the day.

A region’s roadway network can be judged on its overall condition and efficiency in moving people and goods.

How are we doing?

Over the five-year period of 2017-2022, despite a COVID-related dip, Colorado Springs experienced a 23% increase in hours lost due to congestion and a 33% increase in costs—the largest increases among the group of peer cities.

Colorado Springs commuters lost an average of 53 hours due to traffic in 2022, which ranked 5th of 6 peer cities. The loss of time, fuel and repairs due to congestion cost Colorado Springs commuters an average of \$1,101 in 2022.⁵



⁵ Texas A&M Traffic Institute methodology

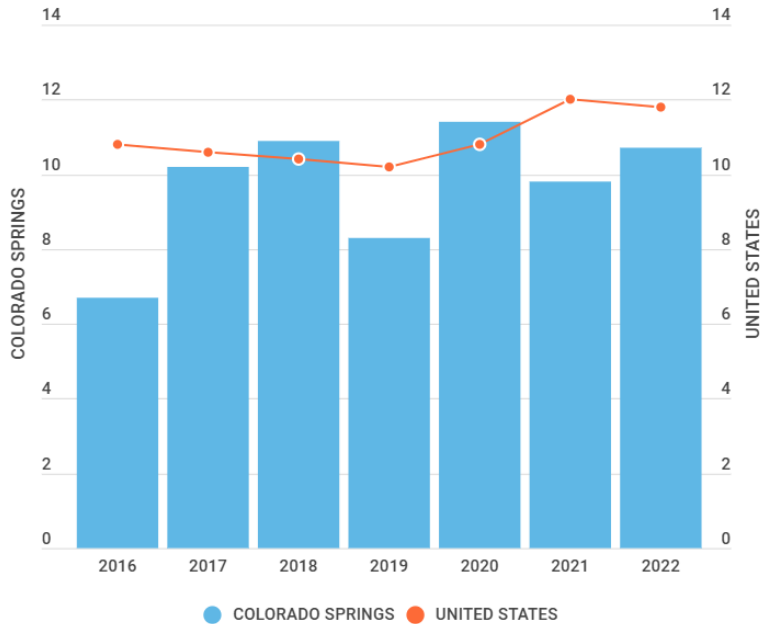
Traffic Safety

There are numerous metrics that may be considered when evaluating how safe travel is in an area. One acceptable metric for transportation safety evaluation is the fatality rate related to vehicle use, normalized per 100,000 people of population. This data is tracked by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for states, counties, and urban centers (medium to large cities).

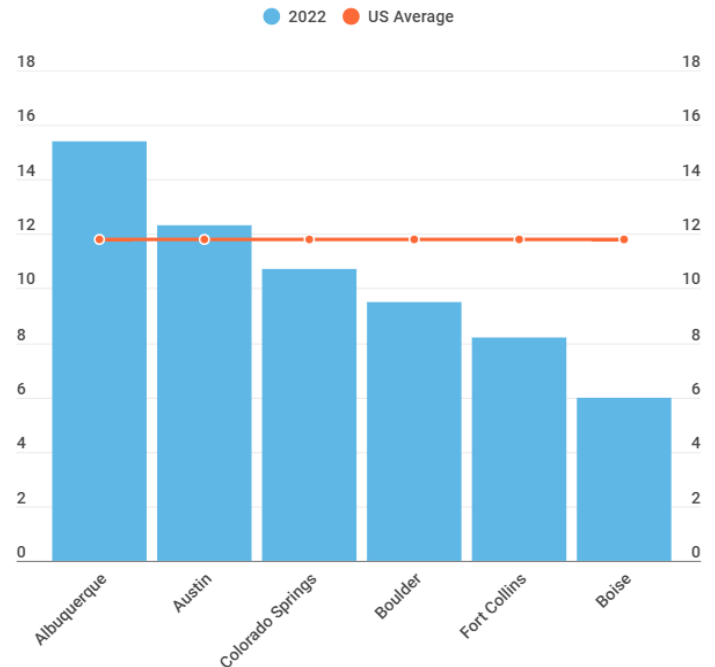
Understanding the nature and magnitude of daily trips should be used as an aid in understanding the fatality rate of these cities. If average commuter trips are several miles away, there is a greater time exposure and speed exposure for these individuals as compared to a city in which average daily commute times are short and or utilize

arterial roadways to complete trips. Different transportation facility types and facilities available can dictate driver use and speeds.

TRAFFIC FATALITIES PER 100,000 PEOPLE



2022 TRAFFIC FATALITIES PER 100,000 PEOPLE



⁶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

How are we doing?

The number of fatalities from traffic accidents in Colorado Springs in 2022 was 82, which corresponds to 10.7 fatalities per 100,000 residents. That was about 10 percent less than the national average of 11.8. Among peer communities, Colorado Springs ranked 3rd of 6 in 2022.⁶

Potential Steps

Having created a community-wide traffic safety steering committee,⁷ the Colorado Springs Police Department has identified four elements of its strategy to improve traffic safety:

- Use data-driven enforcement strategies to reduce dangerous driving behaviors.
- Explore the feasibility of expanding the use of red-light cameras in additional crash-prone locations.
- Educate the community and visitors in preventing dangerous driving behavior through public messaging, collaboration with community organizations, and targeted educational efforts.
- Collaborate with Traffic Engineering in implementing safe-design measures.⁸

Walkability

Walkability measures access in terms of walking time to various amenities using a score of 1 to 100, as provided by commercial information service Walk Score®. Walk Score® attempts to quantify two elements: distance to 7 various kinds of amenities (groceries, dining/drinking, shopping, errands, parks, schools, and culture/entertainment) and pedestrian friendliness. Pedestrian friendliness is calculated from population density and road metrics including block length and intersection data.

People who are suddenly no longer able to drive but who live in an auto-dependent part of the community are often cut off from the life of the community. Not being able to leave one's home and transport oneself can be very isolating and borderline dangerous. On the other hand, providing options for people to get to their destinations by public transit, by bike, or on foot offers independence and autonomy to people who cannot drive, and a less expensive, healthier, sometimes more fun transport to people who do drive.

How are we doing?

Colorado Springs' Walk Score® is 36 out of 100 as of August 2024. Scores between 25 and 49 are considered "car dependent," with most errands requiring a car. Colorado Springs is considered the 38th most walkable large city in the United States and ranks 6th of 6 peer cities for walkability. However, a little improvement would go a long way—improving by 7 points would improve the ranking to 2nd. Of the peer communities, Boulder's score was the highest at 56. Ten Colorado Springs neighborhoods rate above-average (over 50) for both walkability and bikeability. They include Shooks Run, Downtown, Knob Hill, Westside, Ivywild, Old Colorado City, North End, Venetian Village, Divine Redeemer, and Stratton Meadows. Fort Carson and the United States Air Force Academy are both excluded from Walk Score®'s urbanized area. USAFA and Fort Carson each maintains more than 30 miles of trails.¹⁰

Potential Steps

Colorado Springs could improve its walkability score by replacing sidewalks, improving safety at intersections, adding more opportunities to cross large arterial roadways safely, and incorporating more mixed-use development. As these changes and improvements are made, Colorado Springs could use Walk Score's® predictive analysis tool to simulate score improvement to determine impact.

Bicycling

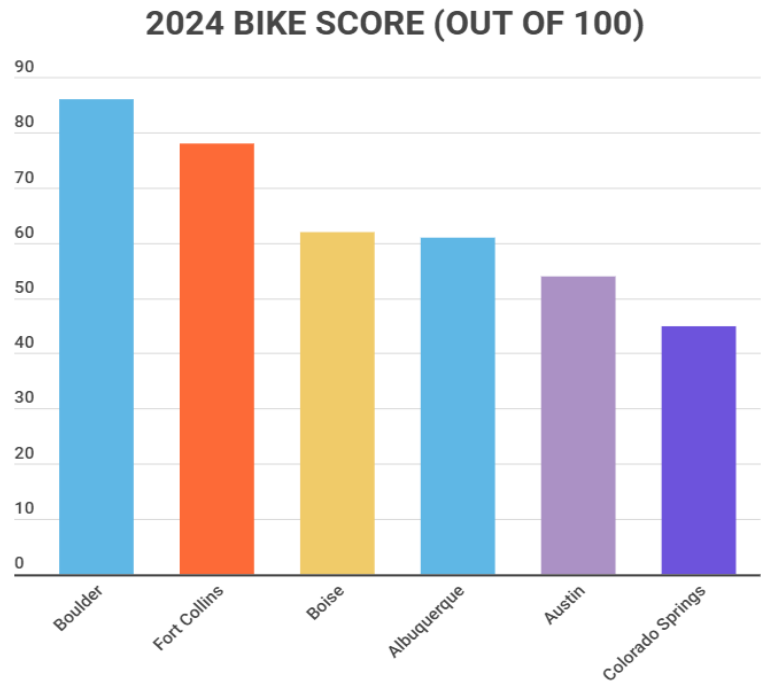
Bikeability measures consider how good an area is for biking on a scale of 0 to 100 using Bike Score®, which considers bike infrastructure (lanes, trails), terrain, route connectivity, proximity to services, and the number of



bike commuters. Bike Score® measures the bikeability of an address (aggregated to neighborhood and community levels) based on the available bike infrastructure, the hills, distance to destinations, connectivity, and the bicycle commute share.

The score reflects a preference for bike paths over bike lanes, and both over shared infrastructure. It calculates hilliness based on the steepest grade close to the address and uses distance to amenities by modifying the Walk Score® data. It recently included the commute mode share from the U.S. Census to reflect social and cultural influences on bikeability.

Providing ways for people to walk and bike for transportation gives them easy, low-cost ways to incorporate activity into their lives.



¹¹ Walk Score®

How are we doing?

Colorado Springs’ Bike Score® is 45 out of 100 as of August 2024. Scores between 0 and 49 are considered “somewhat bikeable” with minimum bike infrastructure. Colorado Springs ranks 6th of 6 peer communities for bikeability. Boulder had the highest Bike Score at 86. Colorado Springs’ Bike Score® has improved by 3 points since 2018.

Potential Steps

Colorado Springs city council approved the 2018 Colorado Springs Bike Master Plan to improve bicycling culture, policy, and infrastructure in the city. Recommended steps include projects in “Bicycle Priority Areas” to improve intersections, increase opportunities to cross large arterials safely, and increased connectivity with rapid transit, businesses, and recreation areas.¹²

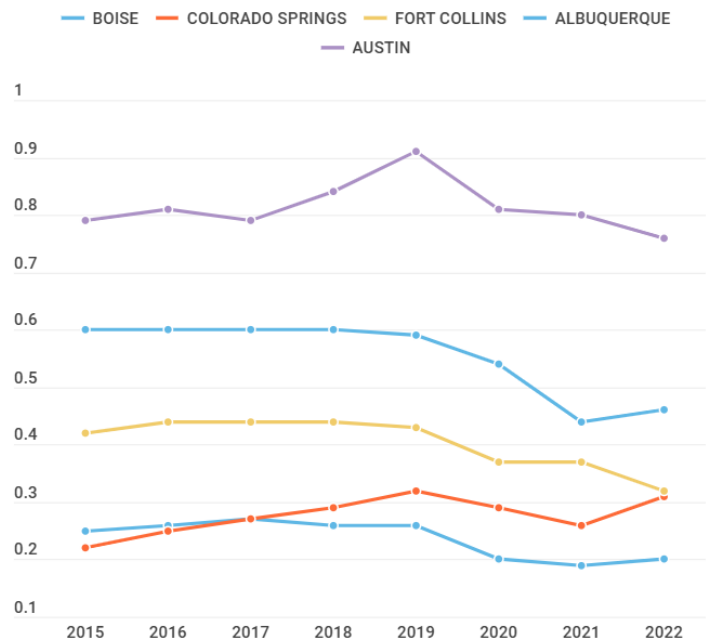
Transit

Transit Score® is an indicator of access of a city’s transit system—that is, usefulness of the transit routes. Transit usefulness measures how well an area is served through public transit on a scale of 0 to 100 using Transit Score®, which considers distance to stops, route frequency, and service mode (e.g., bus, train). Transit Score® measures the usefulness of nearby routes to a given address (and is aggregated to the community level).

This includes data about the distance to the nearest stop on the route, the frequency of a route, and the type of route (with preference given to rail routes over ferries, cable cars, etc., and the least preference given to buses). This is based on GTFS, the General Transit Feed Specification, an open-source method for transit operators to share their data (both static and live) with software developers of all kinds.

Reliance on personal vehicle transportation restricts the movement of some older people, those under age 16, people with a disability that prevents safe driving, and people who are not able or willing to spend thousands of dollars per year to own and operate a motor vehicle. Safe and convenient ways to get by foot or bike to a bus stop can help expand the footprint of transit service in a community. Similarly, being able to take a bus for a portion of a trip can expand where in the city someone can travel through active transportation.

TRANSIT REVENUE HOURS PER CAPITA



¹³ Federal Transit Administration

How are we doing?

Colorado Springs' Transit® Score is 19 out of 100 as of August 2024. Scores between 0 and 24 are considered “minimal transit,” though it is possible to get on a bus. Colorado Springs ranks 6th of 6 peer communities for transit. Among peer cities, Boulder had the highest Transit Score® of 47.¹⁴

A key secondary measure is the volume of transit service available to the urban population. Colorado Springs' vehicle hours per capita was .31 (18.6 minutes) in 2022, placing it 4th of 5 peer communities, though nearly tied with third-ranked Fort Collins. Available bus service in Colorado Springs has grown faster than the population. Per capita vehicle hours increased every year from 2013 to 2019, growing by 43%, and in 2022 seat availability returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. Ridership continues to lag, however. More than 2.2 million trips were made on Mountain Metro buses in 2022, which is two-thirds of the number of 2019 trip segments.¹⁵

Potential Steps

In March 2023 the City of Colorado Springs published the [ConnectCOS](#) transportation draft plan. With a needs-based, data-informed approach, the plan articulates priority policies and actions to improve capacity, efficiency, and safety.

The plan continues to emphasize services and infrastructure in priority corridors, along with integration of bus service with micro mobility services, shared scooters and bikes, that can make use of the city's 250 miles of urban trails. It also encourages collaborative planning with regional transportation groups such as the Front Range Passenger Rail District.

Sources - Transportation

¹ American Society of Engineers, *2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure*, <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2021-IRC-Executive-Summary-1.pdf>; *2020 Colorado Infrastructure Report Card*, <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/colorado-infrastructure/>; *2018 Idaho Infrastructure Report Card*, <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/idaho/>; *2021 Texas Infrastructure Report Card*, <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/texas/>, all accessed Oct. 31, 2024.

² Bureau of Transportation Statistics T-100 Market data: https://www.transtats.bts.gov/Data_Elements.aspx?Data=3; MSA population data for 2020-2023 from U.S. Census Bureau (2023 Vintage), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/metro/totals/cbsa-est2023-alldata.csv>; prior years' data from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2010-2020/metro/totals/cbsa-est2020.csv>, both accessed May 25, 2024.

³ Federal Highway Administration, Table HM74, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2022/hm74.cfm>, accessed Oct. 30, 2024. No data was published for 2021.

⁴ TRIP, "Key Facts about Colorado's Surface Transportation System and Federal Funding," https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/TRIP_Fact_Sheet_CO.pdf, May 7, 2024, from <https://tripnet.org/research-news/?states=colorado>, accessed Oct. 31, 2024.

⁵ Texas A&M Traffic Institute Mobility Division, *2023 Urban Mobility Report*; Data: <https://tti.tamu.edu/documents/umr/congestion-data/complete-data-2023-umr-by-tti.xlsx>, from <https://mobility.tamu.edu/umr/report/> and <https://mobility.tamu.edu/umr/data-and-trends/>; Methodology: <https://static.tti.tamu.edu/tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility-report-2023-appx-a.pdf>. All accessed Oct. 31, 2024.

⁶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool, <https://cdan.dot.gov/query>, query settings: Person Injury Type: Fatal, State and County (MSA counties), Years: 2016-2022; accessed Nov. 1, 2024.

⁷ City of Colorado Springs, 2024 budget; Police chapter, p. 418, <https://coloradosprings.gov/system/files/2024-03/2024fbudget-21-01-police.pdf>, accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

⁸ Colorado Springs Police Department Strategic Plan 2023-2025, p.2, <https://coloradosprings.gov/document/strategic-plan-2023-2025.pdf>, accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

⁹ Walk Score® for Colorado Springs and peer cities—Albuquerque: <https://www.walkscore.com/NM/Albuquerque>; Austin: <https://www.walkscore.com/TX/Austin>; Boise: <https://www.walkscore.com/ID/Boise>; Boulder: <https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Boulder>; Colorado Springs: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Colorado_Springs; Fort Collins: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Fort_Collins; Methodology: <https://www.walkscore.com/methodology.shtml>, all accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

¹⁰ United States Air Force Academy trails include those on its main campus and at Farish Recreation Area, <https://www.usafa.edu/visitors/hiking-and-biking-trails/>; Fort Carson trails: Connell, Anissa. "DPW upgrades Iron Horse Park running trail," U.S. Army, Garrison Public Affairs Office, August 23, 2023, https://www.army.mil/article/269329/dpw_upgrades_iron_horse_park_running_trail, both accessed Nov. 3, 2024.

¹¹ Walk Score®, Bike Score for Colorado Springs and peer cities—Albuquerque: <https://www.walkscore.com/NM/Albuquerque>; Austin: <https://www.walkscore.com/TX/Austin>; Boise:

<https://www.walkscore.com/ID/Boise>; Boulder: <https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Boulder>; Colorado Springs: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Colorado_Springs; Fort Collins: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Fort_Collins; Methodology: <https://www.walkscore.com/methodology.shtml>, all accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

¹² City of Colorado Springs, *2018 Colorado Springs Bike Master Plan*, Dec. 2017, <https://coloradosprings.gov/document/coloradospringsdraftbikeplanfinal.pdf>, accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

¹³ Federal Transit Administration, National Transit Database 2015-2022 Annual Agency Profiles; queried from <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles>, accessed Aug. 27, 2024.

¹⁴ Walk Score®, Transit Score for Colorado Springs and peer cities—Albuquerque: <https://www.walkscore.com/NM/Albuquerque>; Austin: <https://www.walkscore.com/TX/Austin>; Boise: <https://www.walkscore.com/ID/Boise>; Boulder: <https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Boulder>; Colorado Springs: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Colorado_Springs; Fort Collins: https://www.walkscore.com/CO/Fort_Collins; Methodology: <https://www.walkscore.com/methodology.shtml>, all accessed Nov. 4, 2024.

¹⁵ Federal Transit Administration, National Transit Database 2015-2022 Annual Agency Profiles; queried from <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles>, accessed Aug. 27, 2024. Per-capita figures are based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates of each market’s urbanized population. Boulder-specific data was unavailable, as its bus service is provided by Denver’s Regional Transportation District.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

RECREATION REPORT

Recreation Summary

Park systems, water recreation and recreational tourism are all factors in a community's recreation and its impact on quality of life.

Colorado Springs will always be a special place to live, work, and visit because of the amazing natural beauty that attracted the community's founders. This inspiring beauty directly enhances quality of life but cannot be taken for granted....

Colorado Springs' quality of life will suffer if investment in parks and recreation continues to be one-third less per capita than peer communities. Increasing investment will attract new residents, businesses, and tourists. Funding mechanisms should continue to include those directly paid by local residents as well as those paid primarily by visitors. Building and investing in the community's parks and recreation is an efficient approach to improve and sustain the high quality of life in the Pikes Peak region.

Finally, as the community builds, improves, and invests in parks, it should continue designing and improving spaces in such a way that inspires visitors to stay longer and spend more money to ensure a sustainable and healthy parks and recreation system.

- In top 3% of best places to live in the United States
- 79% satisfied with community's restaurants/food
- 83% satisfied with public parks & spaces
- 93% satisfied with recreational opportunities
- Of 2,000 cities rated by Livability.com, Colorado Springs is ranked in the top 3% of Best Places to Live in America.
- 93% of Colorado Springs residents are satisfied with the community's outdoor recreation opportunities and 83% of Colorado Springs residents are satisfied with public parks/ spaces – the highest levels of satisfaction among 12 aspects of living.
- Colorado Springs' park spending per resident is less than the national median and less than all peer communities.
- Colorado Springs' proximity to and volume of national forests, national parks, BLM open spaces, state parks, county parks, and destination city managed parks may offset public desire to invest in city parks.
- The value of volunteer hours for time contributed within Colorado Springs Parks & Recreation ranked 1st amongst comparable cities.

COLORADO SPRINGS RECREATION



Parks & Recreation

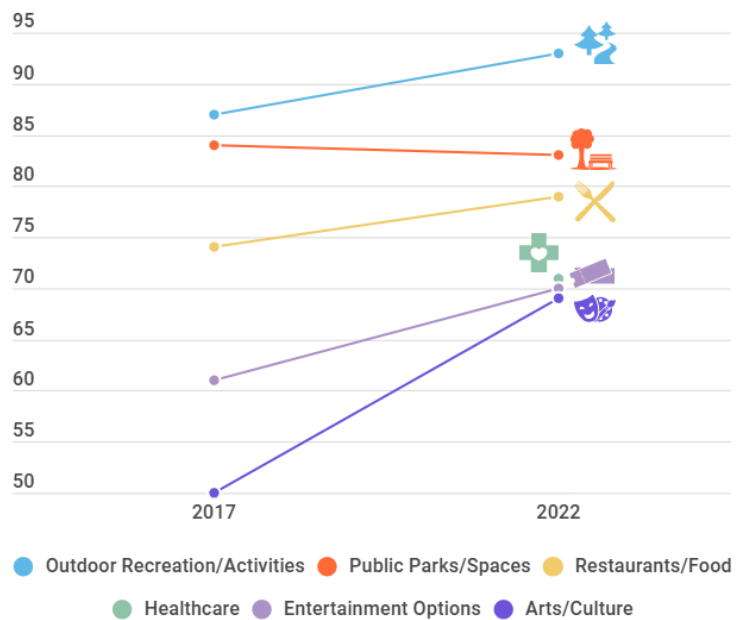
Colorado Springs “offers unparalleled access to nature and plenty of outdoor recreation activities to keep us busy, making it one of the best places to live in America” according to Livability.com.¹

Of 2,000 cities rated by Livability.com for its annual Best Places to Live in America rankings, Colorado Springs is ranked 45th, which is in the top 3%, and is heralded as one of four U.S. cities that will be one of “the Next Dream Outdoor Hubs”³ by Outside.

The purpose of this report is to identify specific ways to continue improving this city and region to match its beautiful setting. Due to public parks and spaces having more readily available data compared to recreational activity data, this study focuses on public parks and spaces.

As of 2022, according to AskCOS, an annual, syndicated tracking study for the greater Colorado Springs area, 93% of Colorado Springs residents are satisfied with the community’s outdoor recreation opportunities and 83% are satisfied with the parks/spaces – the two highest levels of-satisfaction among 12 aspects of living surveyed.⁴

% OF RESIDENTS SATISFIED WITH SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF LIVING IN GREATER COS AREA



Parks Systems

ParkScore®, prepared by Trust for Public Land (TPL), compares park systems across the 100 most populated cities in the United States. Published annually, the index measures park systems according to access, investment, amenities, acreage, and equity. (Boulder and Fort Collins are not among the 100 most populated American cities, therefore, they are not included in the scoring.)

ParkScore® Index, 2018 – 2024 (scored on a 100-point scale)⁵

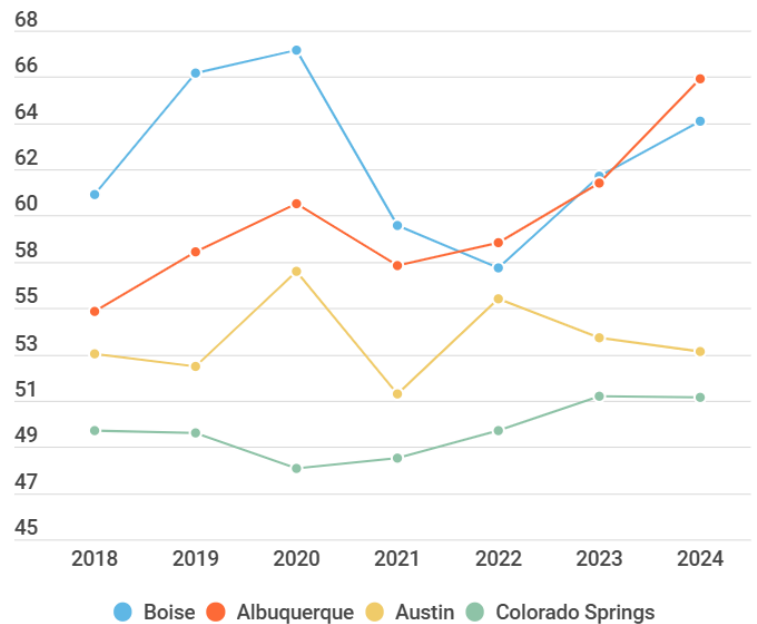
Colorado Springs has the second-smallest range of scores across these five measures (from 38 to 69), indicating a balanced approach to parks management. Of five peer cities, Colorado Springs ranks third or better on three measures (access, acreage, and equity) and has improved on four measures since 2022.

It is also useful to compare park spending per resident. Colorado Springs' per-capita spending increased 45% between 2020 and 2024. However, it is still less than the national median and less than all peer communities.

Read More: ParkScore®

Further investigation is warranted regarding how park space for military installations is considered. Colorado Springs rates above-average on park space for lower-income neighborhoods, yet very low on park space for neighborhoods of color. A contributor to this unusual pattern appears to be that military installations rank as underserved because park space there may not meet the definition of “no barrier to entry” for any portion of the population.⁶

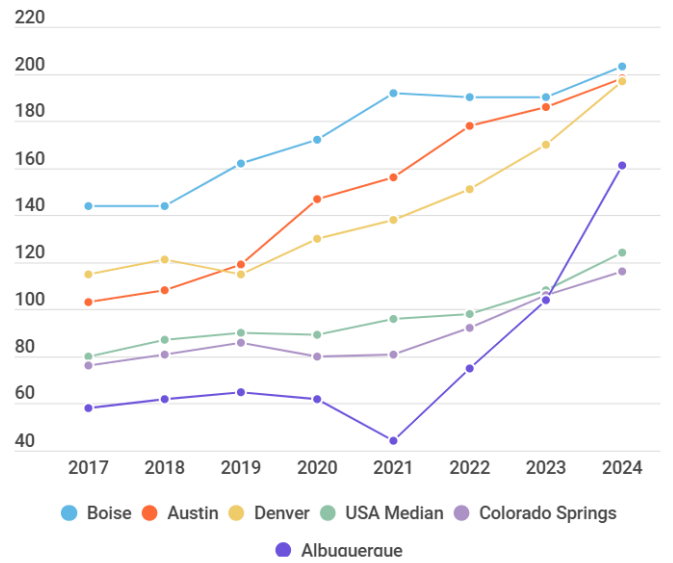
2018-2024 PARKSCORE® BETWEEN CITIES



⁵ Trust for Public Land

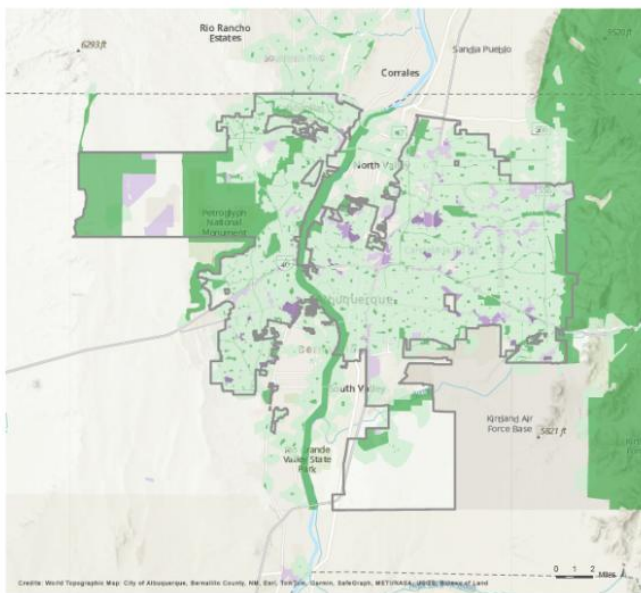
Colorado Springs parks and recreation ratings should be considered in context to Colorado Springs' proximity to and volume of national forests, national parks, BLM open spaces, state parks and county parks. That wealth of resources has perhaps offset public desire to invest in city parks. The maps below visually show the park access differences between cities according to the Trust for Public Lands. Parks are highlighted in dark green; underserved areas are noted in purple.

PARK INVESTMENT PER CAPITA

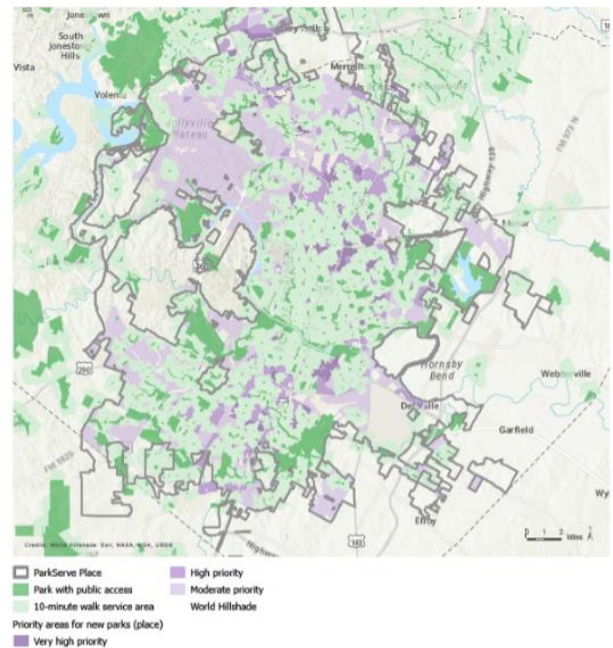


7 Trust for Public Land.

Albuquerque



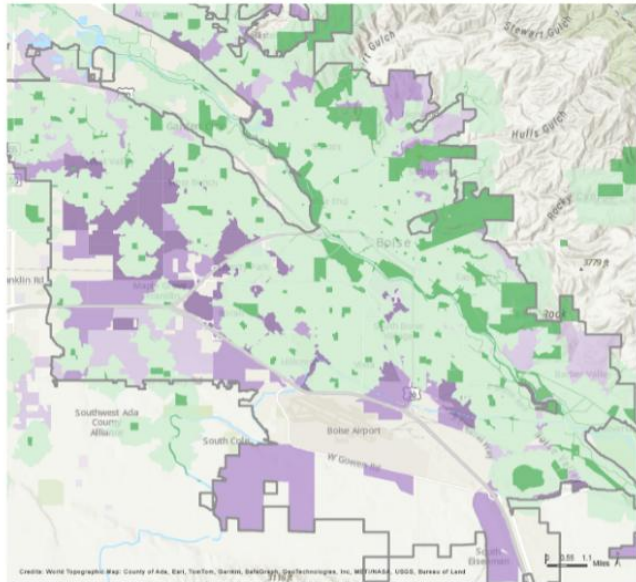
Austin



- ParkServe Place
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

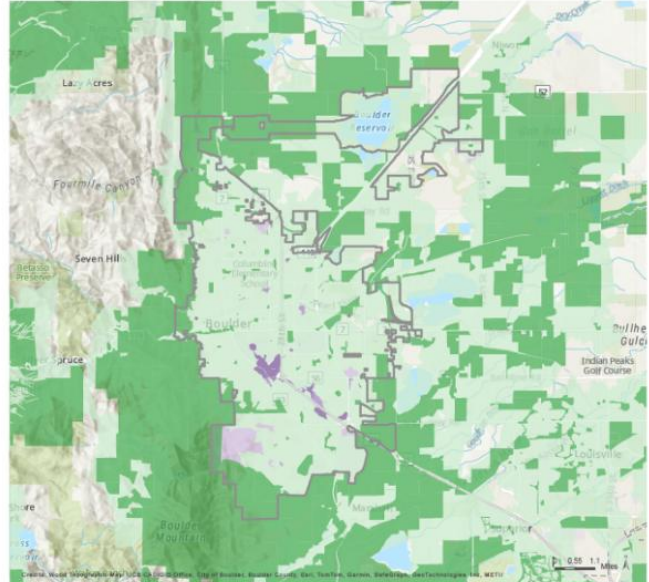
- ParkServe Place
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

Boise



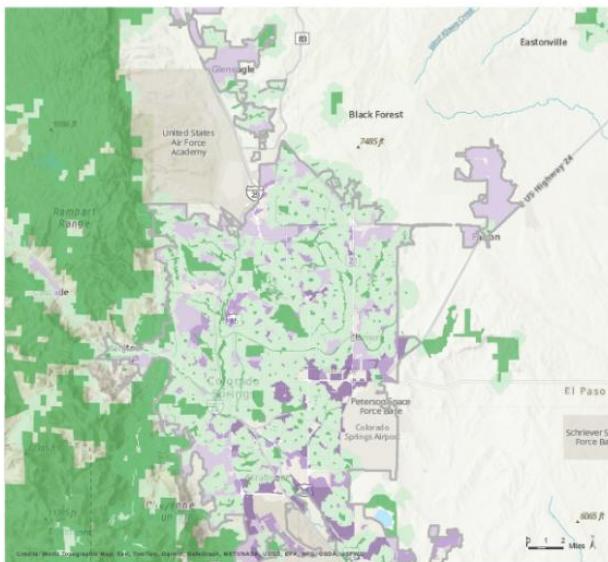
- ParkServe Place
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

Boulder



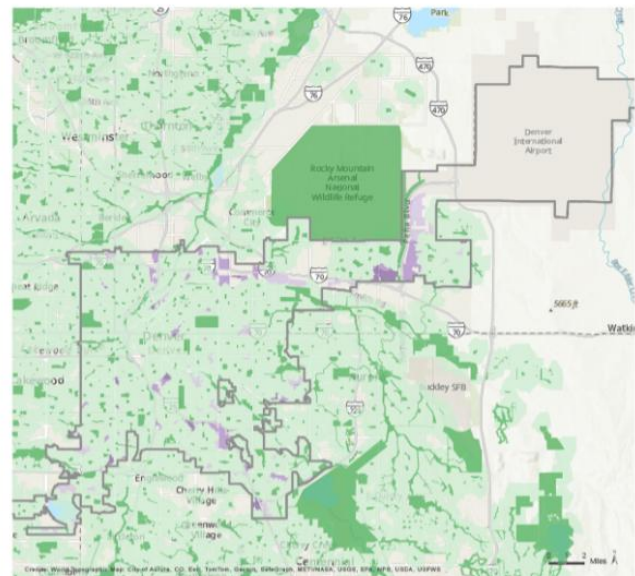
- ParkServe Place
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

Colorado Springs



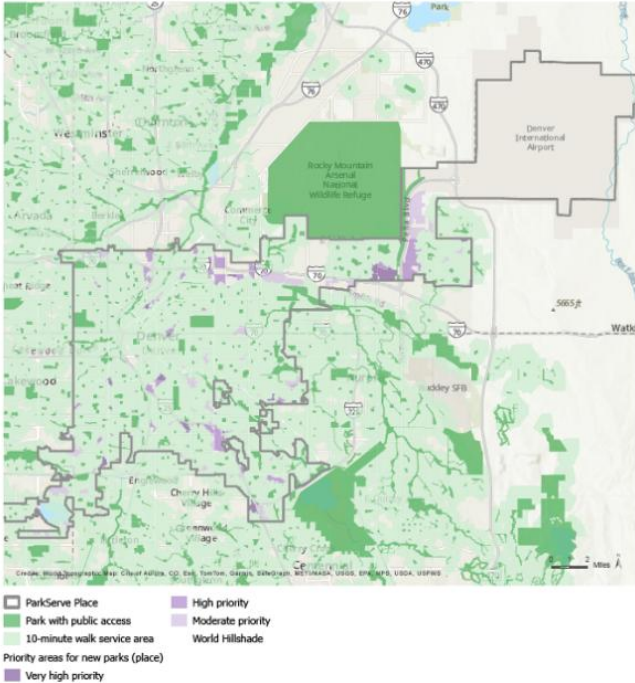
- ParkServe Urban Area
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (Urban Area)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

Denver



- ParkServe Place
- Park with public access
- 10-minute walk service area
- Priority areas for new parks (place)
- Very high priority
- High priority
- Moderate priority
- World Hillshade

Fort Collins

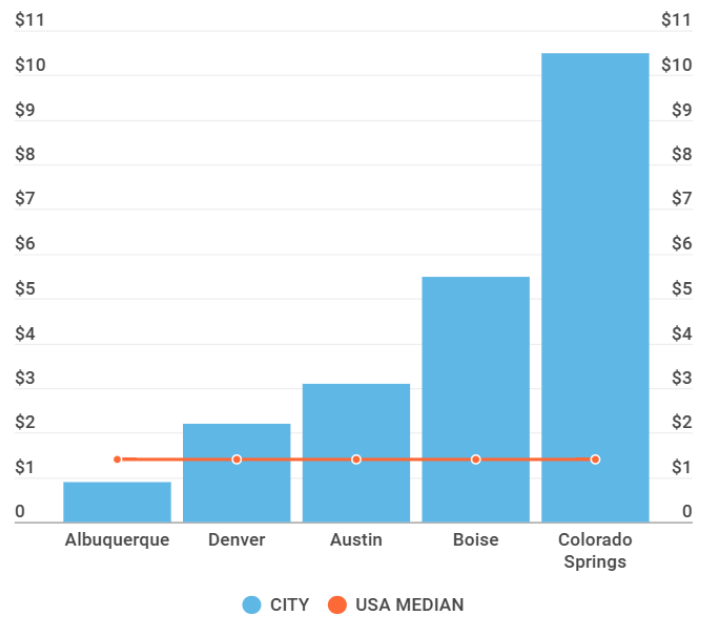


8 Trust for Public Land

An efficient and inexpensive method to improve quality of life centered around parks and recreation is to improve communication and coordination within the parks and recreation-focused community. Many parks and recreation stakeholders are involved in the Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak region. Organizations like the Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (PPORA), that bring numerous stakeholders together to communicate and align, are critically important. An opportunity, albeit complex, for PPORA could be to include other institutions with significant recreational assets like public school districts, colleges, sport’s governing bodies, and large private organizations like YMCA and The Broadmoor.

It is also clear by the amount of measured volunteer hours, that even outside the daily businesses involved in outdoor recreation, Colorado Springs residents care more deeply

VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS (PER CAPITA)



9 Trust for Public Land

about parks and recreation than many peer cities.

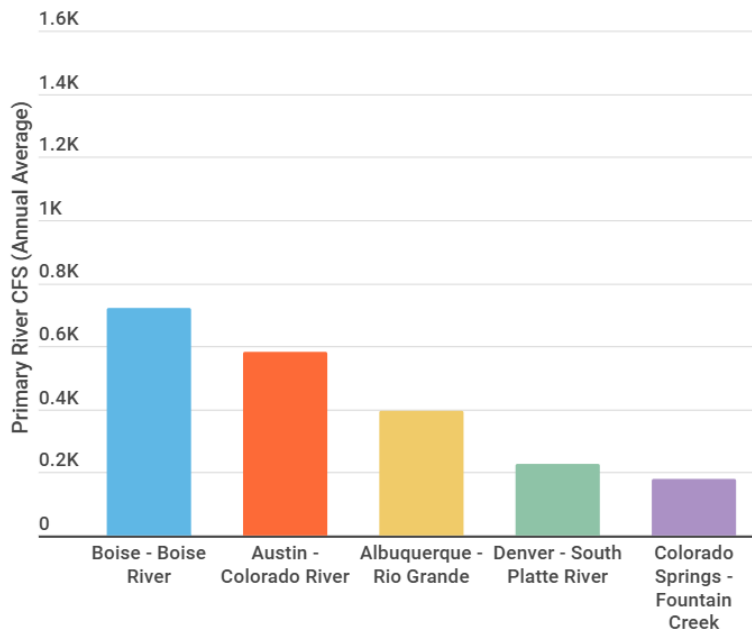
Several steps can be taken to increase the focus on and quality of Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation. For instance, emphasizing the monetized value of volunteer hours in Colorado Springs parks will increase park spending per capita with no budgetary cost. Additionally, focus should be placed on recreation and senior centers per capita. Only three communities out of the 100 surveyed have fewer recreation and senior centers than Colorado Springs. Also, continuing to expand publicly managed trails, can increase access to underserved populations within a 10-minute walk at relatively low cost. Colorado Springs can also work with ParkScore® personnel to determine if park space on military installations (especially pass-through trails) can be recognized in the system as accessible. Finally, planners, developers, and the public are encouraged to use the ParkServe mapping application for informed decision making about public access to parks, trails, and open space.

[SEE MORE PARKSERVE CONTEXTUAL DATA](#)

Water Recreation

In contrast to the comparison cities, Colorado Springs has the smallest amount of urban creek/river water access, as measured by the year-over-year average of cubic feet per second of a primary waterway. Public lakes and ponds also provide access to recreational water, but a reliable data set could not be found for comparison. The annual flow of Fountain Creek, the central waterway in Colorado Springs, has doubled since 2022. However, special attention and investment is still needed to ensure the best use of this limited resource.

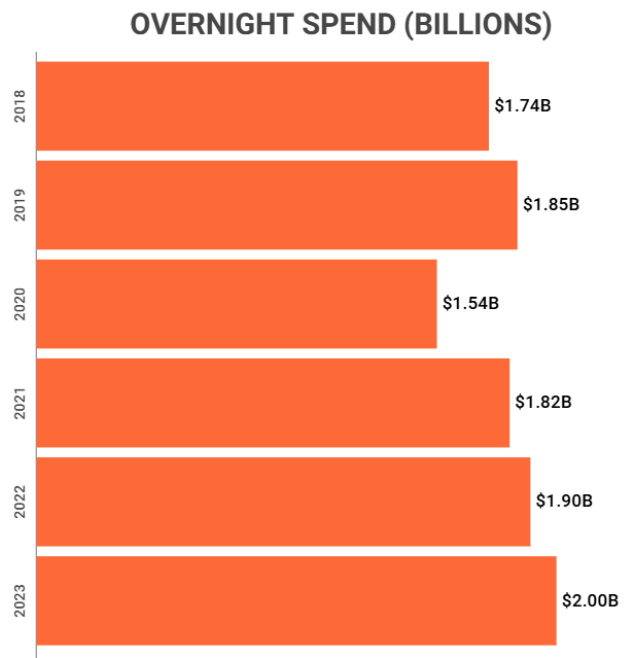
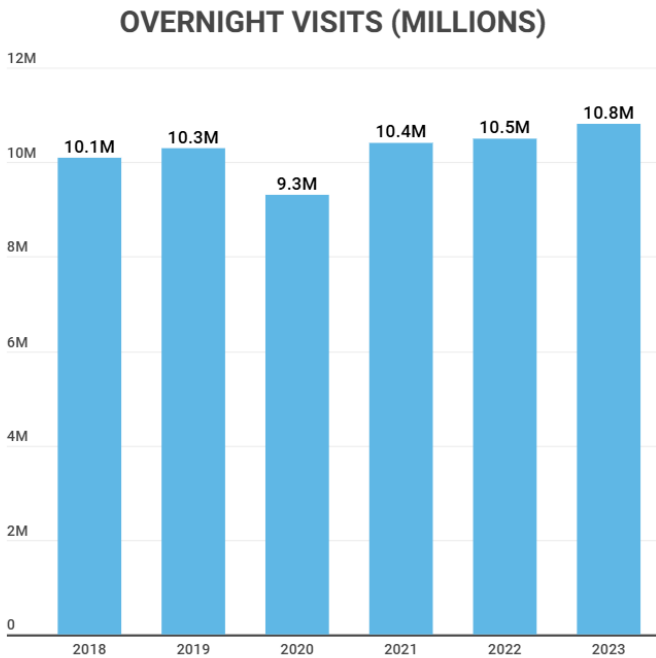
ANNUAL WATER FLOW (CFS)



Recreational Tourism

Tourism is and has been a leading industry in Colorado Springs since its founding. Outdoor recreation access is a critical element in driving visitors, with Pikes Peak and Garden of the Gods being two nationally ranked parks.

Overnight visits is a key indicator of recreational tourism. According to Longwoods International tourism reports, Colorado Springs MSA hosted 10.8 million visitors in 2023. They spent \$2.0 billion, or \$185 per person. Overnight visits have rebounded post-COVID, but at a slightly lower growth trajectory. Since 2018, growth in visitors has averaged 1.3% annually; growth in spending has averaged 1.5%.



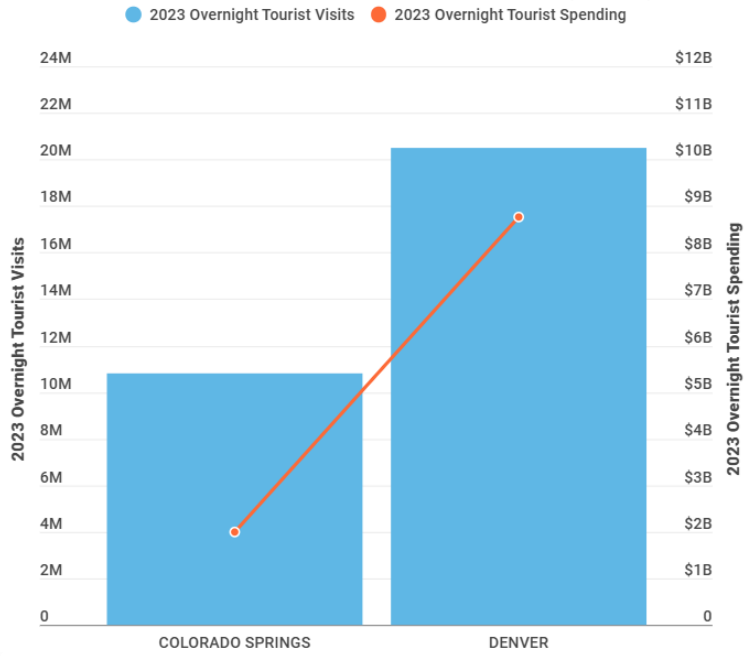
11 Longwoods International, Visit Colorado Springs

Denver saw 90% more overnight visits in 2023 than Colorado Springs. As a capital city and regional hub, Denver is expected to have more overnight visitors and more business travelers in particular.

However, Denver's annualized growth from 2021 to 2023 (11.1% in visitors, 13.6% in spending-per-visitor) far exceeded that of Colorado Springs (1.9% in visitors, 2.8% in per-visitor spending)

It will be important for Colorado Springs to plan and influence recreation attractions, facilities, fees, and transportation in a way to increase opportunities for tourists to spend more dollars and stay overnight.

OVERNIGHT TOURIST ACTIVITY (2023)



12 Longwoods International, Visit Colorado Springs and Visit Denver

References

¹ Livability, “Top 100 Best Places to Live in the U.S.,” <https://livability.com/best-places/2024-top-100-best-places-to-live-in-the-us/> and <https://livability.com/co/colorado-springs/>, 2024. Scores are developed using a proprietary method on the basis of “about 100” measures (<https://livability.com/methodology-ranking-criteria/>). Colorado Springs’ 2024 score is 753 out of 1,000. All links accessed August 24, 2024.

² The narrative reference to Colorado Springs’ high placement in *U.S. News*’ Best Places to Live rankings (#3 of 155 communities in 2024-2025) was removed from this section because the methodology did not include a recreation element.

³ Outside, “The Cities That Will Be the Next Dream Outdoor Hubs,” Sept. 25, 2019, <https://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/destinations/best-adventure-cities-2020/>, accessed August 24, 2024.

⁴ Elevated Insights, a Colorado Springs-based research company, conducted AskCOS®, an annual, omnibus community survey, from 2017 to 2022. Managing Principal Debbie Balch provided reports of 2017 and 2022 results to Peak Progress QLI. The 2022 edition reflected responses from 1,220 local residents.

⁵ Trust for Public Land’s ParkScore® Index scores park systems of the 100 largest U.S. cities using 14 measures in five categories. Scores are scaled from 0 to 100. Data tables: https://parkserve.tpl.org/downloads/cpf/CPF_DataTables_2024.zip; Methodology: https://parkserve.tpl.org/downloads/cpf/2024_CPF_Methodology.pdf, both accessed August 22, 2024.

⁶ Trust for Public Land, ParkScore® Index FAQs: <https://www.tpl.org/parkscore/about>, accessed August 24, 2024.

⁷ Trust for Public Land’s ParkScore® Index, 2024 Staffing/Spending/Volunteers file, https://parkserve.tpl.org/downloads/cpf/Staffing_Spending_Volunteers_WEB_DATA_TABLES_City_Park_Facts_2024.xlsx from <https://www.tpl.org/park-data-downloads>, both accessed August 22, 2024. Note: ParkScore bases spending totals on a three-year rolling average and includes public and nonprofit spending as well as volunteer hours in their calculation. Spending figures for Denver do not include per capita spending for Aurora, a city that has traditionally invested more than Denver in its park system.

⁸ Trust for Public Land’s ParkScore® Index mapping utility, <https://parkserve.tpl.org/mapping/index.html>. Colorado Springs’ map: <https://parkserve.tpl.org/mapping/index.html#/?CityID=0816000>. All accessed August 24, 2024.

⁹ Trust for Public Land’s ParkScore® Index, 2024 Staffing/Spending/Volunteers file, https://parkserve.tpl.org/downloads/cpf/Staffing_Spending_Volunteers_WEB_DATA_TABLES_City_Park_Facts_2024.xlsx from <https://www.tpl.org/park-data-downloads>, both accessed August 22, 2024. Spending adjusted for regional economic conditions based on the Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Pricing Parity Index, 2022. Table 4, All Items. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2023/real-personal-consumption-expenditures-state-and-real-personal-income-state-and>; <https://www.denver.org/about-visit-denver/facts-figures/>

¹⁰ Snoflo, a platform that provides streamflow information from the U.S. Geological Survey and respective state agencies. River flows searched from <https://snoflo.org/river-levels/>; where multiple measurement sites are available for a waterway, the site closest to the city center was selected. Specific sites: <https://snoflo.org/report/flow/colorado/fountain-creek-at-colorado-springs/>, <https://snoflo.org/report/flow/idaho/boise-river-at-glenwood-bridge-nr-boise-id/>, <https://snoflo.org/report/flow/new-mexico/rio-grande-at-albuquerque/>, <https://snoflo.org/report/flow/texas/colorado-rv-at-austin/>, <https://snoflo.org/report/flow/colorado/south-platte-river-at-denver/>, all accessed August 23, 2024.

¹¹ Longwoods International, Travel USA Visitor Profile 2023 for Colorado Springs, as reported by Visit Colorado Springs, <https://visitcos-2022.s3.amazonaws.com/images/Longwoods-Annual-Data-2018-2023.pdf?v=1720387419>, accessed Sept. 3, 2024. For total visits and spending (day and overnight), see also “2023 Pikes Peak Region Visitation Reaches 24.8M,” June 20, 2024, <https://www.visitcos.com/media/press-releases/2023-pikes-peak-region-visitation-reaches-24-8m/>, accessed August 24, 2024.

¹² Longwoods International, Travel USA Visitor Profile 2023 for Colorado Springs and Denver, as reported by Visit Colorado Springs, <https://visitcos-2022.s3.amazonaws.com/images/Longwoods-Annual-Data-2018-2023.pdf?v=1720387419>, accessed Sept. 3, 2024, and by Visit Denver Convention and Visitors Bureau, “Denver Tourism Continues Strong Growth in 2023,” July 15, 2024, <https://www.denver.org/articles/post/denver-tourism-continues-strong-growth-in-2023/>. Both accessed Sept. 3, 2024.



Peak Progress (Quality of Life Indicators)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Natural Environment Summary

The Pikes Peak region's natural environment is a treasured, vital, and vulnerable asset that is key to the community's way of life. It plays an integral role in the community's health, economy, and vitality, and we work hard as a community to ensure that it is protected and preserved.


Our natural environment is also a source of identity and pride for many in the region as well as the reason many community members choose to live here. It is imperative that we maintain the balance of health of our natural environment as it directly affects the plants, animals, and other species that depend on it, and that we depend on, to survive. It is without question that our natural environment will impact our quality of life today and into the future.


- Among 6 peer communities, Colorado Springs ranks **4th** in acreage conserved as a percentage of total land area and **2nd in growth in acreage conserved from 2013 to 2022**.
- In 2023, Colorado Springs' 92 watersheds had an average health index of 0.70 (relative to state standards with 0.00 being the unhealthiest and 1.00 being the healthiest)
- For the five-year period ending in 2022, Colorado Springs averaged **9 unhealthy days** per year in air quality, which ranked 2nd of 6 peer communities for fewest unhealthy days.
- From 2015 to 2022, Colorado Springs reduced its carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by **45%**. However, among 6 peer communities, Colorado Springs still only ranks 5th for CO₂ emissions per capita; Colorado Springs Utilities, which provides electricity and gas to much of the area, agreed in 2020 to cut **80%** of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- In 2022, the front range as a whole diverted 16.4% of its municipal solid waste. That corresponds to 1.1 pounds of recycled waste per person, per day (out of 6.9 pounds of waste generated).

COLORADO SPRINGS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

 **35,468**
ACRES OF LAND CONSERVED
AS OF 2022

 **9 DAYS**
AVERAGE NUMBER OF
UNHEALTHY AIR QUALITY DAYS
PER YEAR FROM 2017 TO 2021

 **45%**
DROP IN CO₂ EMISSIONS
PER CAPITA FROM 2015-2022

 **16.4%**
OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE
THE FRONT RANGE AS A
WHOLE DIVERTED IN 2022

Key Indicators:

For generations, people have been drawn to the natural beauty and landscapes of the Pikes Peak region. As more people come to enjoy the area, however, more pressure is placed on the natural environment, which is a source of scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, food and water, and economic productivity.

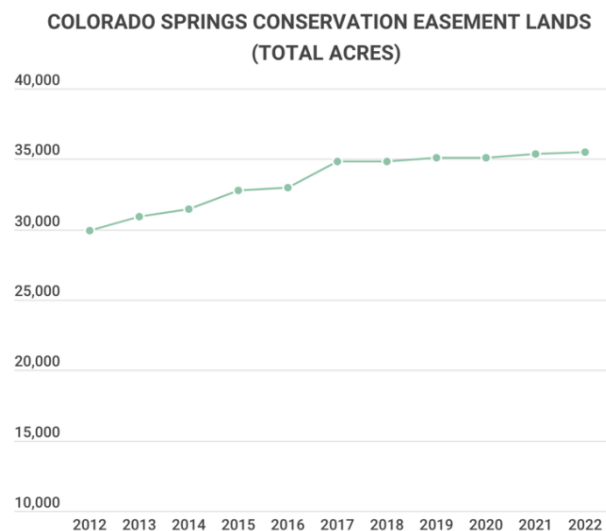
Palmer Land Conservancy CEO, Rebecca Jewett, has said, “Protecting, conserving, and stewarding land, nature, and water is ultimately a catalyst for our community’s well-being, resiliency, and prosperity.”¹

Land Conservation

Land conservation provides critical habitat for native plants and wildlife, protects watersheds, advances recreation and tourism, and supports food production. To prioritize land conservation, the State of Colorado uses a portion of lottery revenues to acquire land via Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).² It also provides a tax credit to encourage private landowners to set aside lands as conservation easements—a legal designation that preserves land use, restricts future development, and ensures a public benefit.³

Through those two vehicles, the state invested more than \$1 billion in land conservation from 1995 to 2017, with each dollar spent producing at least \$4 in public benefits—or \$2,700 per acre.⁴

As of 2022 in El Paso and Teller Counties, 138 land parcels had been set aside as conservation easements, comprising 35,468 acres. That represents 2.1% of the total metro land area.⁵



⁶ National Conservation Easement Database

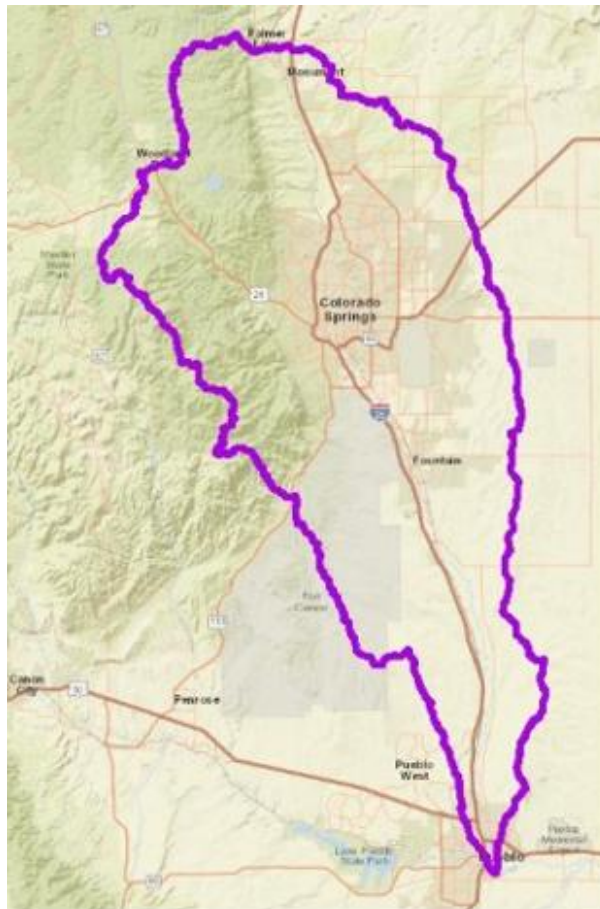
In terms of total acreage and percent of land area conserved, Colorado Springs trails Boulder and Fort Collins. However, Colorado Springs has substantially closed the gap, with 35% of its easement acreage having been added since the beginning of 2013 (vs. less than 10% for Boulder and less than 25% for Fort Collins).

Across six peer communities, Colorado Springs ranks **fourth in acreage conserved** as a percentage of total land area and **second in growth in acreage conserved in the 10 years ending in 2022**.⁷

Watershed Health and Water Body Impairment

A watershed is a region of land that drains to a single point in a body of water such as a stream, river, or lake. Smaller watersheds, like creeks are part of bigger watersheds, like rivers. All watersheds eventually drain to the oceans. Everyone lives in a watershed. Healthy watersheds support wildlife, recreation, agriculture and supplies of drinking water. They are marked by clean water (free from pollutants and harmful bacteria), a thriving habitat, and movement of water (hydrology) and land (geomorphology) that varies within an expected natural range.⁸

The Pikes Peak region spans a boundary between two regional watersheds—the South Platte River and the Arkansas River. Within those regional watersheds are 92 defined smaller watersheds. Several of those make up the Fountain Creek watershed (shown in map), which drains 927 square miles of land and water from the top of Pikes Peak to Pueblo, including nearly all of the city of Colorado Springs. Varying widely in elevation, precipitation, soil type, temperature, gradient, ecosystem, and water use, Fountain Creek is a challenging environment to manage.⁹



The Healthy Watersheds Assessments Project of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitors watershed conditions for impacts from erosion, floods, wildfires, litter, and chemical and biological pollutants.¹⁰ Several measures are combined into overall indexes of watershed health and vulnerability, relative to state and ecological region.¹¹

The EPA's watershed health index ranges from 0.00 (unhealthiest) to 1.00 (healthiest). In 2023, Colorado Springs' 92 watersheds had an **average health index of 0.70** (relative to state standards). While the index has declined slightly from 0.72 in 2021, it compares favorably to Boulder, whose 33 watersheds averaged 0.62.¹²

However, some watersheds in Colorado Springs did score high for vulnerability. In 2023, five local watersheds had statewide vulnerability index scores greater than 0.50, while none of Boulder County’s watersheds did. The most vulnerable watersheds include:

Watershed	Statewide Vulnerability Index (higher is more vulnerable)
Lower Monument Creek	0.63
City of Colorado Springs-Fountain Creek	0.58
Cottonwood Creek	0.56
Sand Creek	0.55
Cheyenne Mountain	0.52

¹³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Additionally, states are required by the Clean Water Act to report whether individual bodies of water have experienced significant impairments in water quality.¹⁴ Fifty-four of the 73 defined water bodies in El Paso and Teller Counties (which include segments of creeks and rivers, along with their tributaries, as well as groups of ponds in close proximity) have been assessed in the 2024 reporting cycle. **Of those, 63% (34) were rated as good (unimpaired), while 37% (20) were rated as impaired.** The most common impairments were bacteria and microbes (noted in 10 bodies of water), along with metals (10). That rate also compares favorably to Boulder, where 77% of 57 assessed water bodies were rated as impaired.¹⁵

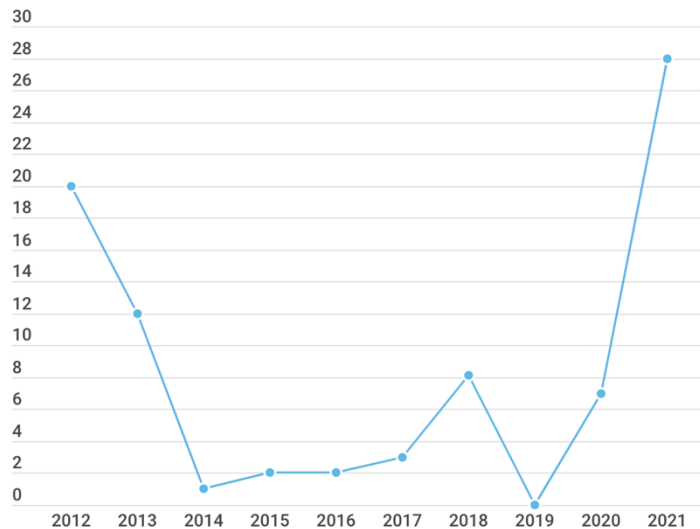
Organizations, businesses, and neighborhood groups can volunteer to improve watershed health through the City of Colorado Springs’ [Adopt-A-Waterway program](#). In 2023, 248 volunteers removed 6.3 tons of litter from area waterways.¹⁶

Air Quality

The EPA is authorized through the Clean Air Act to establish and monitor air-quality standards to protect public health and to regulate emissions of hazardous air pollutants.¹⁷

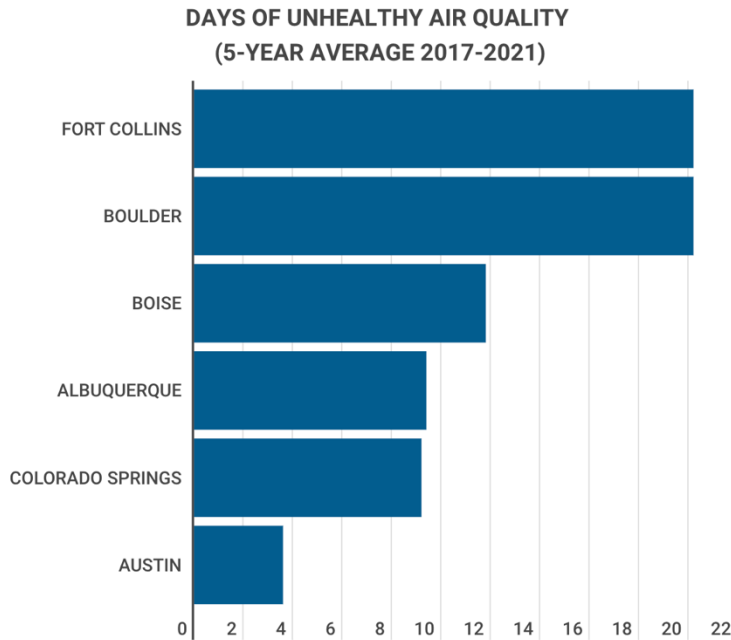
Among the six pollutants it monitors, ozone is of greatest concern in the Pikes Peak region. Ozone has harmful effects on the respiratory system, particularly for children and people with asthma and lung diseases. It forms when sunlight causes a chemical reaction between nitrogen oxides—emitted from combustion engines and furnaces—and organic compounds, such as those in gasoline vapor, dry cleaning chemicals, and refinery emissions. The EPA standard for maximum ozone levels in the air is 70 parts per billion.

COLORADO SPRINGS DAYS WITH UNHEALTHY AIR QUALITY
(AQI OF 100 OR MORE)



²⁰ AirNow

Air quality in the region is monitored year-round at monitoring stations in Manitou Springs and at the U.S. Air Force Academy, where ozone concentrations are usually the highest. Air Quality Index (AQI) levels over 100 are considered “unhealthy for sensitive groups”; levels over 150 are “unhealthy” for all populations.¹⁸ The following charts show the number in which the AQI exceeded 100.¹⁹



²² AirNow

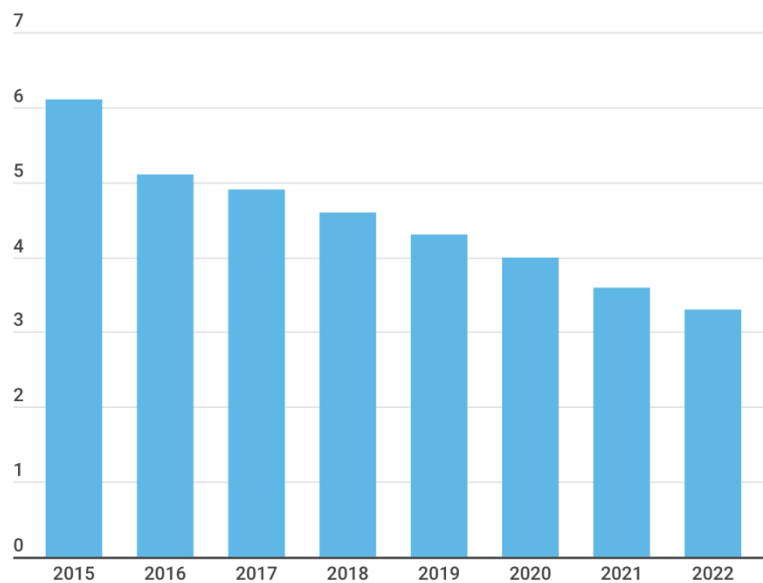
For Colorado Springs, 2021 had more unhealthy days than even the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire year. Wildfires again were the culprit for spikes in poor-air-quality days in all front-range cities. The Marshall Fire and seven other wildfires burned a combined area of 42,000 acres.²¹

For the five-year period ending in 2021, Colorado Springs averaged **nine unhealthy days per year**, which ranked **2nd of 6 peer communities** for fewest unhealthy days.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gases absorb heat in the atmosphere and release it gradually over time, like bricks in a fireplace cooling slowly after the fire dies. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most abundant of these gases. It is naturally present in the atmosphere; its greenhouse effect prevents earth’s average annual temperature from being below freezing. Forests and soils remove and store CO₂ from the atmosphere, but industrial activity and combustion from fossil fuels have created an overabundance of CO₂. Due to CO₂ staying in the atmosphere longer than many other gases, it both creates unnatural warmth and raises the acidity of ocean water.²³

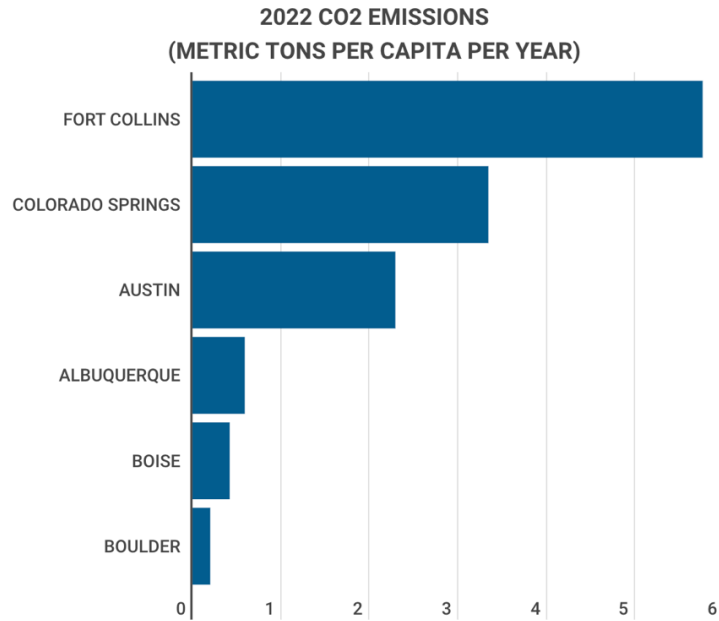
COLORADO SPRINGS CO₂ EMISSIONS (METRIC TONS PER CAPITA PER YEAR)



²⁶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Census Bureau

As of 2022, Colorado had the 11th-highest rate of CO₂ production among U.S. states.²⁴ Emissions from large facilities in the metro area have trended downward in recent years as governments and industry have sought to reduce emissions.²⁵

Colorado Springs has reduced its CO₂ emissions by 45% between 2015 and 2022. However, among peer communities, Colorado Springs only ranks **5th of 6th** for fewest average emissions per capita from large facilities.

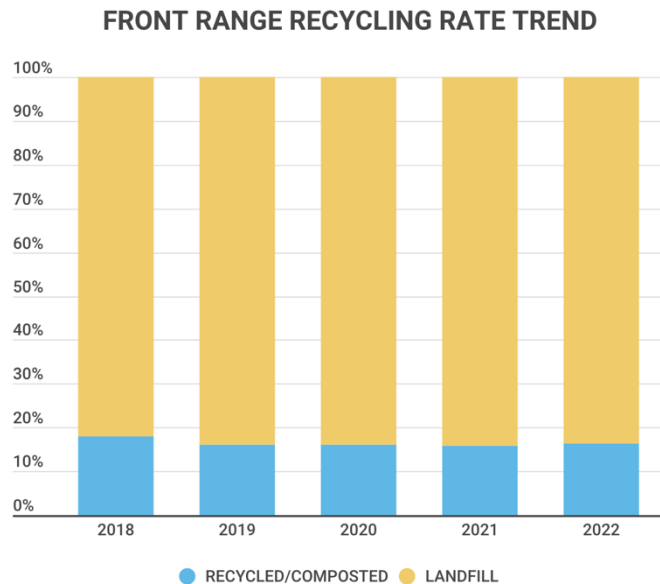


²⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Census Bureau

The state of Colorado is pursuing ambitious policies to address greenhouse gas emissions across the state.²⁸ Among those policies is linking funding for transportation projects to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.²⁹

Colorado Springs Utilities, which provides electricity and gas to much of the area, agreed in 2020 to cut 80% of its emissions by 2030.³⁰

Waste and Recycling



Municipal solid waste (MSW) refers to garbage or trash from households and businesses, much of which is disposed of in landfills. The MSW diversion rate reflects how much of the generated waste is diverted from disposal in a landfill (or incineration) by recycling and composting. Diversion rates are commonly measured as a percentage of all waste generated or on the basis of pounds-per-person.

³³ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

The state of Colorado reports on recycling for the state as a whole and also for the 11-county front-range urban/suburban corridor. Availability of county- and city-level data is dependent on locally authorized monitoring.³¹

In 2022, the front range as a whole diverted **16.4%** of its MSW. That corresponds to **1.1 pounds** of recycled waste per person, per day (out of 6.9 pounds of waste generated).³²

The front range's rate and Colorado's statewide rate (17.2% in 2018, 15.8% in 2022) are far below the national average (32.1% in 2018).³⁴

Only one cited study of recycling in El Paso and Teller counties was identified; conducted in 2010, it indicated an MSW diversion rate of 11 percent.³⁵ That rate compares unfavorably to those calculated in recent years for Fort Collins (30% in 2021)³⁶ and Boulder (44% in 2021).³⁷

Because Colorado Springs' disposal services are privatized and unlicensed, community-wide data is difficult to access. In 2022, Colorado Springs received a \$350,000 state grant to study waste generation, disposal, and recycling.³⁸

Next Steps

The City of Colorado Springs' Comprehensive Master Plan, PlanCOS, lists "Majestic Landscapes" among its six priority areas.³⁹ The plan includes numerous strategies for protecting and improving the natural environment, including:

- Acquire or protect additional properties to preserve as part of Natural Resources and Regional Recreation Typology 3 and Greenways Typology 5. (Strategy ML-4.A-1)
- Align annexation, master plans, and large-scale planned unit developments to contribute and connect to natural areas. (Strategy ML-4.A-4)
- Consider establishment of wildlife-sensitive composting and recycling programs on City-owned and partner-entity properties. (Strategy ML-4.B-2)
- Encourage increased use of xeric and native plants throughout most landscaped park and median areas. Reduce the water demand footprint and maintenance costs in parks by identifying high water use turf areas not suitable for recreation and replacing a percentage of these areas with lower-water requiring native grass species. (Strategy ML-4.B-4)
- Update the Commercial Landscape Code and Policy Manual to improve its effectiveness at ensuring healthy, resilient, water-conserving landscapes. Provide adequate funding to ensure on-site inspections of each project. (Strategy ML-4.B-7)
- Coordinate with Colorado Springs Utilities on the decommissioning of the Drake Power Plant and replacement power. (Strategy ML-4.C-1)
- Support and implement cost effective upgrades to Colorado Springs' vehicle and equipment fleets to incorporate zero and low emissions technology. (Strategy ML-4.C-4)
- Partner with Colorado Springs Utilities and school districts to support educational efforts and provide incentives to support water and energy conservation, and environmental quality best practices. (Strategy ML-4.D-3)

References:

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- ² Great Outdoors Colorado, <https://goco.org/about> and <https://goco.org/programs-projects/grant-programs/land-acquisition>, accessed Sept. 24, 2024.
- ³ Colorado General Assembly bill HB21-1233, “Conservation Easement Tax Credit Modifications,” 2021 regular session, <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb21-1233>, both accessed Sept. 24, 2024.
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- ⁵ National Conservation Easement Database July 2024 data set (registration required), https://site.tplgis.org/NCED/data_downloads/2024/NCED_Tabular_07232024.xlsx, filtered by county (El Paso & Teller aggregated). Data downloadable at <https://www.conservationeasement.us/downloads/?created=true>, accessed Sept. 23, 2024. U.S. Census Bureau’s TIGERweb (Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing database) data used for total area (land+water) of MSAs to enable calculation of percentage of land conserved; https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerwebmain/Files/acs24/tigerweb_acs24_metro_cbsa_us.html from https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerwebmain/TIGERweb_nation_based_files.html, select “Metropolitan Statistical Areas.” Accessed Sept. 10, 2024. Square meters converted to acres using multiplier of 0.000247105.
- ⁶ Ibid. Lands include publicly accessible lands like parks and open spaces as well as private lands that provide public benefits, including ranches, farms, and forested lands.
- ⁷ Ibid. Field “GIS Acres” used for in-county portion of multi-county parcels.
- ⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Healthy Watersheds Protection, <https://www.epa.gov/hwp/basic-information-and-answers-frequent-questions>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.
- ⁹ Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District, Fountain Creek Watershed Fact Sheets, <https://www.fountain-crk.org/district-fact-sheets/>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.
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- ¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water Healthy Watersheds Program, Overview of the Preliminary Healthy Watersheds Assessments Project: Evaluating Relative Health and Vulnerability of Conterminous US Watersheds, February 2017, https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-02/documents/170215phwa_overview_report_final_508v2.pdf, accessed Sept. 10, 2024. Colorado Springs MSA contains two EPA ecoregions—Southern Rockies (mountainous areas) and Southwestern

Tablelands. Indexes range from 0 to 1. For the health index, larger numbers reflect greater health (better); for the vulnerability index, larger numbers reflect greater vulnerability (worse).

¹² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Watershed Index Online data library. Full data set for Colorado included in file <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/other-files/2021-12/20211112-wsio-indicator-data-v2.3-epa-region08.xlsx>, accessed via <https://www.epa.gov/wsio/wsio-indicator-data-library>. List of watersheds specific to El Paso & Teller counties determined via EPA application: <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community>. All sites accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, How's My Waterway reports for the following watersheds, including map, monitoring, & issues identified:

Lower Monument Creek: <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community/110200030107/overview>;

City of Colorado Springs-Fountain Creek:
<https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community/110200030303/overview>;

Cottonwood Creek: <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community/110200030106/overview>;

Sand Creek: <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community/110200030302/overview>;

Cheyenne Mountain: <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community/110200030305/overview>, all accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Overview of Listing Impaired Waters under CWA Section 303(d), updated Sept. 20, 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/tmdl/overview-listing-impaired-waters-under-cwa-section-303d>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹⁵ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; data compiled from queries using the EPA's How's My Waterway map-based application, <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/community>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹⁶ City of Colorado Springs, Stormwater Enterprise Department, <https://coloradosprings.gov/stormwater-enterprise/page/adopt-waterway-program?mlid=31886>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹⁷ Streimikiene, Dalia, Environmental indicators for the assessment of quality of life, *Intellectual Economics*, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2015, pp 67-79, ISSN 1822-8011, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1822801115000077?via%3Dihub>, accessed Sept. 10, 2024.

¹⁸ Detail on AQI scale and calculations are at <https://docs.airnowapi.org/aq101#actionDays>, accessed August 28, 2024.

¹⁹ AirNow, U.S. Census Bureau. AirNow is a partnership of the EPA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, NASA, Centers for Disease Control, and tribal, state, and local air quality agencies. County trend data at <https://www3.epa.gov/aircompare/#trends>, accessed August 28, 2024. For multi-county MSAs, the

number of days is the average of constituent weighted by population of each county where measures were recorded using U.S. Census Bureau population estimates (2023 Vintage) from Table CBSA-EST2020, via <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html> and <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>, accessed July 27, 2024.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ City of Colorado Springs, Waldo Canyon Fire Final After Action Report, April 3, 2013, https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/coe/Website/Data_Repository/Waldo%20Canyon%20Fire%20Final%20After%20Action%20Report_City%20of%20Colorado%20Springs.pdf, accessed June 20, 2022; also Colorado Newline staff and Chase Woodruff, “Colorado wildfires: Latest updates on the 2021 fire season,” Nov. 17, 2021, <https://coloradonewline.com/2021/11/17/colorado-wildfires-latest-updates-on-the-2021-fire-season/>, accessed August 28, 2024.

²² AirNow, U.S. Census Bureau. AirNow is a partnership of the EPA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, NASA, Centers for Disease Control, and tribal, state, and local air quality agencies. County trend data at <https://www3.epa.gov/aircompare/#trends>, accessed August 28, 2024. For multi-county MSAs, the number of days is the average of constituent weighted by population of each county where measures were recorded using U.S. Census Bureau population estimates (2023 Vintage) from Table CBSA-EST2020, via <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html> and <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>, accessed July 27, 2024.

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<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>. Sites accessed August 27, 2024.

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