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2026 UCCS Economic Forum

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About the UCCS Economic Forum

The UCCS Economic Forum is a community resource for data and analysis to help citizens, businesses and civic leaders understand the economic and business conditions affecting the Pikes Peak Region and make better-informed decisions.

Since its origin as the Southern Colorado Business Economic Outlook Forum in 1997, the annual Forum event has been a fixture on the calendars of business and civic leaders in the Pikes Peak Region.

The Economic Forum is possible because of the ongoing support of partners in the business, government and nonprofit sectors. Economic Forum partners receive a monthly dashboard report with analysis of the latest data on the regional economy and invitations to several partner events during the year.

Throughout the year, the Economic Forum helps inform the community through speaking engagements, media appearances, special projects, the “Weekly Economic Snapshot” video series and a monthly column in the Southern Colorado Business Forum & Digest.

Follow the Economic Forum on LinkedIn!

For more information about partnerships contact us at **econfm@uccs.edu**

Bill Craighead, Ph.D.

Program Director, UCCS Economic Forum

Bill Craighead joined the Economic Forum in 2023 after 18 years as an academic economist focused on macroeconomics. His previous experience includes faculty appointments at the US Air Force Academy and Colorado College. He holds an MA and PhD in Economics from the University of Virginia, and a BA from Carleton College in Northfield Minnesota.

Joe Craig Ph.D.

Director Emeritus, Chair,
UCCS Economics Department

Joe Craig has been a faculty member at UCCS since 2012 and is chair of the Economics Department. He served as interim director of the Forum in 2022-23 and continues to support the Forum as Director Emeritus. His research interests include industrial organization and economic education. He received his MA and PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder, and BA from Kenyon College in Gambier Ohio.

Jennifer Sobanet, Ed.D.
Chancellor, University of Colorado Colorado Springs

UCCS is delighted to once again join our business and community partners in presenting the annual Economic Forum. Today's event celebrates those partnerships that drive Southern Colorado forward and highlights the opportunities we can create together to strengthen our region's economic vitality and prosperity.

As Southern Colorado's leading public research university, UCCS is deeply committed to advancing economic mobility, fostering innovation and preparing the workforce of tomorrow. That impact is made possible by the collaboration, expertise and shared vision of the vibrant community we are privileged to serve.

Thank you for joining us and for your continued partnership in shaping a thriving future for Southern Colorado.

Warmly,
Jennifer Sobanet

Bri Newland, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, UCCS College of Business

As Interim Dean of the College of Business, I am delighted to welcome you to the 30th Annual UCCS Economic Forum! UCCS has a longstanding partnership with the business and civic communities of Colorado Springs, working to advance our region's growth and development. The Economic Forum is an excellent example of what we can accomplish together.

This publication offers an exceptional resource for local businesses; helping guide and inform them while they navigate emerging economic challenges. We are certain its timely insights will prove invaluable to business and government leaders throughout our community in their decision-making process.

The UCCS College of Business provides a forward-looking education that supports workforce and economic development in southern Colorado, across the state and nation, and around the world. We serve learners at every stage of their educational path, produce research that advances discovery and business practice, and bring our community together for constructive dialogue, practical learning, and social responsibility.

The support of stakeholders and partners like you makes this work possible.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Bill Craighead for his work as Director of the UCCS Economic Forum, and to the university staff and volunteers whose efforts have made it possible for us to be celebrating our 30th year.

Sincerely,
Dr. Bri Newland

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Introduction

About this Report

This report is intended to be a reference and resource for information about the economy of the Pikes Peak Region. Data from a variety of sources are presented with context and explanation. Due to the lead times in the publication process, the information in this report is current as of August 2026. Data is subject to revision. Much of the data is for the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which is comprised of El Paso and Teller Counties. This is referred to throughout the report as the Pikes Peak Region.

Executive Summary

The Pikes Peak Region continues to be a relatively affluent area with median household incomes and educational attainment above the national average. The rapid population growth the region has seen has slowed recently, though the Colorado State Demography Office projects that growth rates will gradually pick up again in coming years.

Housing affordability continues to be a major concern, as it is in many areas of the United States. The impact of a building permit boom in 2021-22, particularly in the multi-family category, can be seen in declining apartment rents. Single-family home prices have been relatively flat since 2022, which has brought modest gains in affordability as incomes typically rise over time, so the cost of a home has declined relative to household income.

The decline in construction activity after interest rates rose in 2022 contributed to a relatively slow period for the regional economy in 2024 and 2025. Indicators such as sales tax revenue and payrolls indicate that the pace of activity has bounced back somewhat in the first half of 2026.

Although headline national economic indicators continue to show resilience, consumers and businesses face a challenging economic environment, with shifts in immigration and trade policy. Conflict in the Persian Gulf region has contributed to higher gas prices and will have broader inflationary impacts. Increased federal borrowing is a source of upward pressure on interest rates.

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Output & Employment

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures the total value of goods and services produced in a geographic area in a period of time, typically a year. Real GDP removes the effects of price changes from GDP to measure the quantities of goods and services produced.

In 2024, El Paso County's GDP was $55.1 billion, making it the 106th largest county economy in the United States. It was the third largest in the state, after Denver ($128.5 billion) and Arapahoe ($66.7 billion). Douglas County's GDP was $31.2 billion, Pueblo County's was $8.8 billion, and Teller County produced $1.3 billion worth of goods and services.

GDP per capita tends to be highest for counties with natural resource extraction or large cities with corporate headquarters. El Paso County's GDP per capita is above the US county median of $55,703.

Both the county and state experienced faster real GDP growth than the US overall over the period 2019-2024. While county figures are not available yet for 2025, that year Colorado matched the 2.1% growth posted by the national economy.

County, State, and National GDP

	El Paso County	Colorado	United States
GDP (2024)	$55.1 bn	$557.6 bn	$29.3 tr
GDP Per Capita (2024)	$73,219	$93,117	$86,170
Avg. Annual Real GDP Growth 2019-24	3.6%	3.2%	2.4%

Data: Bureau of Economic Analysis

PAYROLLS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Civilian nonfarm payrolls estimated from surveys of business establishments conducted by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics are a key measure of employment. These totaled 329,600 in the region in June 2026. Military employment, which is also very important for the region, is not included in this figure. The Census Bureau estimated there were 35,535 people serving in the armed forces in the region in 2024.

Civilian Nonfarm Payrolls

	Level	Average Monthly Increase		
	June 2026	1H 2026	2025	2024
Pikes Peak Region	329,600	367	-308	-8
Colorado	2,967,900	1,417	-975	1,400
United States	158,892,000	76,667	9,667	121,583

Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted.

PAYROLLS AND UNEMPLOYMENT (cont'd)

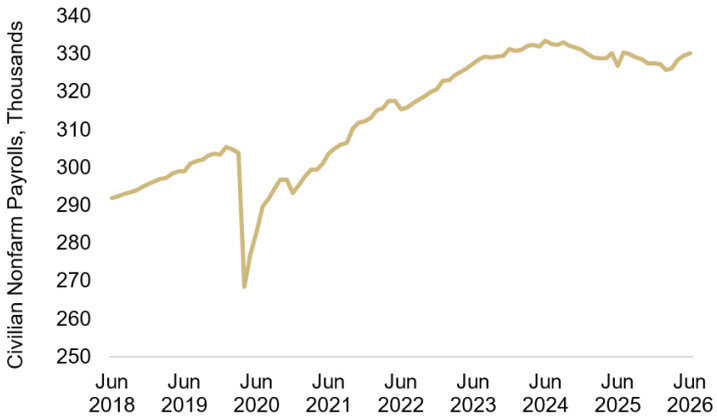
After a very strong 2023, employment growth slowed down considerably in 2024 and had a modestly negative trend from mid-2024 through the beginning of 2026. Statewide payrolls also had a slightly declining trend during this period, while US employment flattened out in 2025.

While a decrease in payrolls can be alarming at first glance, the unemployment rate has remained low, indicating that there has not been a large number of people looking for work and unable to find it. This suggests that the payrolls trend is linked with slower growth in the working age population.

The unemployment rate is measured by a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of households. To be counted as unemployed, a respondent must report that they are looking for work.

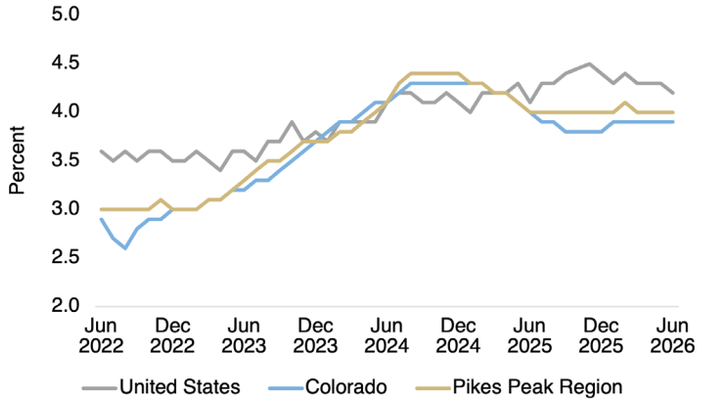
Typically, the unemployment rates for Colorado and for the region are lower than the national rate, but an exception occurred between mid-2024 and early 2025. The region's unemployment rate peaked at 4.4% in the second half of 2024. Since May 2025, the unemployment rates for both Colorado and the Pikes Peak Region have again been below the national rate. Although the unemployment rate recently has been higher than in 2022-23, it is still low by historical standards.

Pikes Peak Region Payrolls



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted

Region, State and National Unemployment



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Seasonally Adjusted.
Oct. 2025 value is interpolated.

Wages, Incomes, & Poverty

WAGES

Average hourly earnings of private-sector workers in the region have seen a rapid rate of increase recently and were above the state and national averages in mid-2026. It is somewhat atypical for the region's average to be above Colorado's, with the very high income and education levels in the state, particularly in the metro Denver area. This likely reflects compositional effects, as recent employment growth at the state level has been weaker for some high-paying sectors with stronger growth for lower-paying categories, while increases in regional payrolls have been more heavily weighted towards industries with better pay.

The median annual wage is the wage received by a worker in the middle of the earnings distribution – i.e., exactly half of earners receive less and half receive more. Median wages in the region are greater than nationwide, though lower than the statewide median – this reflects a more typical pattern in wage and income data consistent with the educational attainment of the region's population, which is below the state's but higher than the national level.

Region, State, and National Wages

	Average Hourly Earnings		Median Annual Wage
	June 2026	1yr % Change	2025
Pikes Peak Region	$40.63	9.3%	$52,710
Colorado	$39.33	0.5%	$59,800
United States	$37.34	2.8%	$50,980

Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted

INCOME, POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY

The Pikes Peak Region is relatively affluent as measured by median income. The Census Bureau defines a "household" as any person or group of persons sharing a housing unit, including individuals living alone and unrelated people living together, while a "family" is a group of related persons sharing a housing unit. Looking at either households or families, median incomes in the region are higher than the US overall, and the Pikes Peak Region ranks in the top 20% of metro areas. This data also illustrates that Colorado is one of the most affluent states in the country.

Economists use the Gini index as a measure of inequality – it ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality). If all households had the same income, the Gini index would be 0, if one household received all the income, the Gini index would be 1. Among US metro areas, Pikes Peak Region has relatively low inequality. This is partly a function of city size as the very top incomes which contribute to greater inequality are more likely to be found in larger metro areas. The importance of the government, including the military, in local employment may also be a factor as the government sector has a more compressed wage distribution than the private sector.

The poverty rate is the share of people who are in families with incomes below official thresholds defined by the federal government. The thresholds depend on family size and the ages of family members. In 2024, the threshold for a single person under 65 was $15,940; for a single parent under 65 living with one child, it was $21,621; for a family of two adults living with two children, it was $31,812. The official poverty rate is somewhat limited as a measure – it does not account for government benefits, taxes, and regional cost-of-living differences.

The poverty rate for the Pikes Peak Region is considerably lower than the national rate and Colorado has one of the lowest poverty rates among states.

Income, Poverty, and Inequality

	Pikes Peak Region	Colorado	United States
Median HH Income	$90,760 (56)	$97,113 (8)	$81,604
Median Family Income	$109,688 (73)	$121,209 (6)	$101,265
Inequality (Gini Index)	0.4291 (324)	0.4611 (30)	0.4809
Poverty Rate	8.5% (354)	9.6% (43)	12.1%

Data: Census Bureau. Ranks in parenthesis (for region, rank is out of 387 metropolitan statistical areas). Data for 2024. Poverty estimates are from the American Community Survey and differ slightly from estimates from the Current Population Survey.

Housing & Real Estate

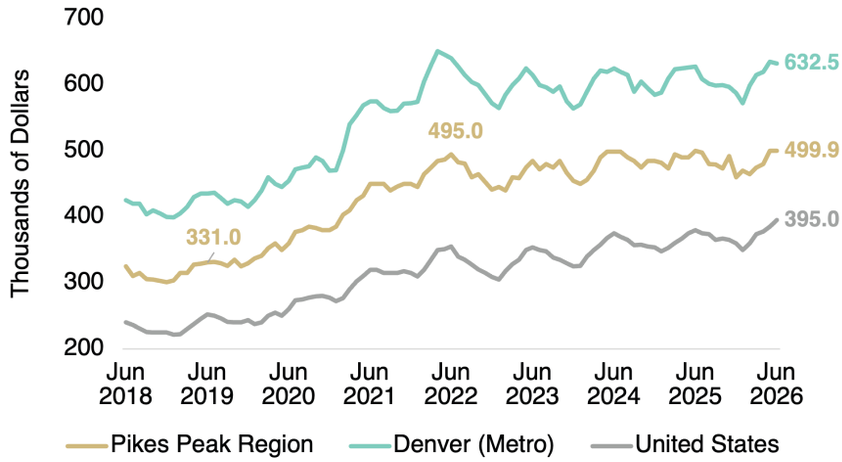
SINGLE-FAMILY HOME PRICES AND AFFORDABILITY

The median sale price of a single-family home in the region has been fairly steady over the four years through summer of 2026, after a sharp increase in 2020 through mid-2022. Although the June 2026 value of $499,900 was just shy of the all-time high of $500,000 set in June 2025, it was only 1% higher than in June 2022.

Elevated prices combined with mortgage rates that are high by the standards of recent history have contributed to affordability concerns. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta estimates the share of local median household income needed for mortgage payments – including estimates of insurance and taxes – on a newly-purchased home at the local median price.

By this metric, affordability sharply deteriorated starting in late 2020. Affordability for the region was at its lowest in October 2023 and has since improved slightly. Note that, since affordability is measured as cost relative to income, and incomes generally rise over time, the recent stability in house prices improves affordability. However, trends in interest rates and insurance costs have been less favorable. Also, while homes in Colorado Springs are considerably more expensive than the national average, with the region's relatively high median incomes, our affordability is not out of line with the nationwide figure. Moreover, with the relatively flat local price trend, even as national average home prices have continued to gradually appreciate, the gap between the cost of a home in Colorado Springs and the rest of the country has narrowed.

Median Sale Price, Single-Family Home



Data: Realtor® Services Corp., courtesy of Pikes Peak Association of Realtors®, Zillow. Note: Local data includes some properties on regional MLS outside of El Paso and Teller Counties

Mortgage Payment Share of Median Income

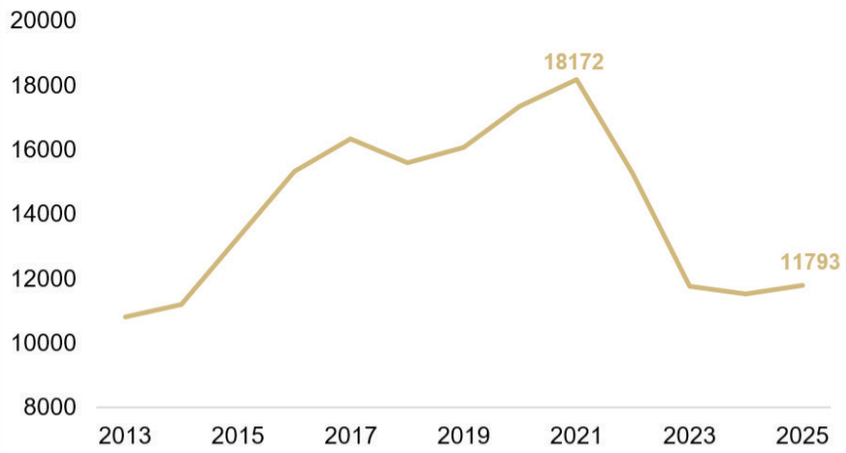
	May 2020	October 2023	May 2026
Pikes Peak Region	29.1%	48.9%	44.1%
Denver (Metro)	31.6%	50.9%	46.2%
United States	27.7%	45.2%	43.4%

Data: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Home Ownership Affordability Monitor

HOME SALES

Home sales have been subdued with higher mortgage rates since 2022 – annual home sales decreased from 18,172 in 2021 to 11,748 in 2023. Sales slightly decreased in 2024, followed by a modest increase in 2025. In 2026 through July, sales were up 1.1% over the first seven months of 2025.

Pikes Peak Region Home Sales



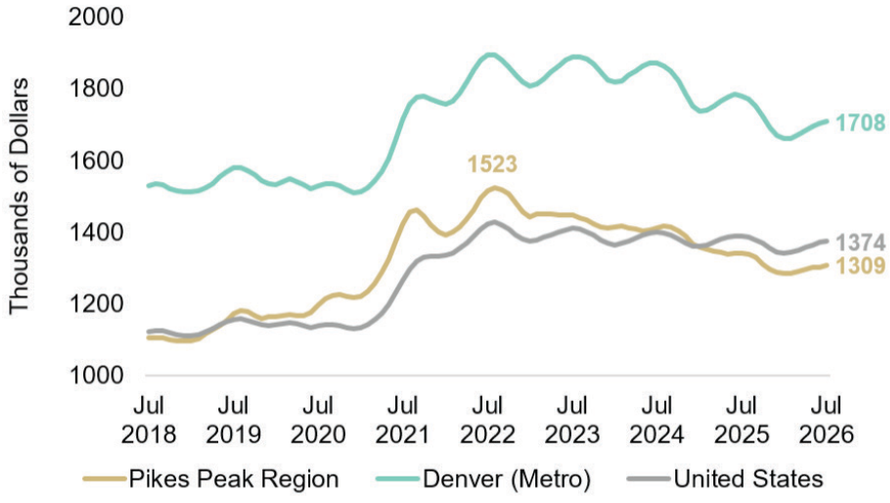
Data: Realtor® Services Corp., courtesy of Pikes Peak Association of Realtors®.
Note: includes some properties on regional MLS outside of El Paso and Teller Counties

APARTMENT RENTS

A surge in apartment building has led to greater supply and apartment rents have fallen in the region since their 2022 peak.

According to Apartment List, the median rent on a new lease for a two-bedroom apartment in July 2026 was $1,309, down 14% from $1,523 in August 2022. However, as the wave of new construction is being absorbed, the market has begun to shift in 2026, with a modest increase in rents in the spring and summer.

Median Rent, Two-Bedroom Apartment



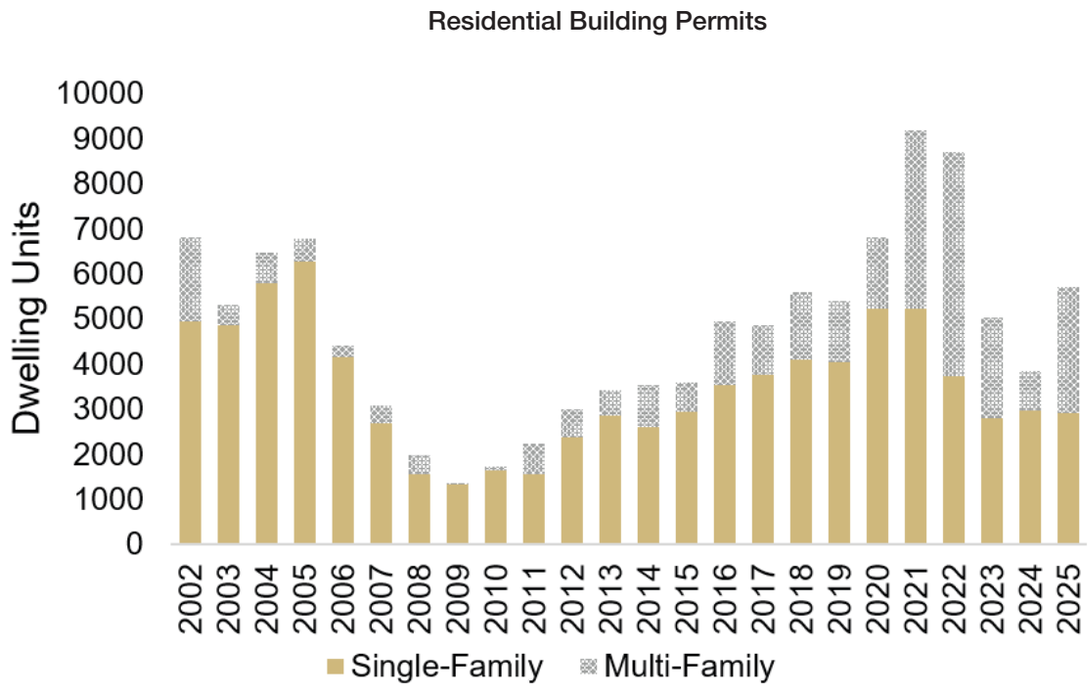
Data: Apartment List

Housing & Real Estate

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS

The increase in apartment supply is the result of a surge in building permits in 2021 and 2022.

The increase was largely driven by the multi-family category – 3,943 apartment units were permitted in 2021 and 4,963 in 2022, compared with an annual average of 1,350 in 2016-19. The number of dwelling units permitted decreased in 2023 and 2024. The total increased in 2025 due to gains in multi-family, with some significant permits coming through late in the year. The first part of 2026 has seen an increase in single-family activity, with the number of dwelling units permitted up 10.5% in the first seven months of the year compared with the same period in 2025. Multi-family permits have been sparse, with only 388 dwelling units permitted through July, though several significant projects were known to be in the pipeline that were not yet permitted by July 31.



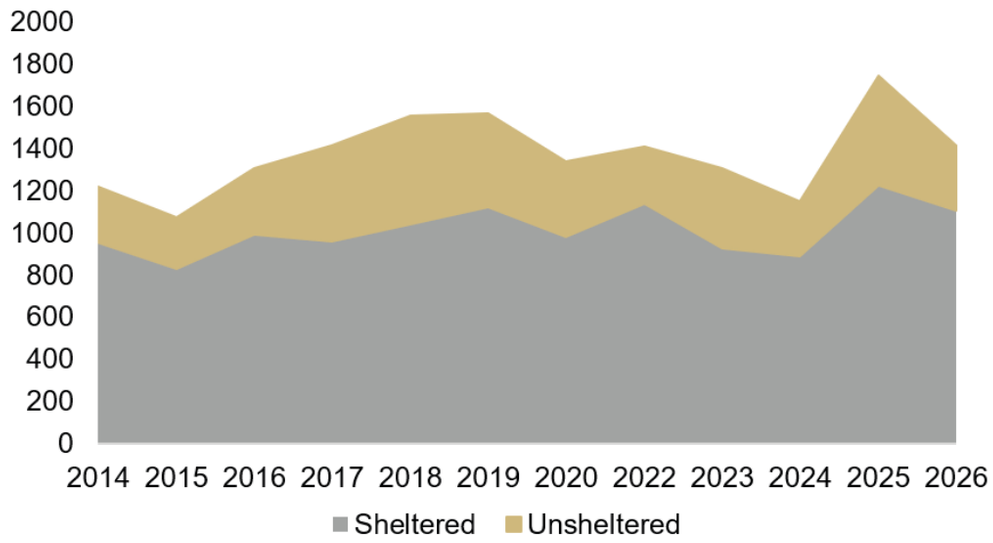
Data: Pikes Peak Regional Building Department

HOMELESSNESS

Estimates of homelessness are provided by the annual point-in-time counts conducted by regional continuum of care organizations that coordinate planning of homeless services. The estimates are from an annual census of the homeless population, usually conducted on a single night in January. However, the point-in-time counts are limited by the fact that they are conducted on a single night and subject to variation due to factors such as the availability of volunteers and weather.

While the point-in-time count showed a decline in 2026, a more comprehensive measure in the Colorado State of Homelessness Report estimated that 7,078 people experienced homelessness in the region in 2025, up 4.3% from 2024, but the number chronically homeless decreased by 8.8% to 1,479.

El Paso County Point-In-Time Homelessness Count



Data: Department of Housing and Urban Development, Pikes Peak Continuum of Care. 2021 is omitted because unshelled homeless were not counted that year.

Business & Consumers

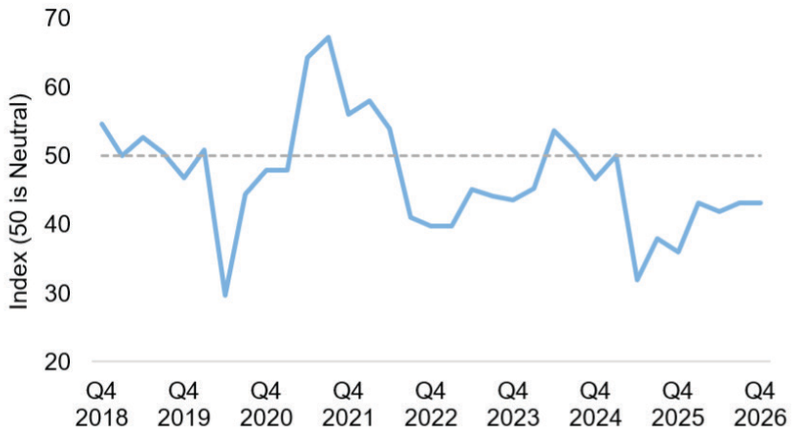
COLORADO BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

The Business Research Division of the Leeds School of Business at CU Boulder conducts a quarterly survey of Colorado business leaders. The survey asks respondents about their expectations regarding the state and national economies as well as industry sales, profits, hiring and capital expenditures. The responses are aggregated into a measure of Colorado business confidence – the Leeds Business Confidence Index (LBCI).

The survey takes place near the end of a quarter and asks for the outlook for the next two quarters. The index is set so that values below 50 represent a negative outlook and above 50 are positive. The index took a sharp downward turn in the second quarter of 2025. In the survey conducted in June 2026, the outlook continued to be negative, though to a lesser degree than in the second part of 2025. More details can be found in the Business Research Division's informative reports, available on their website:

www.colorado.edu/business/business-research-division

Leeds Business Confidence Index



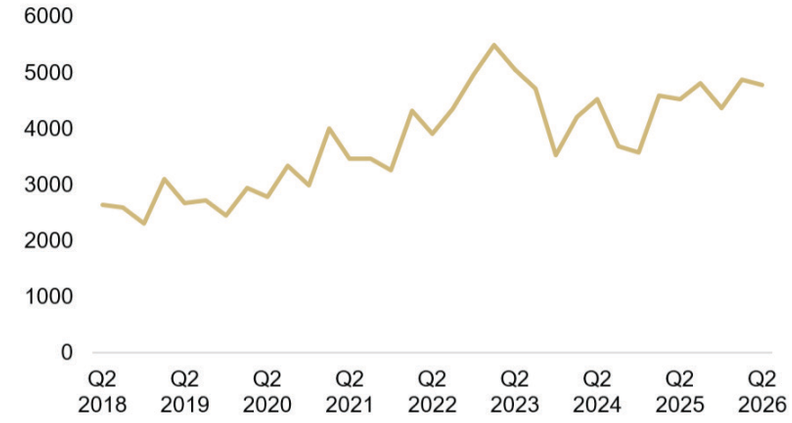
Data: Business Research Division, CU Boulder Leeds School of Business

BUSINESS ENTITY FILINGS

The Colorado Secretary of State maintains a database of business entity filings. From this data, the Economic Forum extracts the new entity filings that list places in the Pikes Peak Region as the "principal city." This data suggests continued strong activity in the region – filings in the first half of 2026 were up 6% over the first half of 2025.

The timing of filings may have been impacted by a fee credit program that reduced the cost of filing between July 2022 and May 2023, which helps account for the peak seen in Q1 2023.

Pikes Peak Region New Business Entities

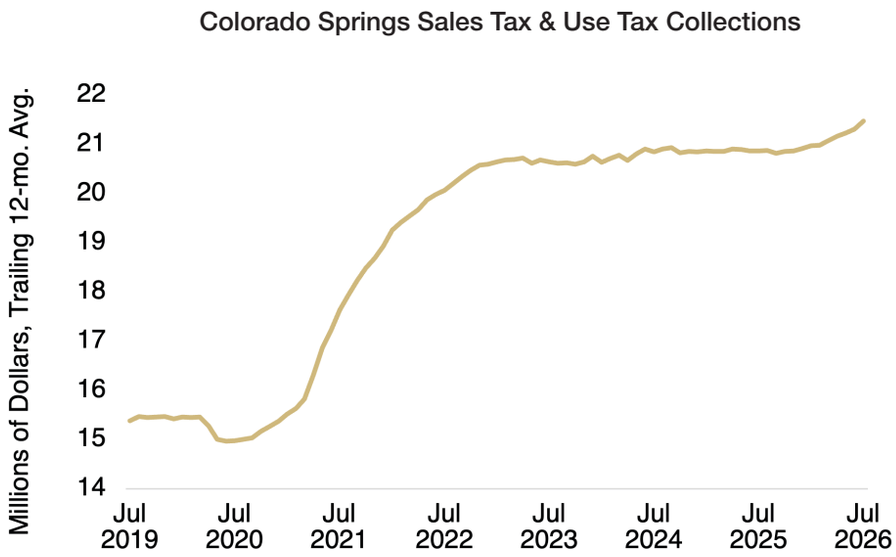


Data: Colorado Secretary of State

CITY SALES AND USE TAX COLLECTIONS

Colorado Springs city sales and use tax collections provide a barometer of retail activity in the city. Because of seasonal patterns, the data is represented as a trailing 12-month average.

The combination of post-pandemic recovery and inflation generated a sharp increase in 2021 and 2022. However, collections then levelled out. Collections for sales in 2025 were only up 0.5% over the prior year, with a substantial decline in revenue from the building materials category pulling down the total. This contributed to financial strains for the city budget. The first part of 2026 has shown signs of a recovery – revenue for sales in the first half of the year were up 5% over the same period in 2025. It is worth noting that not all sales are subject to sales and use tax – a somewhat broader measure of retail sales by the Colorado Department of Revenue showed retail sales in Colorado Springs up 2.5% in the first six months of 2026 compared to the same period in 2025.



Data: City of Colorado Springs Finance Department. Collections are for prior month sales.

Travel & Tourism

LODGERS & AUTO RENTAL TAX (LART) REVENUE and VISITATION

Collections from Colorado Springs' 2% lodgers tax on hotel accommodations and 1% auto rental tax – which together constitute Lodgers and Auto Rental Tax (LART) Revenue – provide a barometer of travel and tourism activity.

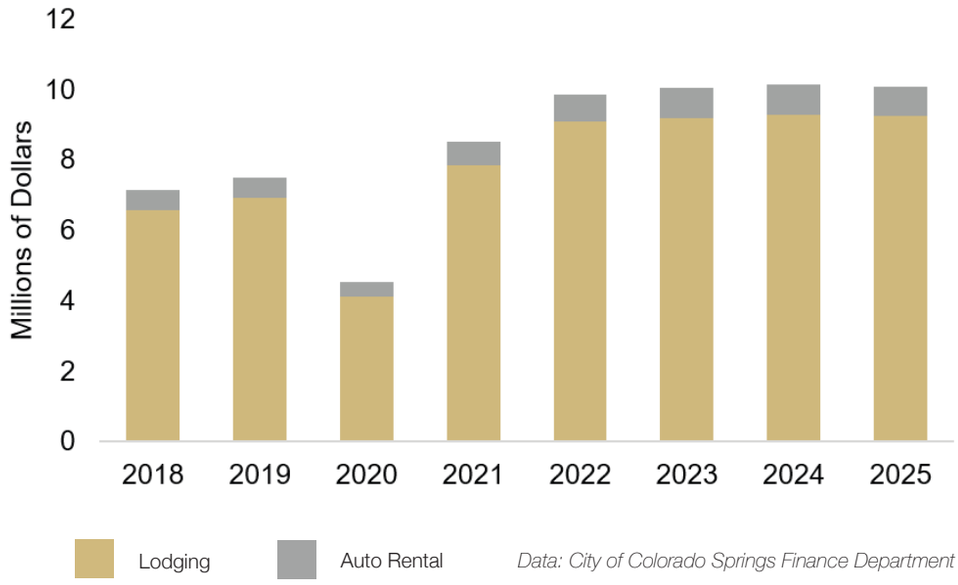
After a strong post-pandemic rebound, LART revenue has plateaued in recent years – 2025 collections were slightly down, by 0.9%, from 2024. The data showed a soft patch in the spring of 2025, which may have been partly due to restricted federal government travel at the outset of the new administration.

According to the Longwoods International Travel USA Visitor Profile study, commissioned by Visit Colorado Springs, visitation to Colorado Springs edged up to 25.6 million in 2025, a slight increase from 25.5 million the year prior. That study also estimated $3.1 billion of visitor spending. Hotel room rates were generally lower in 2025 than in 2024, which helps explain how LART revenue declined even as visitation was slightly higher.

Overall, the data indicates that the region's travel and tourism sector held its own in a difficult national environment. US consumer spending on hotels and motels declined by 1.3% in 2025, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

LART collections for the first half of 2026 have been encouraging – up 3% over the first six months of 2025. In part, this reflects the weakness in spring 2025, but it also indicates resilience in the face of higher gas prices and airfares due to the conflict in the Persian Gulf.

Colorado Springs LART Tax Revenue



Data: City of Colorado Springs Finance Department

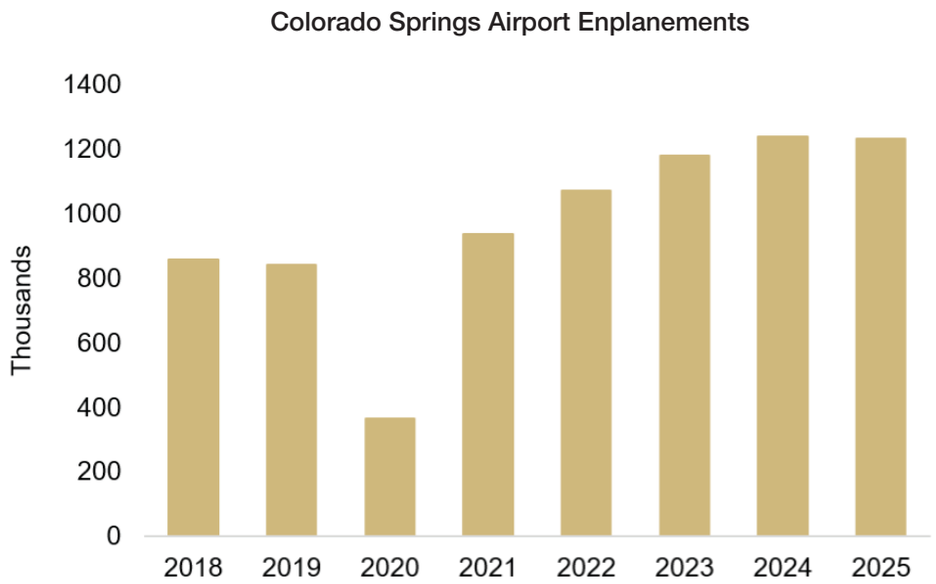
COLORADO SPRINGS AIRPORT ENPLANEMENTS

After several years of strong growth, the number of passengers boarding airplanes at Colorado Springs Airport saw a slight decline of 0.7% in 2025. The first half of 2026 has shown a continued moderate decrease, down 2.4% compared with the same period in 2025 amid challenges for the aviation industry such as higher airfares due to increased fuel prices. Enplanements in 2025 were 46% higher than in 2019.

Terminal amenities are being upgraded with the ElevateCOS program. An outpost of downtown favorite Colorado Craft has opened, with more new dining options to come.

The airport also inaugurated Art at COS which exposes travelers to the city's cultural vibrancy through indoor art exhibitions as well as outdoor sculpture.

The 2025 Colorado Aviation Economic Impact Study conducted by the Colorado Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics estimated that COS airport generated $5.2 billion of total business revenue in 2023.



Data: Colorado Springs Airport

Population & Demographics

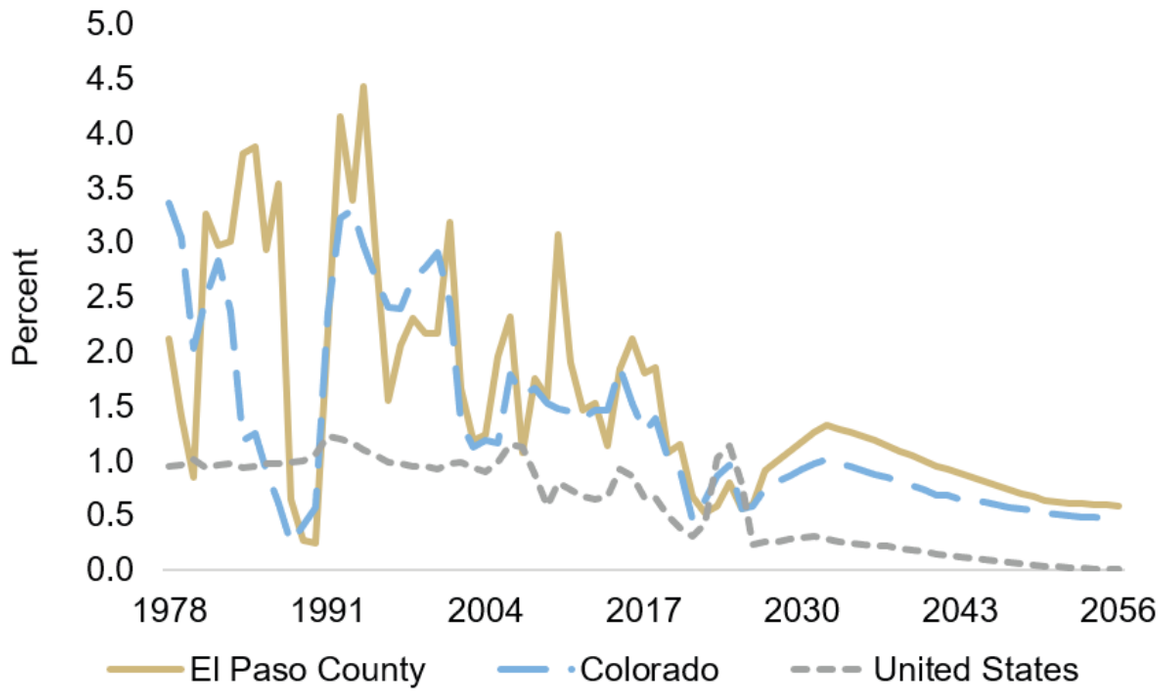
POPULATION GROWTH

The region's population has grown rapidly, though growth has slowed in recent years. Between 1977 and 2020, El Paso County's population more than doubled, increasing from 298,720 to 733,831. The county's average annual growth rate over this period of 2.1% was slightly higher than Colorado's 1.8%, and more than double the national pace of 0.9%.

During 2021-24, El Paso County's average annual population growth rate of 0.6% was slightly below the rates of 0.7% posted by both Colorado and the United States. The State Demography Office projects that growth rates for both the county and the state will gradually rebound over the next several years, though they expect them to remain lower than in previous decades.

Even with a forecast rate of growth that is relatively modest by the standards of the county's history, the population would still increase significantly over the next decade, increasing by 12.3% and adding over 90,000 people. Over the same ten-year period, the State Demography Office projects Colorado's population to increase by 9.4%, while the Congressional Budget Office forecasts a 2.6% increase in the national population.

Annual Population Growth Estimates and Forecasts



Data: Colorado State Demography Office, Congressional Budget Office

AGE COMPOSITION OF POPULATION

El Paso County has a relatively large share of its population in its early- to mid-30s and therefore is expected to see considerable growth in its population of young children over the next decade. At the other end of the age spectrum, with the baby boom generation starting to cross into their eighties, we will see a significant increase in the population over age 80. However, with the region's relatively young population, this is will still represent smaller share of the population for El Paso County than for Colorado or the United States.

El Paso County Population Forecasts by Age

	0 to 5	6 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 64	65 to 79	80+	Total
2026	54,452	103,921	94,885	394,608	90,029	23,708	761,603
2036	61,686	110,712	85,798	474,461	82,741	39,998	855,396
% Change	13.3	6.5	-9.6	20.2	-8.1	68.7	12.3

Data: Colorado State Demography Office

Projected Share of Population in Selected Age Ranges

	El Paso County		Colorado		United States	
	65-79	80+	65-79	80+	65-79	80+
2026	11.8%	3.1%	13.6%	3.6%	14.7%	4.5%
2036	9.7%	4.7%	13.1%	5.9%	15.1%	6.7%

Data: Colorado State Demography Office, US Census Bureau

Population & Demographics

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

As measured by median age, the region's population is young relative to those of the state and country. The region stands out for its large share of veterans and people serving in the armed forces, ranking 10th and 13th, respectively, in these categories out of 387 metropolitan statistical areas. Among metros with more than 500,000 people, the region has the second highest share of veterans and third highest percentage of armed forces members in its population. The share of the population that moved from a different state in the past year is relatively high in the region. In part, this reflects the significant presence of the military.

Compared with the US overall, a smaller share of the region's population is foreign-born or speaks a language other than English at home.

According to Census data on race and ethnicity, the share of persons identifying as only Black or African-American or as Asian is lower in the region compared with the United States. The region has a higher share of people identifying as more than one race than nationwide. The region's Hispanic or Latino share is slightly smaller than the US overall.

Selected Population Characteristics

	Pikes Peak Region	Colorado	United States
Median Age	35.7	38.0	39.2
Veteran (Civilians 18 and Over)	15.5%	7.0%	5.9%
Armed Forces (16 and Over)	5.7%	0.9%	0.5%
Moved from a Different State Last Year	5.6%	3.1%	2.1%
Foreign-Born	7.9%	10.6%	14.8%
Language Other than English Spoken at Home (5 and Over)	11.7%	16.7%	23.0%
White*	69.2%	69.4%	59.8%
Black or African American*	5.5%	4.3%	12.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native*	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%
Asian*	3.1%	3.5%	6.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders*	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Some Other Race*	5.3%	6.3%	7.4%
Multiracial	15.8%	15.2%	13.2%
Hispanic or Latino	19.2%	23.2%	20.0%

**Persons identifying as having one race. Hispanic or Latino can be of any race. Data: Census Bureau. Data for 2024*

Health & Quality of Life

COMMUTING

Commute times in the region are lower than the national and state averages. The share of workers using public transport in the region is very low, but the percentage that carpool or walk to work is higher than state and national figures.

The share of residents in the region who typically work from home is higher than the US overall, but lower than the statewide figure. It is down from 18.0% in 2021 but still considerably higher than in 2019 when it was 8.0% (no data for 2020). It is noteworthy that among 387 US metropolitan statistical areas, Boulder (28.7%), Denver-Aurora-Centennial (22.6%) and Ft. Collins-Loveland (20.9%) are in the top 10 for the share that work from home, and Colorado has the highest share among the 50 states (the District of Columbia is higher, at 22.9%).

These estimates are from a survey question asking respondents how they "usually" travel to work, so they likely understate the extent of remote work by missing some "hybrid" arrangements where people work from home, but less than 50% of the time. According to a national study[1], as of July 2026, 25.4% of US workers had hybrid arrangements, 12.4% were fully remote and 62.2% were fully on-site.

[1]Barrero, Jose Maria, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis, 2021. "Why Working From Home will Stick," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 28731. Updated data at wfhresearch.com.

Commute Modes and Times

	Pikes Peak Region	Colorado	United States
Drove Alone	69.5%	65.4%	69.2%
Carpooled	9.8%	8.1%	9.2%
Public Transport	0.6%	1.7%	3.7%
Walked	3.3%	2.7%	2.4%
Other	1.4%	2.2%	2.1%
Worked from Home	15.4%	19.9%	13.3%
Avg. Commute Time	24.8 min.	25.7 min.	27.2 min.

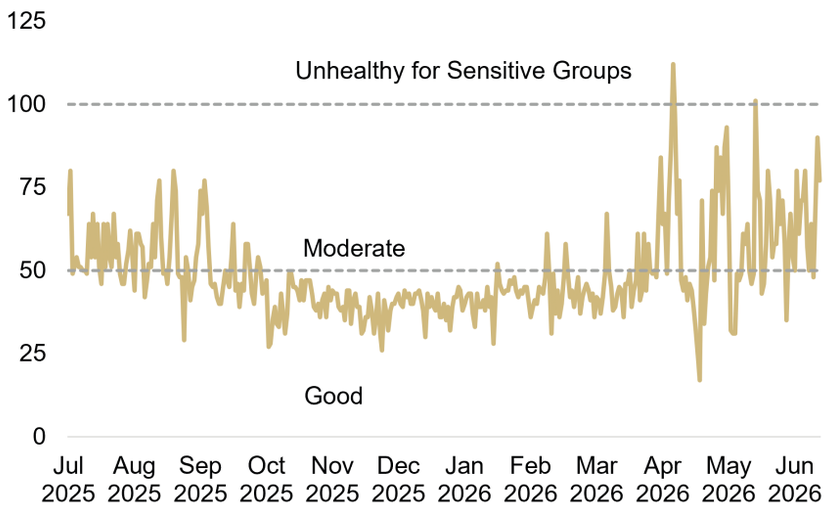
Data: Census Bureau. Data for 2024

Health & Quality of Life

AIR QUALITY

The region has generally enjoyed good air quality. During the year July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, the region's Air Quality Index (AQI) was good (below 50) on 70% of days, and the region only saw two days with an AQI above 100. The AQI is based on ozone and particulate matter concentrations, and each day's figure is the highest daily value from monitors in the region. Ozone was the primary pollutant on 92% of days. Note, the period covered in the figure does not include July and August 2026, when the region was impacted by wildfire smoke.

Air Quality Index (AQI)



Data: US Environmental Protection Agency

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

The shares of the regional and state populations without health insurance coverage are lower than the US overall. However, share of the region's children that are uninsured rose above the nationwide level in 2024. According to the health policy research organization KFF, Colorado had the seventh-highest rate of Medicaid disenrollment after a pandemic policy of "continuous enrollment" which allowed people to stay in the program without recertification of eligibility ended in the spring of 2023.

Note that the data in the table are for 2024. The number of uninsured is expected to increase as subsidies for purchasing health insurance on Affordable Care Act marketplaces such as Connect for Health Colorado were not extended for 2026, and eligibility for Medicaid (Health First Colorado) is being reduced as a result of the 2025 federal budget reconciliation act (H.R.1, the so-called "Big Beautiful Bill"), with some significant changes taking effect Jan. 1, 2027. Connect for Health Colorado reported 22,542 El Paso County residents receiving coverage through the program at the end of the open enrollment period on January 15, 2026. According to the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, there were 163,502 El Paso County residents enrolled in Health First Colorado in the second quarter of 2026, of whom 69,155 were age 20 and under.

Share of Persons Without Health Insurance Coverage

	Overall	Under 19
Pikes Peak Region	7.9%	7.5%
Colorado	7.9%	6.0%
United States	8.2%	6.0%

Civilian Noninstitutional Population. Data; Census Bureau. Data for 2024.

CAUSES OF DEATH

State and national vital statistics data include information on causes of death. Age-adjustment removes the effect of differences in the age composition of different populations to facilitate comparisons.

Relative to the rest of the US, both Colorado and El Paso County suffer from relatively high rates of death due to suicide, firearm injury and alcohol.

Age-Adjusted Death Rates, Selected Causes

	El Paso County	Colorado	United States
Motor Vehicle Accidents	11.7	12.1	12.0
Suicide	20.6	20.6	13.7
Homicide	6.5	5.1	6.2
Injury by Firearm	16.1	15.2	12.8
Drug-Induced Deaths	22.7	26.6	24.0
Alcohol-Induced Deaths	21.1	21.6	12.1

Data: Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment, CDC. Rates are per 100,000 for underlying cause of death. Data for 2024.

CRIME RATES

Rates of violent and property crime are higher in the region and state than in the US overall, but Colorado's homicide rate was lower than the national rate in 2025. Some caution is advised in comparing crime data across areas because of inconsistencies in how it is reported by different jurisdictions. Note that data on homicide reported by law enforcement agencies to the FBI differ from deaths from homicides recorded in vital statistics.

Crime Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants)

	Pikes Peak Region	Colorado	United States
Homicide	5.3	3.9	4.2
Violent Crime	562.6	434.8	320.7
Property Crime	2362.6	2213.5	1508.9

Data: Federal Bureau of Investigation (crime), US Census Bureau (population) Data for 2025.

Schools & Education

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The share of the region's 25-and-over population with at least a bachelor's degree is 42.8%, considerably higher than the national figure of 36.8%. Local educational attainment is somewhat lower than statewide, but Colorado is one of the most highly-educated states in the country. At 47.8%, the share of the state's 25-and-over population with at least bachelor's degree is the second-highest among US states; only Massachusetts is higher, at 48.3% (the District of Columbia is also higher, at 65.5%).

Highest Level of Education Attained, Population 25 Years Old and Over

	Pikes Peak Region	Colorado	United States
Graduate or Professional Degree	17.4%	18.7%	14.7%
Bachelor's Degree	25.3%	29.0%	22.1%
Associate's Degree	11.0%	8.2%	8.8%
Some College, No Degree	21.1%	18.2%	18.5%
High School Graduate	20.4%	19.0%	25.7%
9th-12th Grade, No Diploma	2.8%	3.7%	5.5%
Less Than 9th Grade	2.0%	3.2%	4.6%

Data: Census Bureau. Data for 2024. High school graduate category includes equivalencies.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA

The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced school lunches provides a proxy for the share of students served by a school district from lower-income families. Students are eligible for free school lunch if their family incomes are below 130% of the federal poverty guideline, and for reduced-price lunch with incomes below 185% of the poverty guideline. Although Colorado instituted the Healthy School Meals for All program following a 2022 ballot initiative, the national free and reduced school lunch criteria are still relevant for federal funding.

Four-year graduation rates vary considerably across the region's districts – this is the percentage of students graduating high school in the standard four-year time frame and does not include students who graduate after longer periods.

The matriculation rate measures the percentage of graduates entering (i) 2-year colleges, (ii) 4-year colleges, (iii) career and technical education (CTE) programs, (iv) the military and (v) postsecondary programs[2] . For the Pikes Peak Region, the matriculation rate was 16.9% for two-year colleges, 29.4% for four-year institutions, 8.1% for CTE, 3.0% for the military and 1.8% for the postsecondary programs.

Teacher salaries in all of the region's districts were below the statewide average of $74,909 in 2025-26. Note that the data include salaries of charter school teachers, which are generally below non-charter teacher salaries.

Of the districts in the region, there are three where charter school teachers account for more than 30% of full-time equivalents (FTE): District 49 (43.4%), Harrison (33.1%) and Woodland Park (30.6%).

Statewide, per student school spending was $16,845, and the regional average is lower by 8%.

[2]The postsecondary programs are: P-TECH: Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools, a partnership program between school districts, community colleges and employers; ASCENT: Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment, a program which allows students to participate in concurrent postsecondary enrollment after 12th grade; and TREP: Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation, which allows for concurrent enrollment in postsecondary courses by students in an educator career path.

Schools & Education

Pikes Peak Region School District Data						
District	**K-12 Students**	**Free & Reduced Lunch**	**Four-Year Graduation Rate**	**Matriculation Rate**	**Avg. Teacher Salary**	**Spending per Student**
Calhan RJ-1	365	40.5%	94.4%	43.2%	$50,756	$17,573
Harrison 2	12,011	71.7%	89.8%	60.8%	$60,311	$16,209
Widefield 3	8,976	46.9%	82.9%	55.8%	$66,709	$14,658
Fountain 8	7,225	50.5%	90.7%	50.6%	$70,963	$16,181
Colorado Springs 11	22,363	58.1%	76.7%	49.8%	$63,635	$20,223
Cheyenne Mtn. 12	3,603	18.9%	95.6%	75.3%	$72,208	$14,701
Manitou Springs 14	1,066	36.1%	91.0%	71.4%	$64,929	$20,262
Academy 20	26,131	22.7%	95.4%	70.1%	$67,136	$13,380
Ellicott 22	901	50.2%	86.8%	45.2%	$47,081	$14,223
Peyton 23 JT	551	31.0%	96.4%	51.5%	$51,595	$16,735
Hanover 28	242	Not Reported	90.9%	43.5%	$44,770	$19,290
Lewis-Palmer 38	6,127	16.4%	93.2%	74.1%	$59,958	$13,338
District 49	25,932	41.8%	63.5%*	30.8%	$60,573	$13,481
Edison 54 JT	71	Not Reported	80.0%	Not Reported	$34,754	$28,240
Miami/Yoder 60 JT	305	62.3%	87.1%	20.4%	$50,154	$15,546
Cripple Creek-Victor RE-1	253	76.7%	74.3%	20.7%	$50,523	$26,976
Woodland Park RE-2	1,740	31.2%	83.4%	56.6%	$55,410	$16,757
Pikes Peak Region	117,862	42.5%	79.5%*	51.4%	$63,701	$15,499
Colorado	837,726	44.6%	85.6%	57.5%	$74,909	$16,845

Data: Colorado Department of Education. Data for 2025-26, except matriculation and graduation rates (2025) and per student spending (2024-25). For free and reduced lunch, avg. teacher salary and per student spending, regional figure calculated as average of school district data, weighted by students. Regional graduation rate excludes districts with graduating cohorts less than 50 students due to data availability.

**District 49's state-reported graduation rate is affected by the inclusion of data from the GOAL state-wide alternative education charter school serving over 6500 students. The graduation rates for Falcon HS and Vista Ridge HS were both 93.4% and the rate for Sand Creek HS was 92.0%. Excluding District 49, the graduation rate for the region is 88.1%.*

COLORADO MEASURES OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS (CMAS)

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) tests are used to measure whether students have mastered the Colorado Academic Standards set by the state board of education.

Mathematics and English Language Arts are assessed in grades 3 through 8. There are science assessments in grades 5, 8 and 11, and social studies assessments in grades 4 and 7 for selected schools. The 2026 results showed improvement statewide and for most of the region's larger districts in fourth and eighth grade mathematics and in fourth grade English language arts, but some slippage in eighth grade English Language Arts.

CMAS - Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

	Fourth Grade		Eighth Grade	
District	**English Language Arts**	**Mathematics**	**English Language Arts**	**Mathematics**
Calhan RJ-1	60.9%	26.1%	32.0%	29.2%
Harrison 2	35.6%	24.8%	31.2%	26.4%
Widefield 3	45.0%	27.5%	41.6%	32.3%
Fountain 8	37.3%	25.9%	33.0%	28.9%
Colorado Springs 11	39.3%	36.7%	36.0%	29.3%
Cheyenne Mtn. 12	65.2%	63.0%	66.8%	59.4%
Manitou Springs 14	62.5%	44.4%	60.2%	42.7%
Academy 20	64.3%	58.4%	65.5%	59.9%
Ellicott 22	47.5%	27.1%	40.8%	16.3%
Peyton 23 JT	40.5%	21.4%	50.0%	30.0%
Lewis-Palmer 38	61.8%	62.2%	51.8%	56.7%
District 49	50.6%	41.2%	42.2%	34.3%
Woodland Park RE-2	36.4%	29.5%	46.1%	41.2%
Pikes Peak Region	48.7%	41.1%	45.8%	39.7%
Colorado	47.0%	39.0%	42.2%	37.8%

Data: Colorado Department of Education. Data for 2026. Not reported for some smaller districts for privacy reasons.

Schools & Education

COLORADO EDUCATION

Comparing Colorado with national figures shows that the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced school lunch in the state is lower than nationwide. Colorado's teacher salaries and per student spending are lower than the national average. Colorado is also slightly below average for its high school graduation rate and provides a comparatively low level of higher education funding per student.

The state's scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are above average. The NAEP is a set of national standardized tests, sometimes referred to as "the nation's report card," overseen by the National Center for Education Statistics, which is part of the US Department of Education.

These tests are taken every two years, but results from 2026 were not yet available when this report was prepared. Scores in 2024 were below their 2019 levels, but mathematics scores improved compared with 2022. The continued national decline in reading scores is a subject of concern, but Colorado was an exception, at least for 8th graders, who saw a slight improvement in reading scores.

Education in Colorado

	Colorado	United States
Free and Reduced School Lunch (2022-23)	42.4% (33)	53.3%
High School Graduation Rate (2023-2024)	88.2% (25)	89.0%
Per Student Public School Spending (FY 2024)	$15,908 (28)	$17,619
Average Teacher Salary (2024-25)	$72,781 (19)	$74,495
Public Higher Ed Appropriations per FTE (FY 2025)	$8,529 (37)	$12,082

State rank out of 51 in parenthesis (DC included). Data: US Department of Education; National Education Association; US Census Bureau; National Education Association; State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. High School Graduation Rate is averaged freshman graduation rate (AFGR). This is reported because more accurate adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) data is not currently available past 2021-22. FTE: full-time equivalent.

National Assessment of Educational Progress Scores

	Fourth Grade Mathematics		Fourth Grade Reading		Eighth Grade Mathematics		Eighth Grade Reading	
	Colorado	United States	Colorado	United States	Colorado	United States	Colorado	United States
2024	239	237	221	215	278	274	265	258
2022	236	236	223	217	275	274	263	260
2019	242	241	225	220	285	282	267	263

Data: National Center for Education Statistics

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

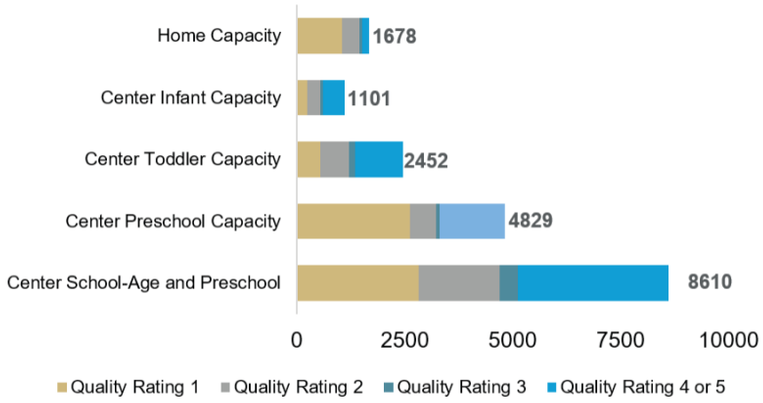
The availability of Early Childhood Education places in the region is limited. Between home-based and center-based facilities, there were 10,060 licensed places for infants, toddlers and preschoolers in the Pikes Peak Region, up 3.2% from a year ago. Including slots at centers licensed for both preschoolers and school-age children increases the total to 18,670. The number of available places is far short of the region's population of 0-4-year-olds, which the State Demography Office projected to be 46,151 for 2026.

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood rates childcare providers through a quality rating and improvement system called Colorado Shines. Providers are rated at level 1 on being licensed and progress to level 2 by submitting a quality indicator assessment and improvement program and completing required training. Levels 3-5 are based on a points system with measures of (i) workforce qualifications and professional development, (ii) family partnerships, (iii) leadership, management and administration, (iv) learning environment and (v) family health. Of the spaces in categories included in the figure, 40.4% are at providers rated at level 1, 21.6% at level 2, 4.2% at level 3 and 37.6% at level 4 or 5.

With the region's large population cohort in their early thirties, the need for childcare is expected to increase. The State Demography Office forecasts the number of 0-4-year-olds in the region to start growing rapidly in coming years and peak at 52,632 in 2038.

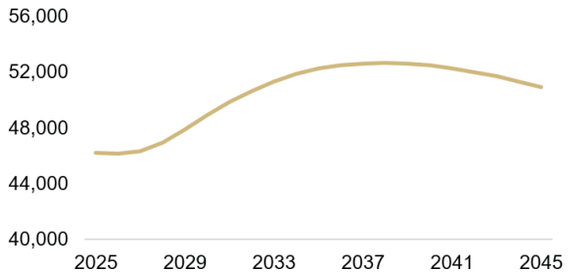
The impact of the region's limited childcare availability can be seen in the labor force participation rate of parents with children under 6. According to the Census Bureau, in 2024, 57.8% of households with children under 6 had all parents participating in the labor force, compared with 69.6% for the United States and 68.1% in Colorado.

Pikes Peak Region Licensed Childcare Capacity



Data: Colorado Department of Early Childhood, August 4, 2026

Pikes Peak Region Population Age 0-4



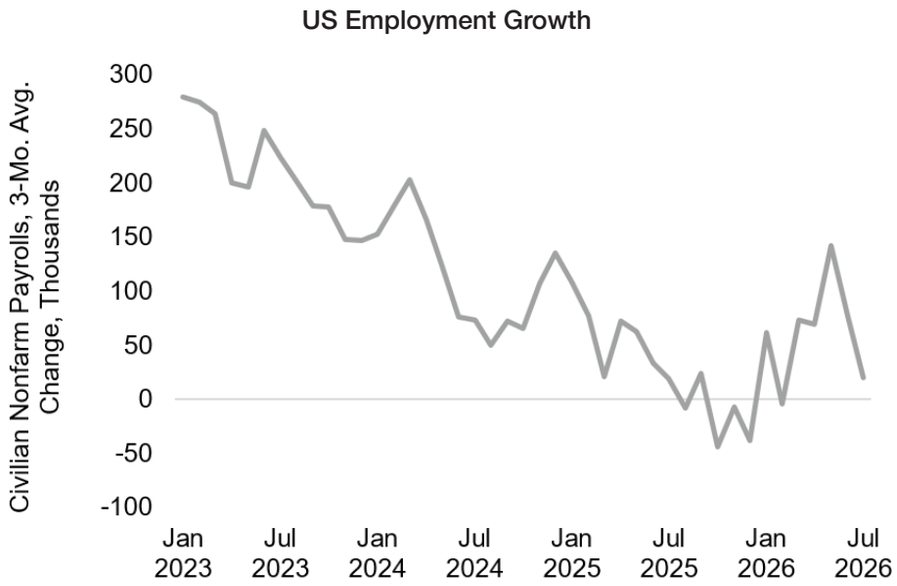
Data: Colorado State Demography Office

Macroeconomic Outlook

EMPLOYMENT, OUTPUT, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Despite briefly picking up in early 2026, US employment growth has generally been subdued, with an average monthly increase in civilian nonfarm payrolls of about 26 thousand in the year through July 2026. The slow employment growth was expected as immigration policy has sharply curtailed the growth of the working-age population. This has lowered the "breakeven" rate of employment growth needed to keep the unemployment rate from rising. Unemployment has indeed remained relatively low, standing at 4.1% in July 2026. While that suggests solid labor market conditions, other data points to softness beneath the surface, with low hiring and quitting rates (workers are less likely to quit if they are not confident about finding another job). However, layoff rates are also modest. While the unemployment rate is low, the lack of turnover in the labor market has made it difficult for those who are unemployed to find new jobs.

With the slow growth in employment, recent increases in output as measured by Gross Domestic Product, while not spectacular, are quite respectable. As of the second quarter of 2026, US real GDP was up 2.1% over the past year. With labor growing slowly, GDP increases have been supported by stronger productivity growth. If it continues, the increase in productivity growth since 2023 would be a significant tailwind for the economy, raising living standards and easing pressure on inflation and the federal budget. While many are excited by the promise of A.I. technologies, the historical experience with "General Purpose Technologies" that impact production processes throughout the economy such as the steam engine, internal combustion, electricity and computing, is that their main impact on aggregate productivity only occurs with a significant time lag. The recent improvement in productivity is thus unlikely to be the effect of A.I. Productivity data can be volatile, so it is too soon to be sure that the faster gains in recent years represent a lasting trend shift.



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted

TARIFFS, GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT AND INFLATION

Although well down from its 2022 peak, inflation continues to be a concern. As of July 2026, the year-on-year increase in the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index, the measure targeted by the Federal Reserve, stood at 3.7%. Economists and policymakers sometimes look at core inflation, which excludes food and energy, to get a sense of underlying trends while removing the short-term volatility in these categories – the annual change in the core PCE index was 3.3% in July. The PCE index is conceptually similar to the better-known Consumer Price Index (CPI), though there are technical differences in how they are constructed which can lead them to diverge somewhat.

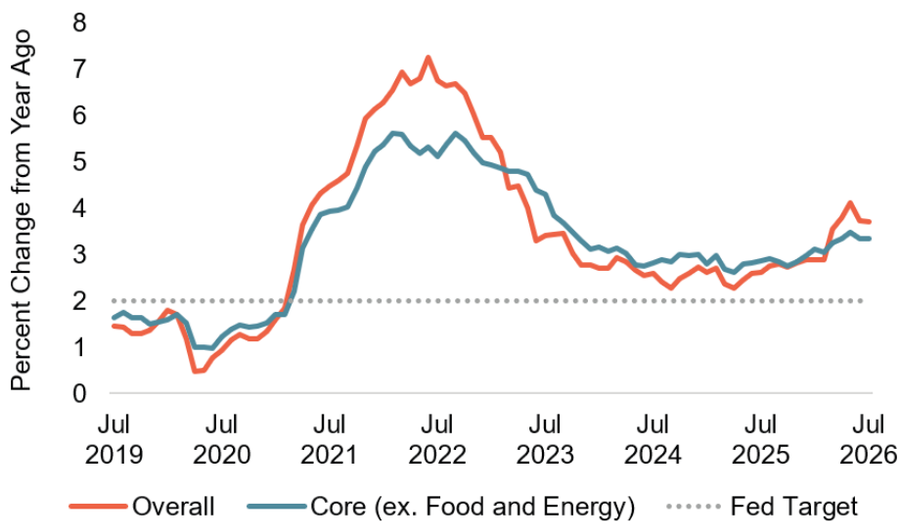
Tariffs have been a factor in the failure of the inflation rate to continue to decline back to pre-pandemic levels and the Fed's 2% target. The Supreme Court struck down the administration's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose a wide array of tariffs on imports from many countries. The administration then used Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 to impose across the board 10% tariffs, but that provision includes a time limit. With those tariffs expiring, another broad set of tariffs under Section 301 of the same law has come into place, after the completion of a required investigation by the US Trade Representative, covering 60 major US trading partners. The resulting justification for the tariffs is that US commerce is adversely affected by the failure of our trading partners to adequately enforce prohibitions on trade in goods made with forced labor. This application of Section 301 has come under legal question, including in a multi-state lawsuit joined by Colorado's Attorney General. Other tariffs are in place under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, based on claims that certain imports – including of kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities – threaten US national security. The administration has also invoked a clause from the Tariff Act of 1930 – the infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff law – to impose tariffs on imports from Canada.

Economists generally believe that tariffs result in reduced efficiency by distorting prices and shifting the allocation of resources away from their best uses. The results of the shift in trade policy have been uncertainty and higher costs for businesses, which get passed on to consumers. Research generally finds that the costs of US tariffs are borne by US business and consumers. While still much smaller than income or payroll taxes, tariffs have become a more significant contributor to federal government revenue.

Inflation is typically mainly driven by services prices, but tariffs have led to more significant contributions from goods prices, such as a 3.9% year-on-year increase in apparel prices reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in July 2026.

Conflict in the Persian Gulf with blockages of the Strait of Hormuz provided a new source of price pressure in 2026.

Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index



Data: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Macroeconomic Outlook

TARIFFS, GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT AND INFLATION (cont'd.)

Consumers felt this directly in gasoline prices – although the US is a net petroleum exporter, markets are integrated enough that US retail gasoline process track global oil price benchmarks. Limitations on exports from the Persian Gulf region will have broader impact, including by impacting industry, shipping and farm costs through higher diesel prices and also raising the cost of fertilizer and petrochemicals.

FEDERAL BORROWING AND INTEREST RATES

The outbreak of hostilities in the Persian Gulf led market interest rates to rise. This was in anticipation of higher short-term rates from the Federal Reserve in response to the expected inflationary pressure. Expectations of future short-term rates are one major influence on longer-term rates. Federal budget deficits are another factor – when the US government borrows, it taps into the same pool of global saving that finances private investment, driving up borrowing costs across market segments. Concerns about the fiscal trajectory appeared to contribute to an increase in US Treasury bond yields, with the 30-year yield reaching its highest level since 2007. H.R.1, the so-called "big beautiful bill" fiscal package, was estimated by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget to add over $5 trillion to federal borrowing over a decade, after accounting for the likely extensions of temporary tax provisions.

Tariff revenue is not expected to be nearly sufficient to offset the additional borrowing, and costs associated with the conflict in the Persian Gulf will also add to deficits.

Large planned private-sector borrowing to finance the A.I. data center buildout is another factor putting upward pressure on long-term rates. The threat to the political independence of the Federal Reserve is a risk factor for even higher rates. Although the administration's firing of a member of the Federal Reserve Board was disallowed by the Supreme Court, it is continuing its efforts to pressure the Fed. If markets were to lose confidence in the Fed's insulation from political interference, they would demand higher compensation to hold US dollar assets.

Data: Federal Reserve Board

ECONOMIC FORECASTS

The US economy has so far been robust to the negative impacts of tariffs, war-driven increases in gasoline prices and airfares, and higher interest rates. Although consumers report negative views of the economy, and workers are seeing slower wage growth, spending has generally continued to grow at a solid pace. One concern is that consumers appear to be increasingly relying on gains in wealth, particularly from the stock market, rather than income to support their spending. That would make demand vulnerable to any significant decline in equity prices.

Cuts to Medicaid from H.R.1 are another potential negative factor in 2027. Provisions taking effect on January 1 are expected to cause many beneficiaries to lose coverage. This will lead to more uncompensated care from providers, with some of the additional costs passed on to paying customers, resulting in higher insurance costs.

Professional forecasters surveyed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia are expecting GDP growth to continue at a similar pace and unemployment to remain low. They anticipate inflation will ease next year. We shall see.

Forecasts for the US Economy

	Real GDP Growth	Unemployment Rate	Inflation (CPI)
2026	2.1%	4.3%	3.6%
2027	2.2%	4.3%	2.3%
2028	2.1%	4.2%	2.3%

Data: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, August 14, 2026. Real GDP and the unemployment rate are on an annual average basis, inflation is a Q4-Q4 annual average.

Notes

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