

# SNAPSHOT OF RURAL HEALTH IN COLORADO

2024

 **COLORADO  
RURAL HEALTH  
CENTER**

*The State Office of Rural Health*



# COLORADO RURAL HEALTH CENTER

*The State Office of Rural Health*

The Snapshot of Rural Health is prepared as a resource to highlight and advance interest in the health of rural Colorado.

The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health with the mission of assisting rural communities in addressing healthcare issues; and as the State Rural Health Association, advocating for policy change on behalf of its members and all rural healthcare providers.

Our mission is to enhance healthcare services in the state by providing information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues. Our vision is to improve healthcare services available in rural communities to ensure that all rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable, high quality healthcare.

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COLORADO RURAL HEALTH CENTER | *The State Office of Rural Health*

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## **CRHC'S ORGANIZATIONAL EQUITY STATEMENT**

The Colorado Rural Health Center recognizes that many factors impact the health of individuals and communities, including geography, income, and race. We recognize the existence and power of historical and ongoing systematic structures that have excluded individuals from leading their most healthy lives.

We are committed to repairing injustices by championing policies that recognize these inequalities and foster community-led solutions. We are actively working to include diverse opinions and perspectives in our decision making processes and advocacy work and recognize that we all live better lives when everyone has a seat at the table.



# Table of Contents

## DEMOGRAPHICS

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| People              | 6  |
| Race and Origin     | 7  |
| Veterans            | 11 |
| Education           | 13 |
| Income and Poverty  | 16 |
| Healthcare Coverage | 18 |

## RURAL HEALTH

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Technology & Internet Access       | 20 |
| Health Information Technology      | 21 |
| Women's and Maternal Health        | 22 |
| Older Adults Health                | 25 |
| Oral Health                        | 26 |
| Substance Use & Prescription Drugs | 28 |
| Drug Use Disorder                  | 30 |
| Substance Use Treatment            | 32 |
| Mental Health                      | 33 |
| Gun Violence                       | 34 |
| Climate Change                     | 35 |
| Chronic Disease                    | 37 |
| Vaccines                           | 40 |

## RURAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| Childcare                  | 42 |
| Industries                 | 44 |
| Oil & Gas                  | 47 |
| Healthcare                 | 48 |
| Transportation             | 51 |
| Cost to Patient Case Study | 54 |

## APPENDIX

|      |    |
|------|----|
| Maps | 56 |
|------|----|







# Demographics of Colorado



**64** TOTAL COUNTIES



**17** urban



**24** rural



**23** frontier



**59%**

of the counties experienced natural population decrease due to aging, COVID and fewer births in 2021



**20** counties

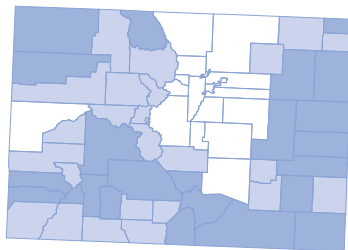
reported population net out-migration overall in 2021, which was the lowest since the tech bust of 2003-05



**RURAL:** A non-metropolitan county containing no municipalities over 50,000 residents.

**FRONTIER:** A county with a population density of 6 or fewer residents per square mile.

# Colorado is a Rural State



**77%**

of Colorado's landmass is considered rural or frontier



**719,343 people**

are the estimated rural population in 2023 (12.2% of the total population)

## OUR STATE IS GROWING



**73%**

of the population growth was along the Front Range from 2020-21



Since 2018, housing growth is increasing by **40,000+ housing units per year**



Colorado's population is forecast to **increase by 630,000**, slower than the previous decade

## BIRTH AND DEATH RATES



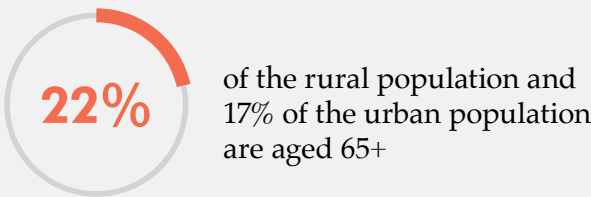
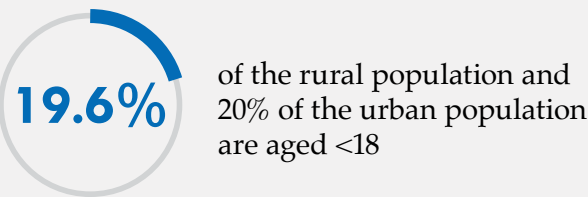
**Annual births were at their lowest levels** since 1999, yet there are more women of childbearing age



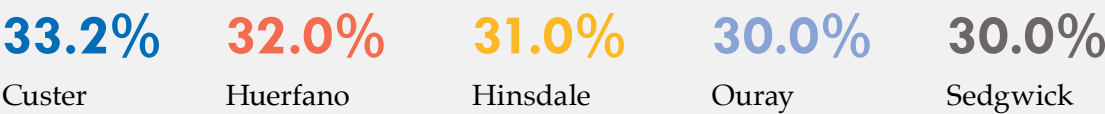
**Annual deaths were at their highest levels** on record due to COVID-19 and aging, most were rural counties



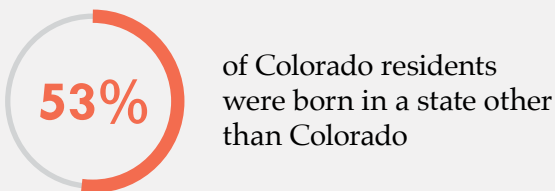
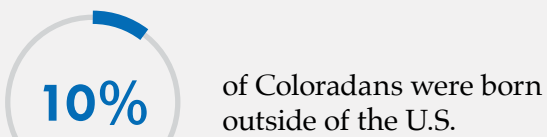
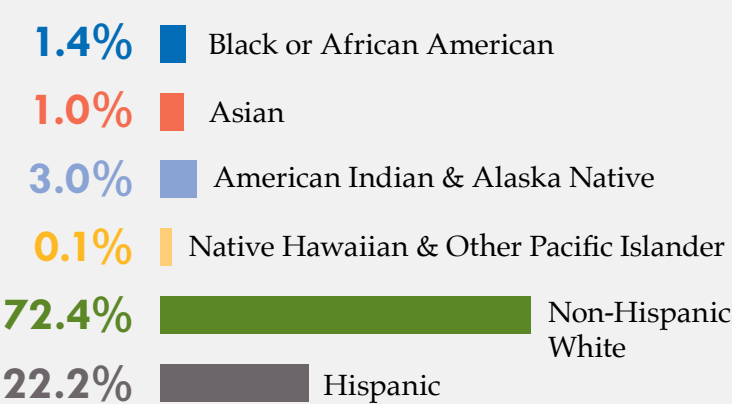
# Age, Race, & Ethnicity



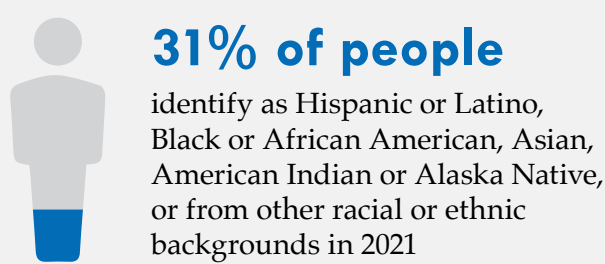
## TOP 5 RURAL COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENT OF 65+ RESIDENTS



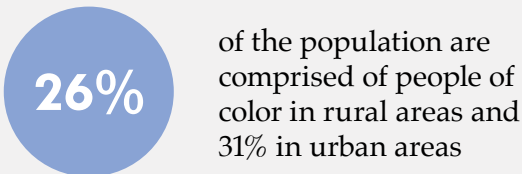
## RACE AND ETHNICITY OF RURAL COLORADO



## COLORADO IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY MULTIRACIAL STATE



It is estimated that by 2040, this will increase to 45% of the population





# American Indians & Alaska Natives

In Colorado, the two federally recognized tribes are the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. These tribes have reservations in southwestern Colorado. The Ute Nation is historically and culturally important in the region, and their presence in Colorado predates European settlement.



**74,129 people**

who identify as American Indians and Alaska Natives alone live in Colorado

About 1% of the population

**Vast majority live in the urban areas – Denver metro and Colorado Springs**

DESCENDANTS OF:

- Cheyenne
- Lakota
- Kiowa
- Navajo
- 200+ tribal nations

**Southern Ute Reservation tribe is the largest employer in La Plata County with revenue from:**



Oil and gas production

Real estate development

Housing construction

## AI-AN HEALTH & HEALTHCARE



The Indian Health Service (IHS) **provides comprehensive health services for about 2.56 million** of the nation's American Indians & Alaska Natives



**2 locations for The Indian Health Service in Colorado:**

- Ute Mountain Health Center
- White Mesa Health Station

Both locations are in rural Towaoc, CO



**The life expectancy today is 5.5 years below average**

**73 years**

American Indians and Alaska Natives

VS

**78.5 years**

U.S. population of all races



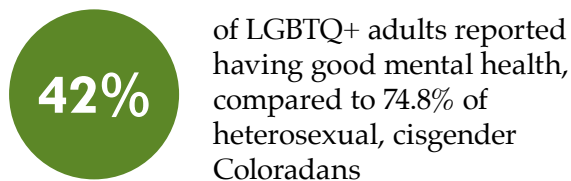
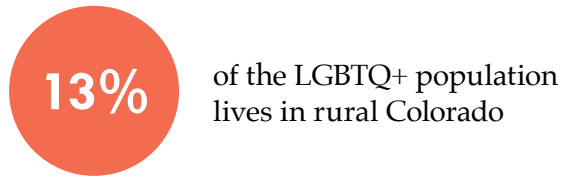
American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to experience **higher rates of deaths**

heart disease  
cancer  
diabetes

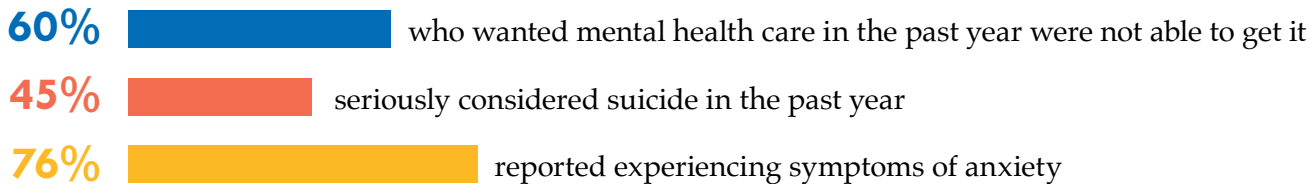
stroke  
liver disease  
suicide

Alzheimer's  
influenza  
pneumonia

# LGBTQ+ People in Colorado



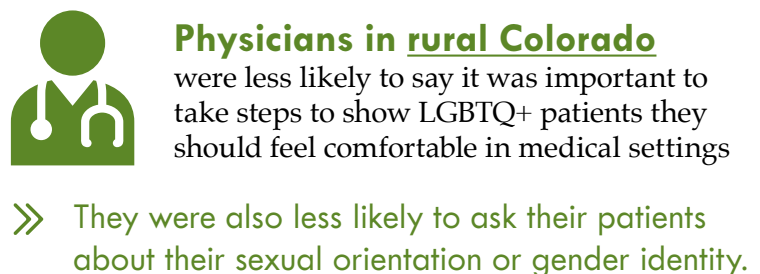
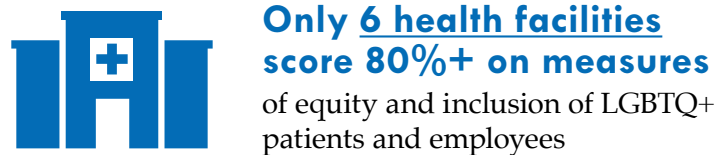
## MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH IN COLORADO



## WHAT MAKES A SPACE AFFIRMING FOR LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE?

- ✓ A supportive environment of people
- ✓ Asking about pronouns in an open way
- ✓ Other LGBTQ+ people
- ✓ How people talk about and treat LGBTQ+ people
- ✓ Having openly LGBTQ+ staff and in positions of authority

## LGBTQ+ HEALTHCARE IN COLORADO





# Healthcare for Transgender & Nonbinary Coloradans

Starting in 2023, Colorado will be the first state in the country to explicitly include gender-affirming care services in its benchmark health insurance plan for essential health benefits (EHBs). These will be comprehensive services that insurance companies must cover for individual plans (those not from an employer) and small group plans (for small employers with 2–100 employees).



**Transgender and non-binary people in rural areas are over three times more likely than cisgender LGBTQ+ people to:**



See a particular healthcare provider because **the provider was known to see other LGBTQ+ patients**

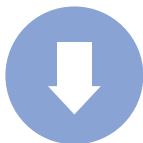


**Travel 25 to 49 miles for routine care**, suggesting that transcompetent care may be even more difficult to find in rural areas than LGB-competent care

## PEOPLE WHO HAVE A TRANS-INCLUSIVE PROVIDER



**More likely**  
to receive wellness exams



**Less likely**  
to delay care due to discrimination



**Less likely**  
to attempt suicide

## MANY TRANS PEOPLE IN RURAL COLORADO STRUGGLE TO FIND PROPER CARE



**Transgender populations experience the most difficulty finding providers**  
largely because there are treatments needed, such as hormone therapy, that often aren't standard with traditional care



of responding medical schools reported that they spent zero hours on LGBTQ+ health-related content during clinical training

# Veterans of Colorado



**69,118 veterans**  
live in rural colorado (2021)

**8.3%**  
of the urban population

**8.2%**  
of the rural population

## TOP 3 RURAL COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATE OF VETERANS

**16.1%** Jackson  
**13.5%** Ouray  
**13.2%** Custer



of the veteran population is **65 to 74 years of age** in the rural areas of the state

## WHERE DID CO VETERANS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS SERVE?



**1.8%** World War II  
**38.0%** Gulf War  
**39.7%** Vietnam  
**18.6%** Between conflicts  
**6.3%** Korea

## EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS



Where are Colorado rural veterans working?

**38.5%** Management, business, science, and arts occupations  
**16.5%** Service occupations  
**19.5%** Sales occupations  
**12.2%** Construction and extraction  
**11.9%** Transportation



**6.1% of veterans** live in poverty



**\$81,568** is the median household income of veterans



**738 veterans** experienced homelessness in 2022

## AMONG RURAL VETERANS

**26%** reported there was inadequate housing available

**26%** reported mortgage costs of 30% or more of income

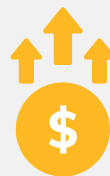
**34%** reported rental costs of 35% or more of income



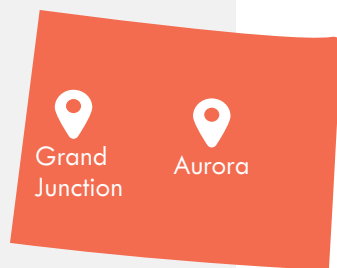
# Health of Veterans



**42 locations**  
in Colorado that accept  
VA Healthcare



Compared to the general civilian population, **those who serve experience higher rates of access to health care**



**2 veteran administration medical centers,**  
both of which are in urban areas

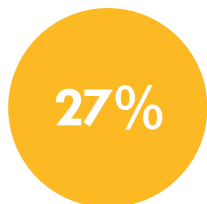
## VETERANS IN RURAL COLORADO

**21%** have a service-connected disability

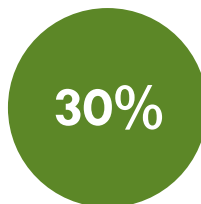
**32%** have a disability

## MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Compared to the general civilian population, those who have served experience almost twice the rates of increase in mental health challenges, including depression, frequent mental distress, mental illness, and suicidal thoughts than civilians.



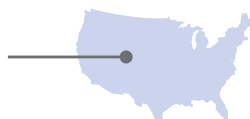
of veterans with high levels of combat exposure are much more likely to **engage in heavy drinking** compared to others (17%)



of veteran suicides were preceded by **alcohol or drug abuse**

**The rate of veteran suicides in Colorado is significantly higher than the national average**

**43.1 per**  
100,000 veterans



**31.6 per**  
100,000 people



representing nearly **1 in 7 suicide deaths in the state in 2019**

## AVERAGE WAIT TIMES FOR PATIENTS SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS



For new patients

**6 days**

at Golden  
VA clinic

to

**32 days**

at La Junta  
VA clinic

For returning patients

**1 day**

at Alamosa  
VA Clinic

to

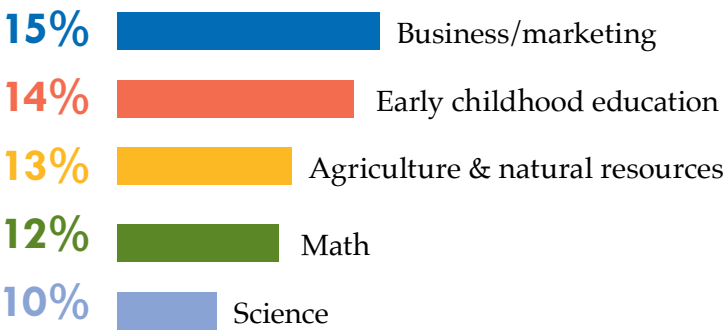
**10 days**

at PFC Floyd K.  
Lindstrom VA Clinic

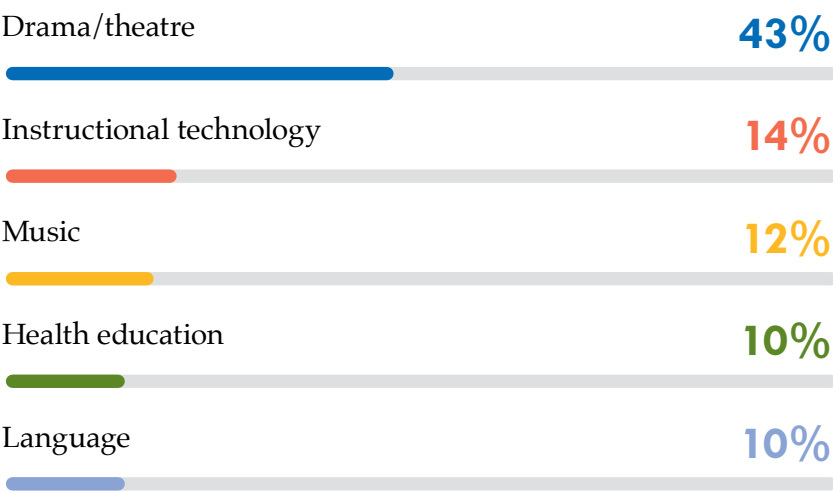
# Education in Colorado

In the 2021–2022 Educator Shortage Survey, the greatest percentage of unfilled positions were in small rural and rural districts.

## GREATEST SHORTAGE AREAS FOR RURAL ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL



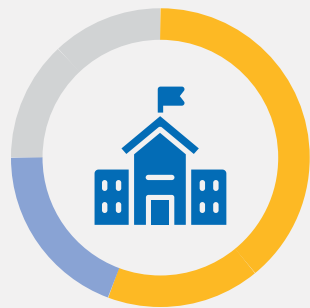
## GREATEST SHORTAGE AREAS FOR K-12



## RURAL AREA SALARIES IN 2022-23



**178** SCHOOL DISTRICTS



**37 districts** are defined as “rural” (22%)

**110 districts** are defined as “small rural” (60%)

These 147 rural districts (82% of total districts) **comprise only 11% of the total student population**



**SMALL RURAL:** K–12, <1000 enrolled students

**RURAL:** K–12, 1,001–6,500 enrolled students

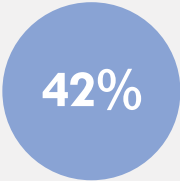


# Education Enrollment, Health & Funding



**10.7% (94,827)**

of total (883,264) enrollment in Colorado is from rural and small rural districts



of Colorado schools had **comprehensive health education** required for all



of rural or small rural districts **do NOT have a licensed psychologist**



of rural or small rural districts **do NOT have a licensed registered nurse**

## PEOPLE OF COLOR ENROLLMENT IN 2022–23



**42%**

of students attending rural schools (K-12)

**30%**

of students attending small rural schools (PK–12)

## AVERAGE FUNDING PER STUDENT



Colorado receives the second-lowest amount per pupil in federal funding (**\$4,188 per student**)

**\$11,070 per pupil**

Colorado average

**\$12,422 per pupil**

rural average



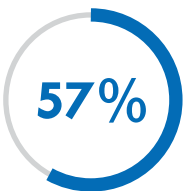
Delta County has one of **the lowest at \$9,941 per student**



Pitkin has the **highest at \$20,199 per student**

Cheyenne, Ouray, San Miguel, and Saguache were also among the highest spending at \$17,000+ per student

# Graduation & Higher Education



of Bent County students graduate, the lowest rate in Colorado



of those over age 25 in rural areas have completed high school

## TOP 5 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES ARE ALL IN RURAL COUNTIES

97.5%

Pitkin

93.2%

Routt

93.2%

Prowers

92.5%

Lake

93.5%

Gunnison



High school graduation racial disparity in Colorado is among the worst in the nation, **ranked 42 out of 50**

High school graduation racial disparity

**21%** Colorado's state value

**15%** U.S. value

## HIGHER EDUCATION ATTENDANCE IS LOWER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE



College-going rates for Colorado 2020 graduates **dropped 10% in small rural areas**



**of rural Coloradans** attend some kind of postsecondary education, compared to 74% of urban Coloradans

### College enrollment rate for 2020 high school graduates

**50.5%** State average

**46.3%** Rural districts

**43.2%** Small rural districts

» The pandemic had the most profound impact on small rural districts



**of rural postsecondary institutions** nationally are public community and technical colleges



of undergraduate students in rural areas **attend public community and technical colleges**



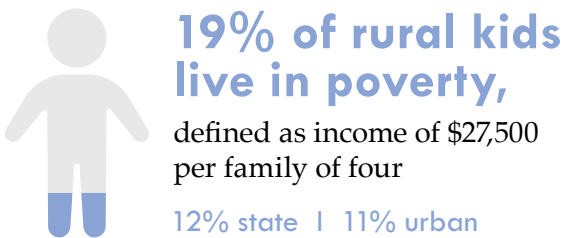
# Food Insecurity

The County Health Rankings measure of the food environment accounts for both proximity to healthy foods and income. This measure includes access to healthy foods by considering the distance an individual lives from a grocery store or supermarket, locations for health food purchases in most communities, and the inability to access healthy food because of cost barriers.

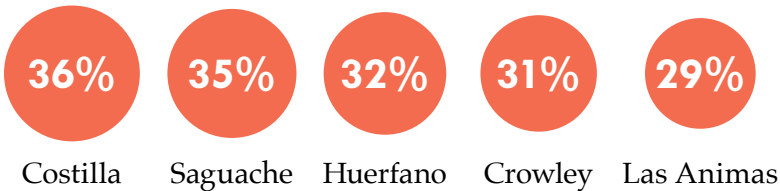
## COLORADO'S FOOD ENVIRONMENT INDEX



## CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS



### Highest rates of children living in poverty by county



### Highest rates of food insecurity by county



### Children eligible for free or reduced price lunch enrolled in public schools

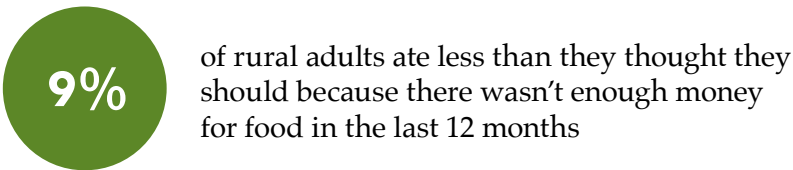
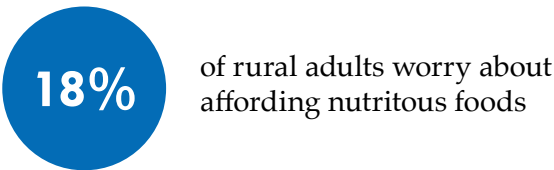
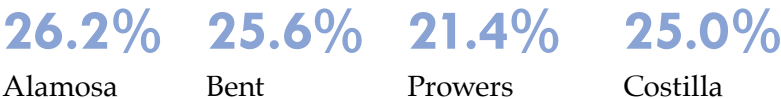


## ADULTS & FAMILIES IN RURAL AREAS

### Percent of households on SNAP

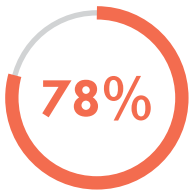


### Highest rates of households on SNAP by county



# Colorado's Housing Crisis

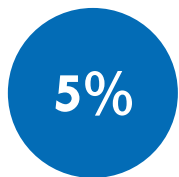
Colorado's deepening housing crisis is marked by a shortage of affordable homes, rising rents, homeowners struggling with unaffordable mortgages, and first-time buyers unable to secure affordable or available options. Data reveals that those with the lowest incomes bear the greatest housing burden, forcing sacrifices when deciding on essentials like food and healthcare. The housing crisis is particularly acute in rural ski towns where housing costs have more than doubled in the past decade. The need to address and expand affordable housing has never been more urgent.



of extremely low income renters are severely cost burdened



**22% of renter** households are considered extremely low income



of rural adults report worrying they would not have stable housing in the next two months



**42% of renters** are spending 35% or more of their income on rent



**Colorado is experiencing a housing shortage equal to over \$130k in affordable rental homes for low income renters**

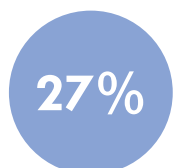
## INCOME



**Working wage of \$12.56/hr each week, you would have to work 75 hours to afford** a modest 1 bedroom rental home at fair market rent in Colorado



**\$60,186 is the annual household** income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home in Colorado



of senior households are extremely low income renters

## Average living wages



**\$43.97/hr** Colorado  
**\$35.80/hr** National

**\$33.60/hr**  
in Costilla County

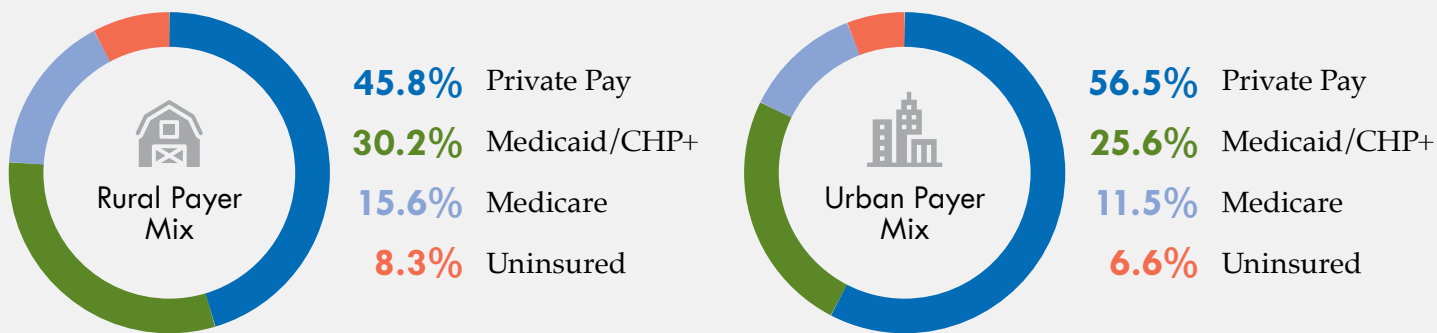
**\$49.31/hr**  
in Eagle County



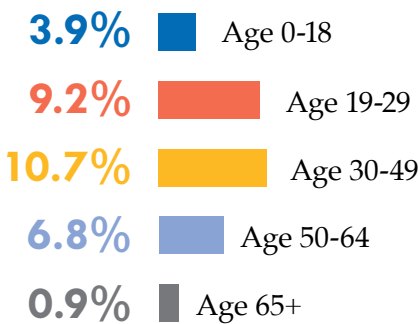
of disabled households are extremely low income renters

# Healthcare Coverage

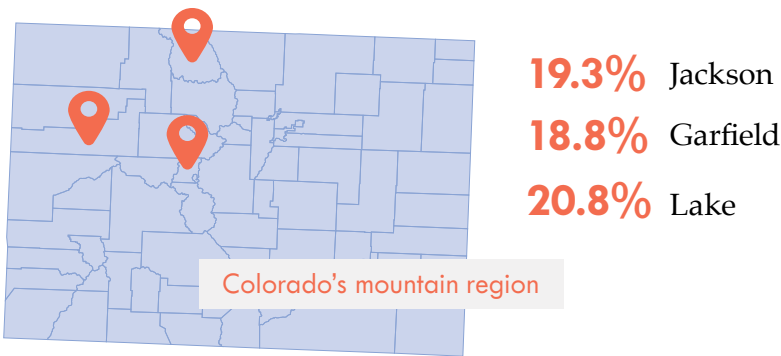
In rural Colorado, more people rely on public insurance like Medicaid and Medicare than do those living in urban areas. This is mainly due to limited availability and high costs of private insurance. These coverage demographics emphasize the importance of government programs in ensuring healthcare coverage for a significant part of the rural population.



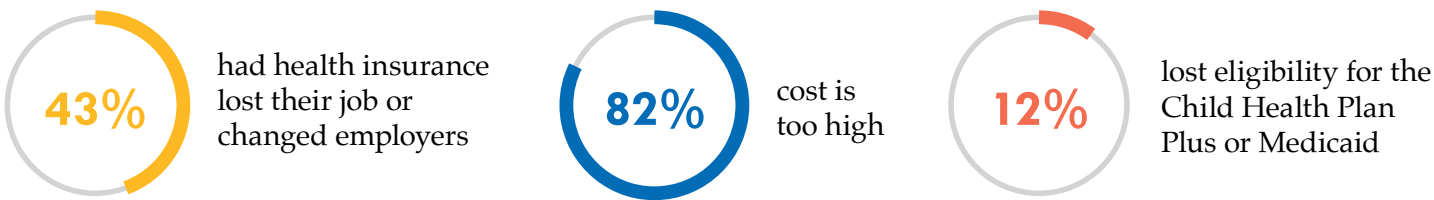
## UNINSURED COLORADANS BY AGE



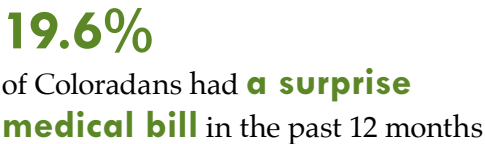
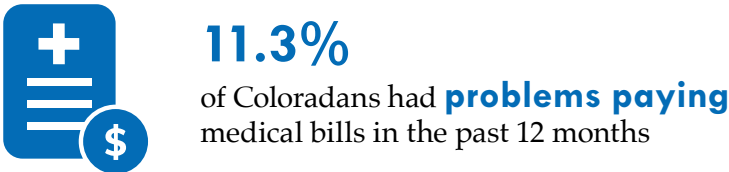
## HIGHEST UNINSURED RATES BY COUNTY



## WHAT PREVENTS UNINSURED COLORADANS FROM HAVING COVERAGE?



## MEDICAL BILLS







# Rural Health in Colorado



## RURAL HEALTH FACILITY TYPES



**32**

Critical Access Hospitals (CAH)



**56**

Federally Certified Rural Health Clinics (RHC)



**11**

Rural Prospective payment system (PPS) Hospitals



**92**

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)



**21**

Community Health Centers

## Technology & Internet Access

In 2023, President Biden and Vice President Harris allocated Colorado \$826,522,650 from the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) funds as part of the Biden administration's "Internet for All" program. This program's purpose is to bridge the rural-urban divide and help connect America's rural, underserved population with high-speed broadband.



**1 in 23**

people lack internet service in Colorado

Only **27%** of rural districts

have high levels of connectivity, and many have very low levels

**Southeast Colorado has the poorest access to 100/20 Mbps broadband**



Cheyenne



Crowley



Dolores



Custer



Hinsdale

### TELEHEALTH VISITS

**30%**

of rural facilities complete visits

33% telehealth users

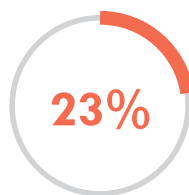


**55%**

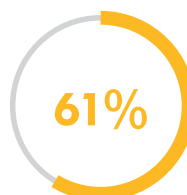
of urban facilities complete visits

39% telehealth users

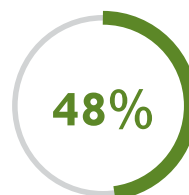
### AMONG ALL PAYERS USING TELEHEALTH



were for patients 0-17 years of age



were for females



were among non-Hispanic white patients

# Health Information Technology

The Rural Connectivity Program is a program funded by the Office of eHealth Innovation, Department of Health Care Policy and Financing and in partnership with the Colorado Community Managed Care Network (CCMCN). The goals are to establish a sustainable model for rural connectivity, including connecting providers to Colorado's Health Information Exchanges (HIE), supporting rural providers to adopt health information, data sharing and analytics/tools to support care coordination and quality measurement.



## 100% OF RURAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM ARE CONNECTED WITH HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGES



**84 eligible**

rural facilities

**31**

were already connected to the Health Information Exchange

**65**

were connected to CRHC's Data Vault



**170,602 lives**

attributed to rural providers



There are 2 main types of electronic medical record (EMR) Pricing Models:

## Perpetual License or Subscription License

### COSTS FOR ONE RURAL HEALTHCARE FACILITY



**\$1,200-\$500,000+**

Perpetual License: one time license fee with additional and hidden costs

VS

**\$200-\$35,000**

Subscription License: monthly license fee with hidden costs

### TOP TELEHEALTH SERVICES FOR RURAL COLORADO IN 2022

**41%**

Behavioral Health and Substance use Disorders

**24%**

Primary care

**53%**

Mental health conditions



**790 telehealth**

services were provided per 1,000 people in rural areas

# Women's and Maternal Health

From 2015 to 2019, there were at least 89 obstetric unit closures in rural hospitals across the country. By 2020, about half of rural community hospitals did not provide obstetrics care.



**25 counties in Colorado are considered "Maternal Care Deserts,"** or areas where there are no OB providers, hospitals, or birthing centers offering OB care



**27,372 women** live in a county without a single obstetric provider

Huerfano County has 6,920 people and is a maternal healthcare desert

**29.8%**

of live births receive inadequate care

**8.1%**

of births are premature

**6.49 out of 1,000**

births results in the death of the child

VS



San Miguel County has 8,074 people and has full access to maternal care

**15.3%**

of pregnancies receive inadequate care

**6.4%**

of births are premature

**4.15 out of 1,000**

births results in the death of the child

**56%**

of counties do **not have a hospital or birth center** offering maternity care in Colorado



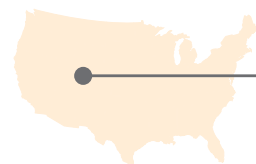
**36% of rural women**

had their first prenatal care visit at 3 months in 2022

Fewer than half of women in rural areas can find perinatal care within 30 miles

**ABORTION IS PROTECTED UNDER COLORADO LAW**

**22 states now prohibit abortion or restrict it earlier in pregnancy**



**30% of abortions** in Colorado in 2022 were for patients who crossed state lines

It is estimated that a national ban on abortions would lead to a **20% increase in maternal mortality**

# Childbirth and Infant Health

The number of births in rural areas have decreased overtime

Declining from 8,000 to 6,596 births annually

2000

2022



Colorado rural counties have **higher rates of preterm births** than urban counties



## Rural hospitals report

higher rates of hemorrhage and blood transfusions as compared to urban hospitals

### IN AN AVERAGE WEEK IN COLORADO



**1,182**

babies are born



**117**

babies are born preterm



**1,114**

babies are born low birth weight



**836**

women receive adequate prenatal care

### OF RURAL BIRTHS

**25%**

listed the maternal marital status as "not married"

**40%**

had a maternal educational attainment of a high school diploma or less (compared to 13% in urban areas)

**17%**

had a maternal annual income of less than \$15,000

**25%**

of rural deliveries were performed by midwives



higher risk for childbirth complications



**3.8%**  
**of babies**

covered by Health First Colorado were **substance-exposed newborns and/or diagnosed with neonatal abstinence syndrome**



## MATERNAL MORTALITY

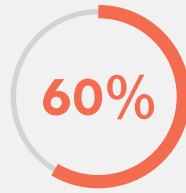
### Top causes of maternal deaths in Colorado



- ✓ Suicide
- ✓ Unintentional drug overdose
- ✓ Injuries, including motor vehicle accidents
- ✓ Homicide, over 50% of which were committed by an intimate partner
- ✓ Cardiac conditions

**1,205 people died of maternal causes in the U.S. in 2021** — a 40% increase from the previous year

## WOMEN'S AND MATERNAL HEALTH INSURANCE



of counties have a higher percent of women **without health insurance** than the Colorado average



**1/4 of Colorado pregnant women on Medicaid insurance** do not go to a doctor's appointment during the first trimester

## GYNECOLOGICAL CARE



**75% of Colorado females**

aged 21-65 reported having a pap within the past 3 years in 2020

65.6% of rural women are up to date with mammogram screenings



**Less than 10% of obstetric providers** practice in rural areas



**52.3% of Prenatal Women,**

were enrolled in Women Infant and Children (WIC) in 2022

## PRENATAL CARE RATES IN THE FIRST TRIMESTER

**76.0%** Most birthing parents

**57.7%** Native Hawaiian Other Pacific Islander

**70.2%** Black/African American

**70.6%** American Indian Alaska Native



**40% higher teen pregnancy rate**

in rural Colorado than urban parts of the state



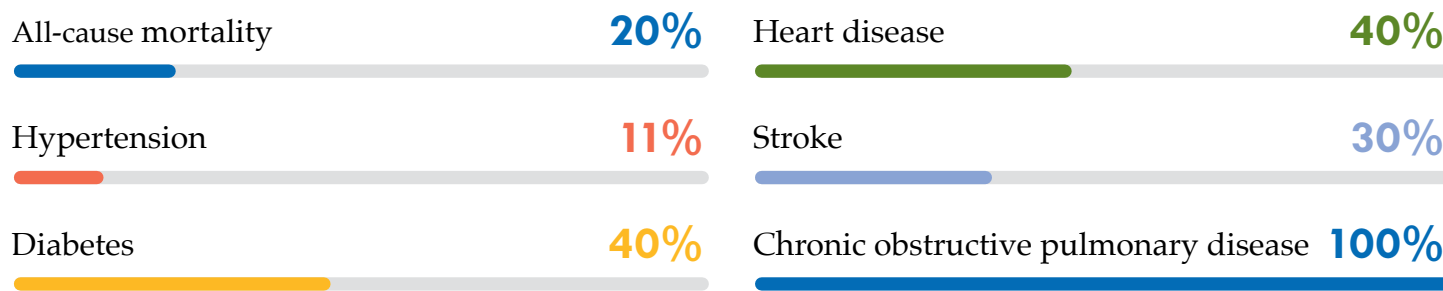
**Counties with low access to telehealth**

were 30% more likely to be maternity care deserts

# Health of Older Adults

Rural aging comes with a host of challenges such as the lack of medical services; infrastructure needs regarding transportation and internet connectivity; affordable, safe and manageable housing; and an increased risk of social isolation.

## RURAL OLDER ADULTS EXPERIENCE HIGHER RATES OF MEDICAL CONDITIONS



**Life expectancy is 3+ years lower**  
for rural adults



**43% of the 28,000 providers**  
who refuse Medicare reimbursement work in  
behavioral health disciplines

## MENTAL HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS

**In 2022, deaths by suicide among 65+ adults in Colorado were:**

**31.62 per 100,000**

older adults in rural areas



**21.8 per 100,000**

older adults in urban areas

**Depression rates in the U.S. has increased in adults ages 65+**

13.0%

2011

14.2%

2020



**Drug overdoses among those 65+**  
in rural Colorado have remained flat since 2018 at **9.62 per 100,000 people**

## 2022 SENIOR HEALTH RANKINGS FOR COLORADO

### Strengths for older adults

- Low prevalence of multiple chronic conditions
- High volunteerism
- Low prevalence of physical inactivity

### Challenges for older adults

- High suicide rate
- High prevalence of falls
- High percentage of low-care nursing home residents

# Oral Health

Physical, oral, and mental health are all interconnected. People who reported better health also indicated that their mental and oral health were good. Coloradans experiencing poor oral health were more likely to experience fair or poor overall health.

Coloradans ages 65+ who have lost all of their natural teeth

**11%** in rural areas    **9%** in urban areas



Coloradans who have lost 6 or more, but not all, teeth due to decay or periodontal disease

**9%** in rural areas    **6%** in urban areas

## COLORADO ADULTS REPORTED

Poor oral health

**20.2%** in rural areas    **16.6%** in urban areas



Dental pain limiting activities like work or school in the past twelve months

**6.5%** in rural areas    **7.3%** in urban areas



Children aged 5-19 living in low-income families are **2x as likely to have cavities**, compared with higher-income kids



**Oral health services in schools protect from the harmful effects of tooth decay** by decreasing the barriers to accessing dental care, preventing missed school hours, and improving school readiness



**Access to oral health providers is limited in rural regions**, because of geographic isolation and workforce shortages



**Tobacco use**, such as cigarettes or smokeless chew tobacco, is known to **cause oral health problems**

**26.9%** of adults use in rural areas    |    **19.3%** of adults use in urban areas

# Dental Care Access

People in rural and frontier areas of the state face provider shortages, which can make it difficult to receive dental care. The majority of dental offices who accept Medicaid are located along the Front Range. In many parts of the state, there is no dentist within a 15-minute drive.



Coloradans who saw a dental professional in the past year

**67%** in rural areas    **75%** in urban areas



**11 rural counties do NOT have an active** licensed dentist, which contributes to a disparity in access

Coloradans who reported not getting dental care in the last year because it was challenging to find a dentist or hygienist they could relate to

**7.4%** in rural areas

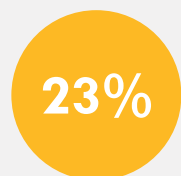


**6.2%** in urban areas



**19 of 47 rural counties (40%)**

have at least one low fee dental clinic that offers dental care on a sliding fee scale to individuals who are unable to afford treatment



23% of Coloradans cited fears about contracting COVID-19 for not receiving dental care



## Cost of dental healthcare

is a larger barrier in rural areas

Black and hispanic/latinx are less likely to get dental care

## DENTAL INSURANCE

Coloradans without insurance consistently report worse oral health status than individuals insured by Medicaid, Medicare, or private insurance.

**The rate of dental insurance coverage has increased in rural Colorado**

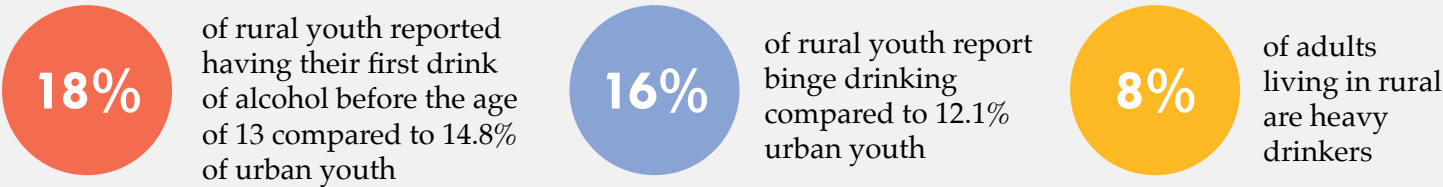


**19 of 47** rural counties have a dental clinic who takes Medicaid

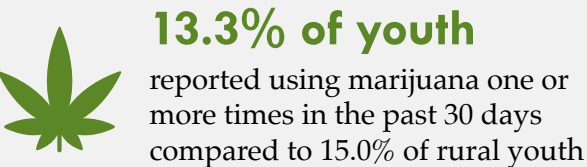


# Substance Use & Prescription Drugs

## ALCOHOL COMSUMPTION IS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER IN RURAL AREAS OF COLORADO



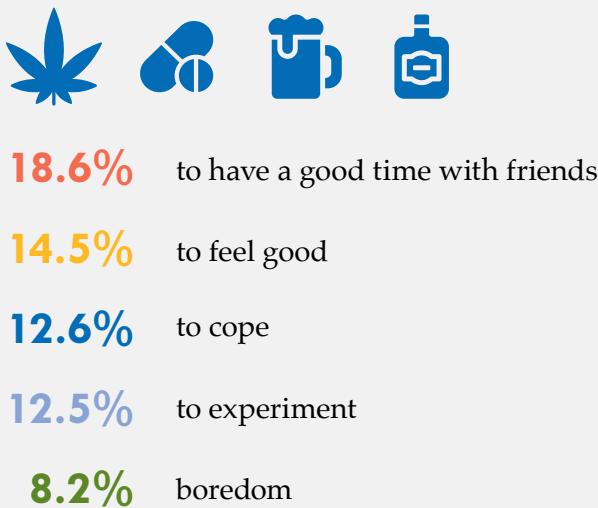
### MARIJUANA USE AMONG COLORADO YOUTH



The highest prevalence of marijuana use was 21.4% in these counties:

- |        |             |
|--------|-------------|
| Park   | Clear Creek |
| Teller | Gilpin      |

### RURAL ESTIMATES & TOP 5 REASONS THEY REPORT USING SUBSTANCES



### TOBACCO PRODUCTS



## OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED PER 1,000 RESIDENTS



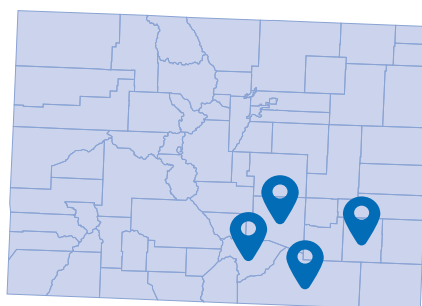
The opioid prescribing rate has **decreased since 2014** from **740 to 489**



of rural youth used pain med without a prescription compared to 14% of urban youth

### The highest opioid prescribing

rates are seen within southeast Colorado



|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| <b>790</b> | Pueblo     |
| <b>756</b> | Las Animas |
| <b>750</b> | Huerfano   |
| <b>649</b> | Bent       |

## BENZODIAZEPINE PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

### More females had a benzodiazepine

prescription filled than males



**259**  
Females

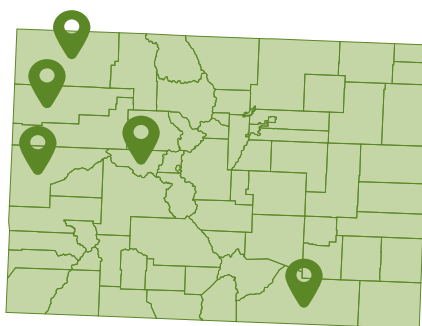


**161**  
Males



The annual age-adjusted rate of prescriptions filled has **declined since 2014** from **329 to 211**

### Top 5 rural counties benzodiazepine prescriptions dispensed



|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| <b>375</b> | Pitkin     |
| <b>325</b> | Las Animas |
| <b>314</b> | Rio Blanco |
| <b>310</b> | Moffat     |
| <b>305</b> | Mesa       |

## STIMULANT PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

### Males were more likely to have a stimulant

prescription filled than females



**180**  
Males



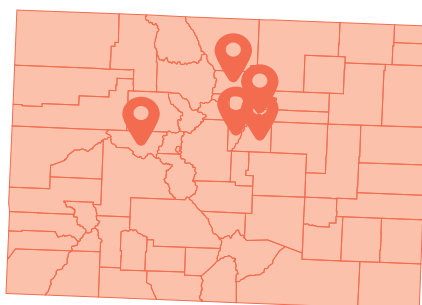
**162**  
Females



The annual age-adjusted rate of stimulant prescriptions filled has **increased since 2014** from **148 to 171**

### Top 5 rural counties for stimulants dispensed

Rates are significantly higher in urban areas



|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| <b>323</b> | Pitkin     |
| <b>259</b> | Douglas    |
| <b>233</b> | Broomfield |
| <b>199</b> | Boulder    |
| <b>198</b> | Jefferson  |

# Drug Use Disorder

While the burden of overdose deaths has remained flat from 2021-2022, the burden remains greatest in rural Colorado, with the highest rates in southern Colorado.

## OVERALL DRUG OVERDOSES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

Average annual age-adjusted rate of any drug overdose

**28.7**  
in rural areas      **30.8**  
in Colorado



The greatest burden was among the Hispanic population in rural areas

**29.6**      **28.9**      **25.5**  
Hispanic      White      American Indian

**Men in rural areas saw higher rates of drug overdoses than women**

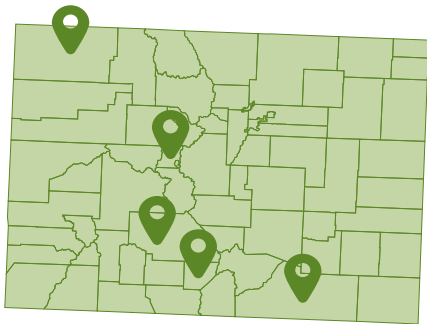
**38**      **18**  
Men      Women

Average annual age-adjusted rate of drug overdose with suicide intent

**2.4**      **2.7**  
in rural areas      in Colorado



**Top 5 rural counties with the highest rates of age-adjusted drug overdose deaths**



**84** Las Animas  
**76** Alamosa  
**63** Moffat  
**52** Lake  
**51** Saguache

## EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

From 2021-2022, the average annual age-adjusted rate of **emergency room visits for overdoses involving all drugs**

**202.2**      **209.6**  
in rural areas      in Colorado



**Females in rural Colorado** had higher rate of emergency room visits for drug use

**236**      **171**  
Females      Males

## OPIOID DRUG OVERDOSES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

Average annual age-adjusted rate of  
**any opioid overdose death**

**17.4**

in rural areas



**20.5**

in Colorado

Rates were significantly higher  
among males



**22.7**

Males



**11.1**

Females

The highest rates were among  
Hispanic people

**19.9**

Hispanic

**17.6**

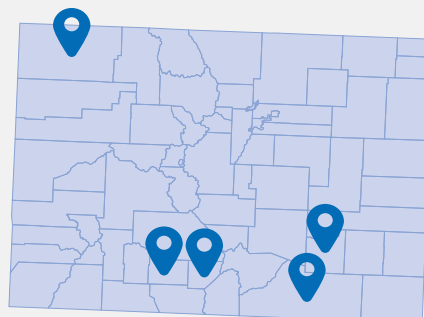
White

**14.8**

American Indian

## Top 5 counties with the highest rates

of age-adjusted any opioid overdose death



**60**

Las Animas

**51**

Moffat

**46**

Alamosa

**42**

Rio Grande

**34**

Otero



From 2021-2022, the average annual age-adjusted  
**rate of emergency room visits  
for overdose involving opioids**

**31.3**

in rural areas

**39.9**

in Colorado

There were no major  
differences by gender  
in rural areas.



US law enforcement seized more than  
**enough fentanyl to kill  
all Americans in 2022**



Emergency room visits for any opioid  
**overdose have significantly  
increased since 2016**

## METHAMPHETAMINE OVERDOSES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

The average annual age-adjusted rate of  
**meth overdose in Colorado**

**12.1**

in rural areas

**12.2**

in Colorado



## More males die

due to meth in rural Colorado



**16**

Males



**8**

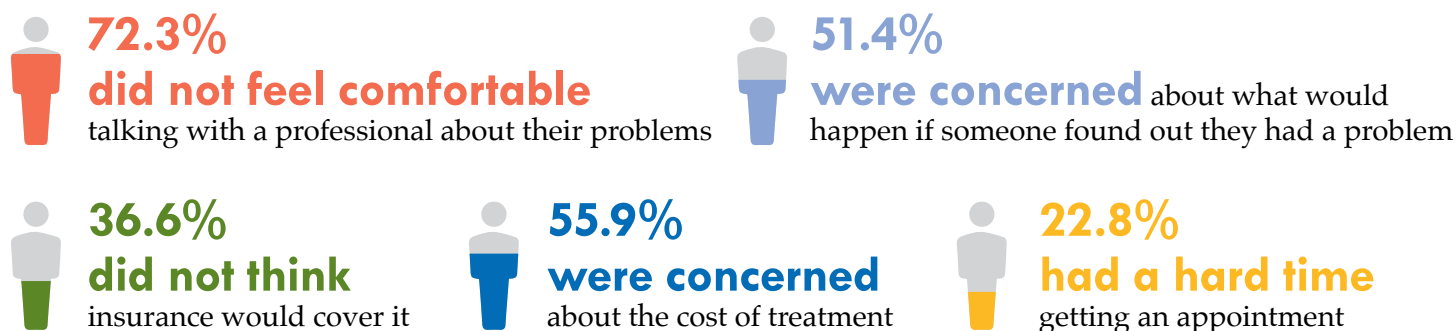
Females



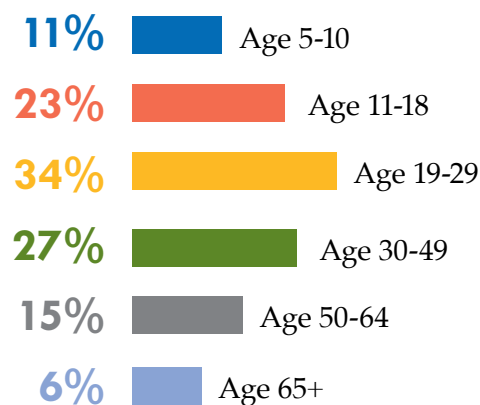
# Substance Use Treatment

In 2023, Colorado state health officials and clinic partners joined together to service smaller communities with six mobile health clinics tailored to treating addiction. The goal of these mobile clinics is to provide access to addiction assistance and treatment to rural and frontier communities. Officials say these communities tend to be disproportionately affected by substance abuse disorders. Providers say the most common substance addictions they treat are for opioids, meth, and alcohol.

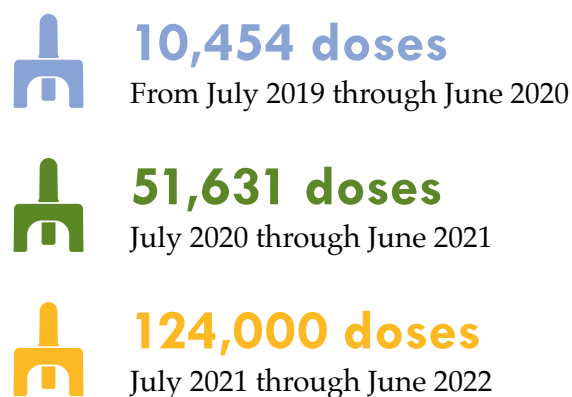
## 80,000 COLORADANS DIDN'T GET NEEDED SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT IN 2021



## YOUNGER ADULTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT NEEDING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN THE NEXT YEAR



The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment distribute Narcan to various harm reduction organizations



The eastern plains and northwest Colorado have **fewer locations to treat opioid**

use disorders than the state average



**About 1/2 of all overdose deaths are attributed to fentanyl**

# Mental Health

Students are experiencing social and emotional hurdles that interfere with their ability to learn and engage in their education. Mental health concerns are particularly acute for communities of color, communities in poverty, and rural populations.

Anxiety among children ages 3-17  
increased 23% in Colorado

**7.5%**  
in 2017-2018

**9.2%**  
in 2020-2021



Depression among children ages 3-17  
increased 27% in Colorado

**3.3%**  
in 2017-2018

**4.2%**  
in 2020-2021



Frontier and rural communities  
have the highest rates of suicide

PER 100,000 IN 2021

|      |          |      |          |
|------|----------|------|----------|
| 28.1 | Frontier | 21.7 | Urban    |
| 26.9 | Rural    | 22.6 | Colorado |



**55%**  
of youth suicides  
in rural Colorado were  
caused by a firearm



**20 lives ages 10-24**

were lost by suicide in rural Colorado  
in 2021



**1 in 13 children in Colorado** will experience  
the death of a parent or sibling by the age of 18

## Protective factors to reduce risk of suicide among youth

- ✓ Increase education about safe storage of firearms
- ✓ Access to culturally competent and evidence-based care
- ✓ Affirming school environments for LGBTQ+ youth

## MENTAL HEALTH AMONG ADULTS IS WORSE IN RURAL AREAS



**Only 1 mental  
health provider**  
for every 1,282 residents  
in rural Colorado

versus 1 mental health provider for  
every 755 residents in urban areas



**Suicides have  
significantly**  
increased in rural areas

**134**  
people in 2010

**202**  
people in 2021

**1/5**  
of adults  
in rural areas  
reported being  
depressed

# Gun Violence

37%

of adult Coloradans indicate they currently have **firearms in their home**

29%

of those with firearms in their homes **stored their firearms while loaded**

57%

of those who kept loaded firearms in their home reported that those **firearms were stored unlocked**



This means that ~6% of adult Coloradans have **a loaded gun stored unlocked in their home**

## SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER RATES OF GUN ACCESS ARE IN RURAL AREAS

**~40% of students**

report having access to firearms

**~17% of students**

report having access in under 10 minutes



**70% of parents**

who own firearms said their children could not get their hands on the guns

**41% of kids**

from those same families said they could get to those guns within 2 hours

## CHILD (1-19) FIREARM DEATHS PER 100,000



**Firearm deaths among children are up 63%, from 3.5 to 5.7 deaths**

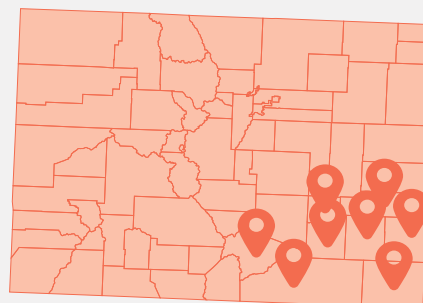
between 2013-2015 and 2018-2020

**79% of youth suicides**

involving a firearm used a firearm belonging to a family member

## Counties with the highest access to

firearms without adult supervision within one hour (35.5%)



Baca

Bent

Crowley

Huerfano

Kiowa

Las

Animas

Otero

Prowers

# Climate Change

With increasing temperatures come shifts in snowmelt runoff, water quality concerns, stressed ecosystems and transportation infrastructure, impacts to energy demands, and extreme weather events that can impact air quality and recreational opportunities. Larger cities often have water storage reservoirs that can carry them for months if not years during dry periods, but that's not the case in smaller rural and mountain towns.

## WATER



**80%**

of the population is on the Front Range



**only 20%**

of the natural water



**Colorado's system of water reservoirs hit 100% of average**

in June 2023, thanks to heavy snow and rain fall

» The fullest they've been in 3 years



Colorado estimates the South Platte River basin will need up to

**500,000 new acre-feet**

of water to meet demand by 2050



**1 out of 5 glasses**

**of water the Front Range drinks**

comes from Granby, Fraser, and Winter Park



The value of acre-feet of water has increased dramatically **from \$1,150 to \$30,000 since 1989**



Climate projections show that Colorado's springtime mountain snowpack will likely **decline by 2050, with potential impacts on late-season skiing**

## DROUGHT



The Colorado River basin is experiencing **a severe 22-year drought**

Extensive impacts throughout the West



**It could take up to 8 years of above average snowpack** to restore the Colorado River basin system



Annual and spring precipitation totals have **been generally below average since 2000**



**Spruce beetle affected roughly 53,400 acres of high-elevation Engelmann spruce** across Colorado in 2021

## AGRICULTURE IN COLORADO

Rising temperatures, heat waves, and droughts can reduce crop yield and slow cattle weight gain. Colorado farmers and ranchers are already accustomed to large natural swings in weather and climate, but may find it especially challenging to deal with expected changes in water resources.

Colorado Big Thompson Project began piping water to the Front Range

**85%**

went to agricultural use in 1957



**70%**

went to cities & towns in 2018



**80%+ of agriculture**

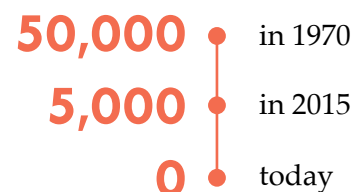
uses of available water in Colorado

5%-6% City water systems  
0.1% Oil producers



decrease in crop yields in the San Luis Valley **due to the tireless wind in 2022**

Crowley County's irrigated acres has been sucked dry due to water buys



## TEMPERATURES



**6 of the 8 warmest years**

on record for Colorado have occurred since 2012



By 2050, the southwest of the U.S. could experience **850 heat associated deaths per year**



**Temperatures in Colorado have risen about 2.5°F**

since the beginning of the 20th century

They've remained consistently higher than the long-term (1895–2020) average since 1998

## AIR QUALITY



**3.5 million Coloradans**

live in areas where the air is considered unhealthy and which causes negative health outcomes



Poor air quality can severely affect those individuals with asthma and even diabetes

2022 “State of the Air” report findings

**Denver & Fort Collins**

were worse for particle pollution and ozone

**Grand Junction**

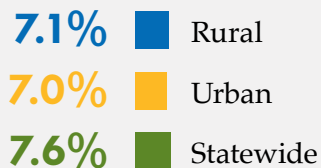
ranked among the country's cleanest cities



# Chronic Disease

## PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC DISEASE AMONGST COLORADO ADULTS IN 2021

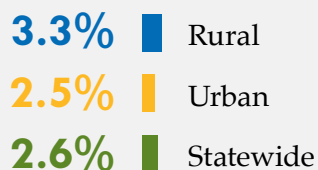
### Diabetes



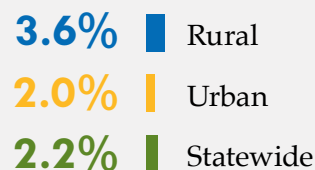
### High Cholesterol



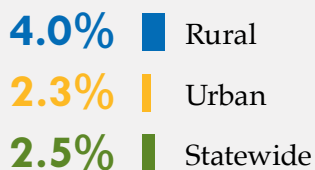
### Heart Attack



### Stroke



### Heart Disease



### Coloradans with 1+ chronic disease



### High Blood Pressure



### Coloradans with 2+ chronic disease



## CANCER

In Colorado in 2021,  
there were an estimated

**28,630** new cancer cases

**8,420** deaths caused by cancer



Top 3 most lethal  
cancers in Colorado

- Lung and Bronchus
- Colorectum
- Breast



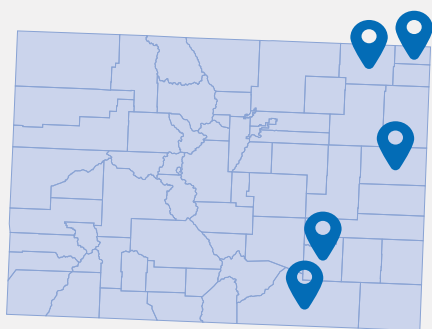
**2,000 new cases**  
of melanoma is estimated  
each year in Colorado

We are 1 of the 10 states with the  
highest death rates for melanoma

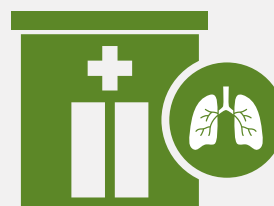
## ASTHMA EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS

### Top 5 rural counties with the highest rates

of age-adjusted rates of Asthma emergency visits in 2021



|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| <b>51</b> | Las Animas |
| <b>41</b> | Otero      |
| <b>59</b> | Kit Carson |
| <b>41</b> | Logan      |
| <b>53</b> | Sedgwick   |



**22.91**  
**asthma**

**emergency department  
visits statewide in 2021**

This is significantly lower than  
2019 (30.69 visits)

## CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD) PER 10,000 RESIDENTS

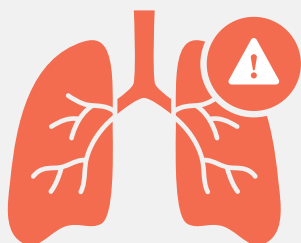
Hospitalizations due to COPD  
in rural areas

**103**

is the highest  
in Phillips  
County

**2**

is the lowest  
rate in Routt  
County



Both the percentage of people diagnosed with  
COPD and the rate of people dying of COPD is  
**higher in rural Colorado than  
urban Colorado**

## DIABETES

Diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) is a crucial component of treatment to delay or prevent complications. Rural communities face many unique challenges in accessing DSMES, including geographic barriers and availability of DSMES programs that are culturally adapted to rural context.



in the U.S. have diabetes,  
with 1.5 million diagnosed  
every year

In 2021, adults reported  
having diabetes

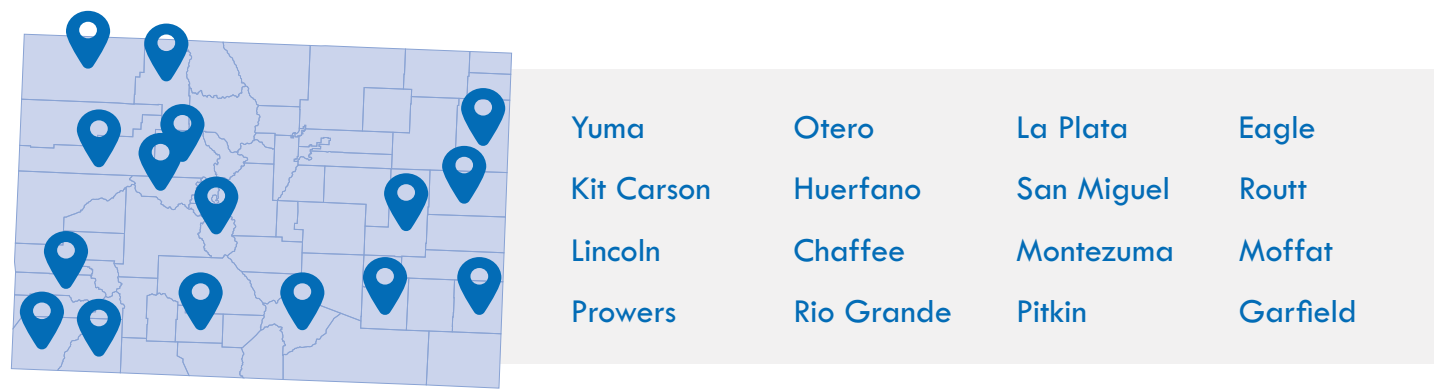
|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| <b>7.1%</b>  | Rural     |
| <b>6.99%</b> | Urban     |
| <b>6.97%</b> | Statewide |



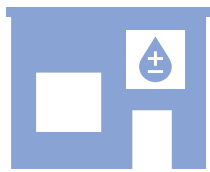
In 2021, diabetes  
self-management course  
participation among adults

|            |       |
|------------|-------|
| <b>50%</b> | Rural |
| <b>60%</b> | Urban |

RURAL COUNTIES WITH A DIABETES SELF-MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAM



**9.0–10.2%**  
is the average rate of  
southeastern Colorado  
residents with diabetes



**Only 2 sites in  
southeastern Colorado**  
cover Diabetes Self-Management  
Education and Support (DSMES)

HEART DISEASE AMONGST COLORADO ADULTS

High Cholesterol in Ages 20+



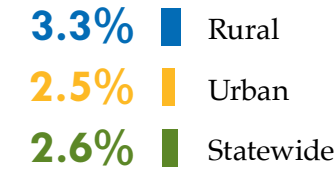
Blood Pressure Medication



High Blood Pressure



Heart Attack



Adults who have had a heart attack  
attend cardiac rehab



Adults ages 20+ reported having a  
cholesterol screening within 5+ years



# Vaccines

Vaccines create the herd immunity. Different diseases have different thresholds in terms of the percentage of vaccinated people needed to create it. The evidence shows that when we have decreases below those thresholds it really increases the risk of vaccine – preventable disease outbreaks.

Colorado requires several **vaccines for children in school or child care**

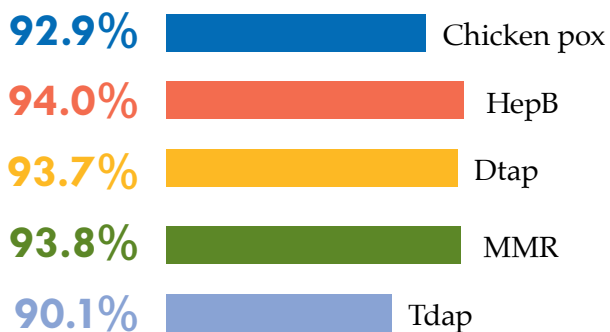
|         |                        |
|---------|------------------------|
| Measles | Whooping cough         |
| Mumps   | Polio                  |
| Rubella | Varicella (chickenpox) |



**There are additional, optional vaccines** that public health officials recommend

|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| COVID-19    | Human papillomavirus |
| Hepatitis A | Influenza            |

## PERCENT OF COLORADO K-12 COUNTY SCHOOLS FULLY IMMUNIZED 2022/2023



Immunization rates for school-required vaccines among kindergartners all fell **below 90% for the second year in a row** with all but the hepatitis B vaccination



**86.8% is the lowest** rate of MMR coverage among kindergartners since the 2017–2018 school year

## WORK-RELATED INJURIES



**112 work-related deaths occur in Colorado each year**

Or about one work-related fatality every 3 to 4 days



**16.7% of the Colorado population** was employed in an occupation with a high risk of morbidity





# Rural Health Infrastructure in Colorado

# 403,927

Colorado Kids are  
under age 6

## ESTIMATED ANNUAL STATE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

### \$3.1B

of affordable child care

### \$1.24B

of universal preschool

## BASED ON THE AVERAGE MEDIAN INCOME OF A COLORADO FAMILY

### 33%

of income is spent on  
childcare for two children

### 51%

of income would cover the  
true cost of high-quality  
childcare for two children

## Childcare

There are large regions of rural Colorado where families are living in a childcare desert, meaning that regardless of costs or determining if a childcare center is trustworthy or a right fit, families can't find a place close by with space for their kids. A childcare desert is defined by a census tract with at least 50 kids under age five, and either no childcare center in that neighborhood, or at least three kids vying for one open spot.



There is only **one childcare slot for every 3.5 children** in Colorado

### 75,000+ more children in Colorado under 6

whose parents are working than there  
are licensed day care spots



## COST OF CHILDCARE



**40% increase**  
in childcare costs in  
Colorado from 1990–2021

Colorado is ranked  
45 out of 50 in the  
nation for highest  
childcare costs

Costs for families with two children

**\$1,127**  
per month



**\$27,055**  
per year

Affordable **\$\$**  
childcare should be  
**7% or less of a  
family's income**

## AVERAGE COST OF CENTER-BASED CARE PER DAY BY AGE



**\$75.28**  
0–18 months



**\$62.72**  
18–36 months



**\$53.11**  
36 months–6 yrs

## USING THE 7% AFFORDABILITY BENCHMARK

Counties closest to the 7% affordability benchmark

**8.9%**

Philips

**9.1%**

Cheyenne

**9.8%**

Yuma



Counties furthest from the 7% affordability benchmark

**31.6%**

Chaffee

**29.3%**

Mineral

**28.3%**

Washington

## AVERAGE COST OF HOME-BASED CARE PER DAY BY AGE



**\$49.04**

0-24 months



**\$46.04**

24 months-6 yrs

**28%**

is the average childcare cost burden, meaning that over a quarter of every dollar earned by a median-income family goes toward paying for childcare



**\$14 - \$17 is the median hourly wage** of workers in the childcare economy

**41%**

of Colorado's direct care workers rely on public assistance, including cash and food assistance to help make ends meet

## SOLVING THE CHILDCARE CRISIS



Under Gov. Jared Polis's administration, the state funded **full-day kindergarten and planned to fund 10 free hours a week of preschool** for four-year-olds starting fall school year 2023



**\$8.7 million has been set aside,**

by the state legislature, to help employers construct onsite or nearby child care facilities for their employees



**3 homes in Ouray have been allocated for people**

who want to start home-based childcare businesses

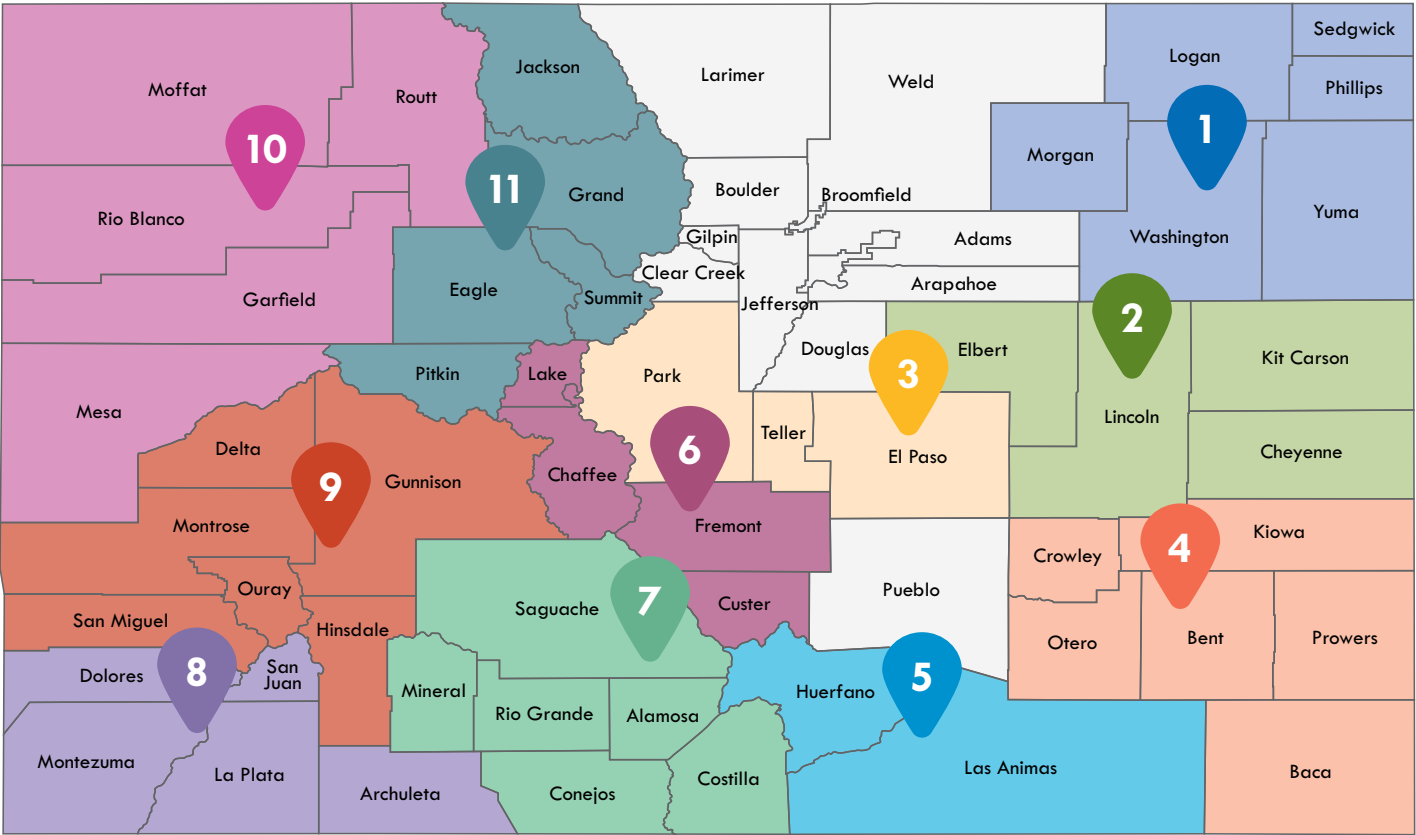
**25%**

discount to teachers whose rural school districts, such as Kremmling, are able to offer childcare on campus

Bringing the cost for an infant to **\$720 a month**

# Regional Industries

Colorado is still struggling with a tight labor market, with 2.7 jobs for every unemployed person.



## NORTHEASTERN REGION



### Key industries

- Food & agriculture
- Advanced manufacturing
- Health & wellness
- Transportation
- Energy
- Natural resources



### Top employers

- Food manufacturers
- Two Class I railroads
- Airport capable of landing a 737

## CENTRAL PLAINS



### Key industries

- Food & agriculture
- Transportation

## SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION



### Key industries

- Defense
- Health
- Financial services

## SOUTHEASTERN REGION



### Key industries

- Agriculture (High volume of exports, including livestock & vegetables)
- Wind & solar power



## SOUTHERN REGION

5



### Key industries

Health & wellness    Energy resources  
Outdoor recreation



### Top employers

Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center  
Mt. San Rafael Hospital

## UPPER ARKANSAS REGION

6



### Key industries

Tourism    Outdoor recreation



### Top employers

Mt. Princeton Hot Springs    Royal Gorge Bridge    Climax Mine

## SAN LUIS VALLEY REGION

7



### Key industries

Health & wellness    Outdoor recreation  
Food & agriculture



### Top employers

San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative    SLV Health  
The San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad    Xcel  
Rio Grande Hospital

## SOUTHWESTERN REGION

8



### Key industries

Agriculture    Outdoor recreation  
Technology



### Top employers

Four national monuments    Mesa Verde National Park    The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

## CENTRAL WESTERN SLOPE REGION

9



### Key industries

Agriculture    Outdoor recreation  
Healthcare



### Top employers

Telluride Ski & Golf Resort    Telluride Hospital District  
Crested Butte Mountain Resort    Gunnison Valley Hospital  
Montrose Memorial Hospital

## NORTHWESTERN REGION

10



### Key industries

Agriculture    Outdoor recreation  
Agri-tourism



### Top employers

Steamboat Ski & Resort Association  
Pioneers Medical Center

## WESTERN REGION

11



### Key industries

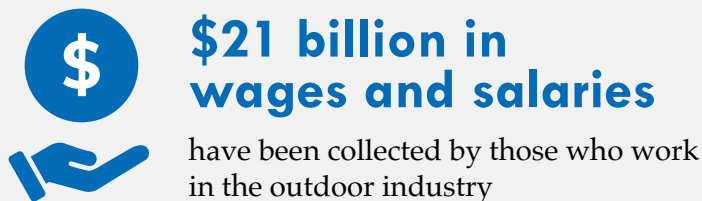
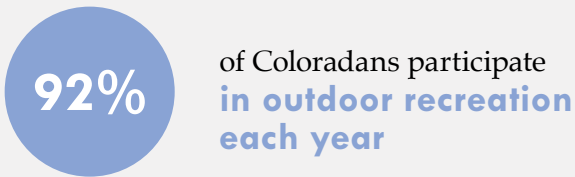
Tourism    Outdoor recreation



### Top employers

Vail Resorts    Winter Park    Middle Park Health

# Outdoor Industry

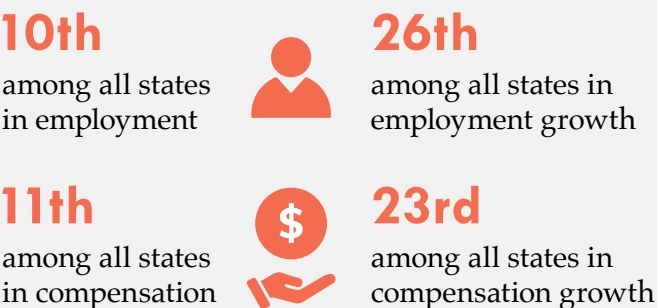


## THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTES THE FOLLOWING TO COLORADO'S RURAL ECONOMY

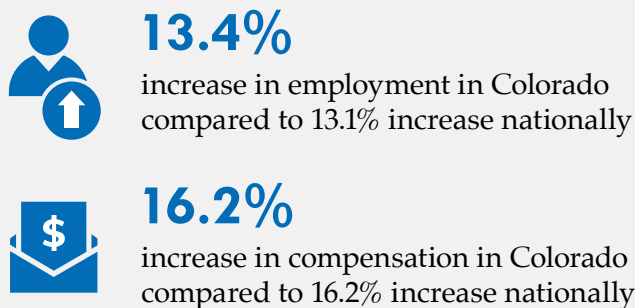


## COMPENSATION & EMPLOYMENT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

In Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA) compensation in 2021, Colorado ranked



Since 2020, outdoor recreation compensation and employment has grown in Colorado



# Oil & Gas



As of April 2022, Colorado is the  
**6th largest onshore  
oil producer in the U.S.**

This accounts for only 3.6% of the total U.S. crude oil production

Colorado's total oil and gas  
production is anticipated to  
close out 2023 at nearly

**\$16 billion**

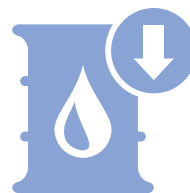


37.5%  
lower than  
in 2022



Colorado has the 39th cheapest  
gasoline tax in the country  
**at 22¢ per gallon,**  
17¢ lower than the national average

Gasoline tax is a major source of transportation  
funding in the state



**59% drop**

in average natural gas prices  
in 2023 was a result of lower  
production value

This marginally impacted Colorado's production output



The U.S. provides  
**~14.5% of the  
total crude oil**  
for the global market

Increasing Colorado's production would have  
minimal impact on global supply and prices

## GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT IN 2021

**\$373.76 billion**

Overall real GDP  
of Colorado

**\$16.73 billion**

Contribution of the  
mining industry

## FARMS AND RANCHES

**89%**

of all farms and ranches are owned  
and operated by individuals and  
families in Colorado



**\$7.28 billion in farm  
cash receipts in 2020**



**71%** Livestock and Livestock Products  
**29%** Vegetable Crops



**820 acres**

average size of farm  
and ranch in Colorado



**31.8M acres**

million acres land in  
farms in Colorado



**38,800**

number of farms and  
ranches in Colorado (2021)

# Healthcare



Healthcare is one of the  
**top 3 industries**  
in rural Colorado



A hospital contributes up to  
**20% of the rural community's**  
employment and income



of healthcare workers  
**are leaving the**  
healthcare industry

Colorado's health and wellness industry experienced  
a 31% job growth between 2010-2019



**10,000**  
companies



**336,000**  
employees

## PHYSICIANS



1 rural physician's employment creates

**~\$1.4 million**

in income from the clinic  
and hospital

**~26**

additional  
jobs

Physician demand is projected to outpace supply,  
resulting in a potential shortage by 2033



**54,100**  
physicians



**139,000**  
physicians

## NURSES



Colorado is expected to have a  
**deficit of 10,000+**  
registered nurses  
by 2026



Travel nurses in Colorado make  
**\$1,566-\$3,130 per**  
week depending  
on specialty

Annual median wage of registered nurses in  
rural Colorado

**\$85,000**

is the highest in  
the Northwest and  
Southwest regions



**\$77,000**

is the lowest in  
the Eastern and  
Southern regions

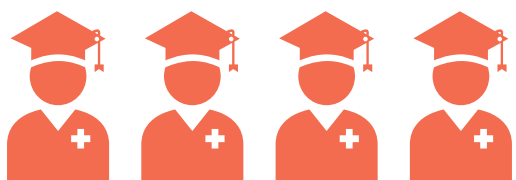
According to the Colorado Center for  
Nursing Excellence



**21,000 of the**  
**61,000 licensed**  
nurses are over the age of 55



## NURSING EDUCATION



**Colorado needs 33,000 nursing graduates per year to meet demand,**

however programs have only seen 24,000 nursing students graduate annually

**32%**

**growth rate in job openings**

for nurse educators by 2031 is anticipated, surpassing the average job growth of 17%



Colorado faces a supply deficit **of 526 registered nurses per year**, due to a lagging workforce and early retirements

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

It takes longer to respond to incidents in rural and frontier areas

**40+**

minutes in rural counties



**50+**

minutes in frontier counties



Primary Impression Categories is a summarized grouping of the **NEMSIS standard ICD-10-CM Codes** that describes the patient's primary problem or most significant condition

## TOP THREE PRIMARY IMPRESSIONS

### Colorado (statewide)

**14%** Injury

**11%** Pain

**10%** Behavioral/Psychology

### Rural

**19%** Injury

**11%** Pain

**9%** Behavioral/Psychology

### Urban

**13%** Injury

**11%** Pain

**10%** Behavioral/Psychology

### Frontier

**18%** Injury

**13%** Pain

**9%** Behavioral/Psychology

## CARE WORKERS



The median hourly wage for workers in the **care economy is between \$14 - \$17**

6.4%

of personal care and nursing aides in the U.S. **hold second jobs to supplement their wages**, which is 35% higher than other workers

## COLORADO IS FACING A MENTAL HEALTH WORKER SHORTAGE

The state is predicted to face a deficit **of 4,417+ mental health workers by 2026**



In 2023, all but two Colorado counties, Adams and Larimer, were identified as **Health Professional Shortage Areas for Mental Health**

## HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES



Of all active, licensed registered practitioners, rural Colorado receives

10%

of the dentists

9%

of the physicians

5%

of the psychologists

### Counties with no direct entry midwives

37/47

of rural / frontier (79%)



6/17

of urban (35%)

### Counties with no licensed certified nurse midwives

35/47

of rural / frontier (74%)



4/17

of urban (24%)

### Counties with no licensed physician assistants

15/47

of rural / frontier (32%)



0/17

of urban (0%)

### Counties with no licensed nurse practitioners

4/47

of rural / frontier (9%)



1/17

of urban (6%)



of all rural and frontier counties **do not have an active, licensed addiction counselor**



**Among rural health facilities in Colorado,**

**only 5% offer a housing stipend as a benefit**

» While nearly half of facilities stated adding a housing stipend would aid in recruitment and retention

## RURAL HOSPITALS



**600+ rural hospitals,**  
over 30% of all rural hospitals,  
are at risk of closing nationally



**10% of Colorado rural hospitals are at immediate risk of closing** because of the severity of financial problems



of Colorado rural hospitals are  
**at risk of losing services**



of Colorado rural hospitals are  
**at risk of closing**

Rural hospitals are at risk due to these serious financial problems



### Losses on Patient Services

Health insurance plans do not pay these hospitals enough to cover the cost of delivering services to patients



### Low Financial Reserves

The hospitals do not have adequate net assets to offset their losses on patient services

## Transportation

Due to the aging population in rural Colorado, CDOT has prioritized increasing options for senior citizens and veterans to reach basic amenities and medical care. One strategy is to increase CDOT outrider service by 2024 to include communities of Lamar, Fort Lyon, Las Animas, La Junta, Swink, Rocky Ford, Manzanola, and Fowler, and add additional connections in Durango, Mancos, Cortez, Dolores, and Rico.



of all freight tonnage in the state  
and 19% of freight by value  
**traveled on Colorado's rural roadways in 2019**



**Roadways in Colorado's rural communities carried 309.7 million tons** of critical products and parcels valued at \$150.3 billion in 2019



CDOT's 10-year strategic plan,  
released in 2019, showed Colorado

**ranked 47th**

in the U.S. for the condition of  
rural roads

CDOT proposes to repair 1,300 miles  
of rural pavement across the state

**\$1.3 billion**

going toward rural roads between  
2020–2030

# Critical Access Hospital CEO Turnover

Unstable leadership team can affect quality of care and also impact the organization's financial and operational health, and can impact the overall community. The recruitment time for a new CEO tends to be lengthy — sometimes it takes 6-12 months to bring someone in.



Colorado critical access  
hospital CEO turnover compared  
to 18-20% turnover nationally

“ When a rural hospital loses a CEO unexpectedly, the cost of recruiting can be significant, and the hospital’s strategic plan may come to a grinding halt.”

## Clinic Types and Ownership Models

RURAL CLINICS SURVEYED (30 RESPONSES)



55% (39)

Hospital Owned Clinic



39% (28)

Rural Health Practice (not certified)



59% (42)

Certified Rural Health Clinics

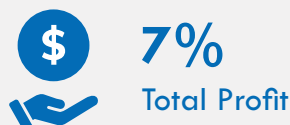


34% (24)

Independent Clinic

# Critical Issue: Hospital Financial Sustainability

From data provided by the CRHC Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Grant (FLEX) Monitoring Team from 2019 to 2020, Total Margin and Operating Margin increased, while Days Cash on Hand and Average Days Revenue decreased. This indicates that there continues to be financial hardships for Colorado CAHs. In 2023, 16 rural hospitals were operating in the red.



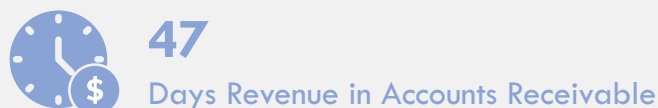
**Total Margin** is the percentage calculated by dividing net income by total revenues. The higher the Total Margin value, the more the hospital retains on each dollar of sales.



**Operating Margin** measures how much profit a hospital makes on a dollar of sale, after paying for variable costs of production. The higher the Operating Margin the more profitable a hospital is.



**Days Cash on Hand** measures the number of days that an organization can continue to pay its operating expenses, given the amount of cash currently available. High Cash on Hand values imply higher liquidity and hence are viewed favorably by creditors.



**Days Revenue in Accounts Receivable** measures the number of days that it takes an organization to collect its receivables. Low values means that it takes a hospital fewer days to collect its accounts receivable.

## IN 2021, RURAL COLORADO HOSPITALS SAW THE EFFECTS OF THE FOLLOWING



**“UNCOMPENSATED CARE”** represents the percentage of total operating expenses that is uncompensated care. In 2019, the median uncompensated care for 32 operating Colorado CAHs was 3.16.

**“BAD DEBT”** is a loss that a company incurs when credit that has been extended to customers becomes worthless, either because the debtor is bankrupt, has financial problems or because it cannot be collected.



# Cost to Patient Case Study


## THE BACKGROUND


Health insurance companies often create programs to encourage patients to receive care outside of their local hospitals in order to decrease healthcare costs and reduce insurance premiums. For patients living in urban areas, this means better access to care, a higher volume of providers, and a greater diversity in options for primary care and specialty care providers.


For rural patients, this is not the case. It is important to consider the additional hidden costs affiliated with this concept. Rural areas often do not have many options outside of local hospitals. In turn, when insurance prompts a patient to seek care outside of the local hospital, the patient often is required to spend time and money to travel further (sometimes a day) to receive care.


## THE CHALLENGE

### Examples of extra costs to patients when traveling to non-local hospitals

 Lost wages due to travel

 Gas Money

 One day federal meal per diem (cost of food)

 Accommodations due to travel

While insurance companies have a cost savings of ~\$400 from rural patients traveling to non-local hospitals, the patient has a cost burden upwards of \$700.

## THE RESULTS

### Average Overall Cost Burden Observed by Rural Patients traveling to distant, non-local hospital/clinic

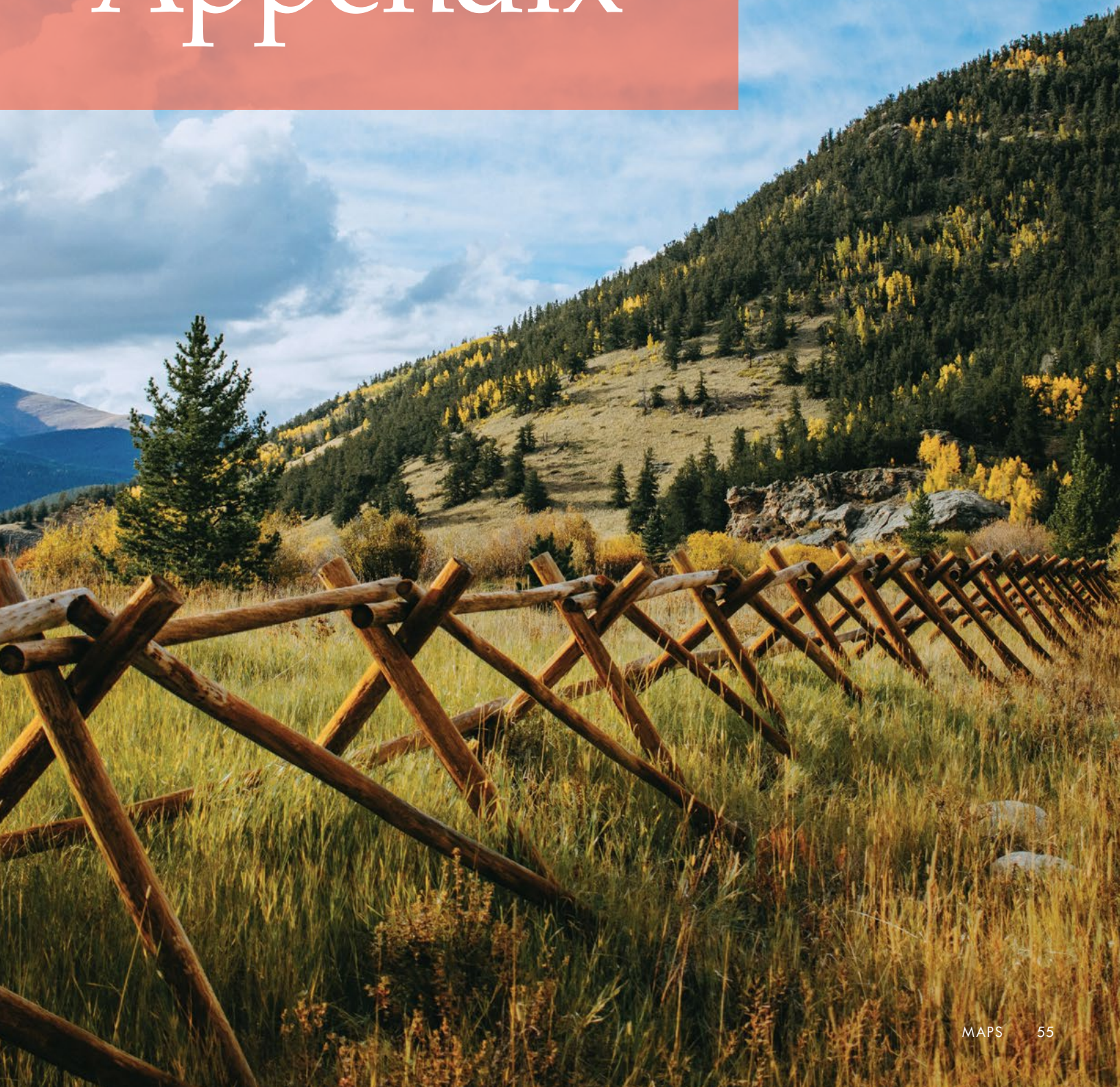
| Cost Burden Description                      | Amount in USD | Running Total of Cost Burden (USD) |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Average Member Liability Amount <sup>1</sup> | \$22.00       | \$22.00                            |
| Mileage Reimbursement <sup>2</sup>           | \$165.00      | \$187.00                           |
| One Day of Lost Wages <sup>3</sup>           | \$235.00      | \$422.00                           |
| One Night of Accommodations <sup>4</sup>     | \$163.00      | \$585.00                           |
| One Day Federal Meal Per Diem <sup>5</sup>   | \$133.00      | \$718.00                           |
| Total Cost Burden                            |               | \$718.00                           |

### Average Cost Savings of Insurance Providers if Rural Patients travel to distant, non-local hospital/clinic

| Scenario   | Amount in USD |
|--|---------------|
| Scenario 1: Patient living in Kit Carson, CO but travels to Denver, CO     | \$316         |
| Scenario 2: Patient lives in Eads, CO but travels to Colorado Springs, CO  | \$438         |
| Scenario 3: Patient lives in Rangely, CO but travels to Grand Junction, CO | \$520         |
| Average Cost Savings to Insurance Company <sup>1</sup>                     | \$425         |

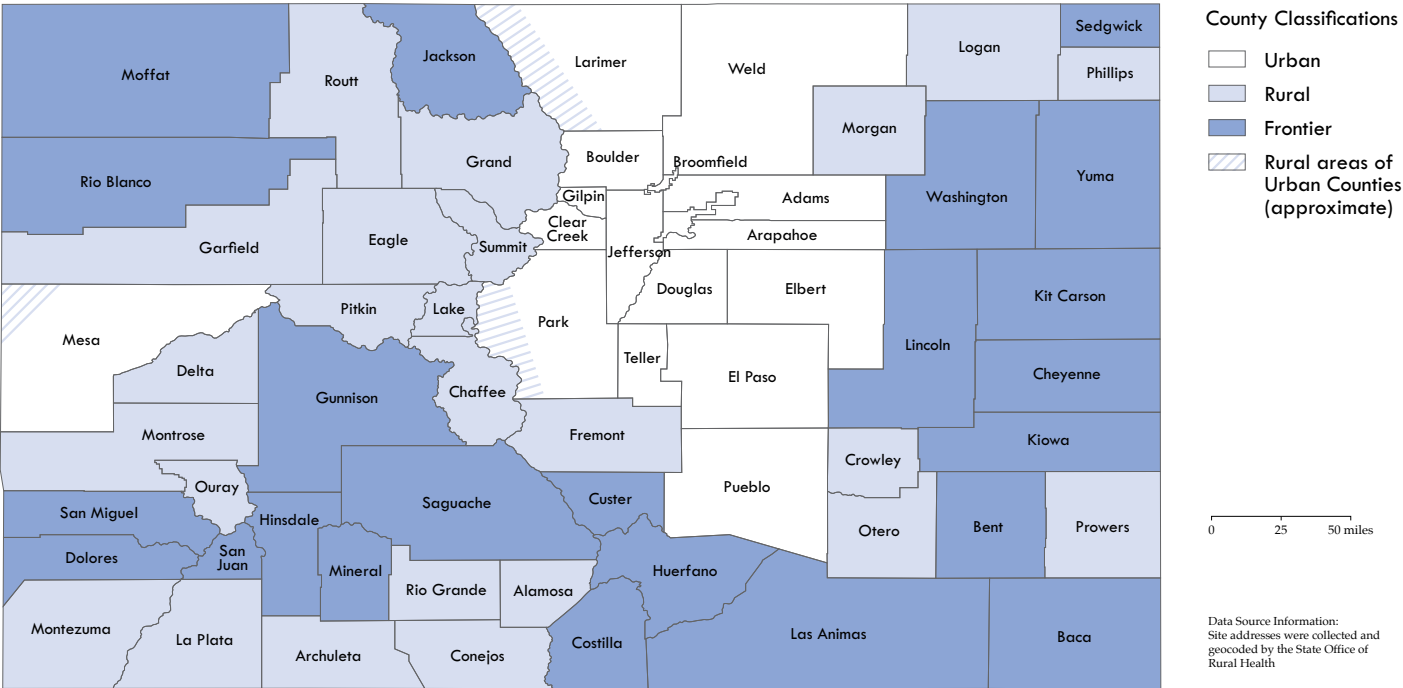


# Appendix

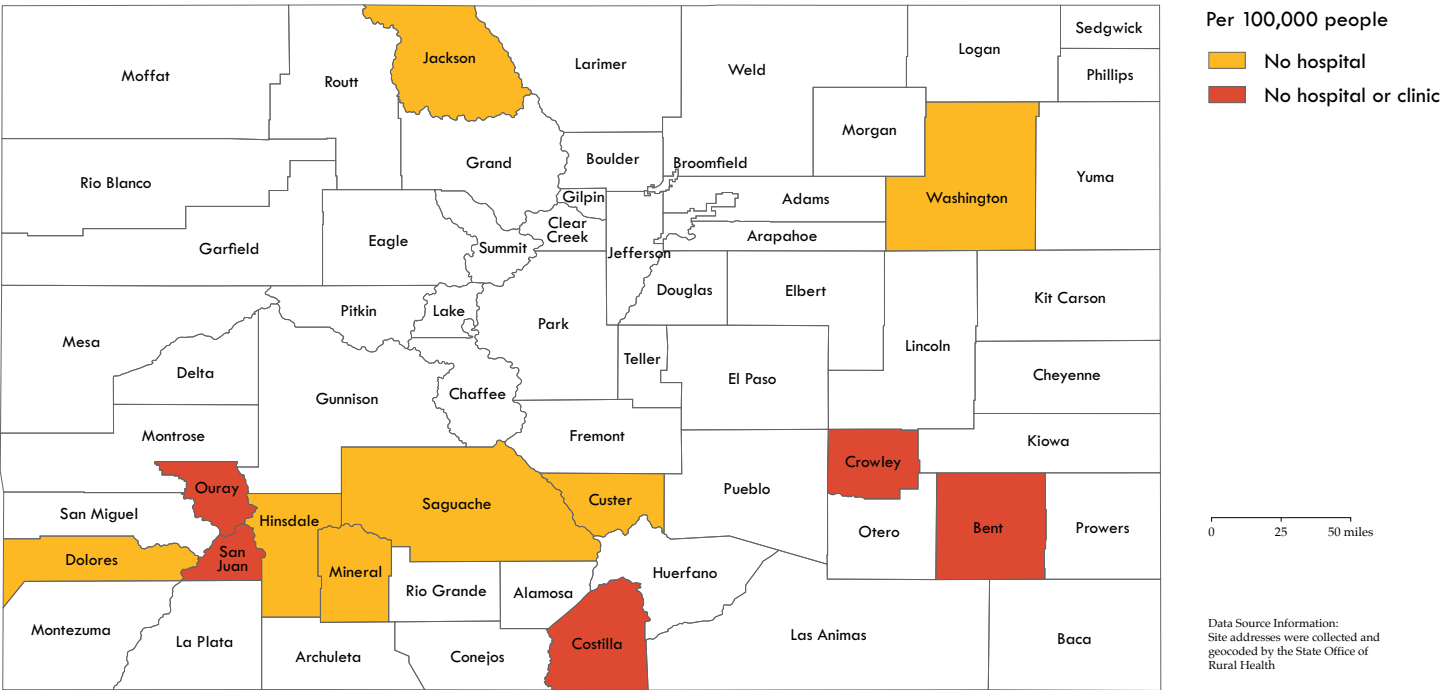




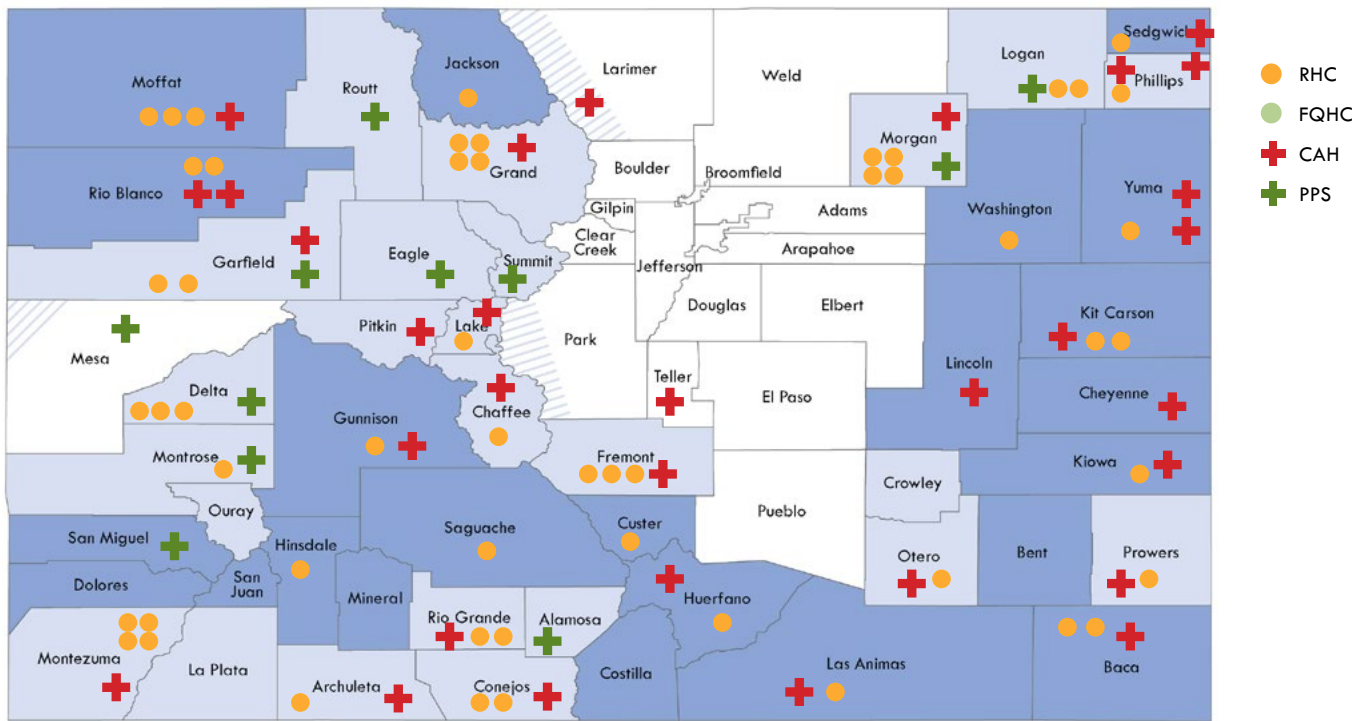
# Colorado: County Designations, 2024



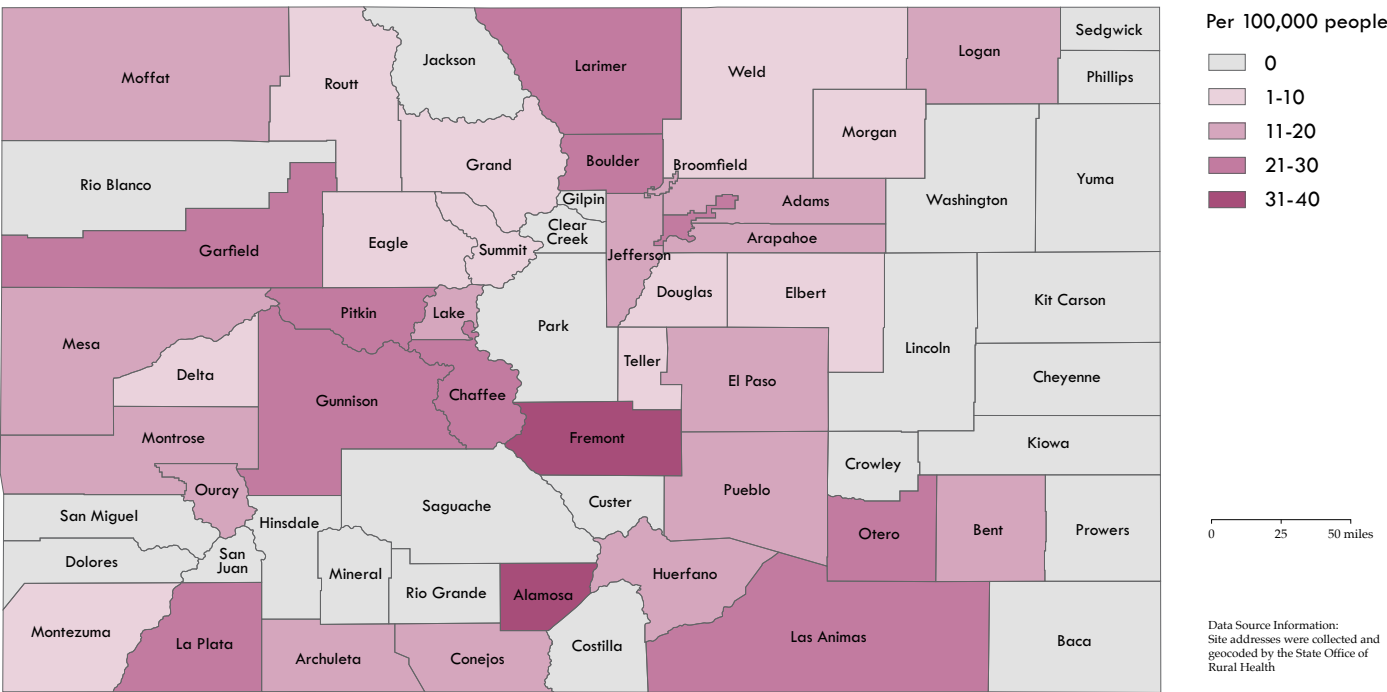
# Rural Colorado: Access to Healthcare



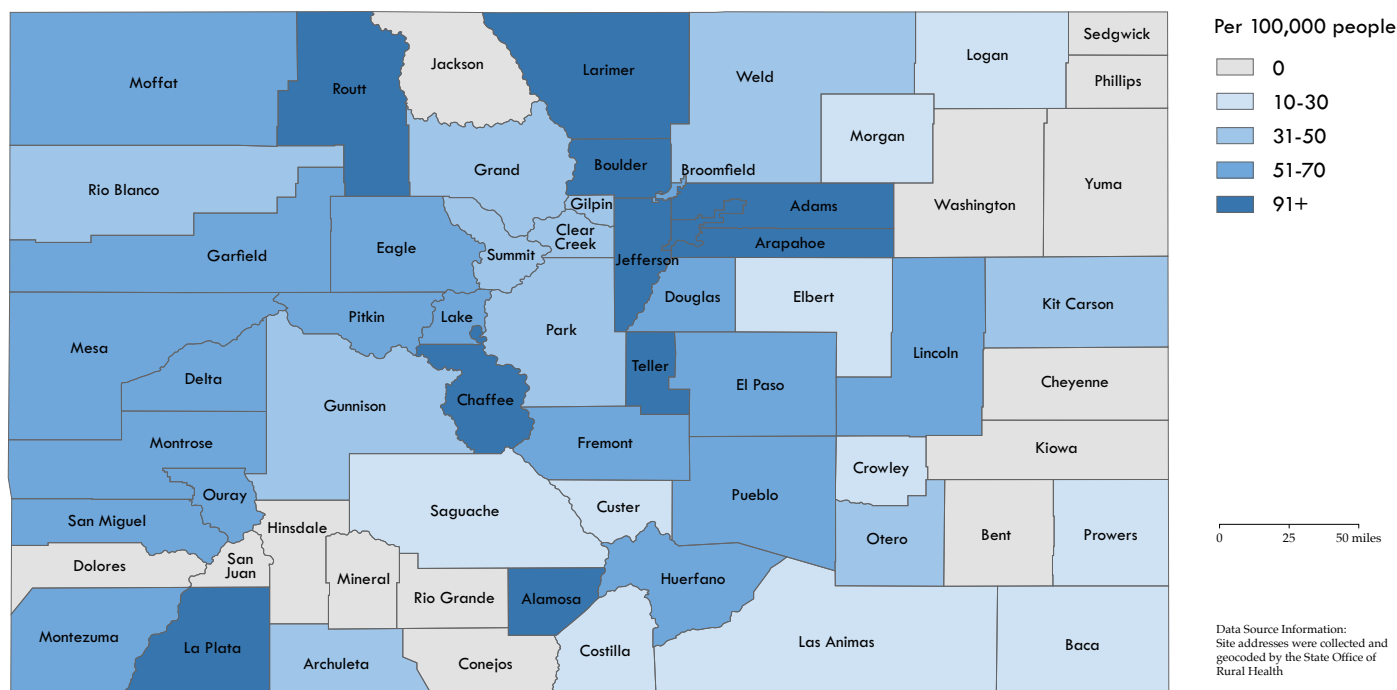
# Rural Health Facilities, 2024



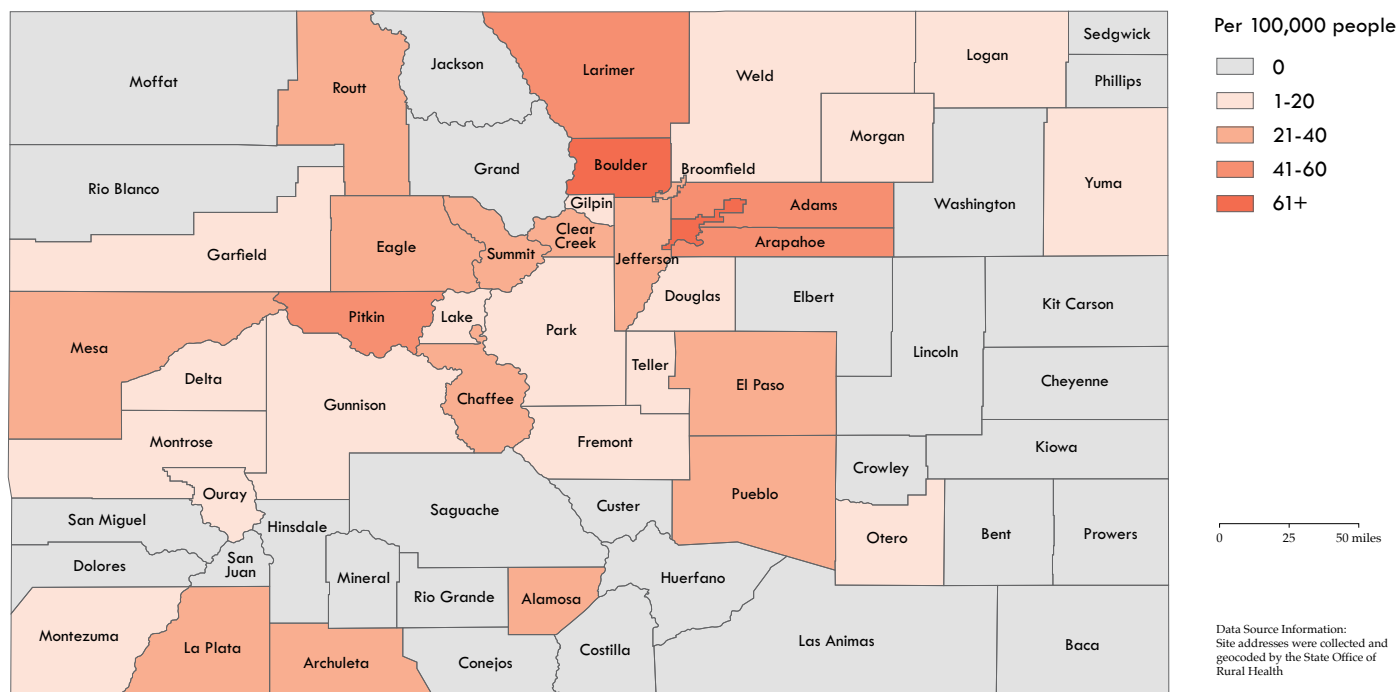
# Licensed Addiction Counselors, 2023



# Licensed Social Workers, 2023

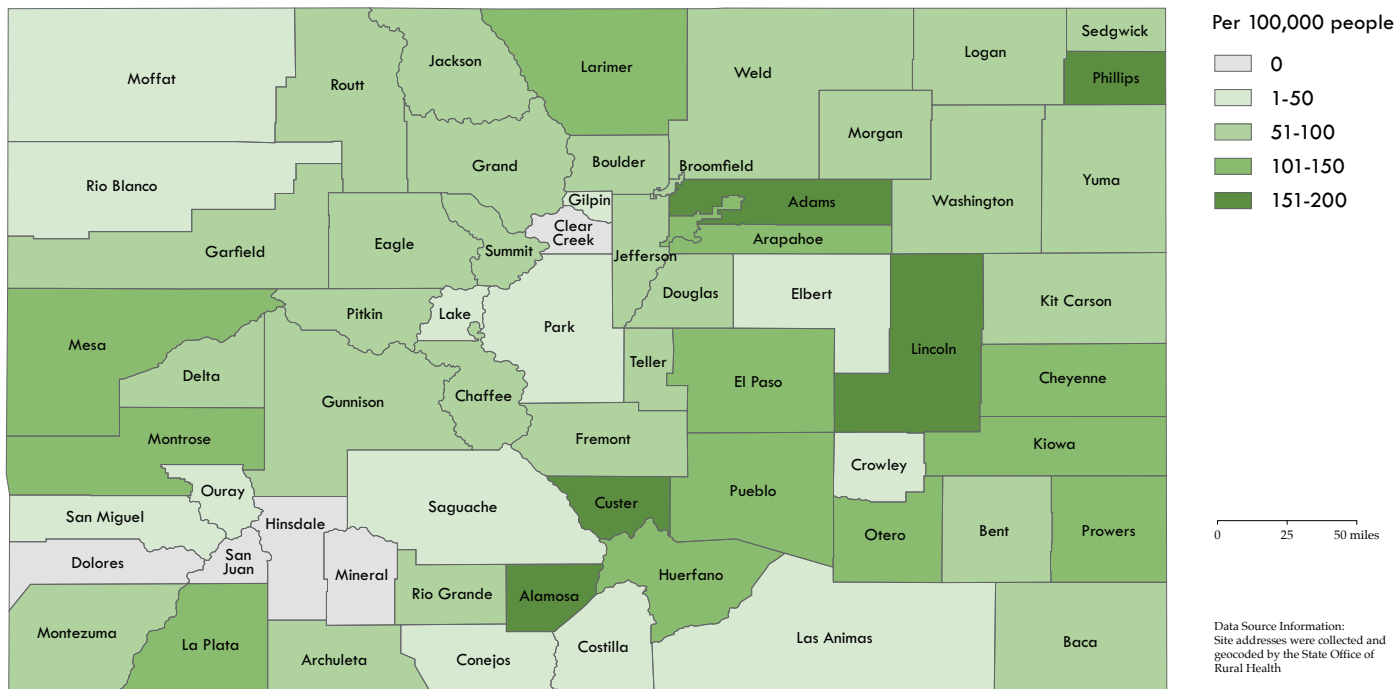


# Licensed Psychologists, 2023

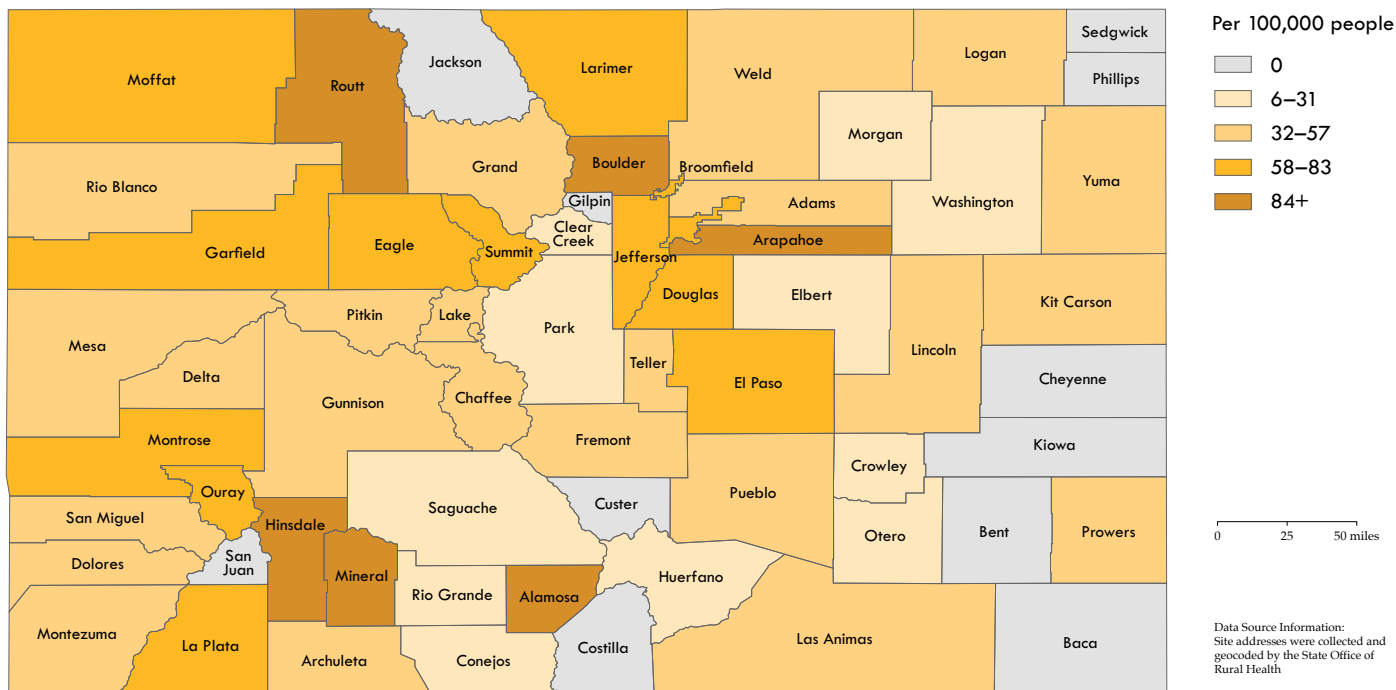




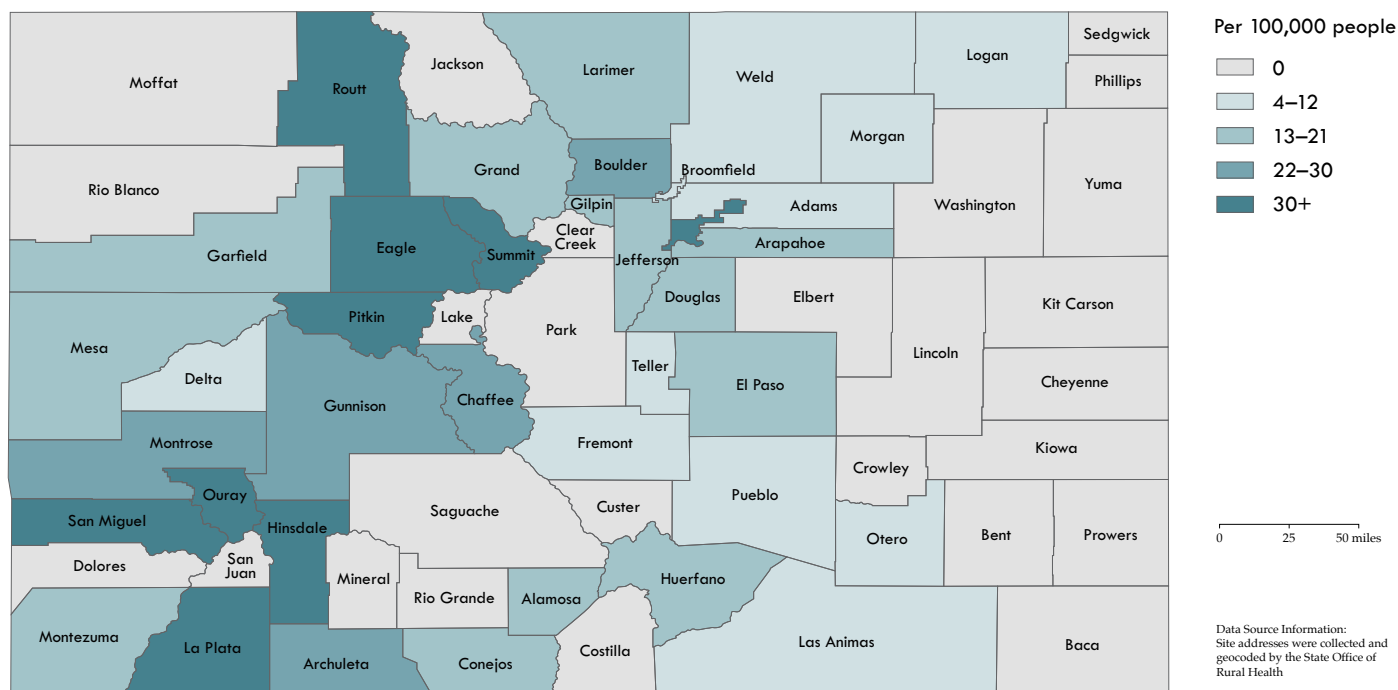
# Nurse, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse with NPI, 2023



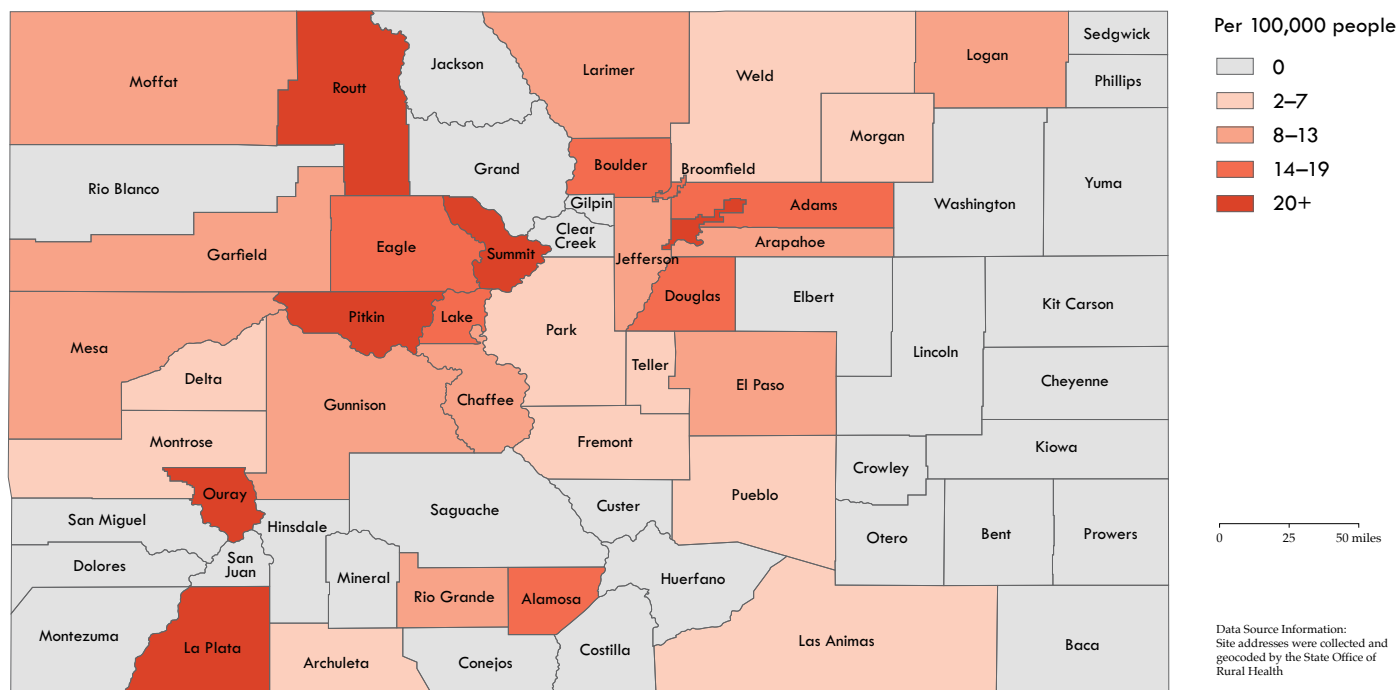
# Dentists, 2023



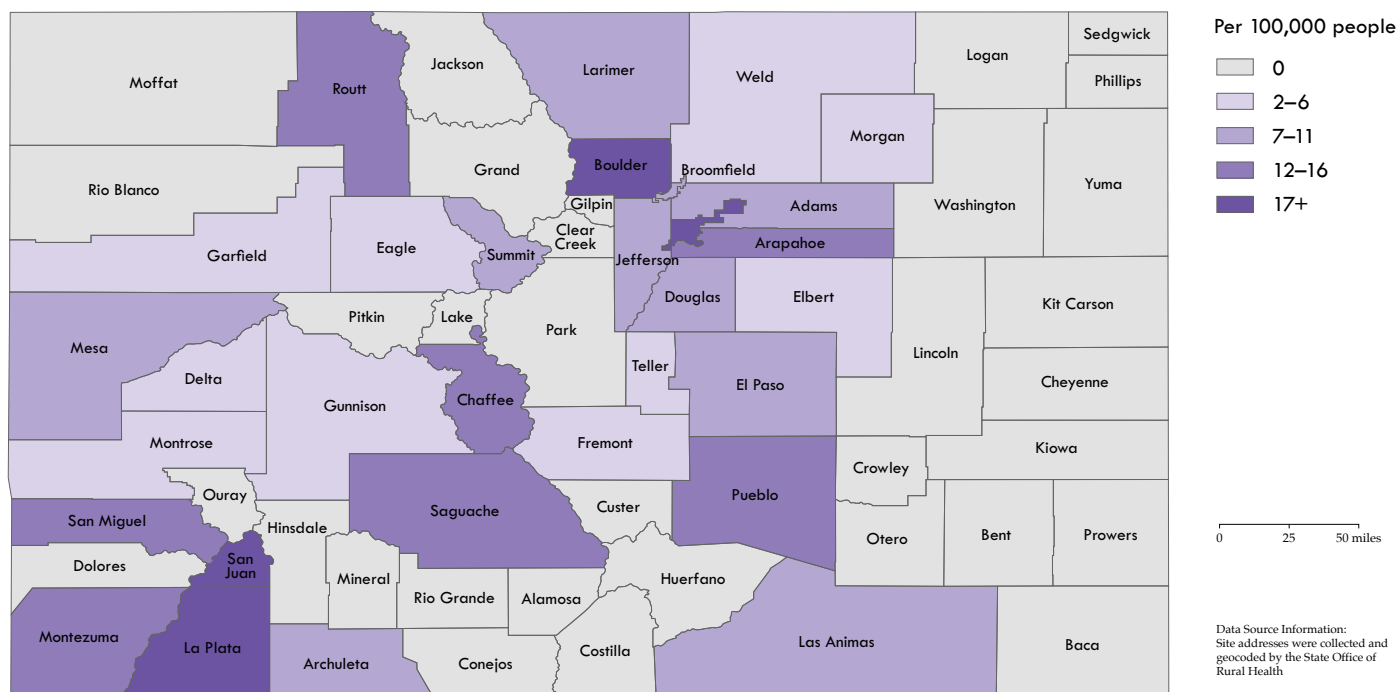
# M.D., Emergency Medicine, 2023



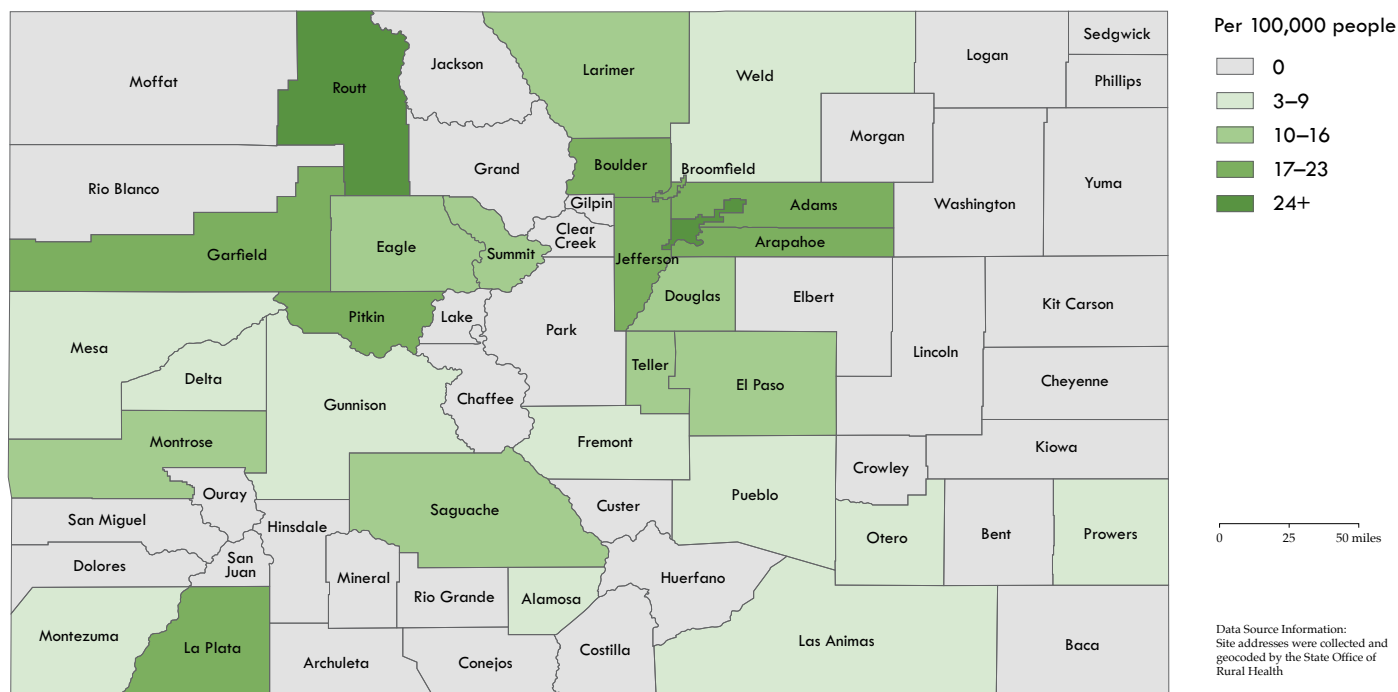
# M.D., Obstetrics and Gynecology, 2023



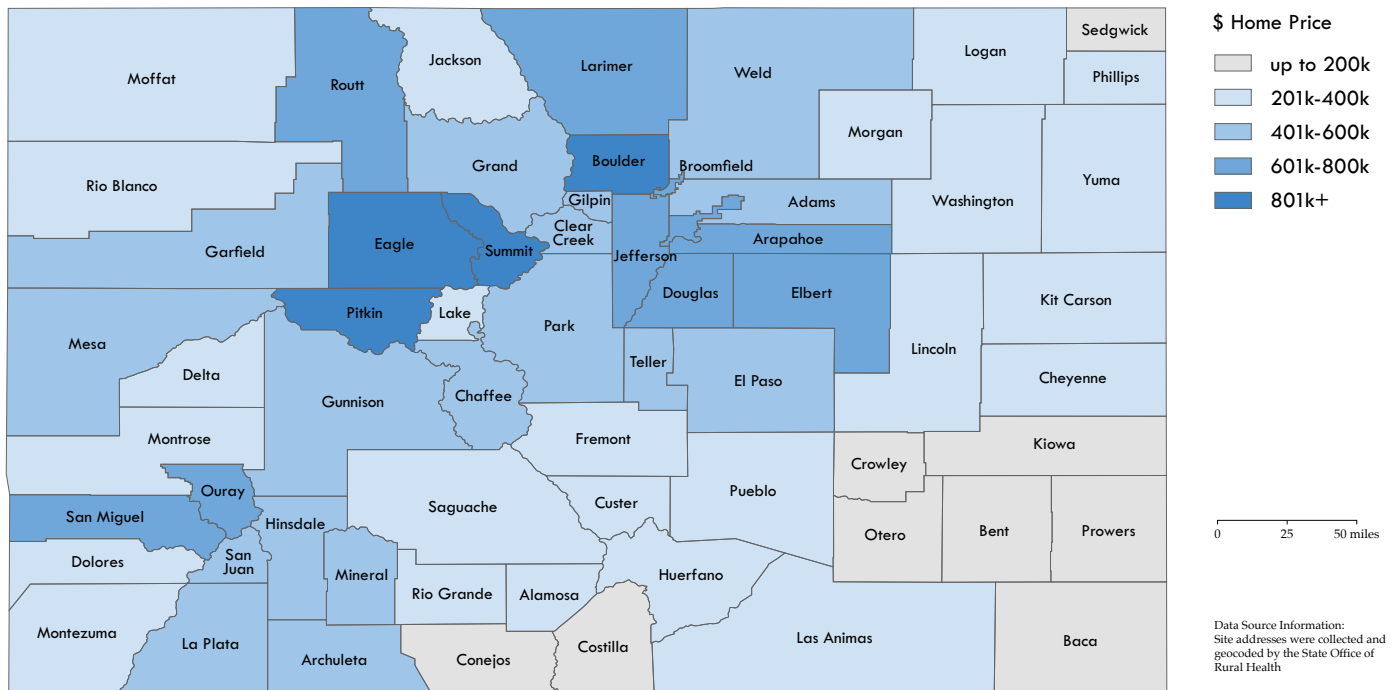
# Physicians, Psychiatry, 2023



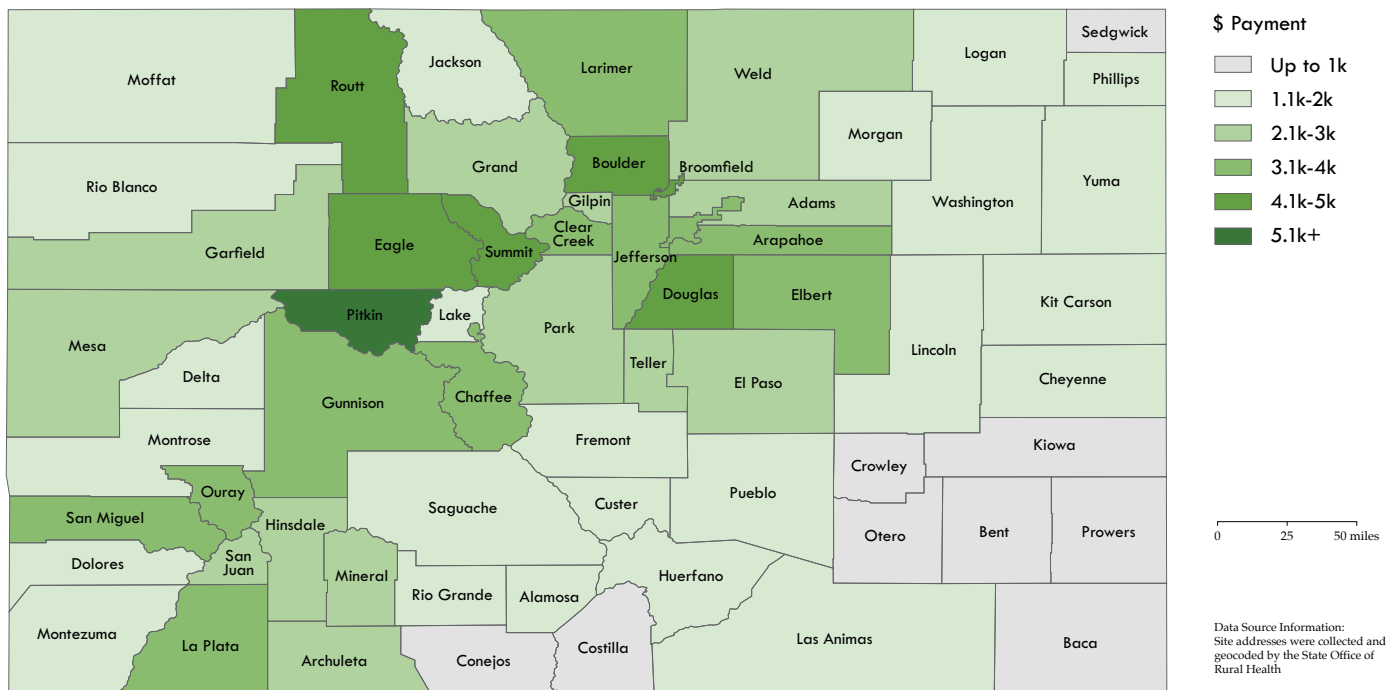
# M.D., Pediatrics, 2023



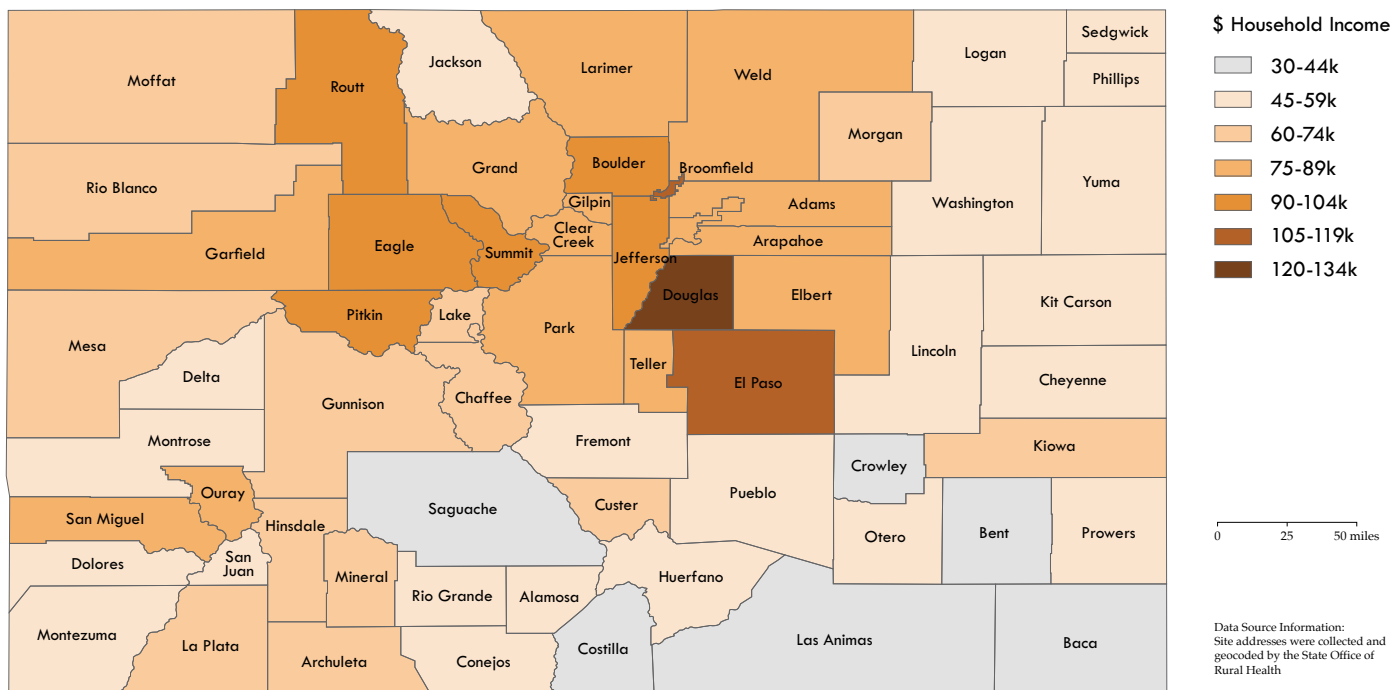
# Median Home Price Q1 2023



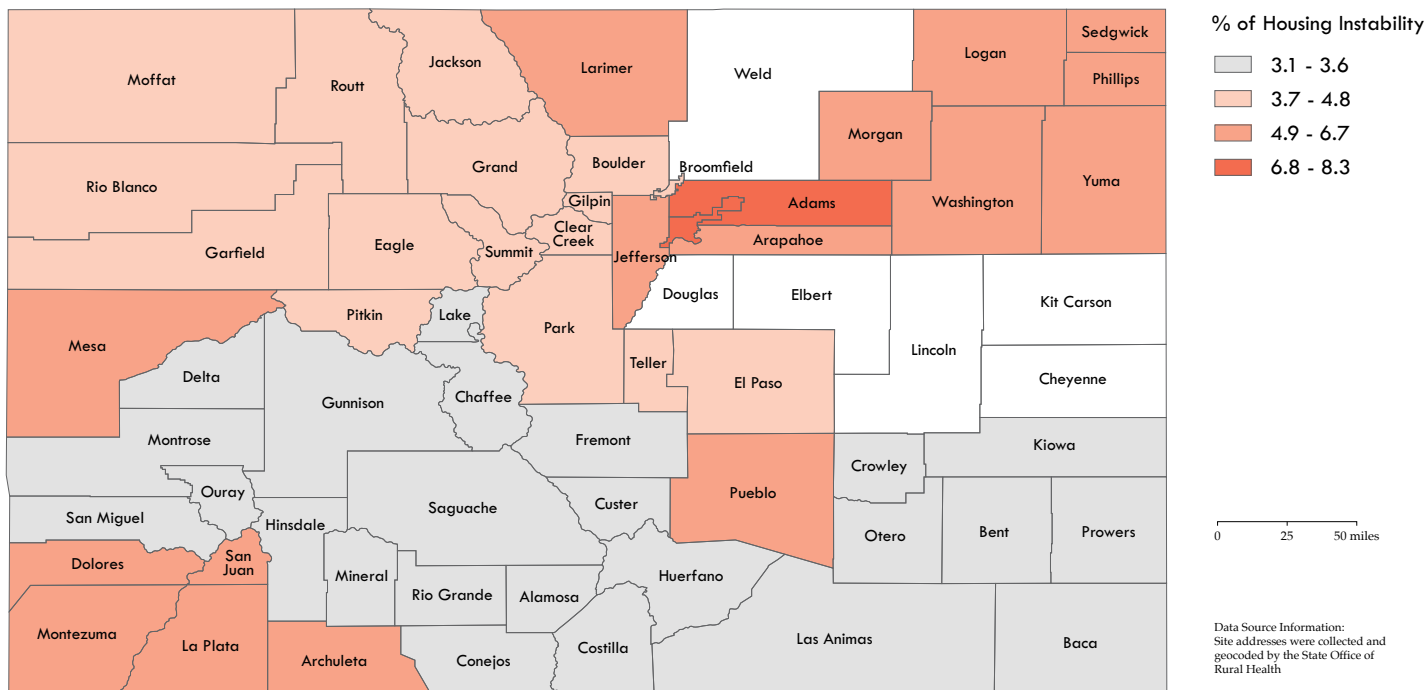
# Mortgage Q1 2023



# Median Household Income, 2021

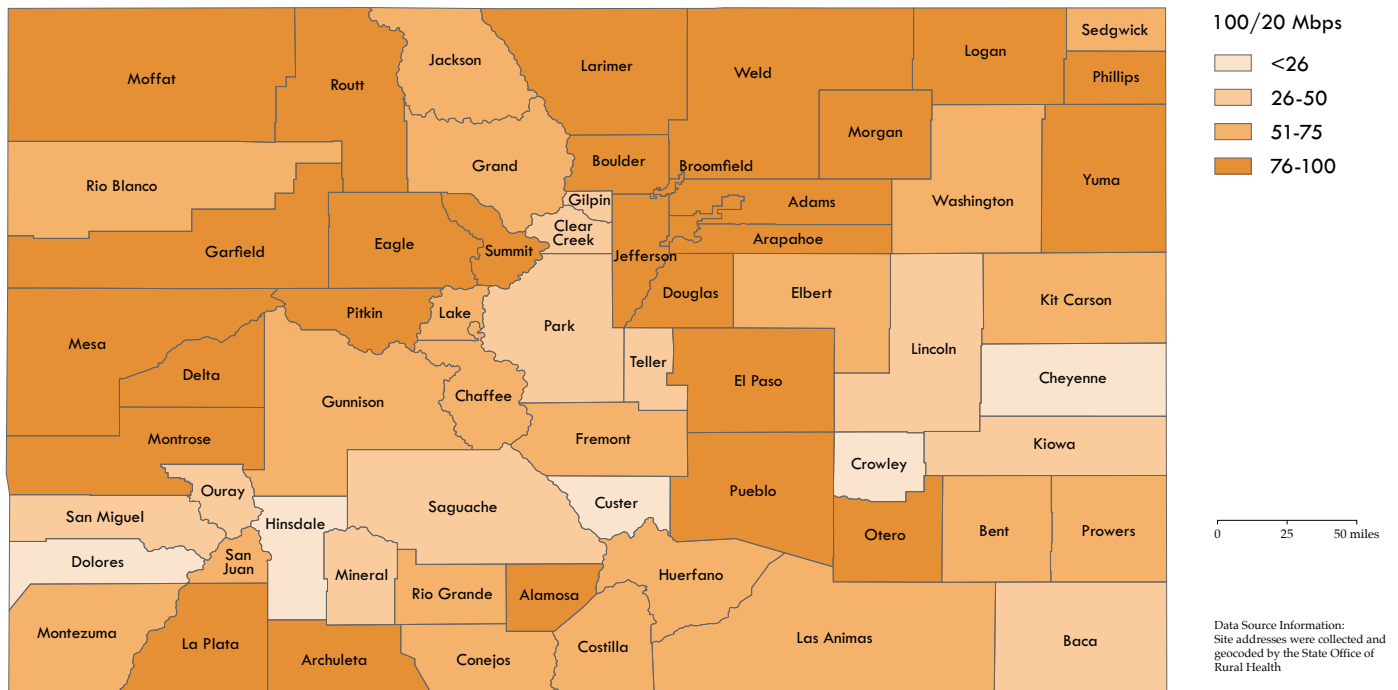


# Housing Instability, 2020

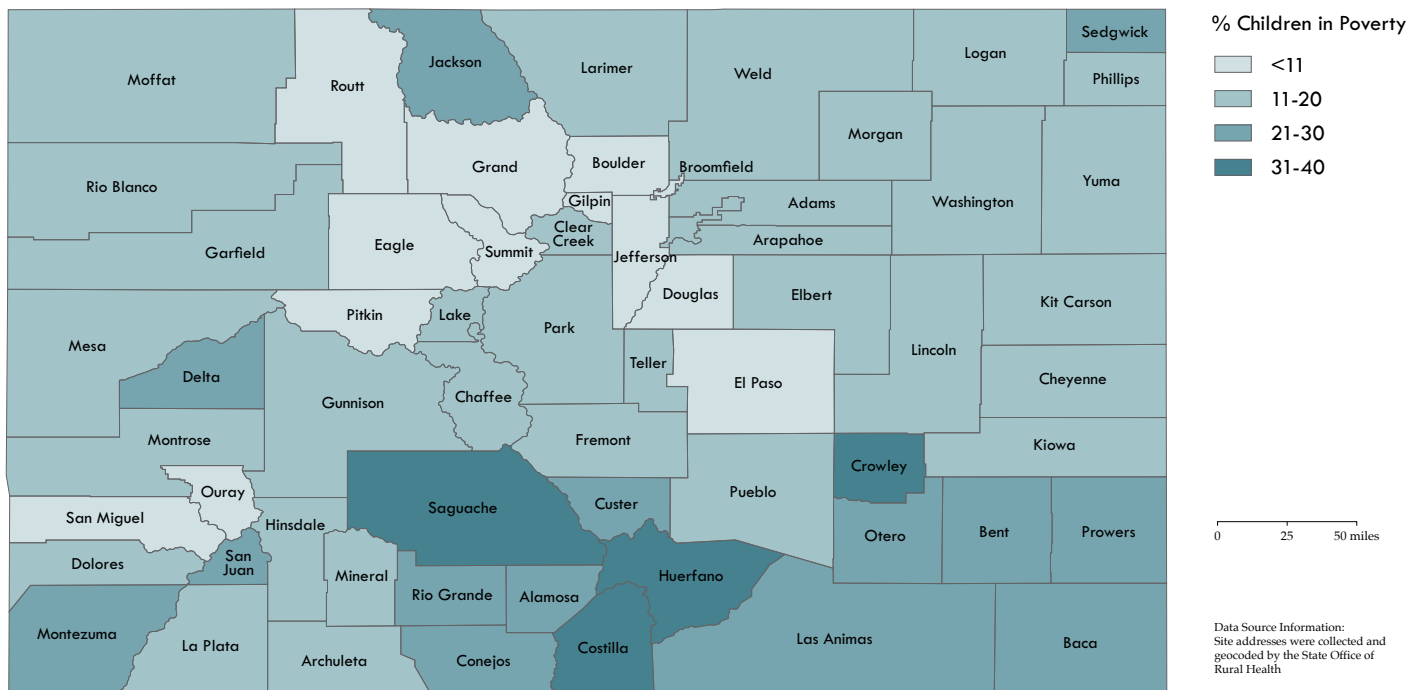




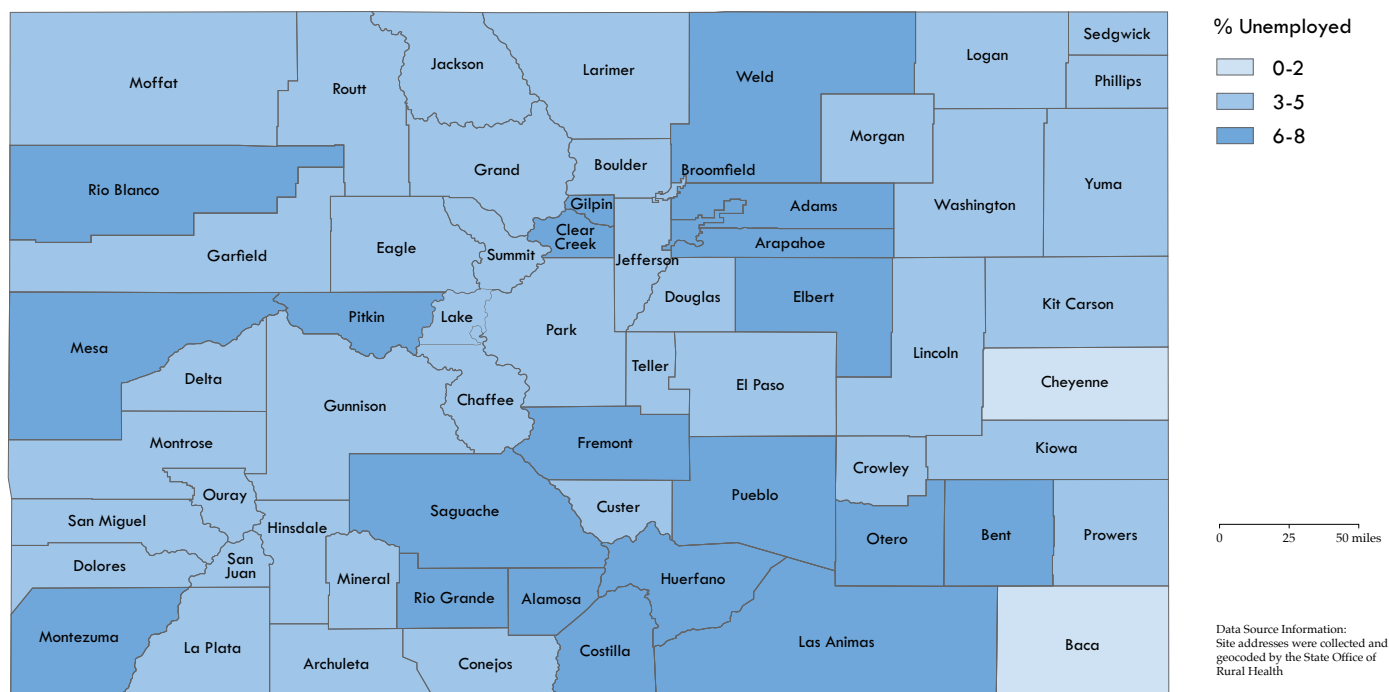
# Colorado Broadband, 2023



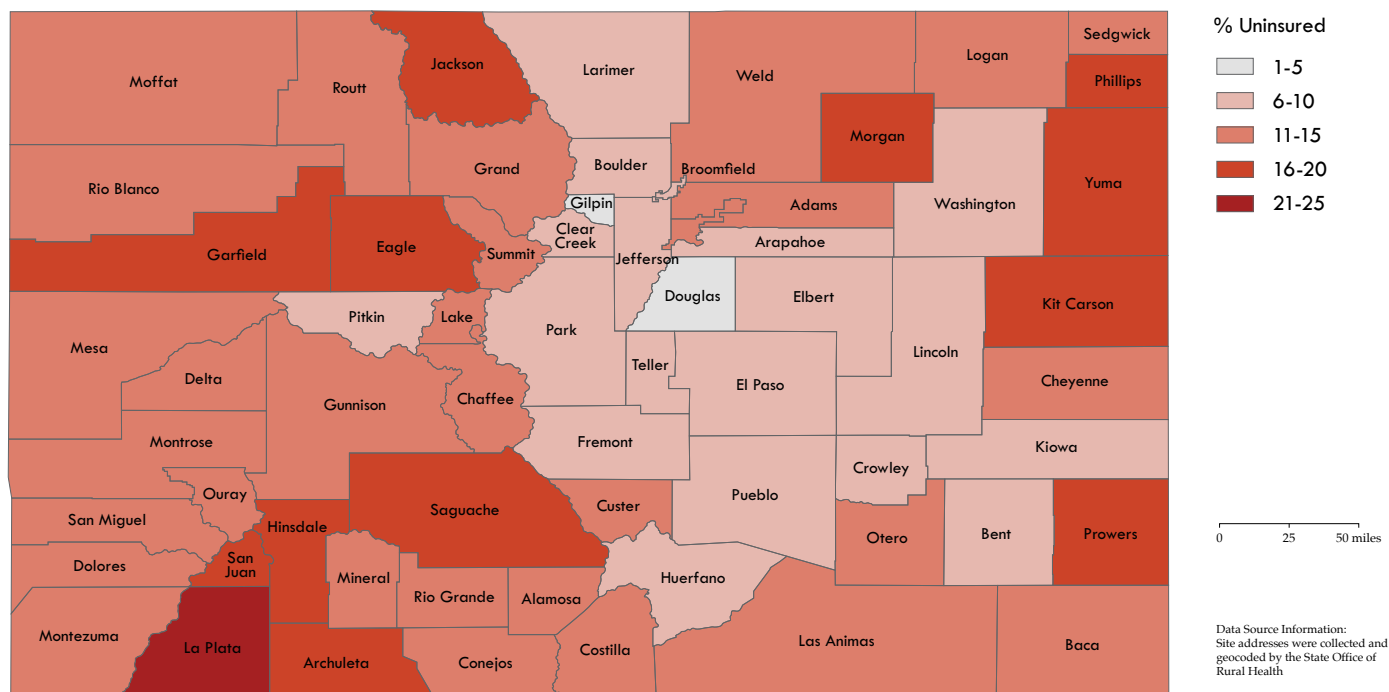
# Children in Poverty, 2021



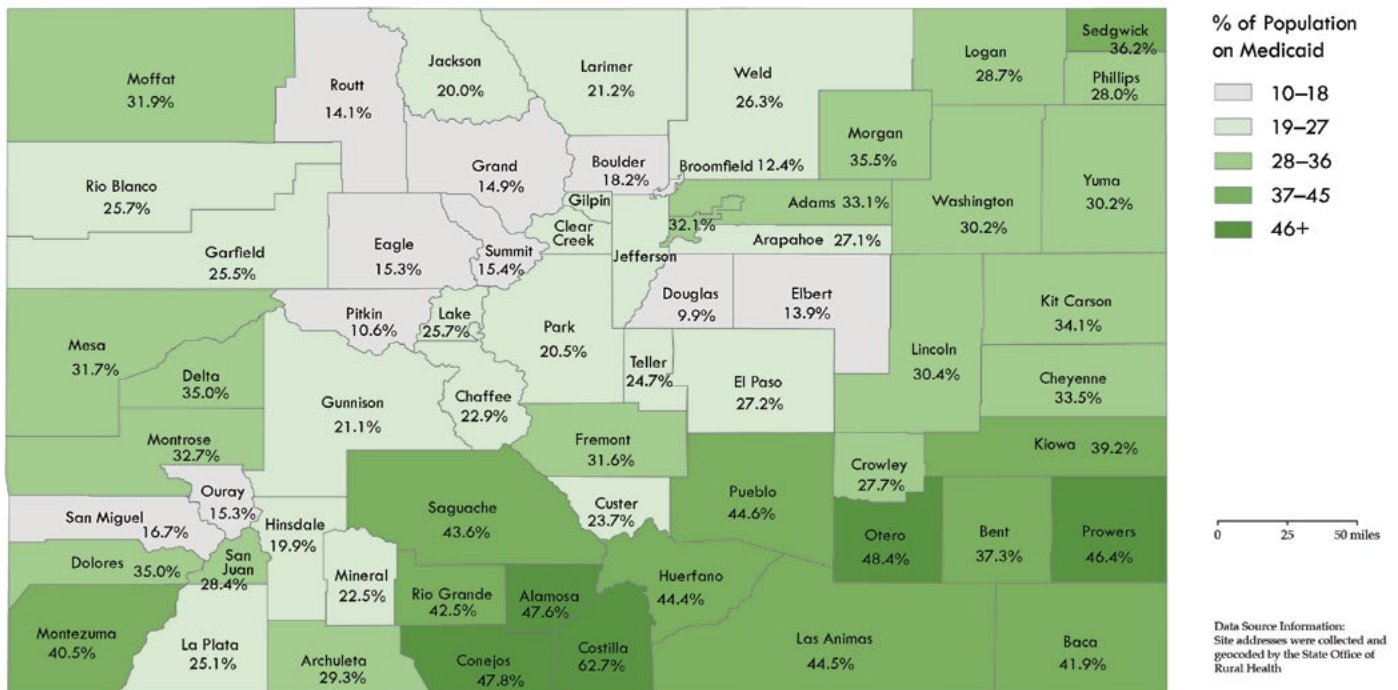
# Unemployment, 2021



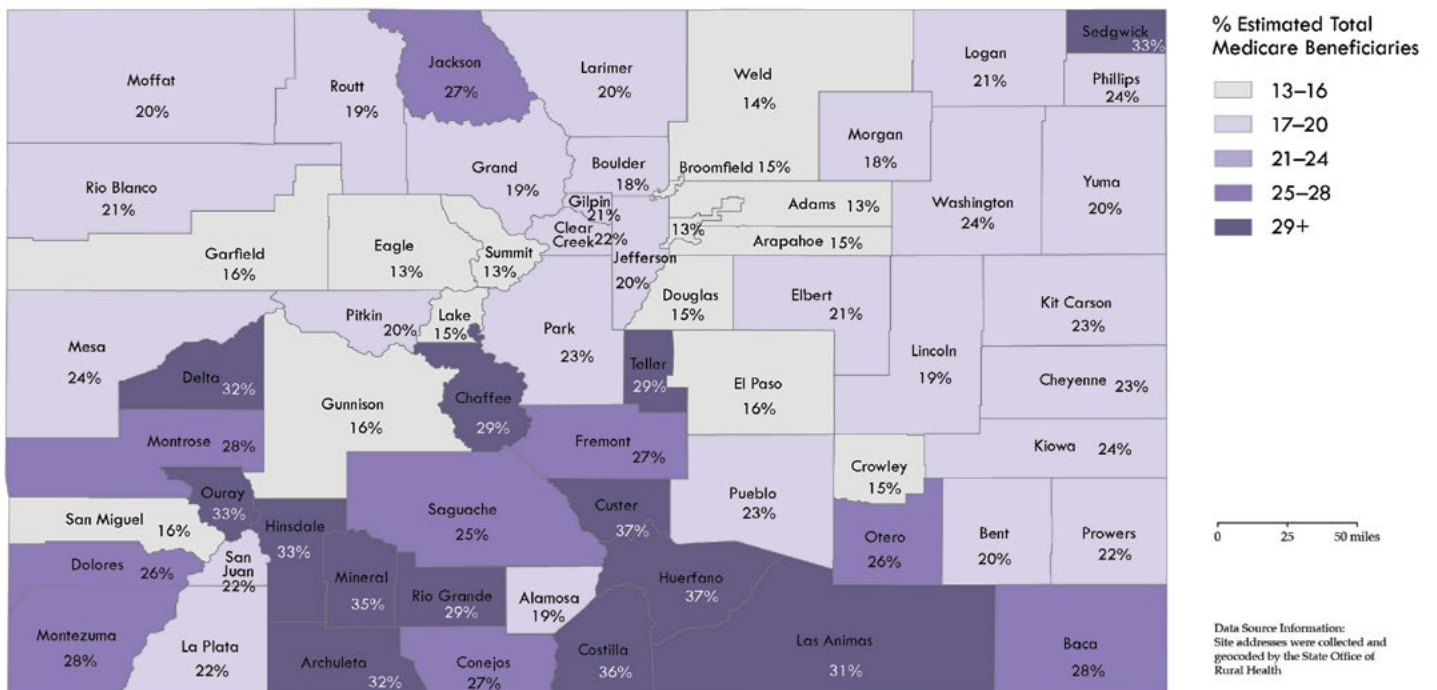
# Uninsured, 2021



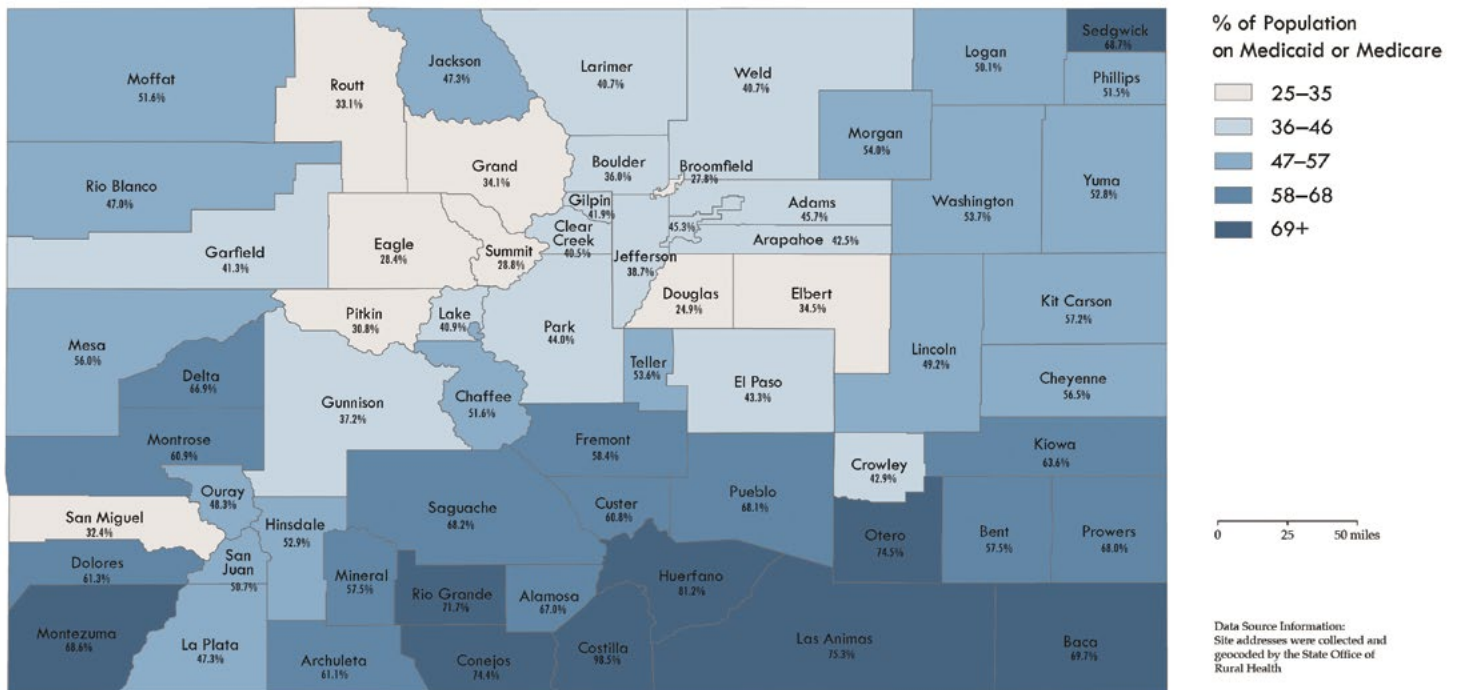
# Medicaid Caseload, 2023



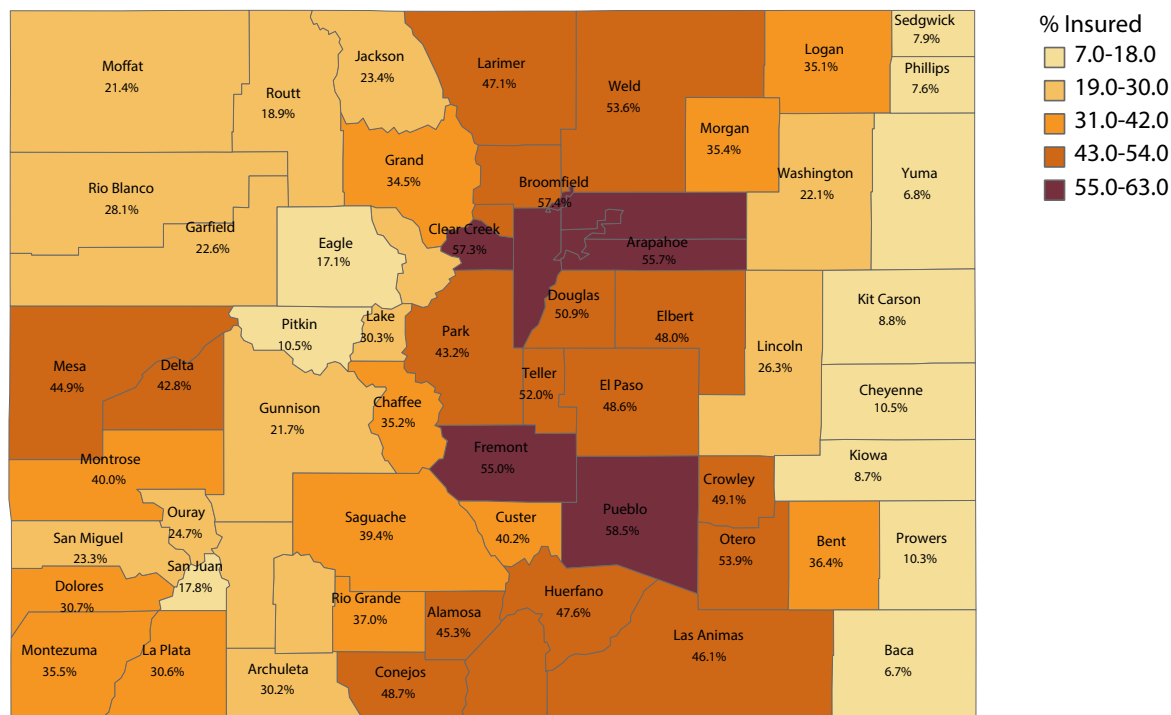
# Medicare Caseload, 2023



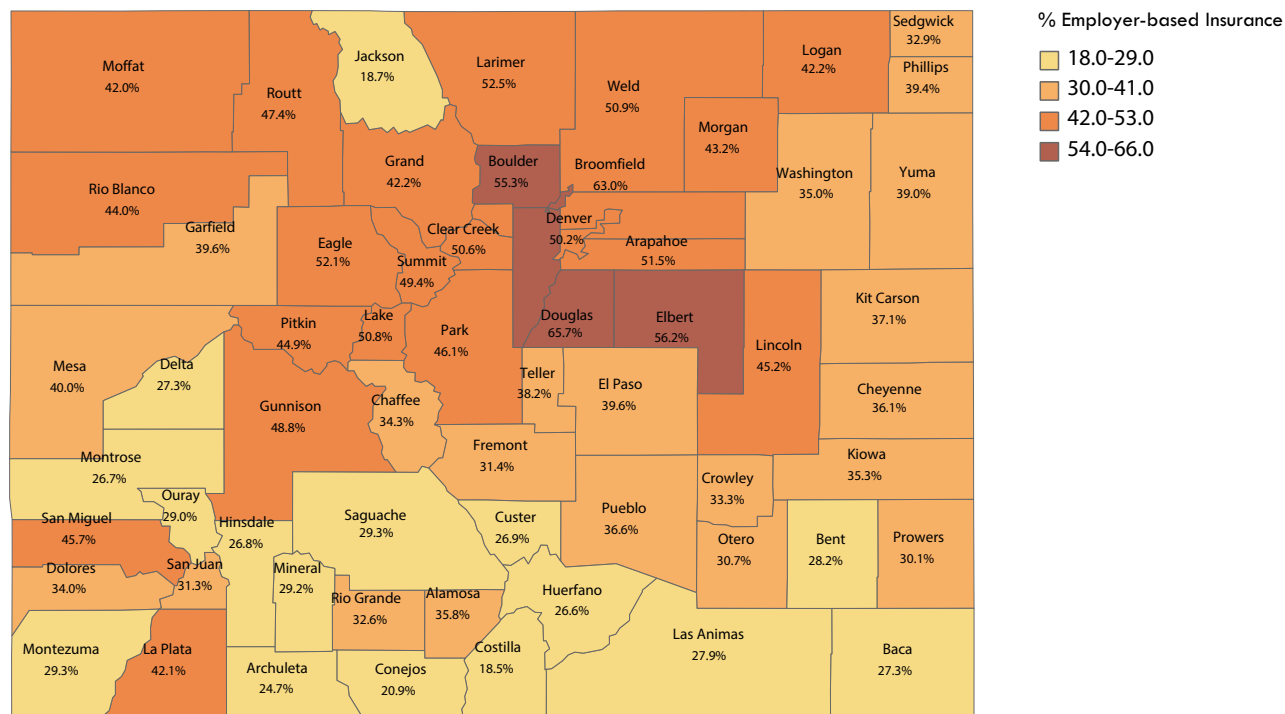
# Medicaid and Medicare Caseload, 2023



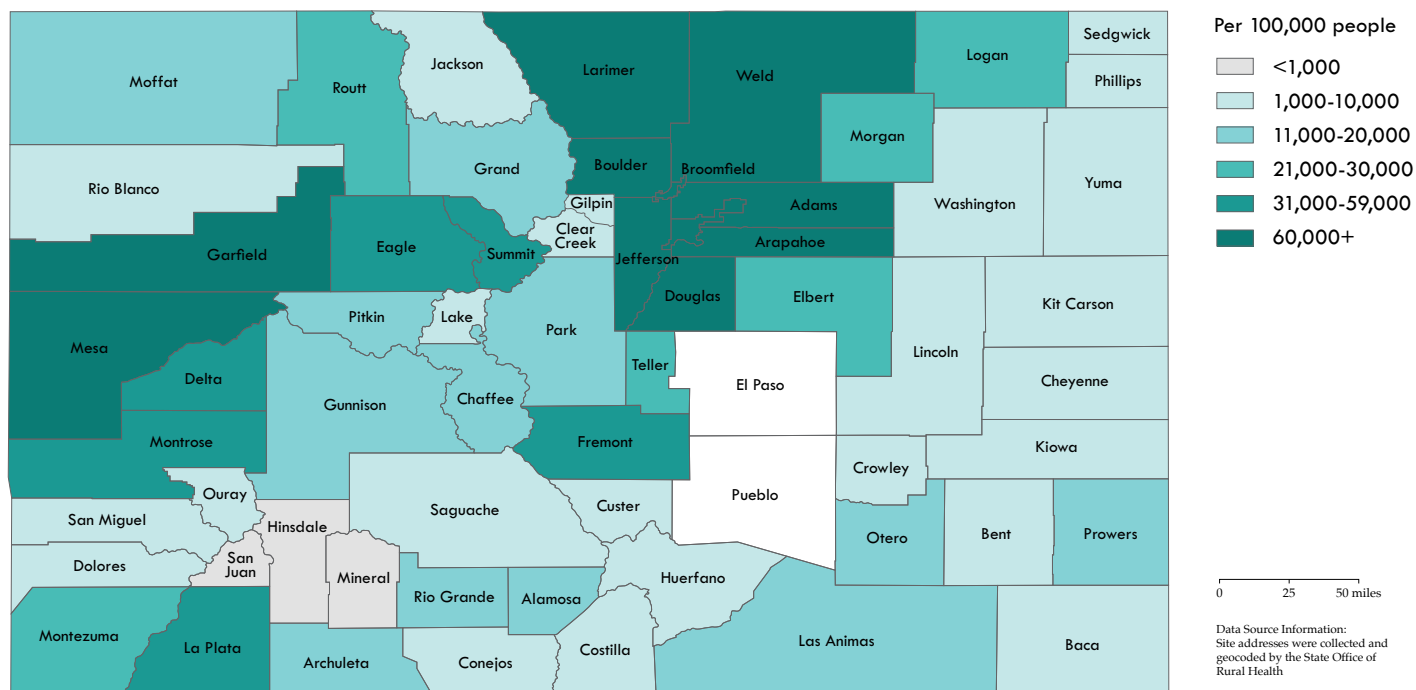
# Medicare Beneficiaries Enrolled in Medicare Advantage Plans, 2023



# Employer-Based Health Insurance, 2022

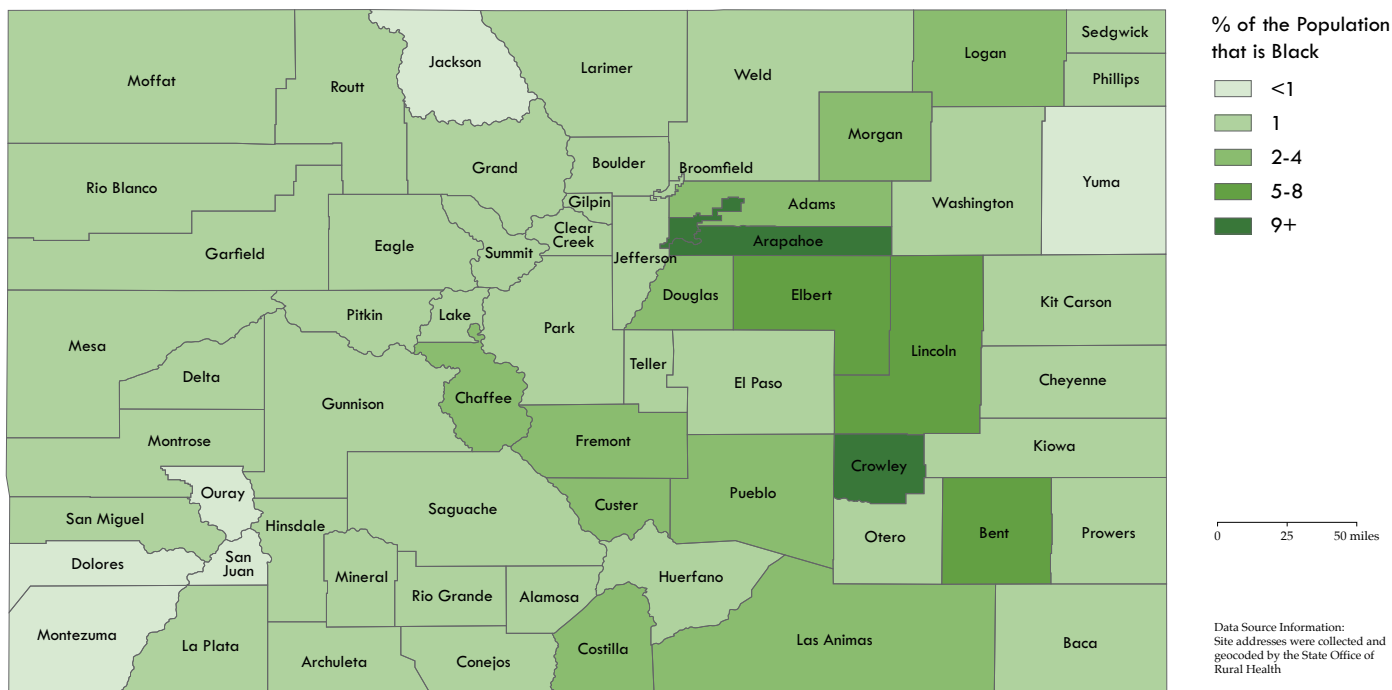


# Population Estimates 2022

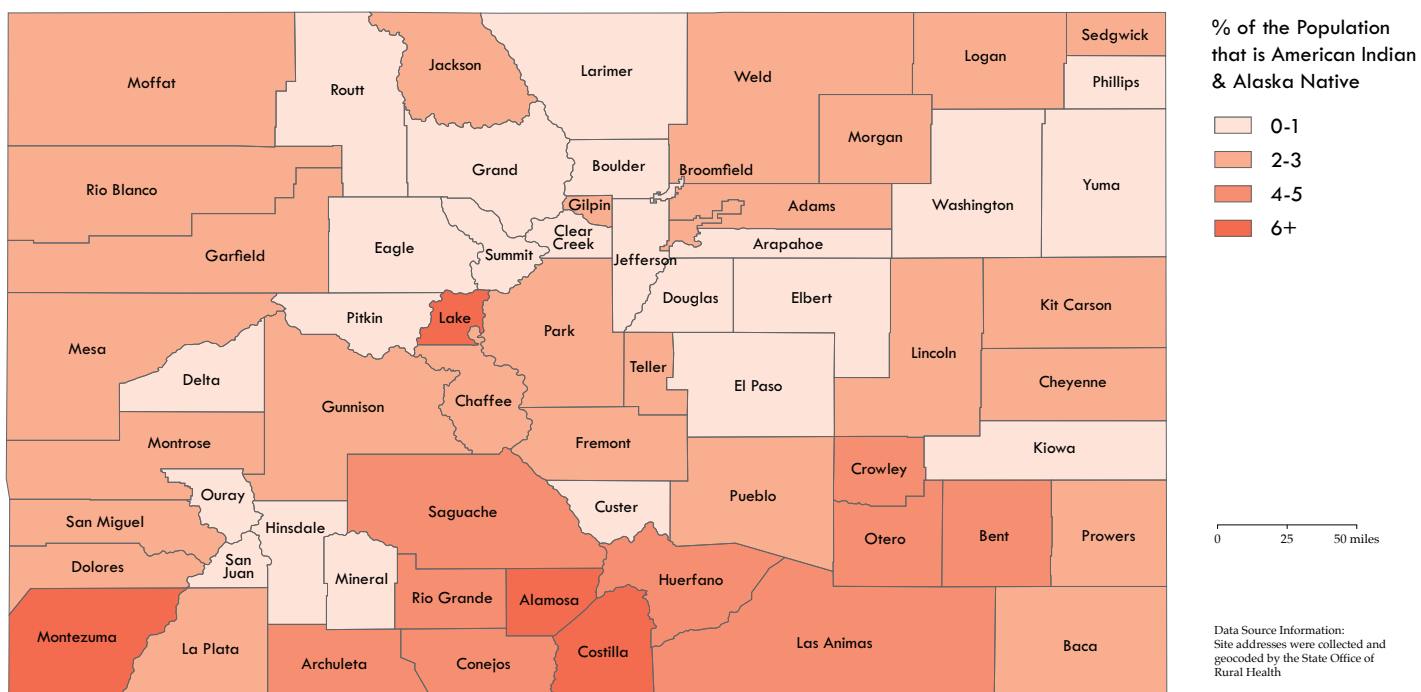




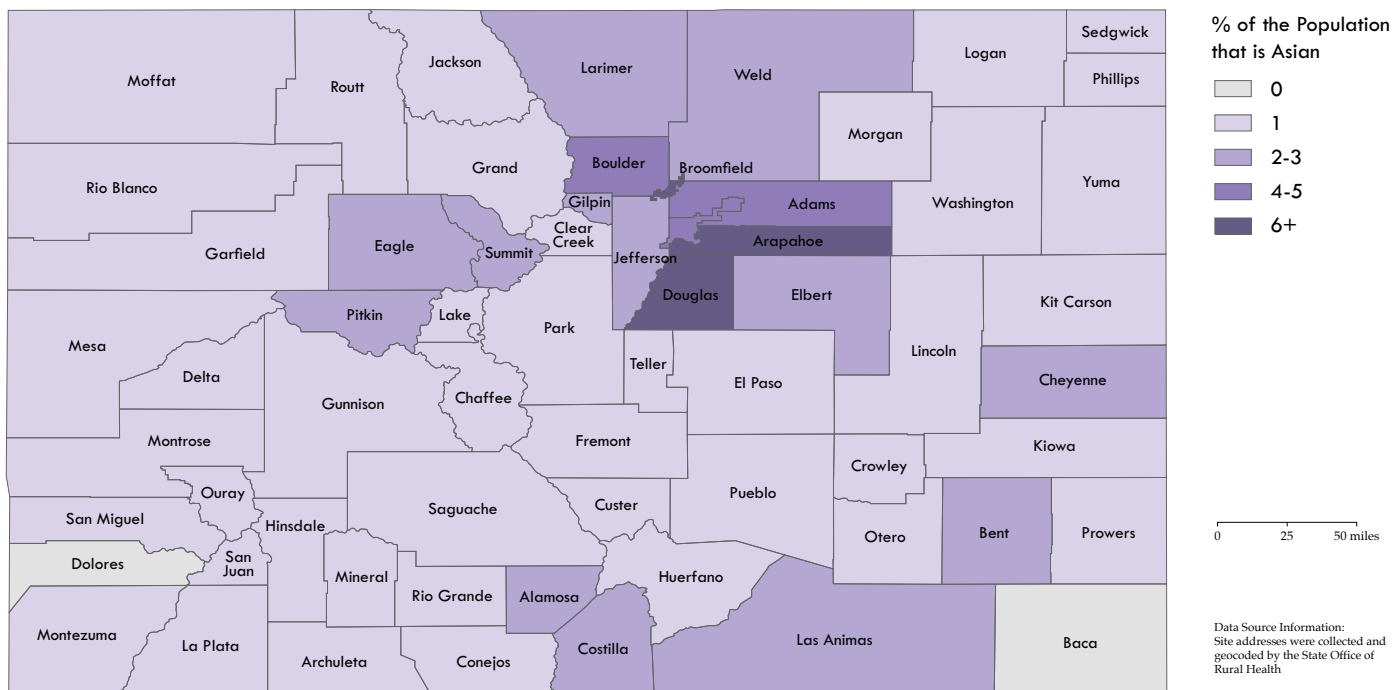
# Black Population, 2021



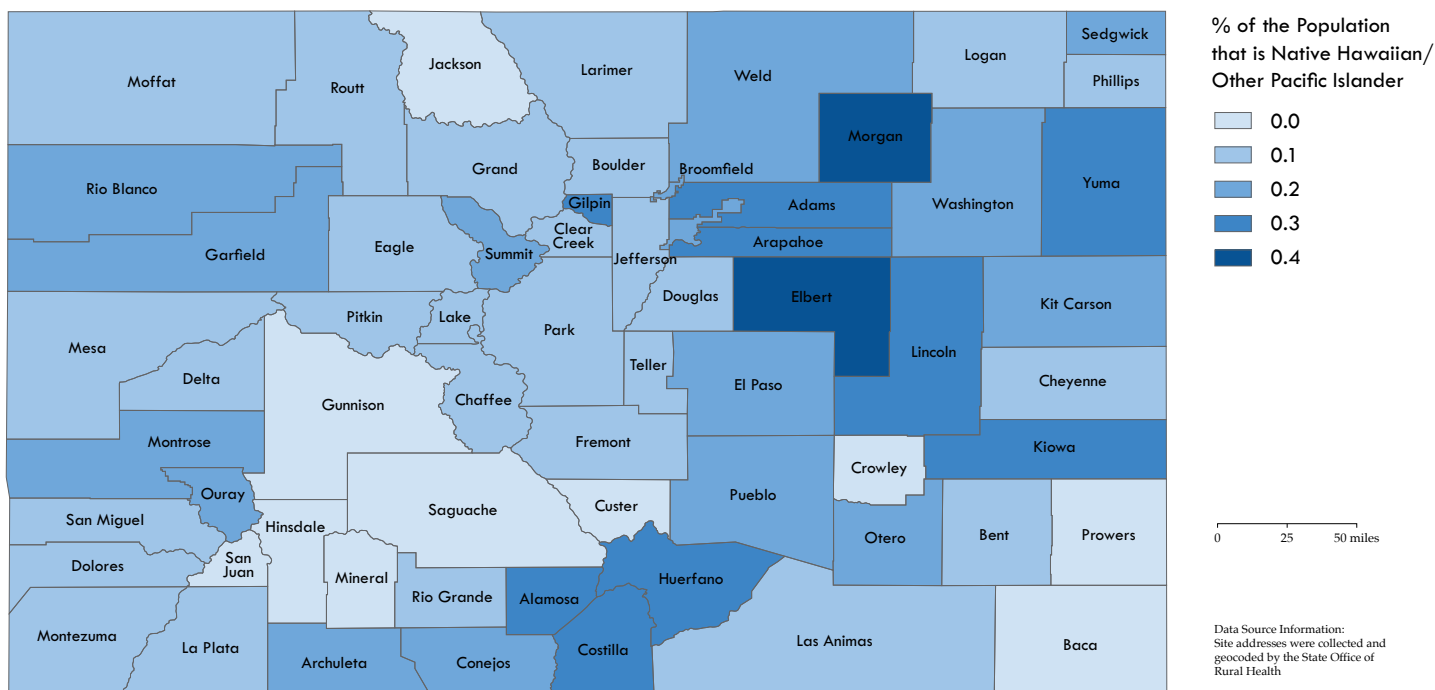
# American Indian & Alaska Native Population, 2021



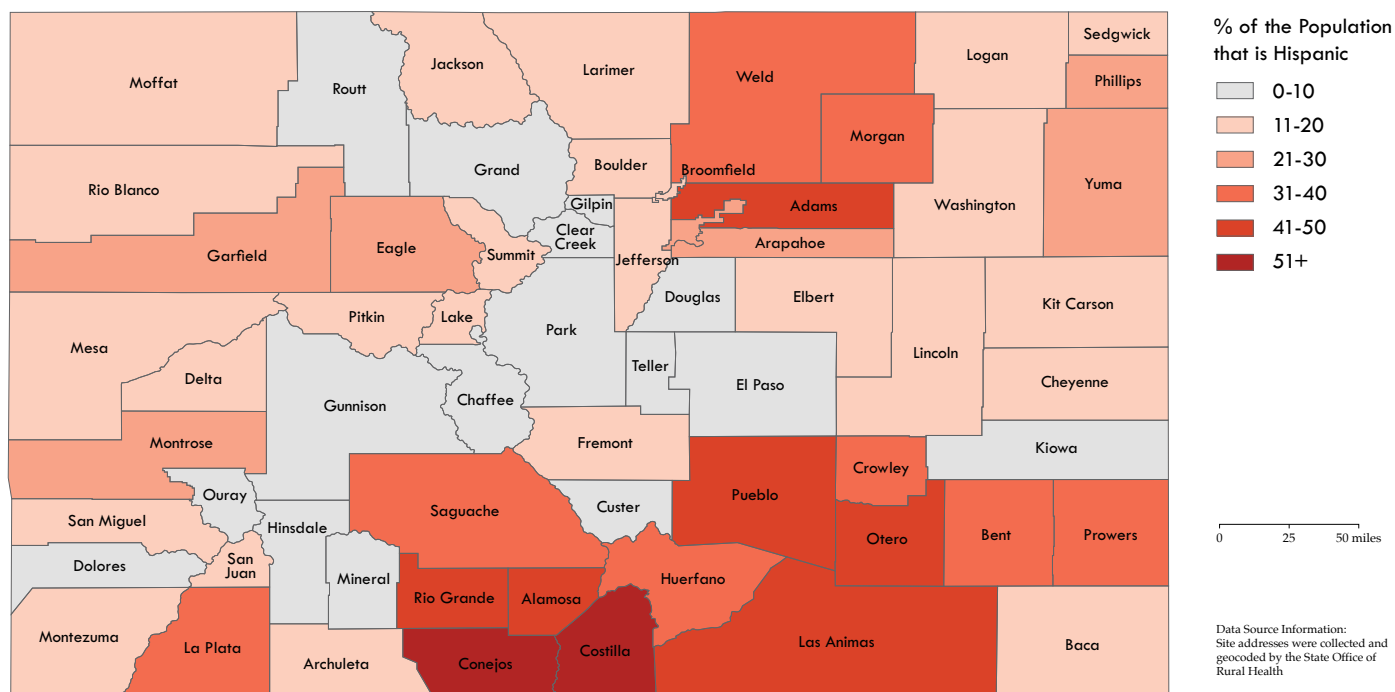
# Asian Population, 2021



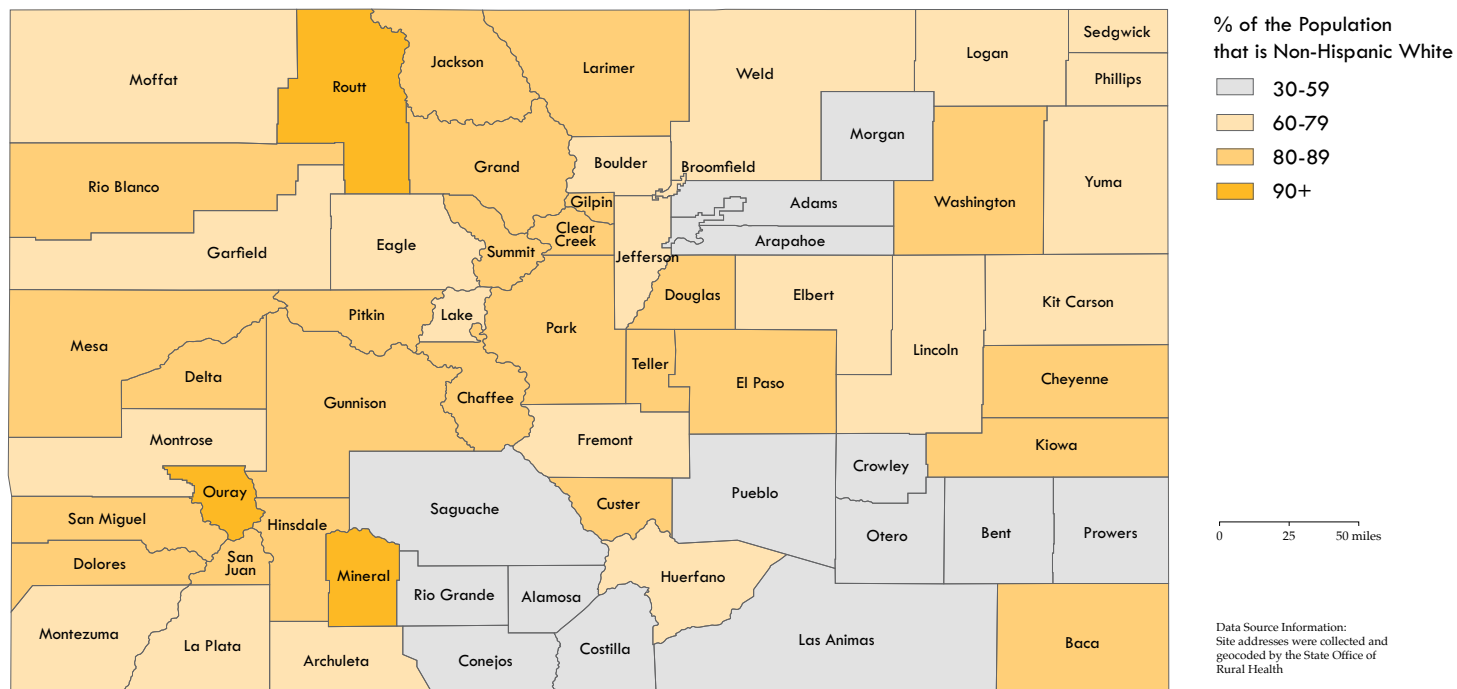
# Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Population, 2021



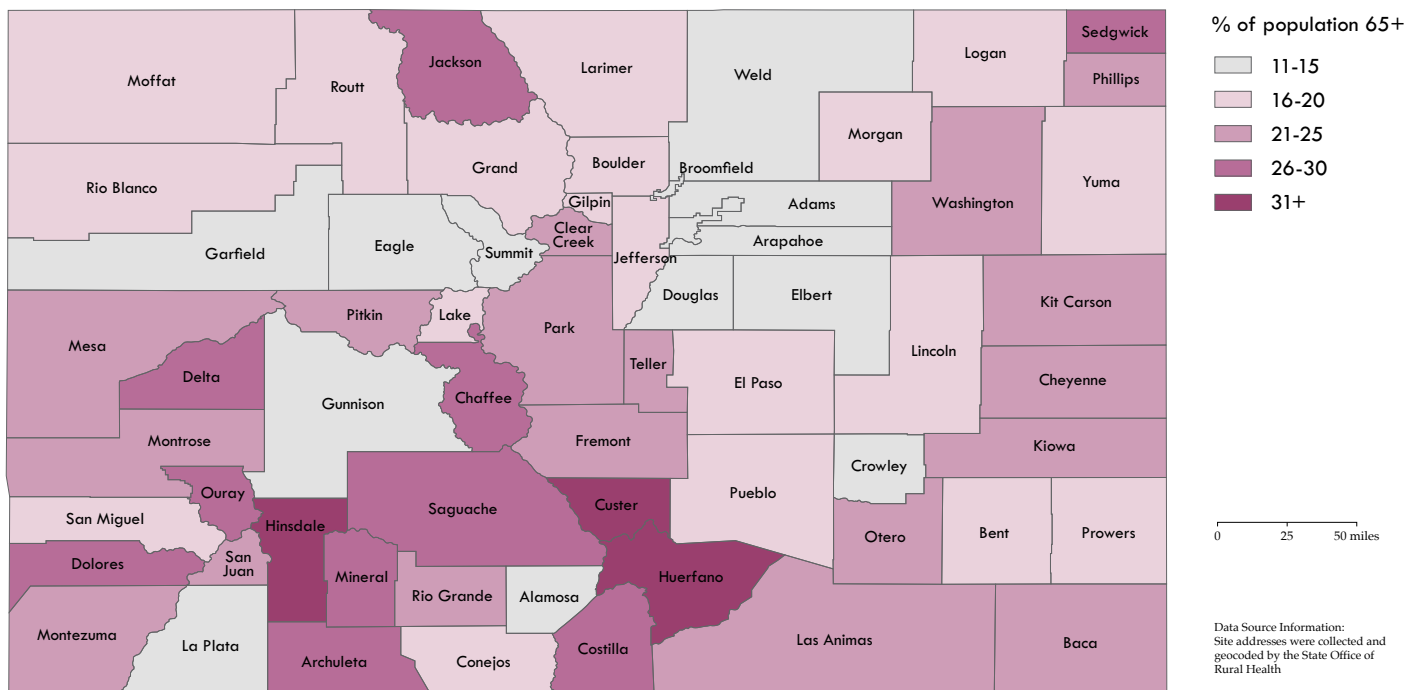
# Hispanic Population, 2021



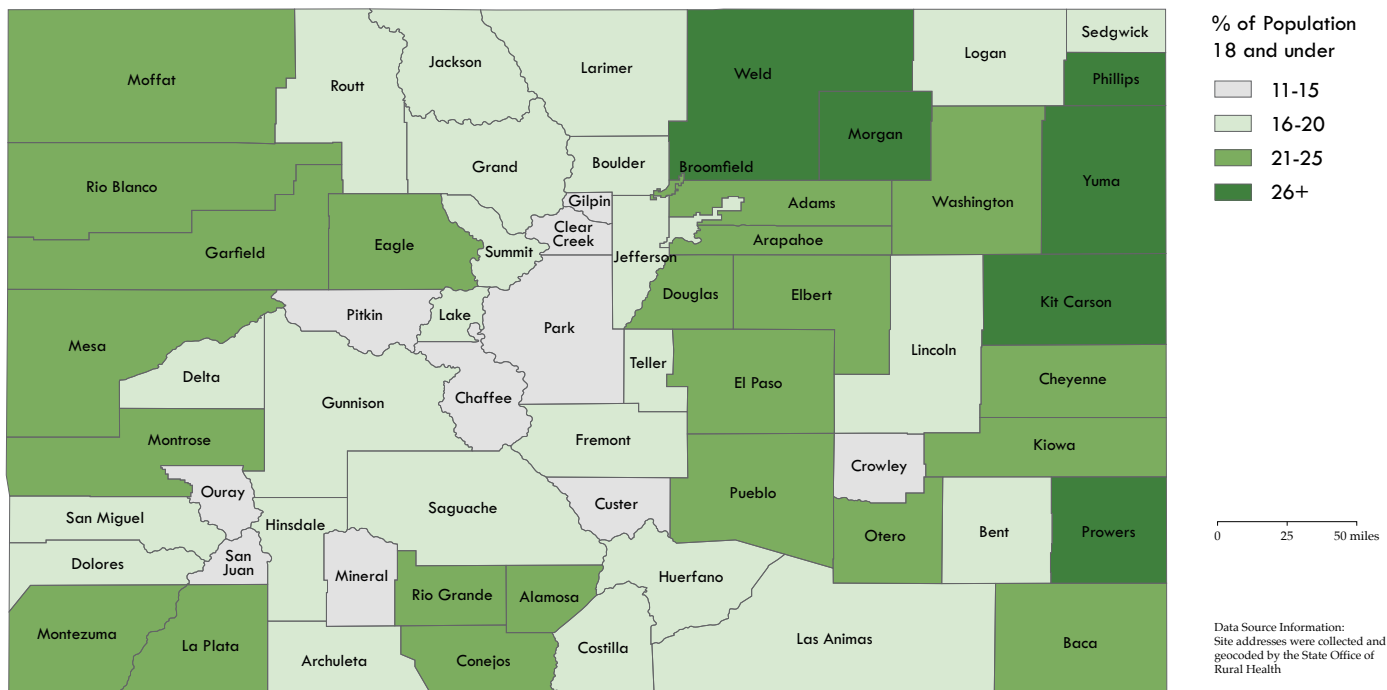
# Non-Hispanic White Population, 2021



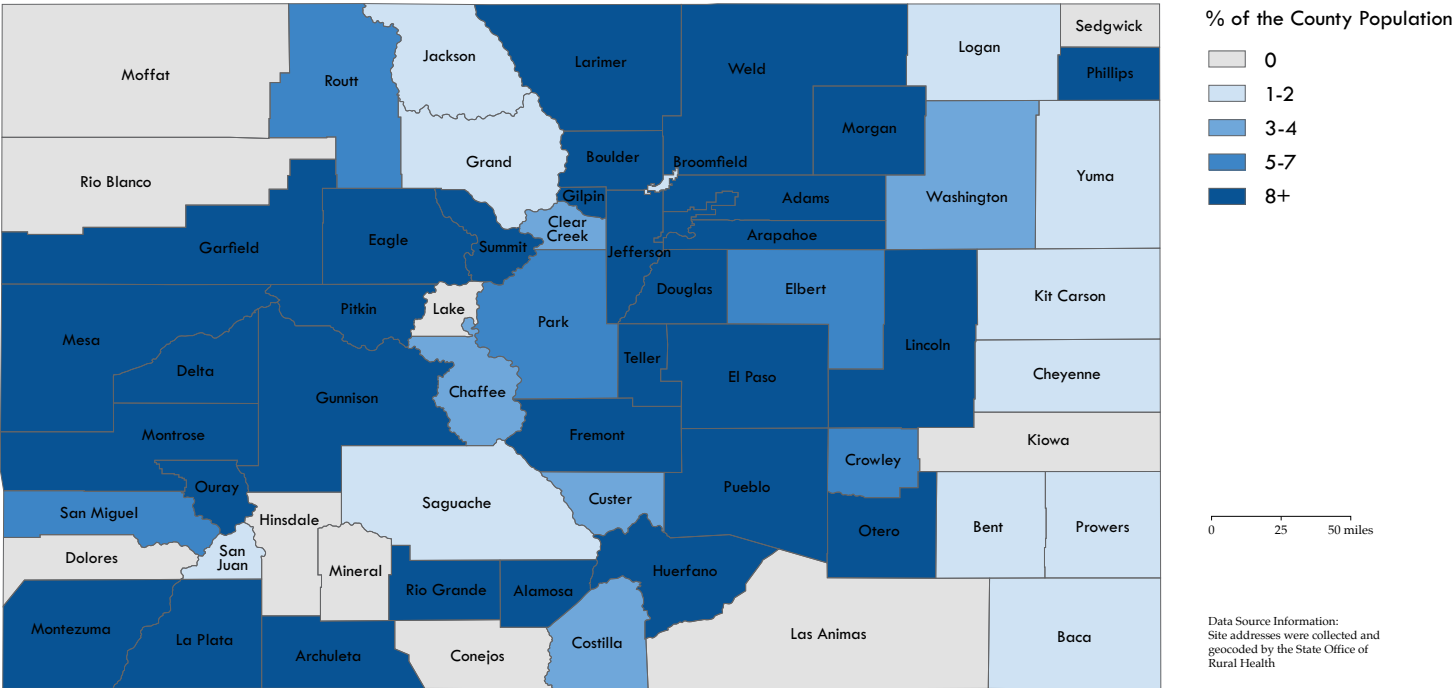
# 65+ Population, 2021



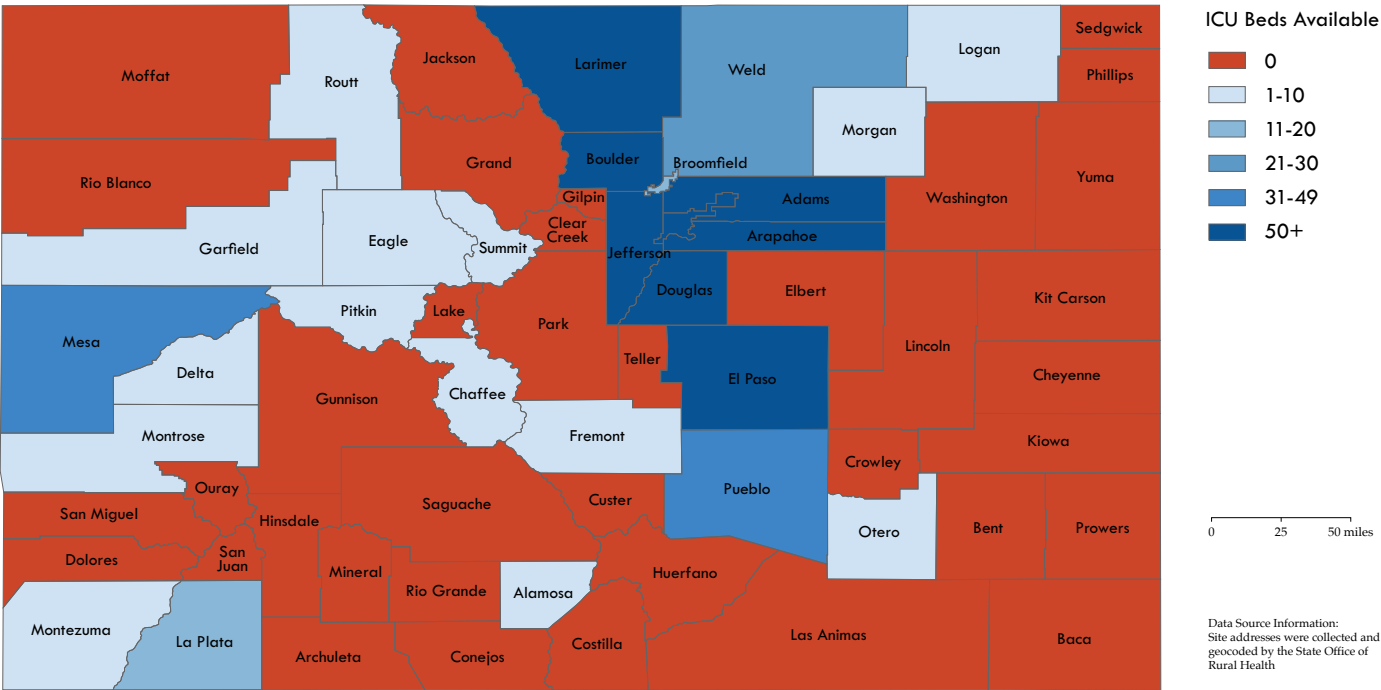
# 18 and Under Population, 2021



# Veteran Population, 2022

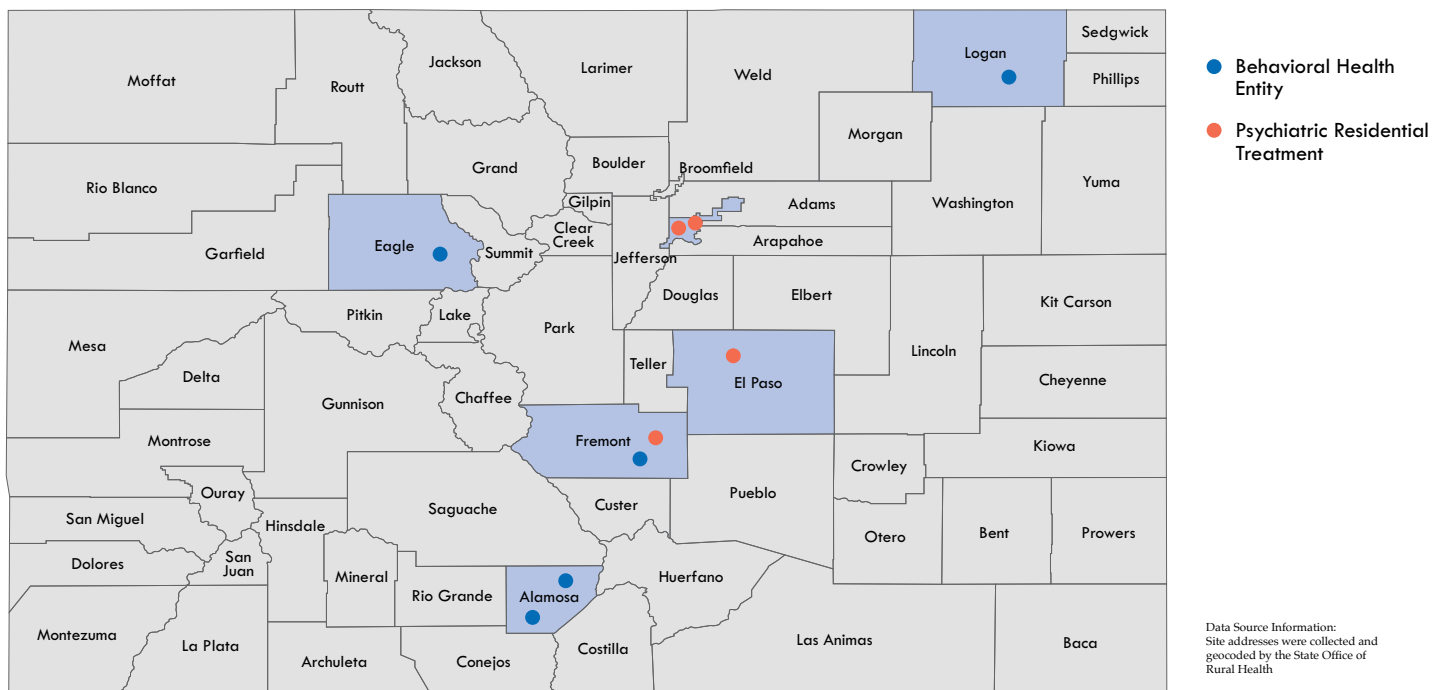


# ICU Beds, 2023

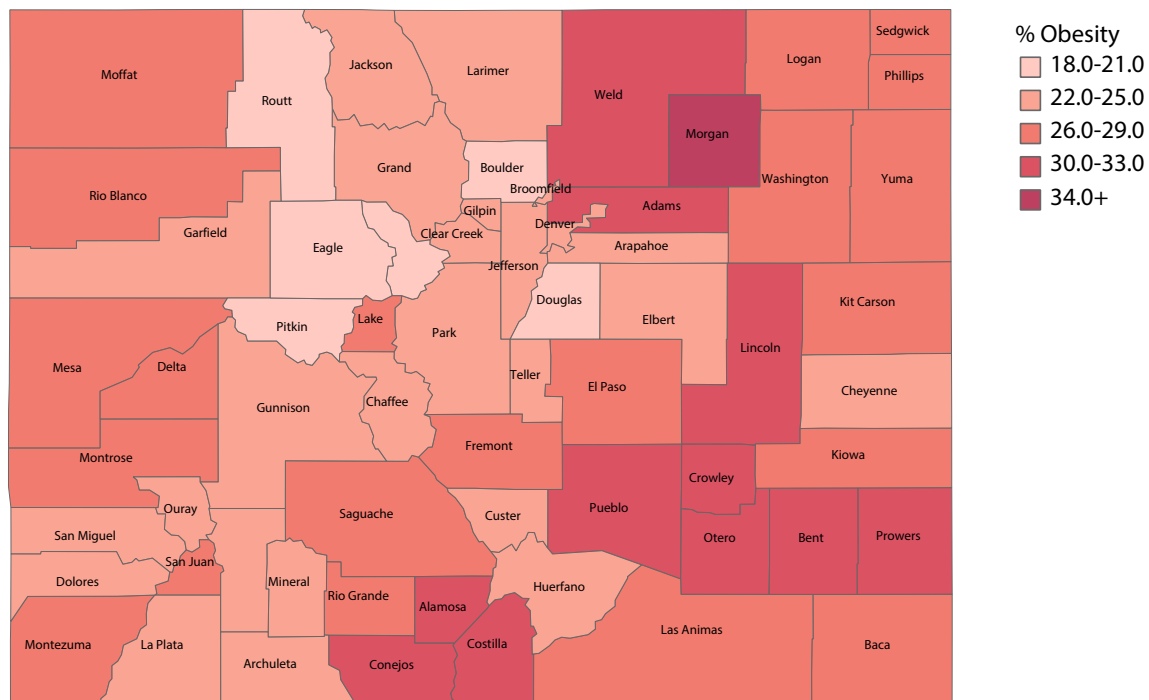




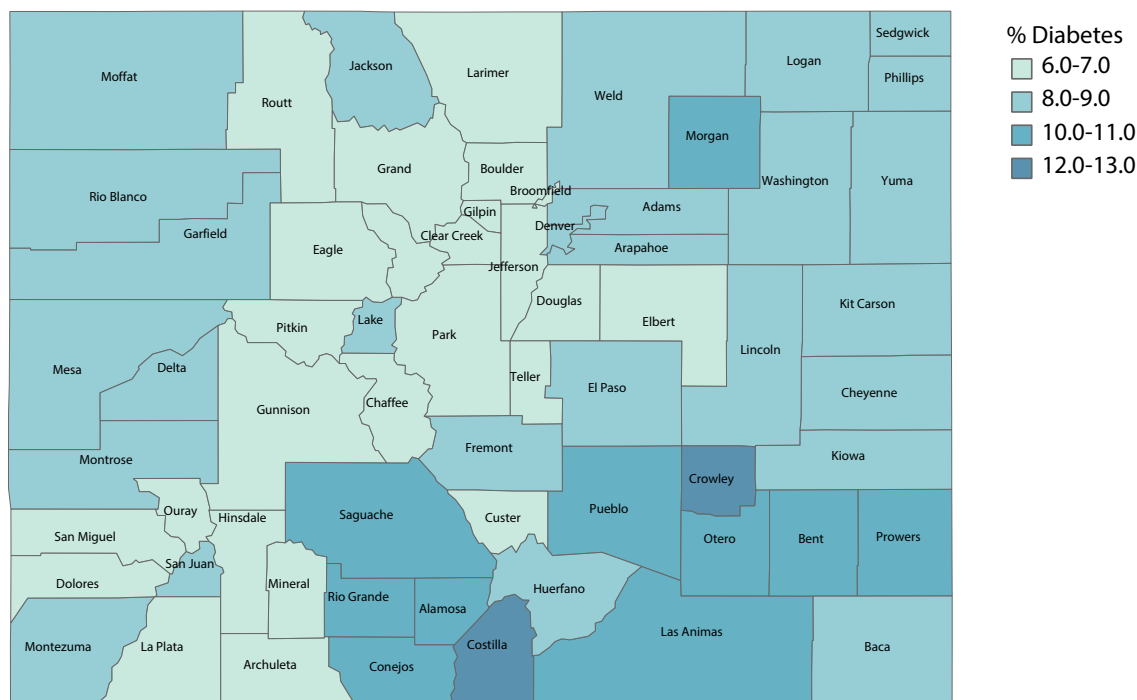
# Mental Health Facilities by Type, 2023



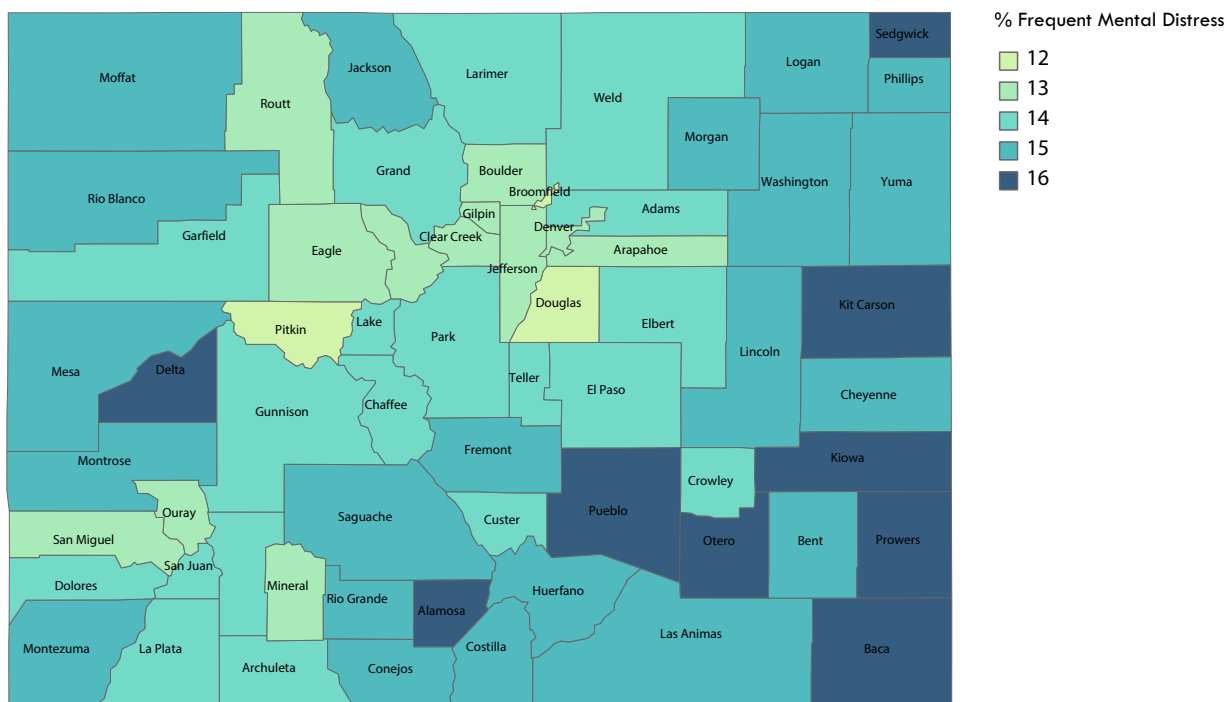
# Obesity, 2020



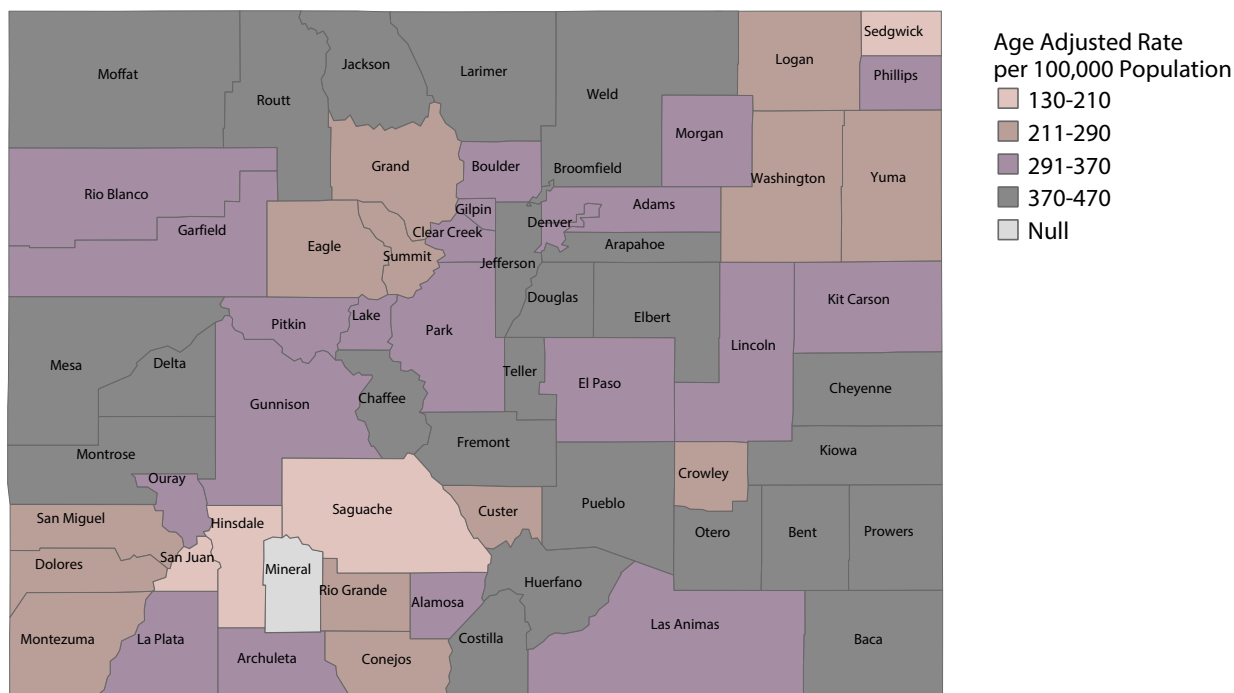
# Diabetes, 2020



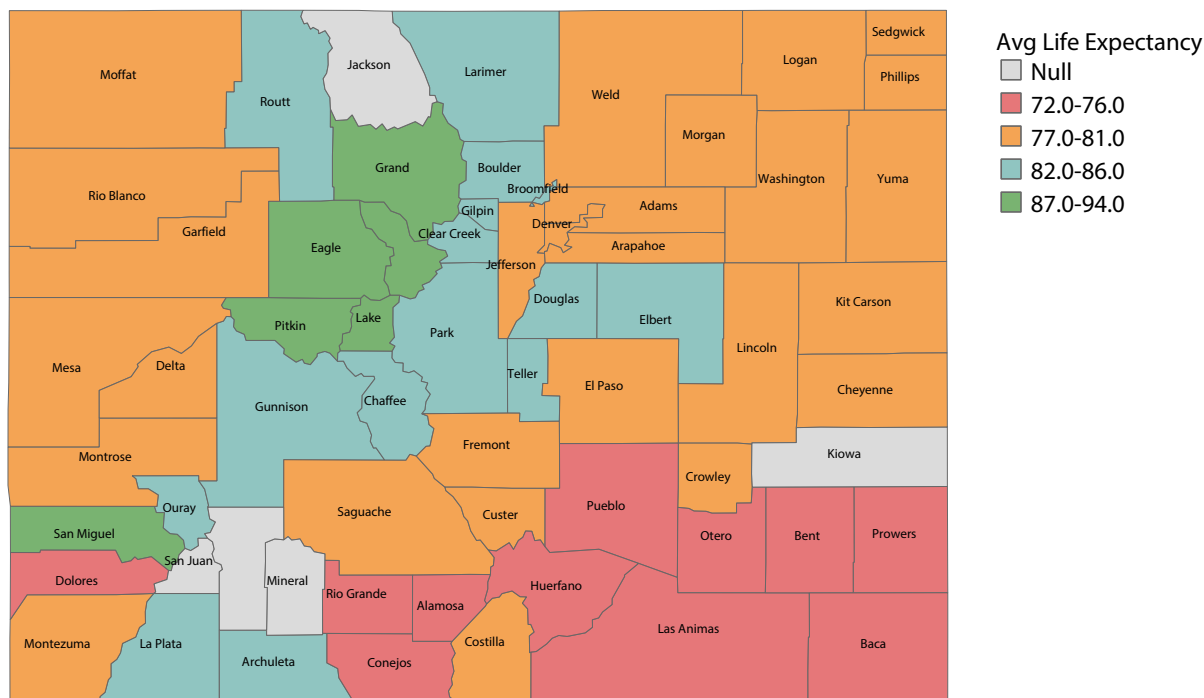
# Adults Reporting 14 or More days of Poor Mental Health per Month (age-adjusted), 2020



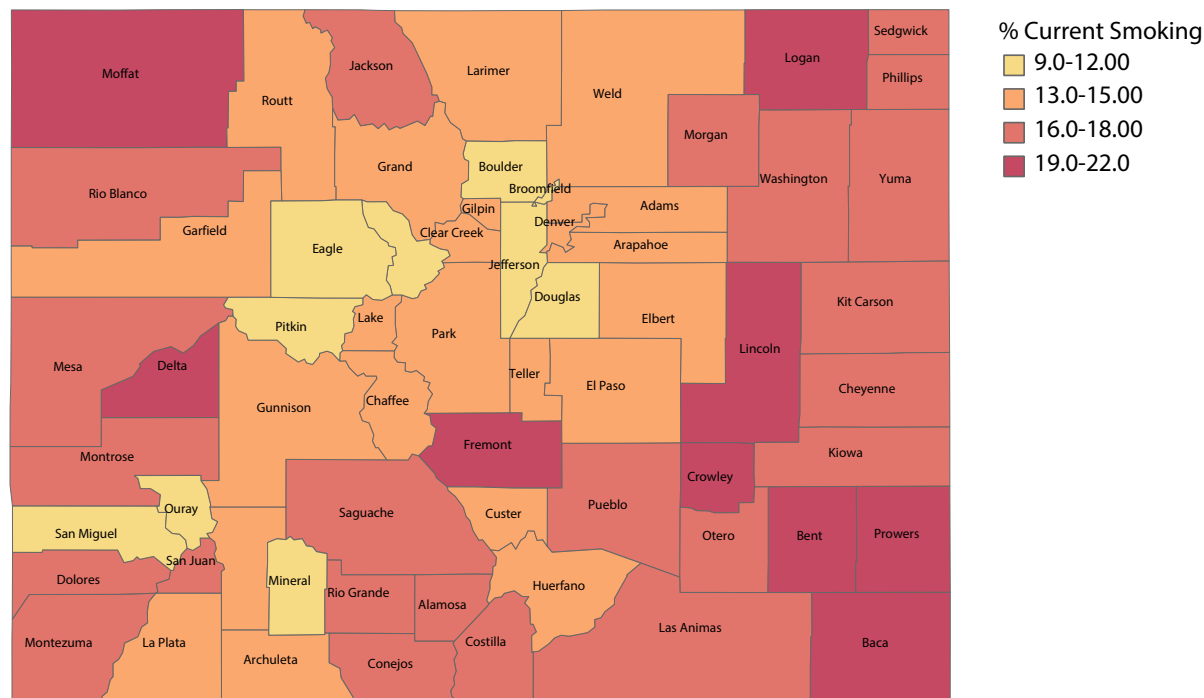
# Cancer Incidence Age Adjusted Rate, 2020



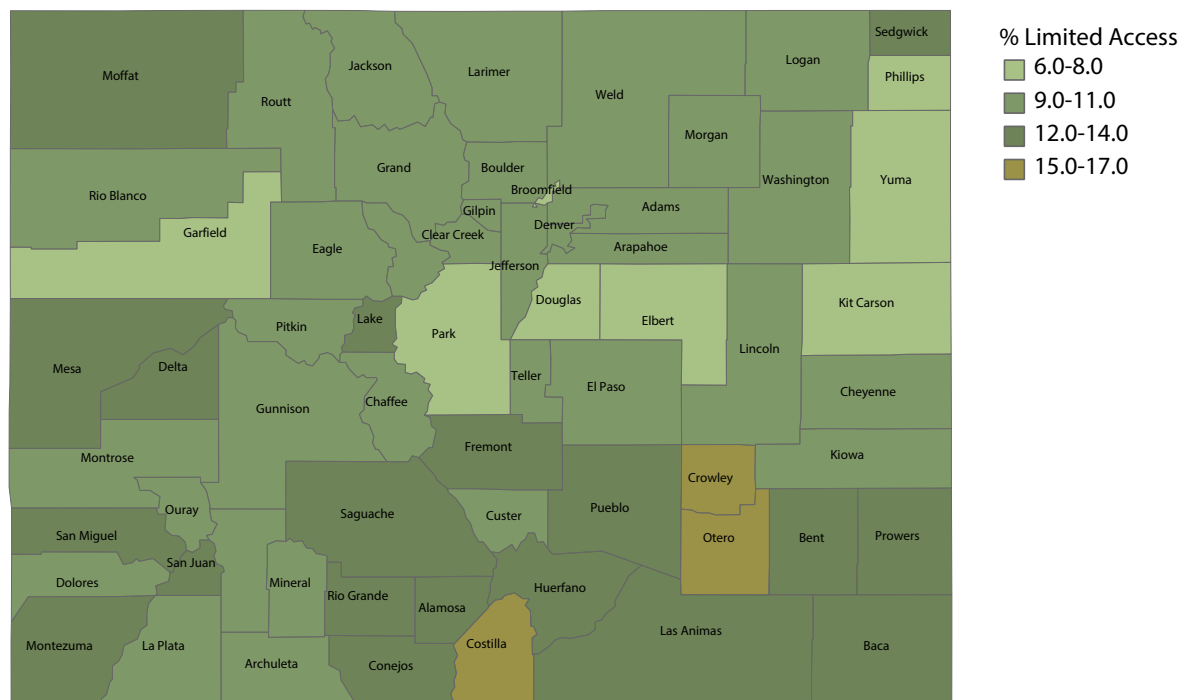
# Life Expectancy, 2020



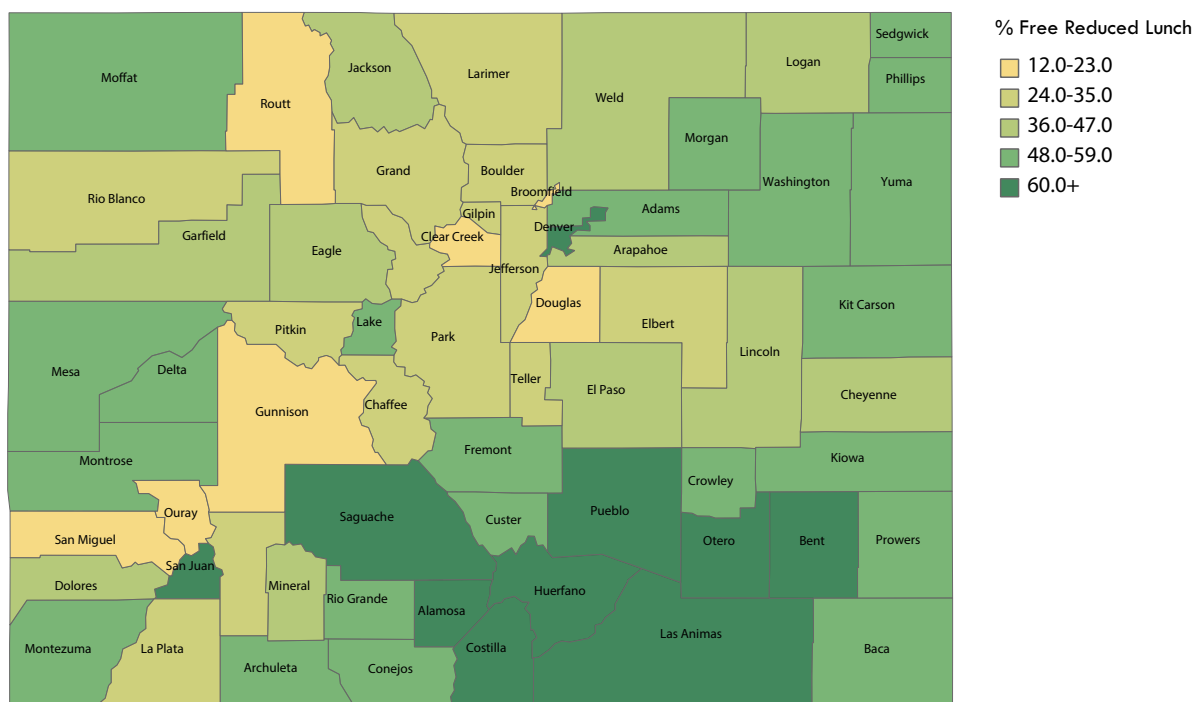
# Current Smoking, 2020



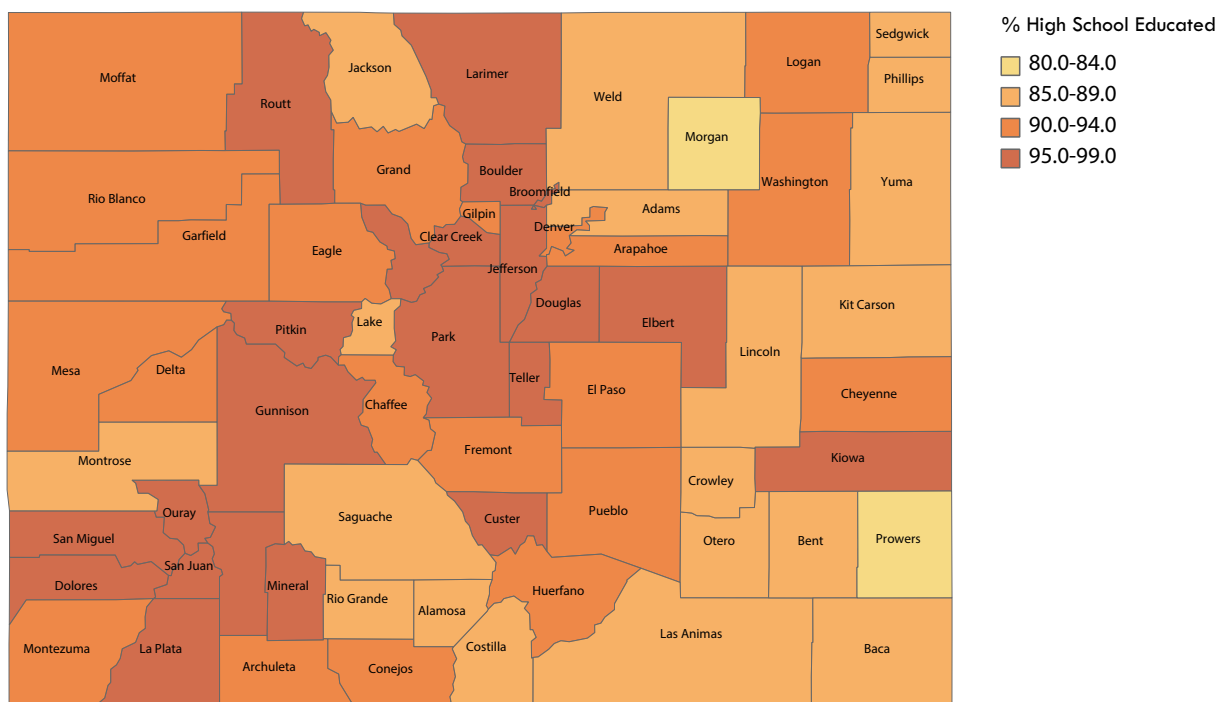
# Limited Access to Healthy Foods, 2020



# Enrolled in Free or Reduced Lunch, 2021

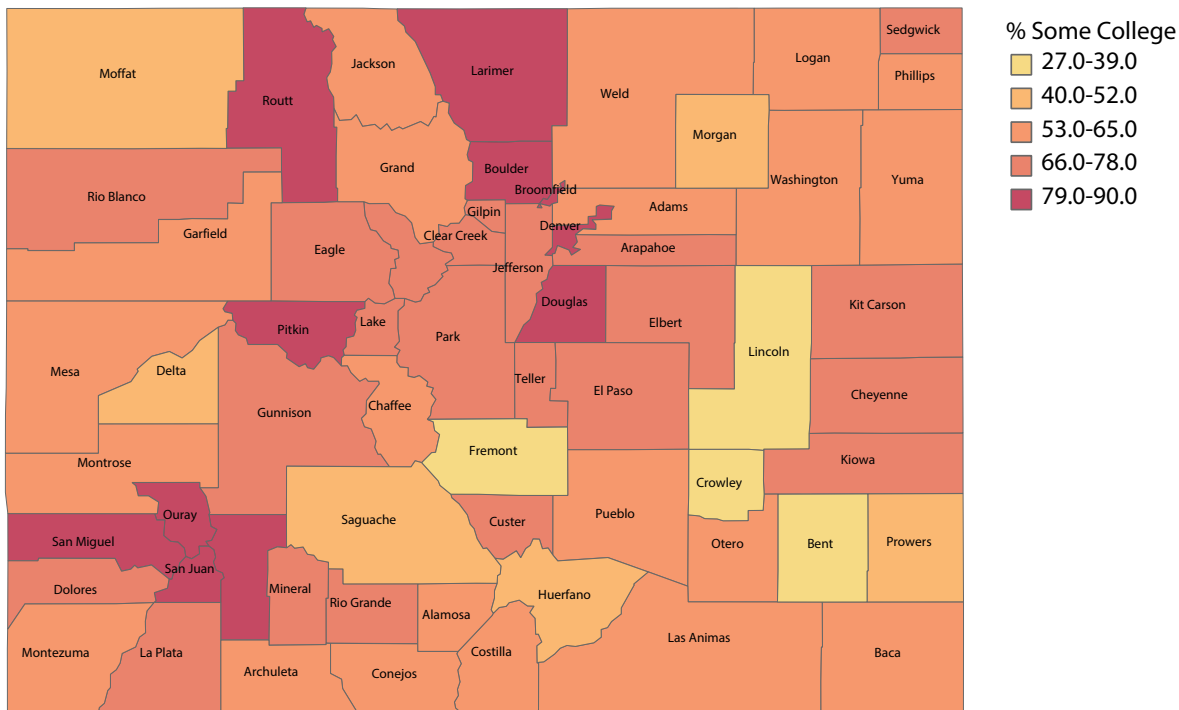


# High School Educated, 2021

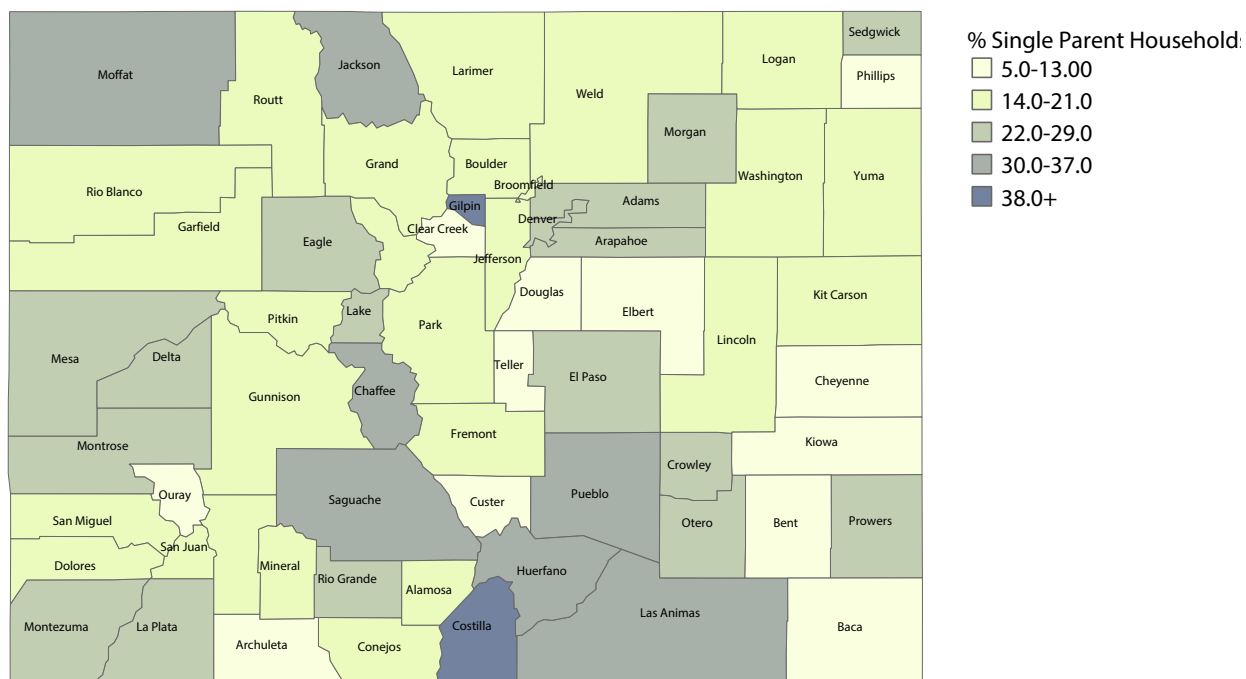




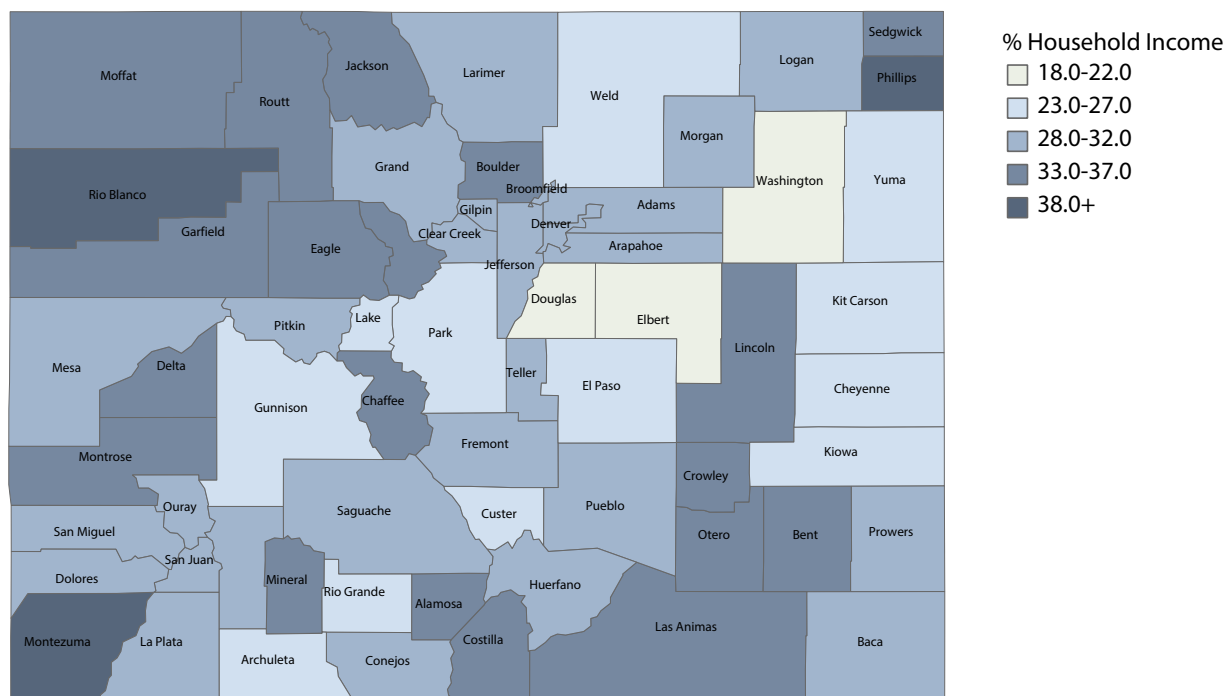
# Some College Educated, 2021



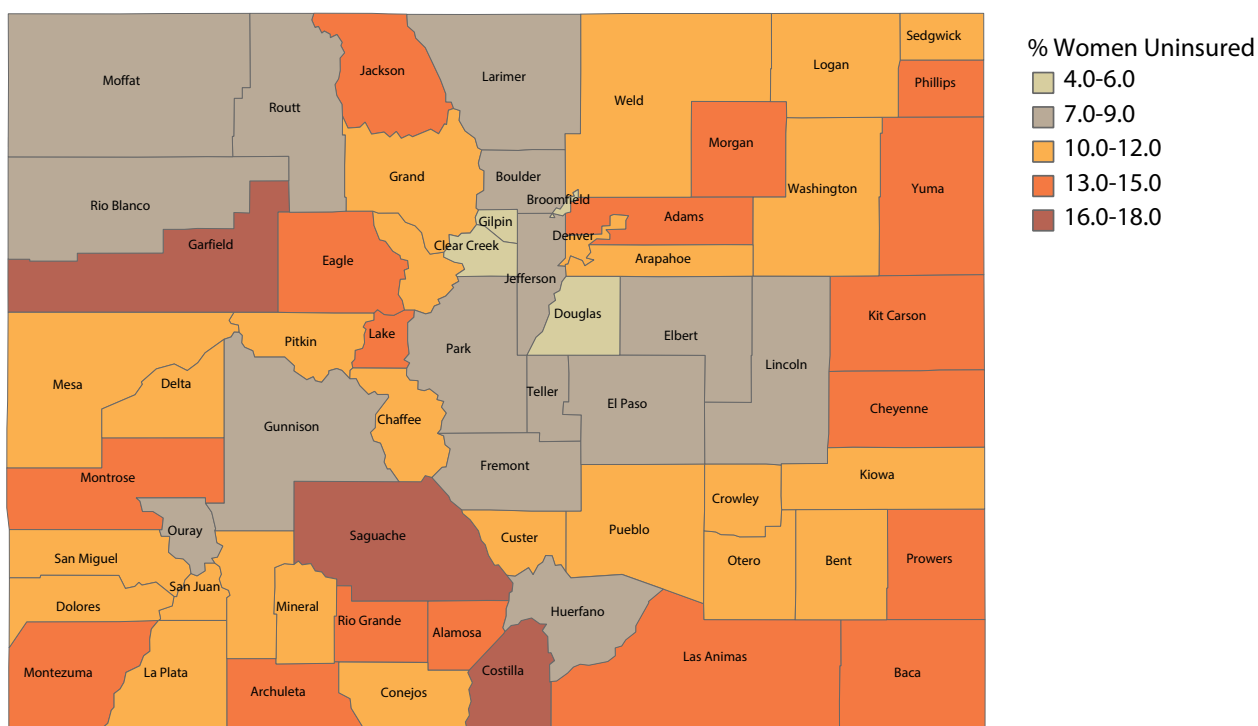
# Children in Single Parent Households, 2021



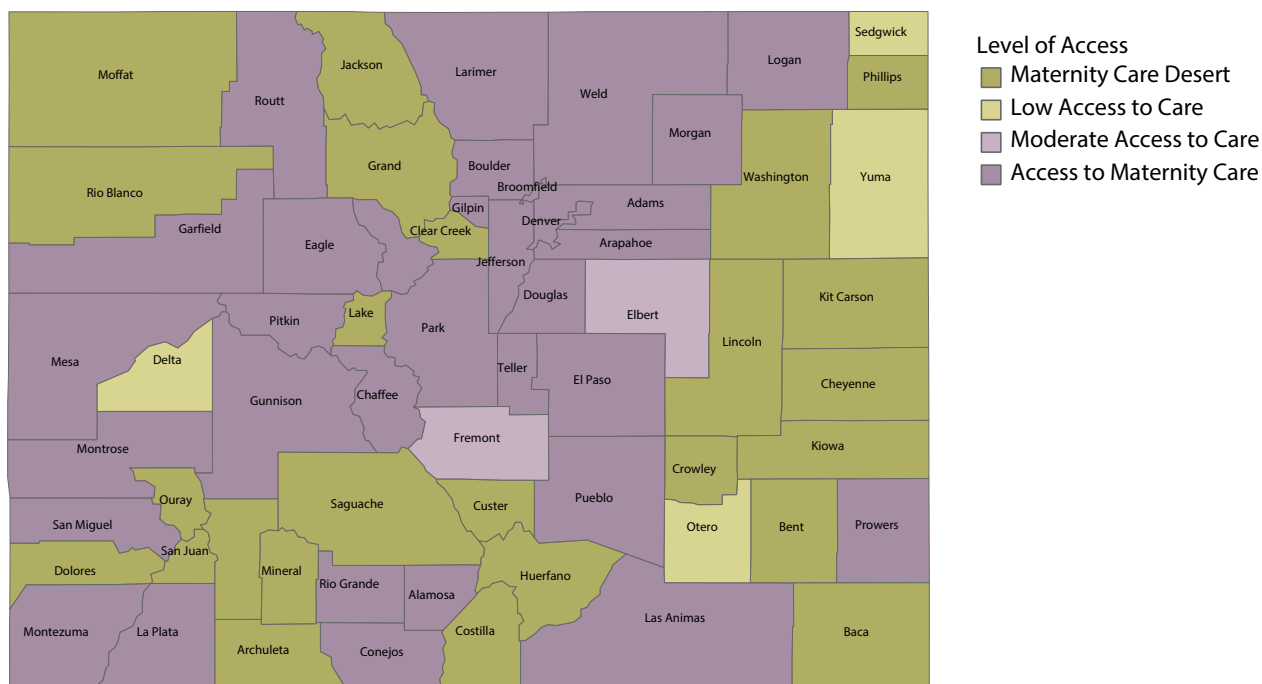
# Household Income Required for Child Care Expenses, 2022



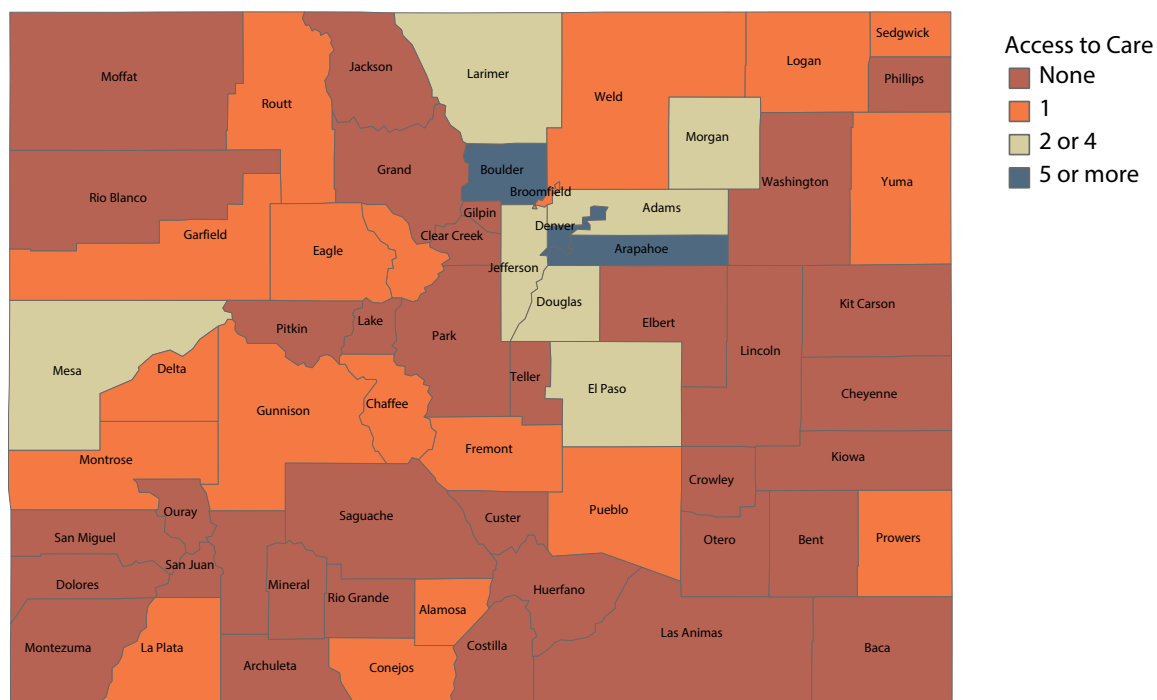
# Women without Health Insurance, 2020



# Level of Maternity Care, 2020



# Access to Hospitals or Birth Centers, 2020



# Expanded Definitions and County Breakdowns

## RURAL COUNTIES

A “rural county” is a county that is located in a nonmetropolitan area in the state that either has no municipality within its territorial boundaries with 50,000 or more permanent residents based upon the most recent population estimates published by the United States Census Bureau or that satisfies alternate criteria for the designation of a rural area as may be promulgated by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.

- |             |            |             |              |
|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| • Alamosa   | • Eagle    | • Logan     | • Phillips   |
| • Archuleta | • Fremont  | • Montezuma | • Pitkin     |
| • Chaffee   | • Garfield | • Montrose  | • Prowers    |
| • Conejos   | • Grand    | • Morgan    | • Rio Grande |
| • Crowley   | • La Plata | • Otero     | • Routt      |
| • Delta     | • Lake     | • Ouray     | • Summit     |
- 

## FRONTIER COUNTIES

A “frontier county” is a county in the state that has a population density of six or fewer individuals per one square mile.

- |            |              |              |              |
|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| • Baca     | • Gunnison   | • Las Animas | • San Juan   |
| • Bent     | • Hinsdale   | • Lincoln    | • San Miguel |
| • Cheyenne | • Huerfano   | • Mineral    | • Sedgwick   |
| • Costilla | • Jackson    | • Moffat     | • Washington |
| • Custer   | • Kiowa      | • Rio Blanco | • Yuma       |
| • Dolores  | • Kit Carson | • Saguache   |              |
- 

## URBAN COUNTIES

- |               |           |             |          |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| • Adams       | • Denver  | • Jefferson | • Teller |
| • Arapahoe    | • Douglas | • Larimer   | • Weld   |
| • Boulder     | • El Paso | • Mesa      |          |
| • Broomfield  | • Elbert  | • Park      |          |
| • Clear Creek | • Gilpin  | • Pueblo    |          |

For additional information on the varying definitions of “rural” and “frontier,” please visit [ruralhealthinfo.org/am-i-rural](https://ruralhealthinfo.org/am-i-rural)

CRHC works hard to make sure that each fact in the Snapshot of Rural Health comes from a reputable source.

To see a full list of citations, line by line, please reference [coruralhealth.org/snapshot-data-2024](https://coruralhealth.org/snapshot-data-2024).

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