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About Colorado Mesa University
A comprehensive university located in the center of western Colorado, Colorado Mesa University provides exceptional educational opportunities on a state-of-the-art campus. As western Colorado’s largest university, Colorado Mesa serves students on its main campus in Grand Junction, its satellite campus in Montrose, its community college, Western Colorado Community College, and via online offerings.

About Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
For 150 years, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce has been working with business and industry to put more Coloradans to work. Its reach goes beyond the metro area, representing 3,000 companies and their 300,000 employees. The DMCC helps business leaders shape public policy and economic development through building relationships.

About Colorado Association of School Boards
Established in 1940, The Colorado Association of School Boards provides a structure through which school board members may unite in their efforts to promote the interests and welfare of Colorado’s 178 school districts. CASB represents and advocates for more than 1,000 school board members and superintendents statewide to groups both within and outside the K–12 education community.

About Colorado Counties Inc.
CCI is a non-profit, membership association whose purpose is to offer assistance to county commissioners, mayors and councilmembers and to encourage counties to work together on common issues. Governed by a board of directors consisting of eight commissioners from across the state, our focus is on information, education and legislative representation.

About Colorado Municipal League
Founded in 1923, the Colorado Municipal League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization providing services and resources to assist municipal officials in managing their governments and serving the cities and towns of Colorado. Its focus is on advocacy, information and training to help ensure that municipal officials have the knowledge to affect change locally, regionally, and statewide.

About Special District Association of Colorado
The Special District Association of Colorado is a statewide membership organization created in 1975 to serve the interests of the special district form of local government in Colorado. Special districts fill a vital role in providing many of the basic services and public needs of the people of Colorado, including fire and rescue services, water and wastewater treatment and delivery, parks and recreation amenities, hospitals, libraries and cemeteries. SDA has over 1,800 special district members and 260 associate members.

About Vitale and Associates
Vitale and Associates (V&A) is a leading survey research and data firm focused on public affairs, and based in Denver, Colorado. The firm’s principal, Todd Vitale, has provided polling, communications advice, data services, and campaign strategy for more than 150 corporate, government, candidate, and non-profit clients in the region, and in industry areas including natural resources, real estate development, transportation, education, health care, tourism and politics.

About CMU’s Social Research Center
Colorado Mesa University’s Social Research Center (SRC) serves as a hub for university, community, and governmental partners to work collaboratively on questions related to social issues. Using modern social science research methods, researchers affiliated with the SRC can help our partners answer critical questions about the constituencies they serve. The goal of the SRC is to serve as an invaluable regional resource whose impact is felt statewide.
Executive Summary
Introduction
This survey represents the first installment of a new partnership established to deliver a periodic examination of Coloradan attitudes towards an array of public policy issues and the related opportunities and challenges that face our growing state. We approach this research with both statewide and regional perspective, understanding and appreciating both the uniqueness and the commonality that defines the critical inter-relationships between our state’s towns, cities, counties and regions. This study seeks to benchmark Coloradans attitudes on key issues and to serve as an initial marker to trend line the public perceptions that shape our state’s future.

Alignment
First, a few words about alignment: Naturally, we know that from every perspective – economic, geographic, social, ethnic, racial, etc. – our state is diverse. In this sense, we expect that there are many issues about which our citizens have unique and differing views. We also recognize that one of the critical goals of public leaders is to identify areas of commonality, to find common ground for the common good. Thus, we fully expect there to be alignment on some things, and mixed/less alignment on others. Even on issues where there seems to be less alignment, our state and regional public leaders seek to find solutions that recognize those differences and provide flexible policies that accommodate and bridge those differences.

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State Outlook

Colorado adults express mixed (but generally more positive) views about the direction of the State. They have solidly positive attitudes towards the state economy, and lean optimistic about the future of the state economy.

- Just under half of Colorado adults (47%) believe that things in the state are headed in the right direction, while one-third (33%) hold the opposite view and another 20% are unsure. This measure can be a proxy for a number of macro measures — for partisan attitudes towards the party in power, economic outlook, and/or other any other measure of social well-being. There is notable evidence of this partisan divide, with Republicans (38% RD/45% WT) more pessimistic about the state than Democrats (55% RD/28% WT). These other variables mix with partisan feelings, such as education level, socio-economics and geography — better educated, middle-income and urban adults all tend to be the most optimistic.

Just under half of CO adults (47%) believe Colorado is going in the right direction.

B. Now, thinking about the direction Colorado is headed today, do you believe things are going in the right direction, or would you say things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

![Pie chart showing 47% Right Direction, 33% Wrong Track, and 20% Unsure]

- In terms of the economy, fully 60% of respondents give the economy a 7-10 on a ten-point scale. Just over one-third of respondents (36%) also see the economy improving in the coming year with a 48% plurality who say they see things staying the same. Optimism about the economy is highest among younger men, singles, middle-incomes, veterans, Hispanic adults, in the North Denver suburbs and on the East and West Slopes.

Independent Voting in Primary Elections

With the passage of Prop 108 in 2016, Colorado’s Independent (aka. Unaffiliated) voters have an opportunity to vote in a party primary for the first time. With the ballots just recently mailed out for the 2018 primary, election observers are watching carefully to see the impact of this change. For reference, about 634,000 party-affiliated voters participated in the 2014 primary elections (which is the most recent non-presidential even year) — about 20% of all registered state voters that year. Given the current 1.1 million registered Independent/Unaffiliated voters in Colorado, there is a potential for these voters to have a real impact on the candidate...
nomination process this year. Although over half of registered Unaffiliated voters in this survey say that they plan to vote in the Primary, we expect a number less than half of that. Still, even a 15-25% turnout of Unaffiliated voters in this year’s primary could have a real impact.

- Just under half of registered Unaffiliated voters (47%) say they are aware of their new found right to vote in party primaries. This awareness rises to nearly 60% in Denver, Colorado Springs, North Denver and the Western Slope. At the other end of the spectrum, Independents in the South Denver suburbs, the East Slope and the Action 22 counties all confess lower levels of awareness about this new opportunity. Awareness about this change is also higher among older women.

Almost half (47%) of Colorado’s registered Unaffiliated voters say they are aware that Independents can now vote in party primary elections.

5. Do you happen to know if independent and unaffiliated voters are allowed to vote in party primary elections, held this June, leading up to the November general elections? If you are not sure, that’s fine to just say unsure.

A nearly equal 51% of registered Independent voters say they will definitely vote in a primary. Likelihood to vote in primary is ten points higher among those who say they will vote in the Democratic Primary (68% definitely going to vote) than those looking to the GOP Primary (58% definitely vote).

Plans to vote in primaries are much higher in urban areas and on the West Slope, compared to Independent voters on the East Slope and in the suburbs, where interest levels are lower.
Overall, CO adults are most satisfied with the government that is closest to them, with the strongest favorable ratings for special districts, law enforcement, city/county government.

Federal Government
- The least well-rated of all the government entities, the Federal Government (39% satisfied overall) gets its worst ratings from adults in the Denver Metro area (34%) and from the Progressive 15 counties (38%). The federal government gets its best ratings from Action 22 (49%) counties.

- As evidenced by the differences in response by Republicans versus Democrats on this question, ratings for the Federal Government are being colored by current politics, Trump, and the GOP-controlled Congress -- Republicans (50% satisfied) are much more likely to say they are satisfied than are Democrats (22%).

Colorado State Government
- Nearly two thirds of Colorado adults (62% satisfied) say they are satisfied with the performance of their state government. This positive view peaks in the Denver Metro area (65%). Satisfaction levels are above the 50% mark in every region of the state with the exception of Colorado Springs (46% satisfied), where respondents are evenly divided on this question.
County Government
- More than two-thirds of respondents (68%) say they are satisfied with their county-level government. Respondents across different regions of the state are rather consistent in this view but satisfaction peaks with the North Denver suburbs (79%), South Denver suburbs (70%), Larimer/Boulder (74%) and in Club 20 (73%) counties.

City Government
- Also performing quite well, City Government also gets high marks (70% satisfied) overall, with its highest score coming from North Denver suburbs (82%), and its lowest scores from Action 22 respondents (48%).

Special Districts
- The government entity closest to the people – special districts – perform better than any other group according to the survey with 86% satisfaction overall. The highest score comes from North Denver Suburbs (91), and its lowest scores from Action 22 respondents (78%).

Service Access Ratings

Access to Open-space, Internet and Schools are all rated well by Colorado adults. Access to safe highways and to jobs have mixed ratings. Access to Healthcare, College and Housing are each rated as poor.
Access Scores (Upper Tier)
- The top overall ratings for accessibility go to quality recreation and open-space (80% A-B). Over two-thirds of adults in every region give high scores to access to recreation. These numbers peak in Larimer/Boulder and in the North Denver suburbs. They are only slightly lower in the Action 22 counties and on the East Slope, where over a quarter of their adults give access to recreation a C or below grade.

Access Scores (Middle Tier)
- Just over half of voters give access to affordable high-speed internet a high grade. High-grades for access are more likely to come from adults in the Denver Metro area (61% A-B) and in Boulder/Larimer, while the worst grades come from adults on the West Slope (40%), Action 22 (43%) and in Club 20 (48%) counties.
- Over half of Colorado adults (55% A-B) rate access to quality K-12 public schools with an A or a B. Happiness with K-12 schools peaks with respondents in Club 20 counties (70%) and in Larimer/Boulder (75%). The lowest ratings come from adults in Action 22 counties (54%), in Denver (41%) and with Latinos (44%).
- Just over half of adults (55%) say they have access to quality transportation options. Ratings for transportation are somewhat consistent across most of the regions of the state. However, C or below grades peak in Colorado Springs, where 50% give transportation a lower grade. In the Denver Metro area, 53% say they have good options. Desire for better roads peaks in Denver and the South Denver suburbs.
- Access to quality jobs (53% A-B) also captures just over half of adults who give it a top grade. But, this measure is a “tale of two counties”, with ratings quite high in Larimer/Boulder (67% A-B), in the Denver Metro 7 (58%), in the North Denver (56%) and South Denver suburbs (58%). But ratings are quite low in Action 22 (37%), Club 20 (38%), East Slope (35%) and West Slope (38%) counties. Notably, Latinos (66%) indicate one of the highest scores for access to jobs.

Access Scores (Lower Tier)
- Just over one-third of adults (35%) give access to affordable healthcare good ratings. There are also wide disparities on this measure, with strong majorities of adults in Larimer/Boulder (67%), Denver Metro 7 (58%) and the suburbs all showing higher grades for healthcare. Still, the numbers are closer to a third of adults or fewer who give high scores for healthcare among Action 22, Club 20, East Slope and West Slope respondents. Healthcare ratings are lowest in North Denver (16%) and on the West Slope (21%), and among Latinos (24%).
- Access to affordable college options also rates at just 34% A-B score overall. However, this item emerges in almost the reverse profile as healthcare -- Denver Metro (25%), Larimer/Boulder (29%), Colorado Springs (26%) all give the lowest scores for affordable college. In contrast, Club 20 (52%), East Slope and West Slope adults all deliver over 50% A-B ratings for access to college.

Access Scores (Bottom Tier)
- Access to affordable housing is the lowest rated item with just 21% who give an A-B grade here. The worst numbers come from Denver Metro (18% A-B), and from North Denver and South Denver suburbs. The top affordable housing ratings come from Action 22 (40% A-B). Nearly every region has two-thirds or more of its adults saying affordable housing deserves a C or below grade.
Community Ratings

Safety, Raising Kids, Retirement, Tax Value, and Biz Opportunity all rate quite high in Colorado.

Community Ratings (Upper Tier)

- A majority of Colorado adults strongly agree that their community is a safe place to live and a good place to raise kids. With the exception of Action 22 - where one third of respondents do not agree that it's a good place to raise kids – almost every other region has overwhelming majorities who agree that their area is safe and good place to raise kids.

- Also in a top-tier, nearly half (47%) of adults strongly agree that their community is a good place to retire. Colorado Springs and Denver are the only two areas where more than 30% disagree.

- While 72% of respondents agree that they get a good value for their local tax dollars, just 34% strongly agree. Disagreement on this item rises over 30% in Action 22 counties, Colorado Springs and on the East Slope.

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of adults agree that their community is good place to start a business. This sentiment is highest in Larimer/Boulder (83%) and in the Denver Metro area (75%), but it drops off in Action 22 counties and on the East Slope.

- Fully 61% say they agree that they get a good value for their state taxes, although just 19% strongly agree. Perceived state tax value peaks in the Denver Metro area (67%), in Colorado Springs, in the south suburbs. State tax value is perceived the lowest in Action 22, North Denver and on the West Slope.
Community Ratings (Middle Tier)

- Concern about **future water storage** gains over 60% agreement, with 36% who strongly agree. Concerns peak in Colorado Springs, South Denver Suburbs and on the West Slope. Adults in Larimer/Boulder show the least concern (43% not concerned) with future water shortages in their community.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents agree that they have **ethnic and socio-economic diversity** in their community, although just 27% strongly agree. Diversity receives high ratings everywhere except in Metro Denver (41% disagree), Larimer Boulder (49% disagree) and in the South Denver suburbs (52% disagree). Perception of diversity is highest in Denver, on the East Slope and in North Denver.

- Just over half of adults say **tourism is key to their local economy**, with 23% who strongly agree. Agreement on this item peaks in Colorado Springs (80%), while disagreement is higher in Denver Metro, Larimer/Boulder, East Slope and the South Denver Suburbs.

Community Ratings (Lower Tier)

- Respondents are evenly divided as to whether **oil and gas is key to their local economy** (46% agree/42% disagree). This question obviously has a strong regional component with agreement peaking in Club 20, Progressive 15 and on the West Slope. Disagreement peaks in Action 22 counties, as well as Denver, the East Slope and the South Denver Suburbs.

- The question of whether “**De-Brucing at local level** is mostly as a good thing” divides respondents -- with 45% who agree, another third who disagree and fully 23% who are unsure. Respondents in Boulder/Larimer (55%) and those who live in North Denver (60%) show the highest favoritism towards de-Brucing. On the other end of spectrum, Action 22 counties (59% disagree) and East Slope respondents are the least positive about this local government spending.

- A 41% plurality say that **Tabor’s state spending limits** have been mostly a good thing but another 29% disagree and fully 30% are not sure. Support for TABOR peaks in Colorado Springs (52% agree/23% disagree), in North Denver (47% agree), Larimer/Boulder (45%) and in the Progressive 15 (45%). It’s weakest in Club 20 (32%), Denver (31%), and on the West Slope (37%)
Community Challenges

Over half (53%) of Colorado adults believe that housing costs are a major problem.

Q30A-33B Thinking about your community, please tell me if you think each of the following is a major problem, a moderate problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all.

Most Active Challenges in the Community

- There is an abundance of evidence in this poll that housing costs are the top issue in Colorado. In an open-ended question of the most important issue facing YOUR community, housing costs (13%) is the top item mentioned. Also, measured in a battery of potential concerns, affordable housing is perceived as a problem by fully 80% of Colorado adults. A 53% majority say it's a major problem (the top level). Perception that this is a major problem peaks in urban areas including Denver County (71% major) and in the South Denver Suburbs (60%). Concern about this issue is much lower in North Denver, East Slope and Action 22 areas. The issue also percolates among single-member households, among seniors, lower socio-economic adults and among Hispanics.

- Also in the upper-tier of concerns, homelessness is perceived to be a problem by 86% of adults, with more than one third (35%) who say it's a major problem. Concerns about this issue rise in both urban (42%) and rural (46%) counties alike — with Denver County residents (47% major problem), Larimer/Boulder (42%) and Colorado Springs adults saying it's most serious. This issue also gets more attention from older citizens, singles, lower socio-economic adults and veteran households.

- A 52% majority of adults rate transportation-related challenges as a major (25%) or moderate (27%) problem. In the open-end responses, 9% of adults (ties for third overall) rank this issue as a top priority, with the issue rising (to 17% as the top issue and 42% as major/moderate problem) in Denver County. This issue also rises among 45-64 year-olds and higher-socio economic citizens – among whom nearly one third rate transportation as a major problem.

Vitale & Associates in partnership with Colorado Mesa University conducted a scientifically-valid phone survey of Colorado adults statewide. These representative findings were drawn from live-caller telephone interviews conducted with N=500 adults across the state. Responses to this survey were gathered April 17-19, 2018 and the confidence level associated with a survey of this type is 95% with a 4.4% margin of error.