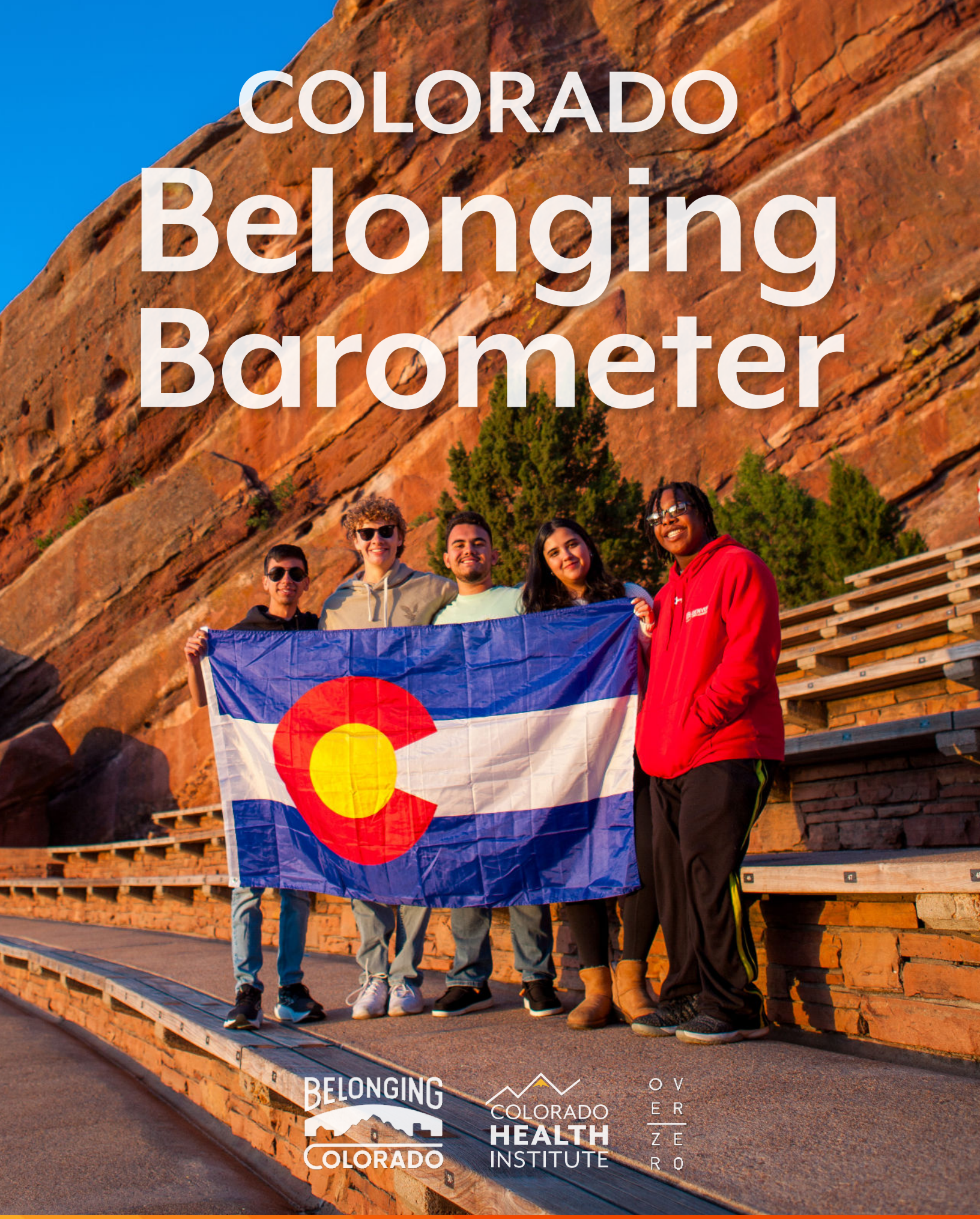
COLORADO Belonging Barometer



BELONGING COLORADO

COLORADO HEALTH INSTITUTE

OVERZERO

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Thank you to the team at Belonging Colorado and our partners at Over Zero.

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Belonging Colorado,

a special fund at The Denver Foundation, represents a new effort to bring Coloradans together and to build social capital across lines of difference. The team behind Belonging Colorado aims to catalyze greater belonging and inclusion across our state so that Coloradans and Colorado communities can thrive.

We are excited to share the **Colorado Belonging Barometer,** a first-of-its-kind effort to measure belonging at the state level. The Belonging Barometer is a national measure of the settings in which people feel they do and do not belong, created by Over Zero and the American Immigration Council. We worked with the Colorado Health Institute and Over Zero to adapt the Barometer to Colorado so we could:

- Understand the extent to which people in Colorado feel a sense of belonging
- Uncover differences among those who do or do not feel they belong
- Assess belonging within different life settings — generally defined as the contexts of daily life, such as a school, community, or workplace
- Facilitate dialogue about what actions we can all take to advance belonging

Given Belonging Colorado's special emphasis on bridging social capital — helping people connect with one another across their differences — we also asked specific questions to better understand where people are interacting with others from different backgrounds and experiences than their own.

Why Belonging?

An emerging body of research indicates that belonging is associated with better physical and mental health, greater workforce retention, increased trust in one's neighbors and in local government, more openness to diversity and less fear of demographic change, and greater satisfaction with U.S. democracy.[1]
Given how much belonging connects to important measures of individual and community resilience, we wondered to what extent Coloradans feel like they belong in key dimensions of their lives and what more could be done to foster those feelings and behaviors.

What Did We Learn from the Colorado Belonging Barometer?

Some of the top-line trends from the data that stood out for us include:

- **The Colorado Belonging Barometer indicates higher levels of belonging overall than the national sample.** That said, the national barometer was conducted during the COVID pandemic, when people were lonelier, more isolated, and in the thick of controversies over masking and vaccines. The Colorado and national Barometers also differed somewhat in the life settings, questions, and methodologies used, potentially contributing to these differences.
- **While a majority of Coloradans reported belonging, there was a significant percentage who felt uncertain, at best, about whether they belonged in the state, community, workplace, and in their child's school.** Well over a third experienced what could be characterized as "non-belonging" in these spaces. Colorado communities clearly have room for improvement.
- **Socioeconomic factors, such as education level and income, as well as people's feelings about belonging, loneliness, and political ideology, are most often associated with whether someone feels they belong.**
- **Some of the spaces where people reported the highest levels of belonging include libraries, parks, and places of worship.** These are spaces with very low barriers to entry, and they may offer opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to engage with each other.
- **Schools and colleges, public transit, and online forums were the areas where Coloradans least frequently reported experiencing belonging.** Leaders in these sectors should explore how they might begin to address this gap.

We see the 2024 Colorado Belonging Barometer as just a starting point that provides a baseline indication of how our state is faring. There is still so much more to learn about belonging. We invite you to review the data, use it to spark conversations with others in your sector about the implications for your work, and challenge your own thinking about to what extent you are advancing belonging in your professional and personal life. We hope you will join with Belonging Colorado to widen the circle in our social spaces and find ways to intentionally build bridges across lines of difference so that all Coloradans have an opportunity to thrive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A sense of belonging is important to people's mental health, physical health, and place in society.

The implications of belonging are widespread. A lack of belonging can fray the fabric of society through increased loneliness, political polarization, and discrimination. Alternatively, a strong sense of belonging can tighten that fabric by increasing trust in one's neighbors and community members, as well local institutions.[1] But the concept of belonging — and how to foster it — is not widely understood.

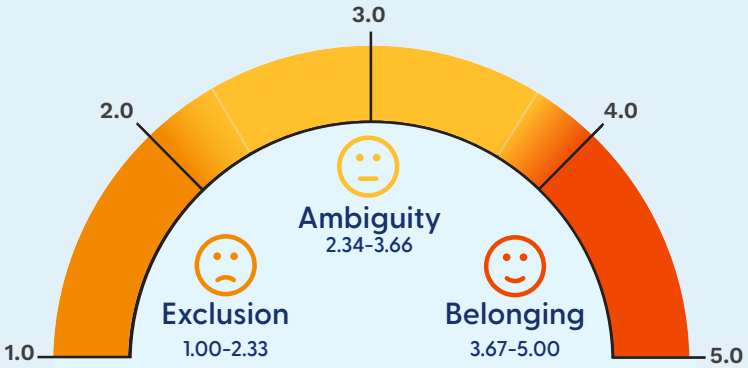
The Belonging Barometer, originally developed by Over Zero and the American Immigration Council, is a set of 10 questions that aims to measure belonging by capturing its multifaceted nature, such as whether someone feels they have a voice, are socially connected, and are welcomed and included. The Barometer can be adapted to different life settings — everyday contexts for which we want to understand belonging — for example, whether people feel they belong among their family and friends or in their workplaces.

To build on this national work and understand what belonging looks like for Coloradans, the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) partnered with Over Zero in 2023 to adapt and administer the Belonging Barometer. Over 1,100 people responded to the Colorado Belonging Barometer, which measured what belonging looks like in our state, local communities, workplaces, and schools. The Colorado survey also went beyond the national Barometer to uncover more about belonging, such as social connection and additional spaces or activities that may evoke a sense of belonging.

An Overview of the Barometer

CHI used the Belonging Barometer to assess a person's sense of belonging in Colorado as well as in their local community, workplace, and child's school. The 10 questions in the Barometer are scored as a composite measure to reflect belonging as a scale, as defined by Over Zero and the American Immigration Council.[1]

Belonging as a Scale



Belonging

(Composite score range of 3.67-5.00)

Indicates that a person experiences social connection, psychological safety, and a sense of agency within a group, with all the richness that belonging entails.

Ambiguity

(Composite score range of 2.34-3.66)

Indicates that a person may feel neither belonging nor exclusion. Alternatively, they might experience strong belonging for some Barometer items and strong exclusion for others, averaging to a neutral score. CHI uses the terms uncertainty and ambivalence interchangeably with ambiguity throughout this report.

Exclusion

(Composite score range of 1.00-2.33)

Indicates that a person may feel ignored, rejected, or ostracized. Experiencing exclusion may indicate lacking a desired connection to an environment. In research, exclusion is associated with antisocial behavior, negative emotions like sadness and anger, attitudes such as distrust, and outcomes such as decreased performance in work or school.

Key Findings

What does belonging look like in Colorado?

Survey findings reveal that a majority of people feel a sense of belonging in Colorado as well as in their workplaces. However, belonging in local communities and schools is less prevalent. While very few people felt excluded in any setting, a significant portion experienced uncertainty on whether they belong.

61.8% About three in five Coloradans said they felt like they belonged **in the state**.

52.6% About half of Coloradans experienced belonging **in their local communities**.

67.9% Over two-thirds of Coloradans felt like they belonged **in their workplace**.

49.7% Less than half of Coloradans experienced belonging **at their child's school**.

On average, across all four life settings, **37.5% of people felt uncertain about their belonging**.

Increasing belonging across all settings is needed. A better understanding — specifically of the large portion of people who were ambivalent about belonging, as well as the factors that may lead to this uncertainty — is needed to create environments where everyone feels valued and accepted.

How does Colorado compare with the national findings?

The percentage of Coloradans experiencing belonging in their local communities and in their workplaces was much higher compared with findings from the national Belonging Barometer. **Only 26% of Americans reported belonging in their local communities and 36% in their workplaces.**[1] However, the national survey was administered in December 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, such as decreased social connection during this time, coupled with increases in social justice movements and deepened political divides, could be contributing factors to the stark differences compared with the Colorado survey. Differences in survey administration and methodologies between the Colorado and national survey could also lead to differences in findings.

Are there differences among those who did or did not feel they belong?

Level of education, a person's sense of loneliness, and how long someone has lived in the state are just three examples of factors found to be associated with belonging.

In general, factors related to experiences or that influence an individual's behaviors and what they feel or believe — such as their sense of isolation, their perception of the importance of belonging, or their political ideology — more frequently influenced belonging than demographics like age, race/ethnicity, or geography. Among demographic factors, education and income most frequently influenced belonging.

These factors are nuanced and can show up differently across life settings. For example, level of education was found to be associated with belonging in local communities, workplaces, and at a child's school but was not associated with belonging in the state. Further, in the workplace setting, Coloradans with the least and most education had the highest percentage of people experiencing belonging (82.1% for those with a high school education or less and 71.7% for those with a postgraduate education). This speaks to the different ways education might impact belonging. An individual's education level is often used as a credential. People may feel a greater sense of belonging if they are around others with similar levels of education in a workplace, regardless of what that level of education is. Alternatively, higher levels of education can lead to job opportunities, higher income, or broadened social networks. This may influence people's belonging as they feel more empowerment and agency in any setting.

Policymakers and leaders should carefully reflect on how these factors can influence belonging and how they can be harnessed to increase belonging.

What else can we uncover about belonging?

Coloradans connect with others organically in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and children's schools. These are important avenues for increasing social connection and belonging.

Parks, libraries, and places of worship are the most common places that evoke a sense of belonging, according to Coloradans who took the survey. Policymakers, funders, and community leaders should consider how they can leverage these and other easily accessible places in the community to bridge social capital.

On the other hand, fewer respondents reported they felt they belonged when visiting online forums (36.4%), using public transit (54.2%), and taking classes for a degree or certification (61.7%). These settings represent opportunities for policymakers and community partners to intentionally cultivate a sense of belonging.

What does this mean for Colorado and Coloradans?

The 2024 Colorado Belonging Barometer is a first-of-its-kind report on belonging in Colorado and the first time the Barometer was administered at a state level. Insights from the survey can serve as a baseline for measuring and understanding belonging and a starting point for finding ways to advance it and the many nuanced factors that can influence it.

While more research is needed to better understand the complexity of belonging, everyone has a role to play in building belonging.

Individuals can consider how they show up in different spaces, how they engage with others, and how they can increase their own understanding of belonging and what it means for others.

Employers can assess their company culture and how they support employees in feeling valued and included.

Community partners and **policymakers** can find ways to implement strategies, programs, and policies that foster belonging and promote inclusivity, equity, and connection, especially in settings such as schools or other public spaces.

Researchers can uncover more about who may not feel they belong and how to engage community members in better understanding belonging.

Funders can assess how they align opportunities with fostering belonging and social connectedness and ensure strategies reflect inclusivity and collaboration.

Belonging is inherent and its implications are widespread. By exploring the roles we all have in building belonging, both as individuals and in our professions, we can foster meaningful connections, support people in feeling valued and heard, and ultimately increase our cohesiveness as a society.

INTRODUCTION

Belonging is a tapestry that is built from threads such as social connection, feeling like you can be yourself, having a voice, and others. These concepts can be complex, especially when woven together. But their complexity doesn't make them less important. Researchers have found that humans have a biological need to seek out belonging, social safety, and connection.[2] We are born to want to belong. This is reflected in how society organizes itself. Whether it's being a member of a family or friend group, sports team, specific hobby, or the community or country we live in, "every aspect of our lives is organized around belonging to something."[3] Belonging is, quite simply, an important part of being human.

Experiencing belonging is associated with strengthened ties in social fabric, such as trust in local government and other people in one's community.[4] On the other hand, the implications of belonging — or feeling like you don't belong — are widespread.

A sense of belonging and its interlinking threads are predictors for mental, behavioral, physical, and socioeconomic outcomes.[2] People who experience poor social relationships, including isolation, a lack of social support, and loneliness, have a 29%

higher risk of heart disease and a 32% higher risk of stroke.[5] Youth who experience loneliness and social isolation are at increased risk of depression and anxiety.[6]

But the current climate in the U.S. can be tumultuous for many, fraying that tapestry of belonging. In May 2023, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy declared loneliness and isolation an epidemic. About half of U.S. adults reported experiencing loneliness prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[7] Research has shown loneliness has also increased as a result of the pandemic.[8] Meanwhile, youth nationwide are experiencing a mental health crisis.[9] Studies from the Pew Research Center document the increased political polarization across the U.S in recent years.[10] And many have experienced dramatic increases in hate crimes and discrimination, such as anti-Asian hate and antisemitism.[11,12]

This backdrop underscores the need to better understand belonging — and how to cultivate it to strengthen our community ties.

The 2024 Colorado Belonging Barometer is a **first-of-its kind report for Colorado,** measuring whether and where Coloradans experience belonging. The Colorado survey administered the Belonging Barometer statewide to measure how much Coloradans felt they belonged in four life settings — the state as a whole, their local communities, their workplaces, and their children's schools. The Colorado survey also goes beyond the Barometer with additional questions that look at how Coloradans are connecting with others from different backgrounds and to explore other spaces and activities that may evoke a sense of belonging.

The Colorado Belonging Barometer is intended to spark conversations and action to advance belonging by starting to untangle the complexity of belonging as a concept, how to measure it, and the many nuanced factors that can influence it. By better understanding these dimensions and reflecting on the role we have as individuals to engage in and build belonging, both in our personal and professional capacities, we can begin to identify the challenges, opportunities, and pathways toward fostering it and to bridging social capital — the connections across different communities and identities to create a stronger and more resilient and inclusive society.

Commonly Used Terms in This Report

Belonging
A multidimensional concept describing the quality of fit between oneself and a setting.[1] In this report, belonging encompasses these 10 facets as defined by The Belonging Barometer:

- Feeling emotionally connected
- Being welcomed and included
- Perceiving that one can influence decision-making
- Feeling able to be one's whole and authentic self
- Being valued as a person and for one's contributions
- Being in relationships that are as satisfying as one wants them to be
- Feeling like an insider who understands how the environment works
- Feeling comfortable expressing one's opinions
- Being treated equally
- Feeling that one "truly belongs"

These facets are measured to reflect belonging on a scale. See Figure 1 in Belonging in Colorado for more.

Bridging Social Capital
Building connections across communities/groups of people who come from different demographic or socioeconomic backgrounds.[13]

Life Settings
Contexts in which belonging is being measured. These can be among other people, such as family and friends; physical settings, such as a park or community center; or a broader environment, such as the state or tribal land. The Colorado Belonging Barometer measures whether people feel they belong in Colorado, in their local communities, in their workplaces, and at their children's school.

KEY FINDINGS

What does belonging look like in Colorado?

- About three in five Coloradans (61.8%) said they felt like they belonged in the state, while over two-thirds of Coloradans (67.9%) felt like they belonged in their workplaces.
- About half of Coloradans (52.6%) experienced belonging in their local communities, and less than half (49.7%) experienced belonging at their child's school.
- A large portion of Coloradans experienced ambiguity. On average across all four life settings, 37.5% of people felt uncertain about their belonging.
- There is room for improvement to build belonging across all life settings, especially among the high portion of those who are experiencing ambiguity.

Are there differences among those who do or do not feel they belong?

- Overall, factors related to experiences or those that influence an individual's behaviors and what they feel or believe — such as their sense of isolation, perception of the importance of belonging, or their political ideology — more frequently influenced belonging than demographics, for example their age or where they live. Education and income are the two demographic factors that most frequently influenced belonging.
- Factors that affect belonging are nuanced and can show up differently across life settings. Policymakers and leaders should carefully reflect on how these factors may influence belonging and how they can be better understood or used to increase belonging.

What else can we uncover about belonging?

- Coloradans connect with others organically in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and children's schools. These are settings that can increase points of connection to help bolster social connection and belonging for Coloradans.
- Coloradans most frequently reported belonging in parks, libraries, and places of worship. Community leaders, funders, and policymakers can consider how these and other easily accessible settings in communities can be leveraged to bridge social capital.
- Fewer respondents reported they felt they belonged when using or visiting online forums (36.4%), using public transit (54.2%), and when taking classes for a degree or certification (61.7%). These reflect opportunities for policymakers and community partners to foster belonging in these settings.

Taking Action

Everyone has a role to play in building belonging, from how we show up as individuals in our communities or workplaces, to employers, policymakers, and other community partners who can work to implement strategies that foster belonging and promote inclusivity and connection.

OUR APPROACH

To measure whether people are experiencing belonging, the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) partnered with Over Zero, which co-created the national Belonging Barometer with the American Immigration Council. The Barometer is a unique tool that aims to comprehensively measure the multifaceted nature of belonging.[1] Implementing the Barometer for the first time at a state level builds upon the national findings and more closely unpacks belonging through a local lens.

Creating the Colorado Belonging Barometer

CHI developed three guiding questions to understand belonging in Colorado.

1. What does belonging look like in Colorado?
2. Are there differences among those who do or do not feel they belong?
3. What else can we uncover about belonging, such as how Coloradans connect with others from different backgrounds and what spaces and activities affirm belonging?

These guiding questions were used to adapt the national Barometer and create the Colorado Belonging Barometer. The Colorado survey uses the Barometer to measure belonging across four life settings — contexts in which we want to measure and understand belonging — the state, local communities, workplaces, and at a child's school. The local community and workplace settings were chosen to be able to make comparisons to the national findings while the state and school settings were selected as exploratory settings for which programs and interventions could be implemented. The Colorado survey was tailored to also go beyond the national survey and explore how people are connecting with others and the spaces and activities in which Coloradans may feel belonging, for example at parks, grocery stores, or places of worship. See Appendix A for more information on the Colorado survey.

Administering the Colorado Belonging Barometer

CHI partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to administer the survey to Colorado residents 18 and older. The survey was available in English and Spanish and was administered through web and telephone. In total, 1,102 responses were collected between November 8 and November 27, 2023.

The remainder of this report is organized by the guiding questions. Each section restates the key findings and includes a brief description of CHI's analysis approach to answer the guiding question and a deeper look at the findings and considerations. The report concludes with a series of questions for individuals, organizations, funders, policymakers, and other partners to reflect on their role in building belonging.

See Appendix B for more on survey administration, data analysis, and limitations.

BELONGING IN COLORADO

Guiding Question:
What does belonging look like in Colorado?

Key Takeaways

- About three in five Coloradans (61.8%) say they felt like they belonged in the state, while over two-thirds of Coloradans (67.9%) felt like they belonged in their workplaces.
- About half of Coloradans (52.6%) experienced belonging in their local communities, and less than half (49.7%) experienced belonging at their child's school.
- A large portion of Coloradans experienced ambiguity. On average across all four life settings, 37.5% of people felt uncertain about their belonging.
- There is room for improvement to build belonging across all life settings, especially among the high portion of those who are uncertain about their belonging.

Analysis Approach

CHI used the Barometer — a set of 10 questions — to measure what belonging looks like in Colorado. Each question in the Barometer captures a different facet of belonging. CHI measured belonging using the Barometer in these life settings: the state, local communities, the workplace, and at a child's school. Table 1 shows an example of how the Barometer items appear in the survey to measure belonging at the state setting.

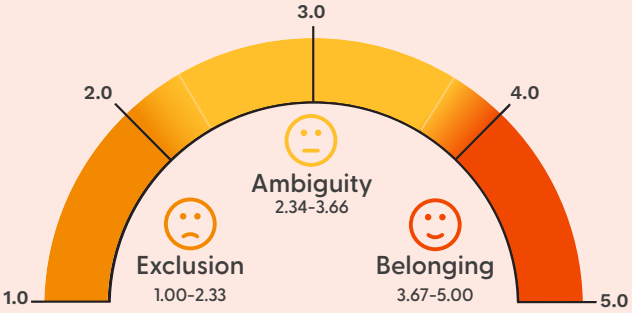
Table 1. Example of The Belonging Barometer Adapted to the State Life Setting

Note that three items indicated with an asterisk are framed in the negative as a data quality check and calculated accordingly as a reverse score, so that higher numbers indicate greater experiences of belonging throughout.

Belonging Barometer Questions (answered on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree)
I feel emotionally connected to Colorado.
People in Colorado welcome and include me in activities.
I am unable to influence decisions that affect me in Colorado.*
I am unable to be my whole and authentic self when interacting with other people in Colorado.*
People in Colorado value the contributions of people like me.
My relationships with other people in Colorado are as satisfying as I want them to be.
I feel like an "insider" who understands how the state works.
I am comfortable expressing my opinions to the average person in Colorado.
I am treated as "less than" others in this state.*
Think about what it means to truly belong in Colorado. To what extent would you agree with the following statement: I feel like I truly belong in Colorado.

Responses from the 10 questions were scored to create a composite measure for belonging. These scores were categorized to reflect belonging as a scale that includes belonging, ambiguity, and exclusion as described in Figure 1. See the national Belonging Barometer report for more on the Barometer and its reliability.

Figure 1. Belonging as a Scale[1]



Belonging

(Composite score range of 3.67-5.00)

Indicates that a person experiences social connection, psychological safety, and a sense of agency within a group, with all the richness that belonging entails.

Ambiguity

(Composite score range of 2.34-3.66)

Indicates that a person may feel neither belonging nor exclusion. Alternatively, they might experience strong belonging for some Barometer items and strong exclusion for others, averaging to a neutral score. CHI uses the terms uncertainty and ambivalence interchangeably with ambiguity throughout this report.

Exclusion

(Composite score range of 1.00-2.33)

Indicates that a person may feel ignored, rejected, or ostracized. Experiencing exclusion may indicate lacking a desired connection to an environment. In research, exclusion is associated with negative emotions like sadness and anger, as well as attitudes such as distrust, and outcomes such as decreased performance in work or school, and antisocial behavior.

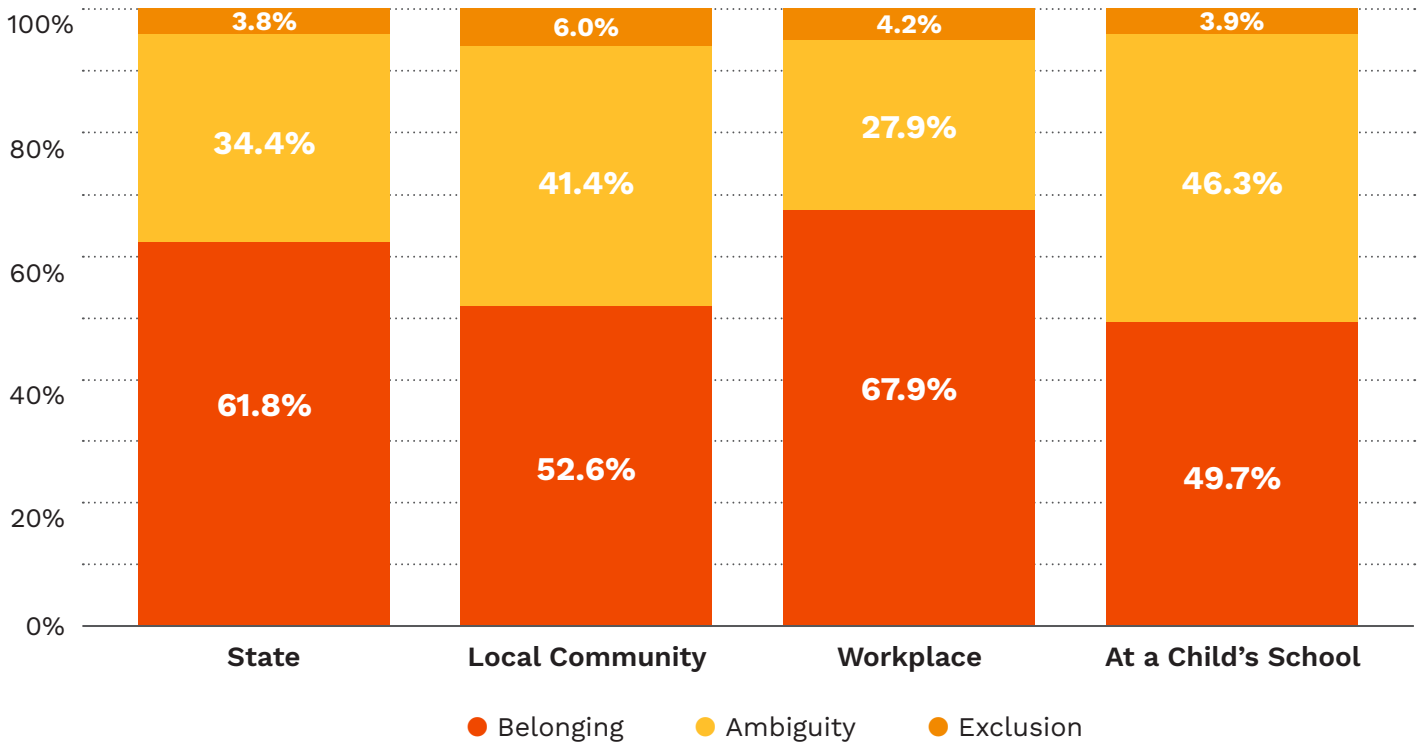
Findings

Overall, 61.8% of Coloradans felt belonging (as defined in Figure 1) in the state while 52.6% experienced belonging in their local community. The highest percentage of people experiencing belonging was reported at the workplace (67.9%) while less than half of Coloradans experienced belonging at their child's school (49.7%). On the other hand, very few people said they felt excluded in any setting. Just 3.8% of Coloradans felt excluded in the state setting. However, a large portion of Coloradans experienced ambiguity. On average, across all four life settings, 37.5% of people felt ambivalent about their belonging. See Figure 2.

The percentages of Coloradans experiencing belonging in their local community and in their workplace was much higher compared with findings from the national Belonging Barometer. Only 26% of Americans reported belonging in their local communities and 36% in their workplace.[1] These life settings were the only two included in both the Colorado and national surveys.

While this may reflect that Colorado's communities and workplaces foster a greater sense of belonging, it's important to consider the context of the national survey. It was administered in December 2021, during a global pandemic and increasing polarization in the U.S. The stark differences in the percentage of people experiencing belonging in both the local community and workplace life settings could be due to decreased social connections that were exacerbated by stay-at-home policies in the prior year or continued precautions throughout 2021. Tensions between employers and employees on COVID policies or layoffs may have also contributed to feeling non-belonging. Masking or vaccination mandates may have influenced people's perceptions of their ability to make their own decisions — another facet of belonging. Social justice movements, especially after the 2020 murder of George Floyd, and heightened political divides could also be drivers for higher rates of non-belonging in the national survey.

Figure 2. Belonging Across Life Settings



The difference in findings may also be due to order effects. The Colorado survey asked respondents about belonging at the state first, followed by local communities, the workplace, and a child's school. Therefore, a respondent's point of reference about belonging may be skewed compared with the national survey, which asked about belonging among family and friends, followed by the workplace, local communities, and the nation. See Appendix B for more on survey limitations.

These data reflect an initial look at belonging in Colorado. While relatively high percentages of people felt they belonged in the state and the workplace, there is room for improvement to build belonging across all life settings, especially among the high portion of those who are ambivalent. Individuals and organizations, including employers, policymakers, researchers, funders, and community-based organizations all have a role to play in understanding and improving belonging. See A Reflection on Belonging for more. As these groups begin to cultivate

belonging, the Colorado Belonging Barometer should continue to be administered in future years to monitor key trends. Individual components of the Barometer can also be further explored to better understand whether there are different drivers for belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BELONGING

Guiding Question:
Are there differences among those who do or do not feel they belong?

Key Takeaways

- Overall, factors related to experiences or that influence an individual's behaviors and what they feel or believe — such as their sense of isolation, their perception of the importance of belonging, or their political ideology — more frequently influenced belonging than demographics, for example their age or geography. Among demographic factors, education and income most frequently influenced belonging.
- Factors that affect belonging are nuanced and can show up differently across life settings. Policymakers and leaders should carefully reflect on how these factors may influence belonging and how they can be better understood or used to increase belonging.

Analysis Approach

CHI used multiple approaches to assess if differences emerged among those who did or did not feel belonging. These findings are categorized into three sections:

- **Findings –** In this section we tested whether various factors were significantly associated with belonging in each life setting. See Appendix B for more information on statistical methods used for determining whether a factor was significant.
- **Differences Among Groups –** In this section we build off the findings by exploring what rates of belonging look like among different groups. Factors included were selected based on the frequency with which they are significantly associated with belonging across the four life settings, including those that appeared across multiple settings, as well as those that only appeared in one life setting. Further statistical significance analysis of these factors can be found in Appendix B.
- **Nuances of Factors and How They May Impact Belonging –** In this section, we discuss the important nuances associated with the factors that were analyzed.

Findings

Our analysis assessed who may be more likely to experience belonging based on two types of factors. The first set of factors deals with demographics — who people are. This includes their age, race, education, sexual orientation, and more. The second set of factors deals with specific experiences or elements that can influence an individual's behaviors and what they feel or believe — their sense of isolation, their political ideology, their satisfaction with where they live, how long they've lived in the state, and other factors.

Table 2 shows that, in general, **factors related to experiences and those that influence an individual's behaviors, feelings, or beliefs are more likely to influence belonging than demographics.** The perceived importance of belonging and loneliness/isolation were found to be significantly associated with belonging across all four life settings. **Education** and **income** (both an objective and subjective measure) were demographics that were found to be significantly associated with belonging across three of four life settings. See Appendix B for a list of the categories and groupings included in each factor.

Table 2. Significance Testing of Variables Associated With Belonging by Life Setting

Factor	State	Local Communities	Workplace	Child's School
Demographic Factors				
Age	NO	YES	NO	NO
Education	NO	YES	YES	YES
Gender Identity	NO	NO	YES	YES
Immigration Status	NO	NO	NO	YES
Income - Objective	YES	YES	YES	NO
Income - Subjective	YES	YES	YES	NO
Language Spoken at Home	YES	NO	NO	NO
Race/Ethnicity - Hispanic Ethnicity	NO	NO	NO	NO
Race/Ethnicity - Person of Color	NO	YES	NO	NO
Sexual Orientation	NO	NO	YES	NO
Urbanicity - Objective	NO	YES	NO	NO
Urbanicity - Subjective	NO	YES	NO	NO
Years Living in the U.S. *(if an immigrant)*	NO	NO	NO	NO
Additional Factors (Experiences, Feelings, or Beliefs)				
Importance of Belonging*	YES	YES	YES	YES
Political Ideologies	YES	YES	NO	YES
Loneliness/Isolation	YES	YES	YES	YES
Tenure *(Number of Years Living in the State/ Community or Number of Years Employed)**	YES	YES	NO	N/A
Satisfaction With State/Local Community as a Place To Live*	YES	YES	N/A	N/A
Trust in Others*	YES	YES	N/A	N/A
Marginalization*	YES	YES	N/A	N/A
Work Setting	N/A	N/A	YES	N/A
Grade of Child	N/A	N/A	N/A	NO

How to read this table: In this table, YES indicates that the listed factor was found to be significantly associated with belonging NO indicates the factor was not found to be significantly associated with belonging. N/A indicates that the factor was not measured at the associated life setting. For example, trust in other people is a factor that was assessed for only the state and local levels.

An asterisk (*) denotes that the factor was framed to be specific to the life setting. For example, satisfaction with a place to live was framed in the state life setting as, "Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Colorado as a place to live?" while in the local community setting was framed as "Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [your local community] as a place to live?"

Policymakers and leaders should carefully reflect on how these factors can be used to increase belonging, for example interventions that target social connectedness and decrease loneliness and isolation. Equally important is understanding how the nuances of many of these factors can influence belonging.

Differences Among Groups

The following samples of group differences are meant to show how factors could affect whether someone feels like they belong. It is important to remember that while some groups are more likely to report belonging, it does not mean that other groups do not experience it. See Appendix C for an overview of Colorado's demographics.

Belonging in the State

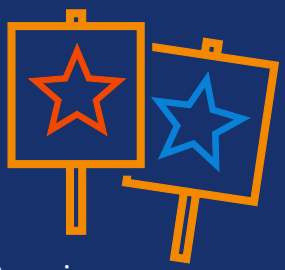
Factors associated with belonging at the state level include income (both objective and subjective), language spoken at home, importance of belonging, political ideologies, loneliness/isolation, the number of years someone has lived in the state, satisfaction with Colorado as a place to live, whether someone trusts in other people in Colorado, and whether they feel marginalized.

- **Objective Income.** Those earning $90,000 a year or more had the highest percentage of people experiencing belonging in the state (66.1%), followed closely by those earning $60,000-$89,999 and those earning $30,000-$59,999 (65.3% and 65.0%, respectively) annually. Less than half (47.9%) of people earning less than $30,000 per year report experiencing belonging in the state.

- **Political Ideologies.** Traditional Liberals and Conservatives (which includes both Traditional and Devoted Conservatives) had a higher percentage of people experiencing belonging in Colorado compared with other political identities (73.4% and 68.9%, respectively). This is followed by Progressive Activists (63.1%), Moderates (55.9%), the Politically Disengaged (51.8%), and Passive Liberals (46.0%).

- **Language Spoken at Home.** Those who speak English at home had a higher percentage of people experiencing belonging in Colorado (63.6%) compared with those who speak a language other than English at home (52.0%).

Determining Respondents' Political Ideologies



In partnership with More in Common, CHI included a series of questions on the Colorado Belonging Barometer to assess respondents' political ideologies in alignment with The Hidden Tribes of America, a project that explores the polarization and divisions within American society, revealing the complexities of public opinion beyond the traditional left-right political spectrum. This set of questions about beliefs was used to categorize respondents into one of the following seven categories. Note that in CHI's analysis, groups were aggregated as needed due to small sample sizes:

- **Progressive Activists.** Considered to be people who have strong ideological views and a high level of engagement with political issues, especially those concerning equity, fairness, and the direction of the U.S.
- **Traditional Liberals.** Considered to be people who tend to be cautious, rational, and idealistic. Traditional Liberals tend to have strong humanitarian values, placing great faith in institutions and valuing tolerance and compromise.
- **Passive Liberals.** Considered to be people who are less engaged in social and political issues but have more liberal-leaning views. Passive Liberals tend to feel more isolated from communities and the system writ large and have a fatalistic view of politics and that circumstances of their lives are beyond their control.
- **The Politically Disengaged.** Considered to be people who feel untrusting, suspicious about external threats, conspiratorially minded, and pessimistic about progress. The Politically Disengaged tend to be patriotic but are detached from politics.
- **Moderates.** Considered to be people who are engaged in their communities and civic-minded and reflect a middle-of-the-road viewpoint. Moderates tend to be socially conservative, view faith as an important part of their lives, and shy away from extremism.
- **Traditional Conservatives.** Considered to be people who believe in personal responsibility and self-reliance. Traditional conservatives tend to be religious, patriotic, and highly moralistic.
- **Devoted Conservatives.** Considered to be people who are highly engaged with politics and hold uncompromising views. Devoted Conservatives tend to feel that the U.S. is embattled and that they must uphold traditional values.

Adapted from: More in Common. Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape. (2018) https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden_tribes_report.

Belonging in Local Communities

Factors associated with belonging in one's local community include age, education, income, whether the individual is a person of color, urbanicity, the importance people place on belonging, political ideologies, loneliness/isolation, the number of years someone has lived in the community, satisfaction with one's community as a place to live, whether one trusts other people in their community, and whether they feel marginalized.

- **Age by Generation.** The Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (56.1%) and Millennials (55.8%) had the highest percentage of people who reported belonging in their local communities. Less than half of people from Generation Z (46.3%) and Generation X (47.5%) reported experiencing belonging in their local communities.
- **Race/Ethnicity – Person of Color.** About three in five people who identify as a person of color (62.4%) reported experiencing belonging in local communities compared with about half of white Coloradans (50.3%).
- **Urbanicity – Subjective.** Coloradans who feel they live in a big city (59.4%), rural area (51.4%), and suburban area (54.0%) all had similar percentages of people who reported experiencing belonging. Those who feel they live in small cities had the lowest percentage of people experiencing belonging (43.3%).

Belonging in the Workplace

Factors associated with belonging in one's workplace include education, gender, income (both objective and subjective), sexual orientation, perceived importance of belonging, loneliness/isolation, and one's work setting.

- **Education.** Coloradans with the least and most education had the highest percentage of people experiencing belonging in the workplace (82.1% for those with a high school education or below and 71.7% for those with a post graduate education). This is followed by those with a bachelor's degree (63.7%) and those with some college or an associate's degree (59.3%).

- **Sexual Orientation.** Straight Coloradans were more likely to experience belonging in the workplace (70.3%) compared with those who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another sexual identity (56.1%).

- **Work Setting.** People who work mostly outside the home had the highest percentage of people reporting belonging (71.7%) followed by those who worked at home (62.4%). Hybrid workers reported a slightly lower rate of belonging (59.1%).

Belonging at a Child's School

Factors associated with belonging at a child's school include level of education, gender, immigration status, perceived importance of belonging, political ideologies, and loneliness/isolation. Note that these factors are of the parent/guardian and not the child.

- **Gender Identity.** Female-identifying parents and guardians were more likely to feel belonging at their child's school compared with male-identifying parents and guardians (55.5% to 38.8%, respectively).

- **Immigration Status.** Colorado parents and guardians who were born in the U.S. but have at least one parent or grandparent who was an immigrant had the highest percentage of people experiencing belonging at their child's school (54.7%). This was followed closely by those whose parents and grandparents were all born in the U.S. (54.2%). Fewer naturalized citizens and noncitizens felt belonging at their child's school (25.0%).

- **Political Ideologies.** Parents and guardians who were Conservatives (which includes Traditional and Devoted Conservatives) and Moderates had the highest percentage of people experiencing belonging at their child's school (64.2%). Fewer than half of people (43.3%) who were Liberals (including both Traditional and Passive) and Progressive Activists reported experiencing belonging at their child's school. About two in five people who were Politically Disengaged (40.6%) reported belonging.

The next section offers a discussion of the nuances of factors that were found to be associated with belonging. It is important to understand and consider how these factors can influence belonging in different settings.

Demographic Factors

Factor: **Age**
Setting: **Local Community**

Age may influence belonging in local communities due to differences in activities and engagement that happen in these settings. For example, age may influence whether one participates in events or activities in their neighborhood or at their local recreation center. Local communities can encompass a range of day-to-day settings, and perceptions of acceptance in these settings may also vary with age, which may affect belonging. Further, age may be connected with the amount of time someone has lived in their local community thereby influencing belonging.

Factor: **Education**
Settings: **Local Community, Workplace, Child's School**

An individual's education level may influence belonging in different ways. For example, education is often used as a credential in a workplace. Therefore, people may feel a greater sense of belonging if they are around others with similar levels of education. Alternatively, higher levels of education can lead to job opportunities, higher income, or broadened social networks. This may influence belonging as individuals may feel better integrated into these networks or more empowerment and agency.

Factor: **Gender Identity**
Settings: **Workplace, Child's School**

Gender identity can influence a sense of belonging through the societal norms and traditional gender roles and expectations. The Colorado Belonging Barometer found that male-identifying people are more likely to experience belonging in workplaces while female-identifying people are more likely to experience belonging at a child's school. Perceptions of belonging may be affected by these societal norms.

Factor: **Immigration Status**
Setting: **Child's School**

People who are not U.S. citizens or are without documentation may have increased fear when interacting with others at their child's school, especially figures of authority.

Language or cultural differences may also hinder engagement and a sense of belonging among the other families or staff at the school.

Factor: **Income**
Settings: **State, Local Community, Workplace**

Income affects a person's access to resources and opportunities, social networks, and perceptions of status, which may influence belonging.

Factor: **Language Spoken at Home**
Setting: **State**

Language spoken at home may influence belonging as it can be a component of one's cultural identity and therefore create a strong sense of belonging with others who speak that same language. Alternatively, people may feel less belonging if they feel they cannot express themselves fully to others who don't speak their language.

Factor: **Race/Ethnicity — Person of Color**
Setting: **Local Community**

Race/ethnicity is a component of cultural identity in which people may feel a strong sense of belonging. This can influence belonging if they are surrounded by others with similar traditions, languages, or customs.

Factor: **Sexual Orientation**
Setting: **Workplace**

Sexual orientation may affect belonging in the workplace as workplaces may not have inclusive policies and practices that contribute to a sense of belonging. People may feel less visibility and representation, may face discrimination, or may not feel they can be their authentic selves.

Factor: **Urbanicity**
Setting: **Local Community**

The area in which someone lives can affect social networks, diversity, interactions, and access to community resources or can convey a sense of a "tight-knit community," which can all influence whether someone feels they belong.

Additional Factors
(Experiences, Feelings, or Beliefs)

Factor: **Perceived Importance of Belonging**
Settings: **State, local community, workplace, child's school**

Whether or not someone believes belonging is important can influence whether they seek out connections and relationships with others.

Factor: **Political Ideologies**
Settings: **State, local community, child's school**

Political ideologies can reflect shared values or beliefs, thereby creating a sense of belonging in different settings.

Factor: **Loneliness/Isolation**
Settings: **State, local community, workplace, child's school**

Loneliness can affect belonging as people who feel lonely or isolated from others may not have the social support they need.

Factor: **Tenure**
Settings: **State, local community**

The number of years someone has lived in the state or in their community may influence belonging as those who have lived in these places longer may feel more established in these settings or like they have a better understanding of their environments.

Factor: **Satisfaction With State/Local Community as a Place to Live**
Settings: **State, local community**

Satisfaction with Colorado or the local community as a place to live may reflect a sense of attachment to that setting, quality of life, or how integrated one is into their setting.

Factor: **Trust in Others**
Settings: **State, local community**

Trust in other people in Colorado and in one's local community may reflect a perception of safety and security in these settings.

Factor: **Marginalization**
Settings: **State, local community**

Marginalization is a composite measure that reflects whether someone feels like a stranger in their state/community, whether they feel left behind, and/or are excited for new opportunities from changing demographics. These may lead to feeling excluded or threatened.

Factor: **Work Setting**
Setting: **Workplace**

How workplace culture is reflected in remote, hybrid, or in-person settings may influence whether someone feels belonging in their workplace.

BEYOND THE BAROMETER

Guiding Question:
What else can we uncover about belonging? How are Coloradans connecting with other people from different backgrounds? What are the spaces and activities that affirm people in Colorado's experience of belonging?

Key Takeaways

- Coloradans connect with others organically in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and children's schools. These are settings that can increase points of connection to help bolster social connection and belonging for Coloradans.
- Coloradans reported most frequently feeling belonging in parks, libraries, and places of worship. Community leaders, funders, and policymakers can consider how these and other easily accessible settings in communities can be leveraged to bridge social capital.
- Fewer respondents reported they felt they belonged when using or visiting online forums (36.4%), using public transit (54.2%), and when taking classes for a degree or certification (61.7%). These reflect opportunities for policymakers and community partners to foster belonging in these settings.

Analysis Approach

CHI and its partners included additional questions beyond the 10-item Barometer to better understand belonging in Colorado. These included questions about social connection among Coloradans and additional spaces or activities that may evoke a sense of belonging.

To better understand social connection, we included an open response question asking respondents to recall a time they had a meaningful interaction with a neighbor, coworker, and person at their child's school who was from a different background. These findings are described in the Points of Connection section. The survey did not define a meaningful interaction. Instead, it allowed people to decide for themselves what counted as a meaningful interaction. Open-response data are subjective, but interpretations of what is "meaningful" are also subjective and can differ for respondents.

To better understand the spaces and places that evoke a sense of belonging, we asked respondents to list up to three places or spaces in their communities that provide a feeling of belonging and asked them to briefly

describe why these places made them feel belonging. These results are presented in the section titled In Their Own Words: Places That Evoke Belonging.

Finally, to further understand additional spaces and activities in which people feel a sense of belonging, we provided respondents with the following list of spaces and activities.

Spaces included:

- An online community or forum
- A local park or open space
- A grocery store
- Public transportation like a local bus or train
- A library

Activities included:

- Taking classes for a degree or certification
- Attending a place of worship like a church, mosque, temple, or synagogue
- Participating or volunteering in a local community or neighborhood group like the neighborhood watch or a nonprofit community organization
- Participating in youth or adult sports like a sports club or league
- Participating in outdoor recreational activities like hiking, biking, or skiing
- Attending a professional sports team event (for example, a Broncos, Nuggets, Avalanche, Rockies, or other professional or college teams' game)
- Watching professional or collegiate sports on television with others (for example, at someone's house, a restaurant, or a bar)

Respondents were asked to select any space or activity they have participated in, visited, or used in the last 12 months. For each one they selected, we asked them to rate the extent to which they feel they truly belong in that space or activity on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. For any spaces or activities they did not select, respondents were asked to indicate reasons why from a list of options. These reasons included not having interest or applicability, difficulties with access, concerns with belonging, and not having the time or money to participate. For this series of questions, CHI opted to use a supplemental approach to shorten the length of the overall survey for respondents. Respondents were randomly assigned to answer questions about spaces or activities, but not both. These findings are presented in the Further Exploring Spaces and Activities section.

Points of Connection

In the local community setting, Coloradans described two main types of interactions with their neighbors: engaging in small talk or helping or doing favors for a neighbor. These interactions with neighbors point to an important component of daily interactions for Coloradans, as well as opportunities for intentional community-building among neighbors. Small talk interactions were categorized as those that described brief interactions with neighbors, such as conversations about the weather or conversations in passing. Examples of both types of interaction are below:

- ***"One of my neighbors is from another country. I'm not sure what country it is, but whenever I see her or she sees me, [we] either smile and wave or have a brief conversation."***
- ***"I have a neighbor who comes from a different economic background who lives in my building and when I found out they were laid off from their job, I bought groceries for them."***

Workplace interactions encompassed day-to-day experiences. The workplace is another opportunity for organic points of connection with others from different backgrounds and is a defined setting that can help to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment.

- ***"My work[place] is extremely diverse, so I've been able to work closely with people from all different races and statuses."***
- ***"I am a supervisor where most of our employees are from Mexico or Central America. Every day is a meaningful interaction. Most of us have worked together for five or more years."***

While responses to meaningful interactions at a child's school were sparse and vague, those who recounted an interaction described speaking with teachers and other families and parents at school functions, such as parent-teacher conferences, sports, or while picking up their students.

- ***"I chatted with my son's teacher while I waited for him after a game."***
- ***"I went to pick up my daughter from a sleepover and had a nice chat with the dad of my daughter's friend. They are of Mexican heritage."***

These touchpoints provide an important avenue for building social connection because they are places where people meet each other. Initiatives can be implemented in each of these settings to not only foster and boost social connection, but also bridge a person's social capital and organically link them to others who may be or come from different backgrounds. However, more research is needed to gain a better understanding of how Coloradans are truly connecting with others in different spaces and life settings.

In Their Own Words: Places That Evoke Belonging

The most frequently mentioned places in communities that provide a sense of belonging were a **park** (including state and local parks), a **library**, and a **place of worship**. Common themes as to why these places provide a sense of belonging are listed in Table 3.

Coloradans said they felt a sense of belonging at a **park** because they can gather with neighbors or friends and see or participate in activities they are interested in, which fosters a sense of community. Respondents also noted that parks are a relaxing and peaceful place where they can go to appreciate the quiet and calmness of nature. This reflects the notion that belonging does not always need to involve the presence of other people and that one can feel belonging to an environment, such as a mountain, park, or tribal land.[1] Finally, many respondents said they felt belonging at a park because they can participate in activities they enjoy such as hiking, biking, or walking.

Similarly, respondents noted that a **library** also creates a sense of belonging because it is a place to gather, and it provides important resources to the community. Respondents also said that they feel welcome or included and do not feel judged when they are at a library. Finally, respondents listed specific positive attributes of libraries as a reason they felt belonging there, such as having a large variety of books or friendly staff members.

A sense of community and belonging and feeling welcomed and included were also top reasons Coloradans indicated a **place of worship** evokes a sense of belonging. Again, respondents noted churches, mosques, and other places of worship as a place to gather and where there is a built community of family and friends who share the same beliefs and where they feel valued and accepted. They also pointed to their sense of faith and being able to practice/worship freely and build a spiritual connection as a reason these spaces evoked a sense of belonging.

These places are accessible in communities. Policymakers, funders, community leaders, and others can consider how these, and other spaces, can be used to encourage community connection and bridge social capital through community-wide events that intentionally promote inclusivity.

Table 3. Most Frequently Mentioned Places That Create a Sense of Belonging and Why

	Top Reasons Why the Place Creates a Sense of Belonging	Examples
Park (including both state and local parks)	Sense of community and belonging Relaxing/peaceful Ability to enjoy or engage in outdoor activities	A gathering place for neighbors or a place to say hello and see others engaging in similar activities Appreciating the quiet and calm of being outdoors A place to hike, bike, or walk
Library	Sense of community and belonging Feeling welcomed or included Positive attributes of the location/facility	A gathering place that hosts events and provides resources to the community A place where everyone is welcome without judgment Having a large variety of books to choose from and positive interactions with staff
A Place of Worship	Sense of community and belonging Feeling welcomed or included Sense of faith	A gathering place and community of family and friends who share the same beliefs A place where everyone is welcome and can feel valued and accepted Being able to practice/worship and build a spiritual connection

Further Exploring Spaces and Activities

Of the provided list of spaces, most Coloradans reported they belong (agree and strongly agree) at libraries and local parks/open spaces (83.5% and 78.4%, respectively). The lowest rate of belonging was reported for visiting or using an online community or forum (36.4%). Online forums also had the highest rate of ambiguity — neither agreeing nor disagreeing that one belongs (47.9%). It's possible that survey respondents were unsure how to rate their sense of belonging in an online community or forum. However, the polarizing nature of online spaces, which can be fueled by misinformation, anonymity, and extremism could also be reasons for the lower rate of belonging. The highest rate of exclusion — or respondents reporting they strongly disagree or disagree that they belong — was for using public transportation (20.2%). This could be due to safety concerns with public transportation.[14] See Figure 3.

Coloradans reported relatively high rates of belonging (agreeing or strongly agreeing they belong) across all of the listed activities. The rate was highest (82.9%) for participating in outdoor recreational activities, which makes sense given that parks were frequently mentioned as a community place that evokes a sense of belonging in the open-response section. The rate of belonging was lowest for taking classes for a degree or certification (61.7%). This activity also had the highest reported ambiguity (neither agreeing nor disagreeing) at 34.7%. Very few Coloradans reported feeling excluded in any activity. These data reflect an opportunity for leaders and policymakers to focus on building belonging at schools, including colleges, given the high rates of uncertainty. See Figure 4.

Some people don't participate in activities because they feel they don't belong. Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents who do not visit, use, or participate in the listed activities or spaces due to concern they would not belong. While a small percentage of respondents reported belonging as the reason for not engaging in many of the activities or spaces, these data show an opportunity for further research related to these spaces to understand the reason why someone may not feel they belong.

Figure 3. Extent to Which Respondents Feel They Belong in Identified Spaces

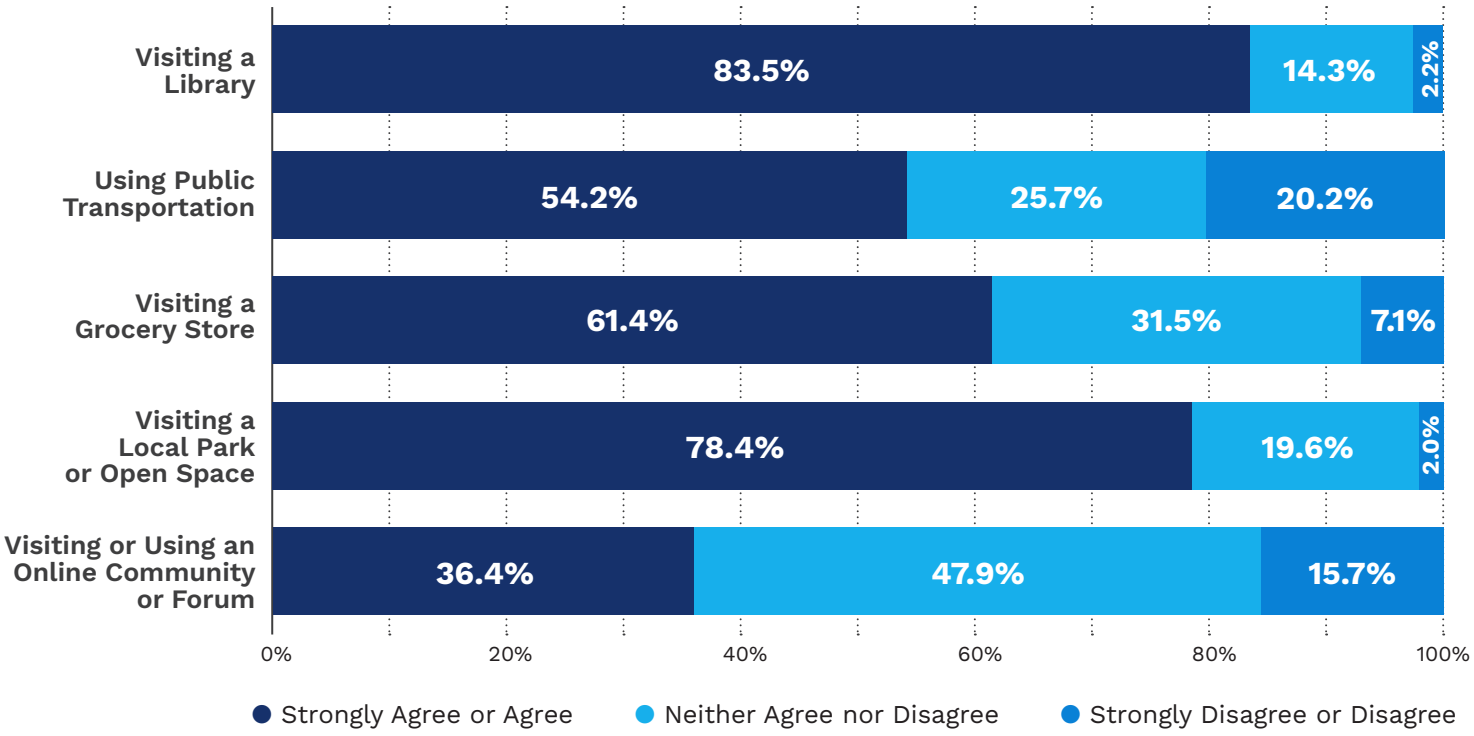


Figure 4. Extent to Which Respondents Feel They Belong in Identified Activities

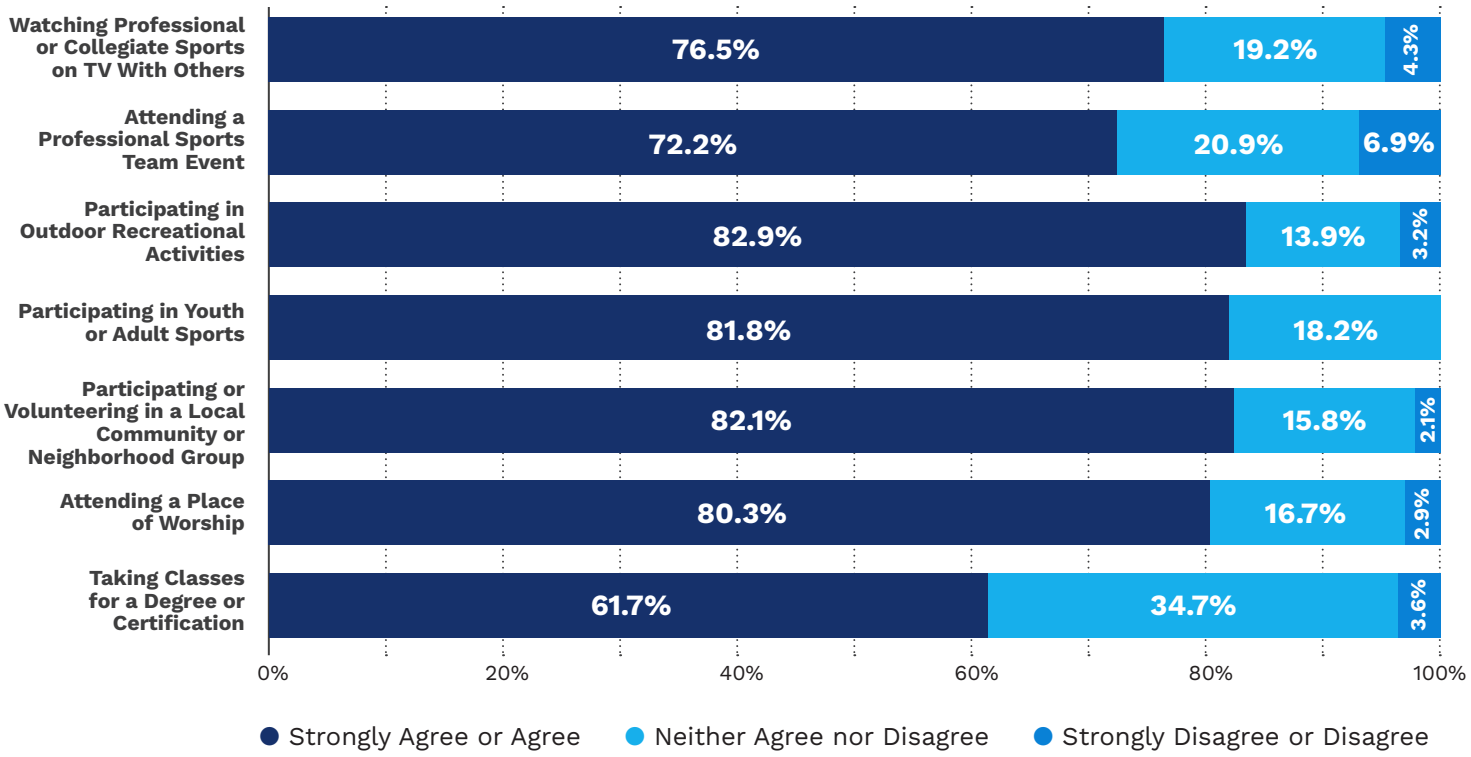


Table 4. Percentage of Respondents Who Do Not Participate in the Listed Activity or Visit/Use the Listed Space Because Were Concerned They Would Not Belong

Activity	Percent of Respondents
Taking classes for a degree or certification	5.2%
Attending a place of worship like a church, mosque, temple, or synagogue	7.6%
Participating or volunteering in a local community or neighborhood group like the neighborhood watch or a nonprofit community organization	8.1%
Participating in youth or adult sports like a sports club or league	6.5%
Participating in outdoor recreational activities like hiking, biking, or skiing	6.6%
Attending a professional sports team event (for example, a Broncos, Nuggets, Avalanche, Rockies, or other professional or college teams' game)	4.7%
Watching professional or collegiate sports on television with others (for example, at someone's house, a restaurant, or a bar)	4.9%
Spaces	**Percent of Respondents**
An online community or forum	5.9%
A local park or open space	6.5%
A grocery store	4.6%
Public transportation like a local bus or train	4.1%
Library	2.9%

Key Takeaway: Everyone has a role in building belonging, and it is something everyone can engage in.

The following questions are meant to prompt reflection and inspire action among various groups, including employers, policymakers, communities, researchers, and funders, toward fostering a greater sense of belonging within their respective spheres of influence.

Questions for Reflection and to Inspire Action

Individuals:

Reflection:

- How are you building a culture of belonging in your community? In your workplace? In your child's school or as a caregiver?
- How are you engaging with others?

Action:

- How can you increase your understanding of belonging and what belonging means to others?
- What are you communicating about belonging or differences in community?

Communities:

Reflection:

- Are there specific populations within the community that may experience barriers to belonging? What barriers do they face?

Action:

- How can you collaborate with community members to co-design programs or create spaces that better foster a sense of belonging for all residents and address those barriers? How would you know they were successful?

Employers:

Reflection:

- How do you assess the sense of belonging among your employees? How can you model an inclusive culture? What steps can you take to make them feel valued and included?

Action:

- How can you involve employees in creating initiatives and policies that promote a culture of belonging and inclusion in the workplace?

Policymakers:

Reflection:

- In what ways do your policies prioritize the well-being and a sense of belonging for the communities you represent? Are you advancing policies that might exclude or harm others and their sense of connectivity to the state or community?

Action:

- How can you incorporate principles of equity and inclusion into policy development processes to enhance a sense of belonging for populations experiencing exclusion?

Researchers:

Reflection:

- How can the existing quantitative and qualitative research on belonging be expanded to delve deeper into the dynamics of bridging social capital and its impact on fostering connections between the diverse, complex, and multifaceted groups in your communities? See Appendix D for a list of future research questions to consider.
- In what ways can you innovate research methodologies to better capture the nuances and complexities of inter-community relationships and identify factors that contribute to or inhibit the formation of bridging ties?

Action:

- What interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative partnerships can you leverage to explore the role of bridging social capital in facilitating cross-community dialogue, collaboration, and collective action?
- How can you design research projects and approaches that further engage community members as co-researchers and co-creators of knowledge, ensuring their perspectives and experiences are central to the understanding of inter-community connections?

Funders:

Reflection:

- How do you prioritize funding opportunities that promote belonging and social connectedness within communities?
- In what ways do your funding criteria and evaluation metrics reflect an understanding of the importance of building inclusive networks and strengthening ties across diverse communities? Are you supporting groups that use divisive tactics to achieve their aims?

Action:

- What strategies can you implement to support capacity-building efforts among grantees to effectively promote belonging in their communities?
- How can you adapt your grantmaking processes to prioritize projects that actively promote bridging social capital and encourage collaboration and partnership-building between communities?

CONCLUSION

Findings from the Colorado Belonging Barometer are a starting point to discover what belonging looks like for Coloradans. While high percentages of people experience belonging across life settings, a significant number of people feel ambiguity or uncertainty about their belonging in these settings. More research is needed to better understand the nuances of belonging and the factors and settings that can influence it. Policymakers, community leaders, funders, researchers, and other partners should reflect on how these nuances can affect belonging and also be leveraged to help cultivate it. However, this much is clear: Belonging is not a privilege reserved for the few. Belonging is a birthright inherent to all; it is a tapestry woven from threads such as meaningful connections, feeling valued, and having one's voice be heard. And everyone has a role in building a stronger and more inclusive social fabric, where every thread finds its place, and everyone feels they truly belong.

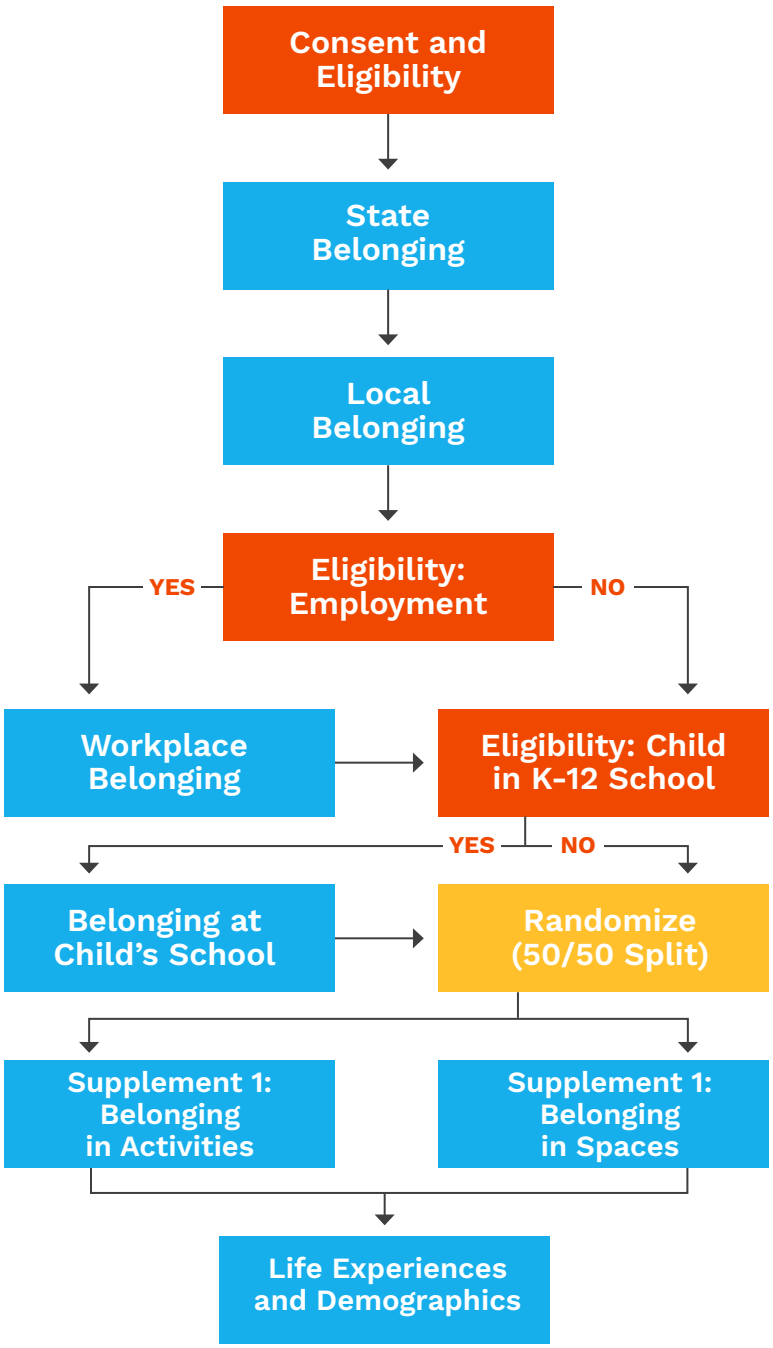
Appendix A: The Colorado Belonging Barometer

The Colorado Belonging Barometer assessed belonging by adapting the national Belonging Barometer across four life settings: the state, local communities, workplace, and at a child's K-12 school. All respondents answered the series of questions on belonging in the state and their local community, as well as associated questions in that section, such as on trust and marginalization.

Respondents were screened so that those who indicated they were currently employed — either by the military or someone else and excluding self-employment — received the series of questions on workplace belonging. Similarly, only parents or guardians of at least one child attending a public or private K-12 school in Colorado received the series of questions on belonging at a child's school. Respondents were prompted to answer the series of questions for their oldest child if they have more than one who attends a K-12 school in Colorado.

Respondents were then randomly selected to respond to a series of questions on belonging in activities or belonging in spaces. CHI used this supplemental approach to decrease the overall length of interview for respondents. All respondents then answered questions related to demographics and life experiences. See Figure 5 for an overview of the survey flow.

Figure 5. Survey Flow



Note that the definition of local community was open to the respondent's interpretation. At the beginning of the local community section of the survey, respondents were first asked, "What is the name of the municipality where you live (e.g., your town, city, etc.)?" For every follow-up question in that section, respondents saw the name of their municipality (e.g., Denver). If respondents did not enter a name, they saw "my/your community."

Appendix B: Survey Administration, Data Analysis, and Limitations

Administration

The survey was administered in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago using NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel and Dynata. AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel and Dynata is a non-probability panel. Both panel types were used to increase the number of responses to the survey.

The survey was available in English and Spanish and was administered in two modes for the AmeriSpeak respondents depending on the preference of the respondent provided during panel recruitment: 1) self-administered by the respondent online via the web; or 2) administered over the telephone by a live interviewer. For Dynata respondents, all interviews were self-administered by the respondent online.

NORC's AmeriSpeak panelists were offered the cash equivalent of $7 for completing this survey. While Dynata incentivizes its panelists as part of its member agreement, the incentive amount is unknown as Dynata considers this to be proprietary information.

In total, 1,102 responses were collected; 304 AmeriSpeak interviews (295 by web mode and nine by phone mode) and 798 interviews through Dynata. Only six respondents completed the survey in Spanish. This does not include interviews that may have been removed by NORC for data quality purposes.

Data Analysis

NORC weighted final data using its TrueNorth Calibration methodology. This methodology calibrates data from the nonprobability survey, truing it up with the AmeriSpeak data, which ensures that respondents gathered from the non-probability panel are representative of Colorado's population. CHI used the final weighted dataset for this report.

Factors Associated with Belonging

Table 5 lists each factor included in the Colorado Belonging Barometer, categorized by demographics and other characteristics. The table defines the groupings, or categories, included for each factor. Note that groupings may have been excluded or aggregated from what was collected in the Colorado survey due to small sample sizes.

Table 5. Grouping Definition for Factors

Factor	Grouping definitions
Demographic Factor	
Age	▸ The Silent Generation (born 1928-1945) and Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) ▸ Generation X (born 1965-1980) ▸ Millennials (born 1981-1996) ▸ Generation Z (born 1997-2012)
Education	▸ High school graduate or below ▸ Some college or an associate's degree ▸ Bachelor's degree ▸ Post graduate or professional degree
Gender Identity	▸ Female ▸ Male
Immigration Status	▸ Not a citizen or a naturalized citizen ▸ Born in the U.S. but have at least one parent or grandparent who is an immigrant ▸ Those who were born in the U.S. and whose parents and grandparents were born in the U.S.
Income - Objective	▸ Less than $30,000 ▸ $30,000-$59,999 ▸ $60,000-$89,999 ▸ $90,000 or more
Income - Subjective	Would consider their economic situation compared to the average American to be: ▸ Much worse or worse ▸ Same as ▸ Better or much better
Language Spoken at Home	▸ Speaks a language other than English at home ▸ Does not speak a language other than English at home
Race/Ethnicity - Hispanic Ethnicity	▸ Hispanic or Latino ▸ Not Hispanic or Latino
Race/Ethnicity - Person of Color	▸ Person of Color ▸ White, Non-Hispanic/Latino
Sexual Orientation	▸ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other ▸ Straight
Urbanicity - Objective	Live in a county that is designated as: ▸ Frontier ▸ Rural ▸ Urban
Urbanicity - Subjective	Described the place they currently live as: ▸ Big city ▸ Rural (includes small town and rural) ▸ Smaller city ▸ Suburban area
Years living in the U.S. (if an immigrant)	▸ Number of years

Factor	Grouping definitions
Additional Factors (Experiences, Feelings, or Beliefs)	
Importance of Belonging	How important is it for you to feel like you belong in [life setting]: ▸ Not important at all/Somewhat important ▸ Very important/Extremely important
Political Ideologies	Based on More in Common's The Hidden Tribes of America ▸ Progressive Activists ▸ Traditional Liberals ▸ Passive Liberals ▸ Politically Disengaged ▸ Moderates ▸ Conservatives (includes Traditional and Devoted Conservatives)

Loneliness/ Isolation	Composite measure of how often someone feels they:
	▸ Lack companionship
	▸ Are left out
	▸ Feel isolated from others
	  ▸ Lonely (1.0-2.4)
	  ▸ Sometimes lonely (2.41-3.8)
	  ▸ Not lonely (3.81-5.0)

Tenure	The number of years someone has lived in the state or their local community: ▸ 0-5 years ▸ 6-10 years ▸ 11-20 years ▸ 21-30 years ▸ 31-40 years ▸ 41 or more years The number of years someone has been employed at their primary place of employment: ▸ 1 year or less ▸ 2-3 years ▸ 4-5 years ▸ 6 or more years
Satisfaction With State/Local Community as a Place to Live	Satisfaction with [Colorado/local community] as a place to live: ▸ Very dissatisfied/Fairly satisfied ▸ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ▸ Fairly satisfied/Very satisfied

Trust in Others	Composite measure of how often you can trust other [people in Colorado/ residents in your local community] to:
	▸ Act in ways that are considerate of you and your family
	▸ Do what is in the best interests of the community
	  ▸ Distrust (1.0-2.4)
	  ▸ Sometimes trust (2.41-3.8)
	  ▸ Trust (3.81-5.0)

Factor	Grouping definitions

Marginalization	Composite measure of whether someone:
	▸ Feels like a stranger in [Colorado/local community]
	▸ Worries they or their family will be left behind
	▸ Are excited for new opportunities when thinking about the changing demographics/change of pace in [Colorado/local community] (item is reverse scored)
	  ▸ Feels marginalized (1.0-2.4)
	  ▸ Sometimes feels marginalized (2.41-3.8)
	  ▸ Does not feel marginalized (3.81-5.0)

Work Setting	▸ In-person (Working outside the home) ▸ Hybrid (Mix of some work from home and some outside home/at workplace) ▸ Remote (Working from home/remotely)
Grade of Child	▸ Kindergarten to third grade ▸ Fourth to eighth grade ▸ Ninth to 12th grade

To understand which factors were significantly associated with belonging, the belonging composite measure (10 Barometer items) was recreated into a dichotomous variable, looking at belonging as the outcome of interest. This variable was then used in a series of logistic regression analyses, analyzing the relationship between the belonging outcome and all factors in the analysis. If a factor was not found to be significantly related to the belonging outcome at each life setting, it was excluded from additional analysis. A significance level of 0.05 was used to make this determination.

Statistical Testing of Group Differences

Factors that were found to be significantly related to belonging were then further analyzed to understand additional relationships of that factor, such as which categories were significantly different.

CHI made statistical comparisons between the category with the highest percentage of people reporting experiencing belonging and each of the other categories within the factor. Categories that were found to be statistically different from the group with the highest percentage reporting belonging are as follows.

Belonging in the State

- **Objective Income.** The percentage of respondents reporting belonging was statistically higher for those earning $90,000 or more (66.1%) compared with those earning less than $30,000 (47.9%).
- **Political Ideologies.** The percentage of respondents reporting belonging was statistically higher for Traditional Liberals (73.4%) compared with Moderates (55.9%), Passive Liberals (46.0%), the Politically Disengaged (51.8%), and Progressive Activists (63.1%).
- **Language Spoken at Home.** Those who speak English at home had a statistically higher percentage of people experiencing belonging in Colorado compared with those who speak a language other than English at home (63.6% and 52.0%, respectively).

Belonging in Local Communities

- **Age by Generation.** The Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (56.1%) had a statistically higher percentage of people experiencing belonging compared with people from Generation Z (46.3%) and Generation X (47.5%).

- **Race/Ethnicity – Person of Color.** People of color had a statistically different percentage of experiencing belonging in local communities compared with white Coloradans (62.4% and 50.3%, respectively).
- **Urbanicity – Subjective.** Coloradans who feel they live in a big city had a statistically higher percentage of people experiencing belonging compared with those who feel they live in small cities (59.4% and 43.3%, respectively).

Belonging in the Workplace

- **Education.** Coloradans with the least education had a statistically higher percentage of people experiencing belonging (82.1%) compared with those with a bachelor's degree (63.7%) and those with some college or an associate's degree (59.3%).
- **Sexual Orientation.** Straight Coloradans were statistically more likely to experience belonging in the workplace compared with those who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another sexual identity (70.3% to 56.1%, respectively).
- **Work Setting.** Working remotely made little difference in the way Colorado workers experienced belonging. People who work mostly outside the home reported the highest rate of belonging (71.7%), but that was not statistically different from those who worked at home (62.4%). The rate of belonging for those working outside the home did, however, differ statistically from people who had a hybrid work schedule (59.1%).

Belonging at a Child's School

- **Gender Identity.** Female-identifying parents and guardians had a statistically higher percentage of people reporting belonging at their child's school compared with male-identifying parents and guardians (55.5% to 38.8%, respectively).
- **Immigration Status.** Coloradans who were born in the U.S. and had at least one parent or grandparent who was an immigrant had a statistically higher percentage of people reporting belonging (54.7%) compared with naturalized citizens and noncitizens (25.0%).
- **Political Ideologies.** People who were Conservatives (which includes Traditional and Devoted Conservatives) and Moderates had a statistically higher percentage of people reporting belonging (64.2%) compared with the Politically Disengaged (40.6%) and those who were Liberals (Traditional or Passive) and Progressive Activists (43.3%).

CHI analyzed all qualitative data by developing a codebook to synthesize key themes and takeaways.

Limitations

Using a panel survey approach may introduce bias into the sample and findings. For example, certain individuals may be more likely to sign up for a panel or to respond to surveys.

Order effects may have influenced the results and how survey respondents thought about their belonging. For example, the Colorado survey asked about belonging in the state, followed by local communities, workplaces, and at a child's school. This shift from broad to more narrow may have influenced how respondents thought about or reported their belonging.

Qualitative data and open responses collected in the survey can also be subjective as it is open to interpretation of both the respondent and researcher. For example, what a respondent may consider to be a "meaningful interaction" and how CHI may have coded that interaction could differ based on their perspectives and experiences.

Finally, the Further Exploring Spaces and Activities findings are based on one question — the extent to which the respondent feels they truly belong in that space or activity on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. This approach lacks detail and nuance compared with using the 10-item Barometer to assess belonging in these settings, therefore how respondents thought about their belonging may have differed.

Appendix C: Colorado Demographics

To better understand the Colorado landscape, Table 6 shows the demographics of Colorado's population in 2022.

Table 6. 2022 Demographic Profile of Colorado (Age 18 and Older), American Community Survey

Age (by Generation)	
Generation Z (Age 18 to 27)	**17.5%**
Millennials (Age 28 to 43)	**31.1%**
Generation X (Age 44 to 59)	**23.8%**
Baby Boomer and Silent Generation (Age 60+)	**27.6%**
Gender Identity	
Female	**49.4%**
Male	**50.6%**
Highest Level of Education	
High school graduate or below	**35.0%**
Some college or associate degree	**22.1%**
Bachelor's degree	**27.4%**
Graduate or professional degree	**15.4%**
Hispanic or Latino Identity	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	**19.8%**
Not Hispanic or Latino	**80.2%**
Race	
Person of Color	**31.7%**
White, Non-Hispanic or Latino	**68.3%**

Appendix D: Questions for Future Research

This first iteration of the Colorado Belonging Barometer is intended to be an initial look at what belonging looks like for Coloradans. However, the findings from this data have raised additional questions that warrant further investigation. These questions are presented in this appendix.

- What percent of individuals feel excluded or ambiguity across all four life settings?
- Are there certain items of the 10-item Barometer that were more likely to cause respondents to be characterized as ambiguous or excluded?
- Among the factors that were found to be significantly associated with belonging, what is the relationship between groupings and belonging or exclusion?
- How do demographic and other factors influence the findings presented in the Beyond the Barometer section?

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About the Photos in This Report

CHI Creative Director Brian Clark traveled the state photographing everyday Coloradans in their communities, social circles, workplaces, and the outdoors. Special thanks to the African Community Center of Denver (pictured above), the Denver Rescue Mission, The Center on Colfax, Koelbel Library, the Mile High Browns Backers, the Heckawi dragon boat team, and every Coloradan who helped make these images possible.

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