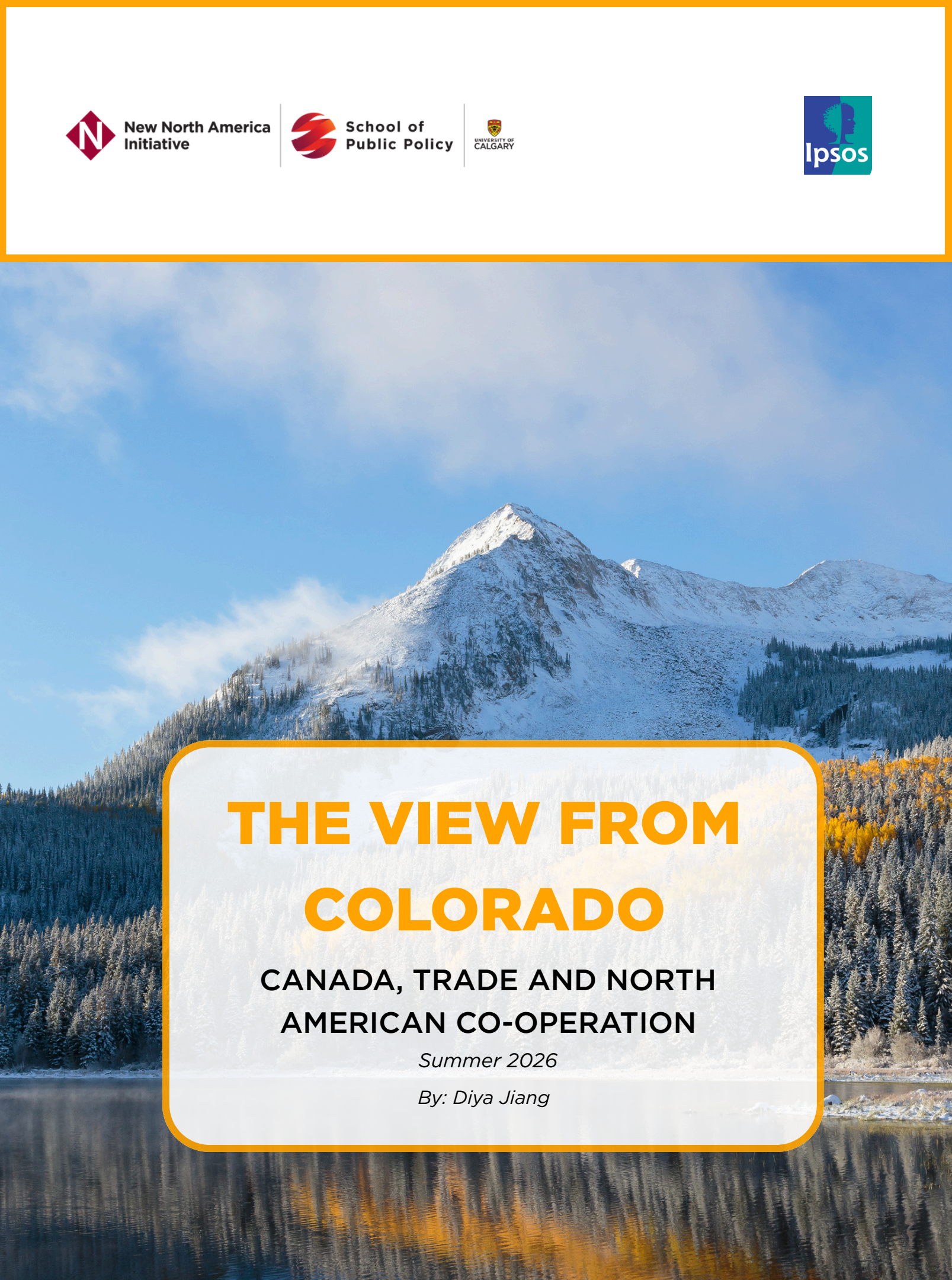




THE VIEW FROM COLORADO

**CANADA, TRADE AND NORTH
AMERICAN CO-OPERATION**

Summer 2026

By: Diya Jiang

INTRODUCTION

In recent months, the relationship between Canada and the United States has been renegotiated, argued over and reshaped. In Canada, conversations surrounding tariffs, trade retaliation and the future of the bilateral relationship have dominated headlines, boardrooms, coffee shops, dinner tables and political debate for months. Far from Washington and Ottawa, in a state with no border crossing and less visible ties to that relationship than a border state would have, the Canada-U.S. relationship still shapes how people think about co-operation, identity, and who they consider a neighbour. This report asks a simple question: what do Colorado residents, in a place without the obvious, front-of-mind stake a border state has, make of the relationship?

The early answer turns out to be more interesting than “not much.” When we ask most Coloradans what worries them, cost of living, housing, wildfires and drought come up long before Canada does. Cross-border trade barely registers as a priority. Yet on Canada-specific questions, Coloradans lean towards openness: majorities oppose tariffs on Canadian goods and support the U.S.-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (USMCA, CUSMA or T-MEX), and Coloradans view Canada more favourably than any other country tested. A relationship that is not top of mind day to day, but still draws real openness and warmth, and where opinion divides more along party lines than along the state’s often-assumed urban-rural fault lines, is the starting point for this report.

Colorado’s physical distance from Canada is exactly why it offers invaluable insights on the future of the North American continent: an American state with no obvious, front-of-mind stake in cross-border co-operation, whose residents’ views are less likely to be sought out precisely because of this distance. The New North America Initiative’s (NNAI) research works from the ground up, asking what communities themselves see as important rather than assuming which places and populations should have a stake in cross-border co-operation. Colorado is one of the first subnational sites in this research program, chosen in part because a place with less visible ties to Canada can reveal something that a border state’s more predictable answers cannot. This survey is the second stage of a multi-part research design for Colorado, following an ideation exchange session conducted by Ipsos in April 2026 with 64 Colorado residents, and preceding planned focus groups, community interviews and a structured experimental exercise still to come. NNAI’s full methodology can be found [here](#).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents findings from the NNAI’s Colorado Studies Survey. The survey was fielded July 9 to 15, 2026, among 559 Colorado residents via Ipsos KnowledgePanel. The margin of error is plus or minus 6.7 per cent. The margin of error is much higher for subgroups, such as the rural/urban divide, given the small sample size. Subgroup analysis should therefore be read as directional. Results are weighted by gender, age, race and ethnicity, metro status, education, income and 2024 vote choice. Full survey methodology can be found [here](#).

When appropriate, findings are compared where relevant to the national surveys conducted by Ipsos in the United States and Nanos in Canada (Wave 1, n equals 1,021, March 2026; Wave 2, n equals 1,022, April 2026). The full report of the national surveys can be found [here](#).

Unless otherwise noted, percentages throughout this report are calculated among all respondents, including those who answered “not sure” or expressed no opinion; the share of undecided or no-opinion responses is called out explicitly wherever it is analytically relevant, since a higher don’t-know rate is itself an indicator of softer, less settled opinion. For context, Colorado has trended Democratic in recent presidential and statewide elections (Kukreja 2024), though it retains a competitive Republican presence, particularly in rural areas (Cronin and Loevy 2024); the partisan splits reported throughout this document should be read against that baseline. For more information, please refer to the Appendix

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Brian R. Lewandowski (University of Colorado Boulder-Leeds School of Business) and Paul Marx (University of Bonn) for their contribution and guidance on this survey’s design. We also thank Alec Tyson (Ipsos) and Colleen Collins (NNAI) for their detailed review and feedback on earlier drafts of this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Colorado’s Priorities:

Cost of living and housing (87 per cent) dominate Colorado’s list of community priorities, while cross-border trade barely registers at all.

Favourability:

Coloradans hold more favourable views of Canada than the national average. But the warmth is split by party: 46 per cent of Republicans hold a favourable view versus 92 per cent of Democrats, though Republicans still lean favourable on balance.

Support for Trade:

Coloradans support trade, with majorities opposing tariffs on Canadian goods and supporting CUSMA. Rural Colorado is measurably more protectionist than urban Colorado, most starkly on tariffs (31 per cent support versus 11 per cent).

Bilateral Co-operation:

A clear majority of Coloradans surveyed support engagement with Canada and Canadian provinces. Sixty-six per cent say Colorado should strengthen or maintain ties with Canada, compared with only seven per cent who want to reduce dependence.

Looking Ahead

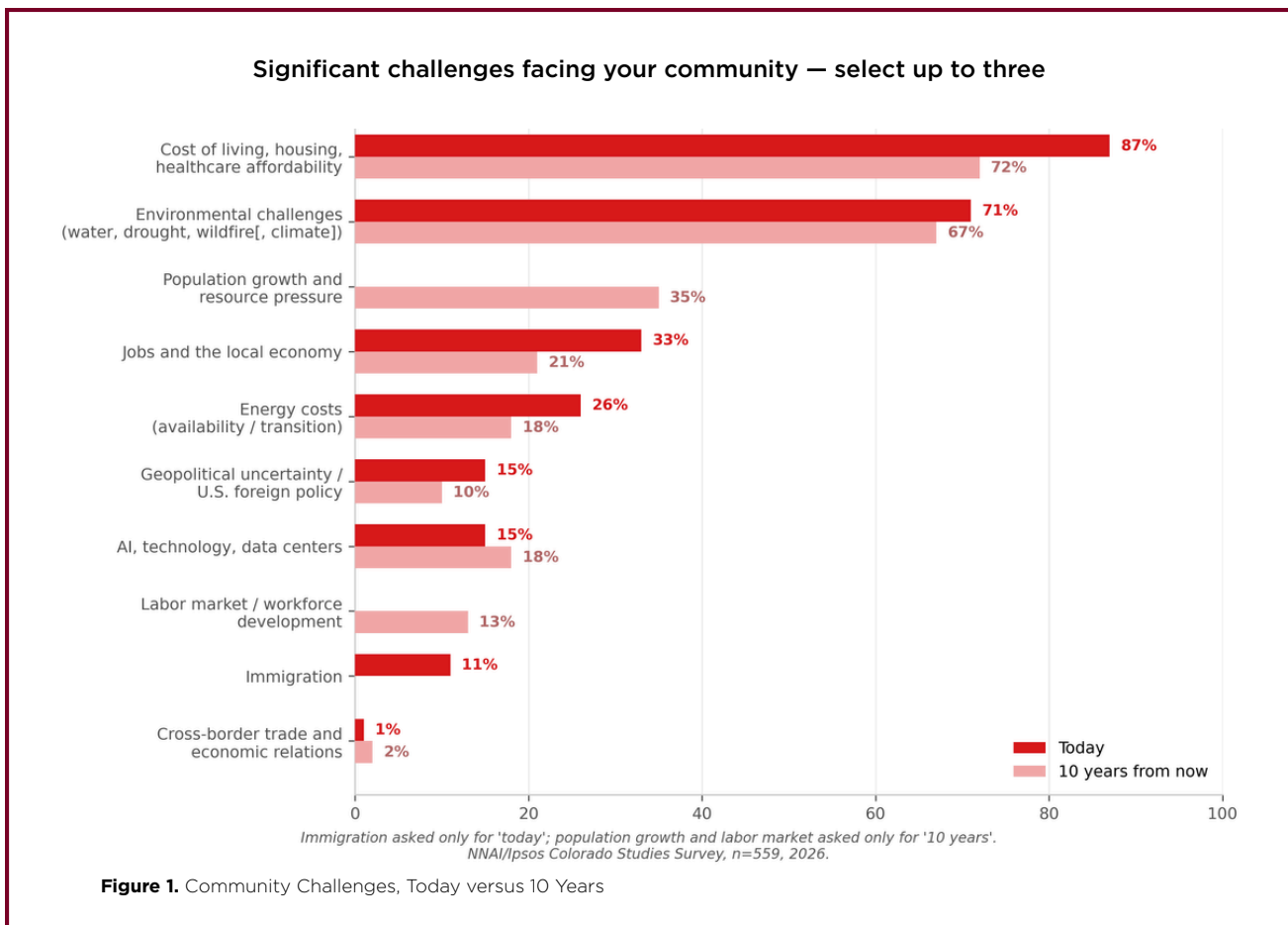
Republicans are the most positive about the U.S.-Canada relationship today (20 per cent positive) and Democrats the least (10 per cent), though the gap is not statistically significant at this sample size. However, when asked about the relationship in 10 years, Democrats become the most optimistic by far (60 per cent), a swing more consistent with a reaction to the current political moment than with lasting pessimism about the relationship itself.

SECTION 1: PRIORITIES AND IDENTITIES

We asked Coloradans to indicate the most significant challenges currently facing their communities from a list of eight options. As Figure 1 indicates, they point overwhelmingly to **cost of living, housing and health-care affordability** (87 per cent) and **environmental challenges** such as water scarcity, drought and wildfire (71 per cent).

Interestingly, cross-border trade and economic relations, an issue dominating headlines in Canada, is named by only one per cent of respondents, last among the eight options offered. This is noticeable as Canada is one of Colorado's largest trading partners, though cross-border trade makes up a modest share of the state's overall economy (Office of the United States Trade Representative 2026).

When asked about the long-term concerns 10 years ahead, the same two concerns remain the most dominant: **cost of living** (72 per cent) and **environmental challenges** (67 per cent), though **population growth and resource pressure** rise into third place (35 per cent). Cross-border trade barely moves, from one per cent to two per cent.

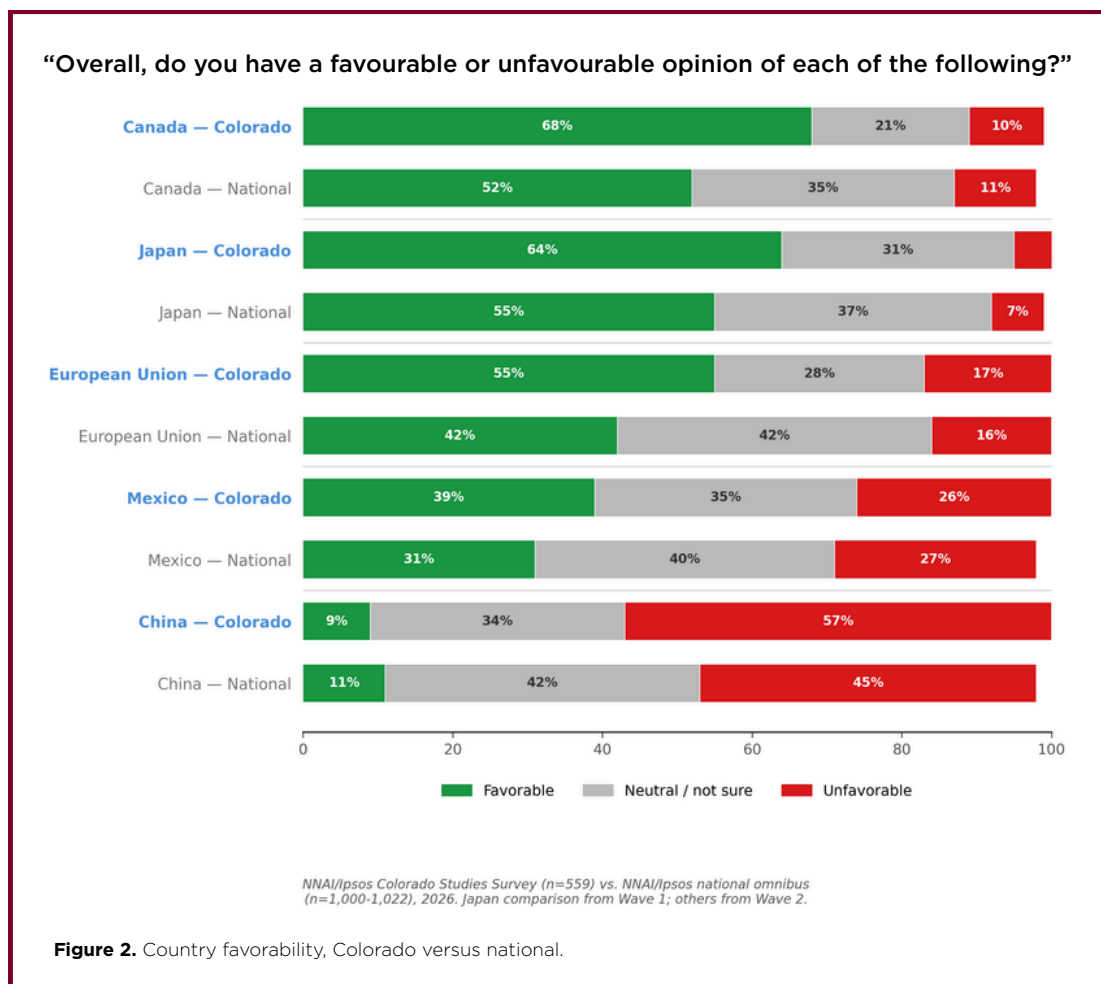


SECTION 2: FAVOURABILITY & ENGAGEMENT

Despite the low salience of trade issues, Coloradans' underlying feelings toward Canada are far from indifferent.

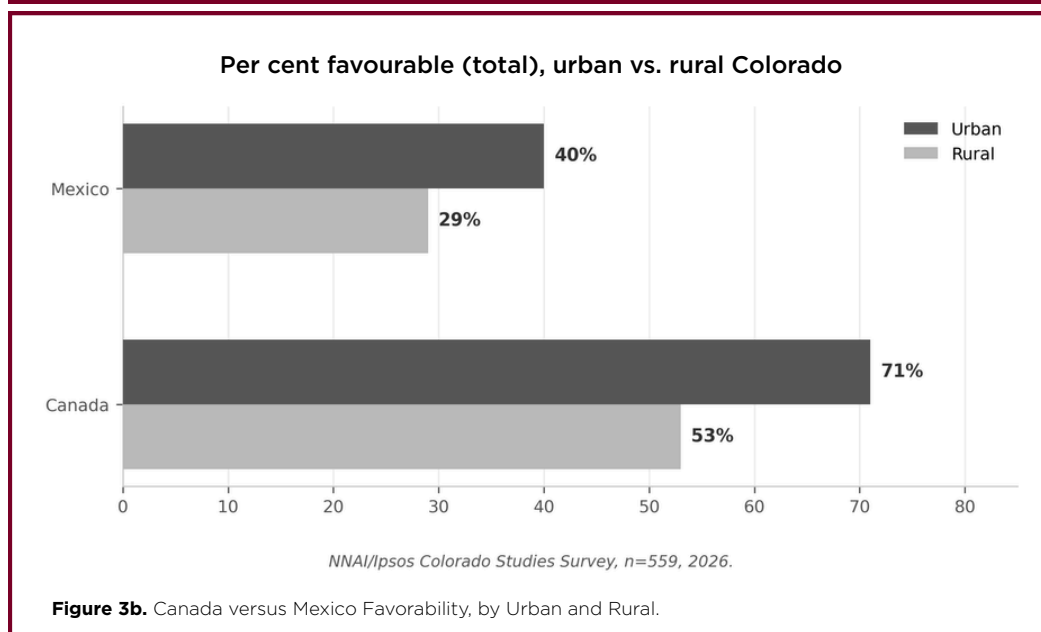
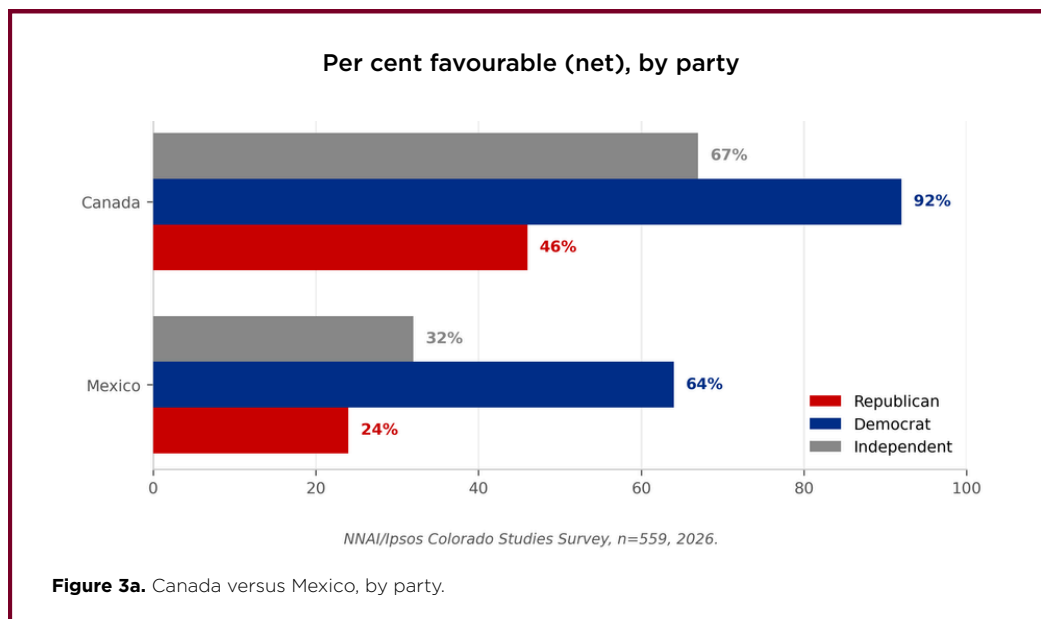
Colorado residents view Canada more favourably than the national average. Sixty-eight per cent of Colorado respondents hold a favourable opinion of Canada compared with 52 per cent nationally.

The same pattern holds across every country tested except China. Coloradans surveyed run warmer than the national average on the European Union (55 per cent favourable in Colorado versus 42 per cent nationally); Japan (63 per cent versus 54 per cent); and Mexico (38 per cent versus 31 per cent). China is the only exception: favourability among Colorado residents surveyed (nine per cent) sits close to, and marginally below, the national figure (11 per cent).



Canada and Mexico diverge sharply in what structures opinion about them. Favourability toward Canada splits almost entirely along party lines: 46 per cent of Colorado Republicans hold a favourable view, against 92 per cent of Democrats. Even so, Republicans remain net favourable toward Canada on balance. The urban-rural gap on Canada (71 per cent favourable in urban Colorado versus 53 per cent in rural Colorado) is comparatively narrow.

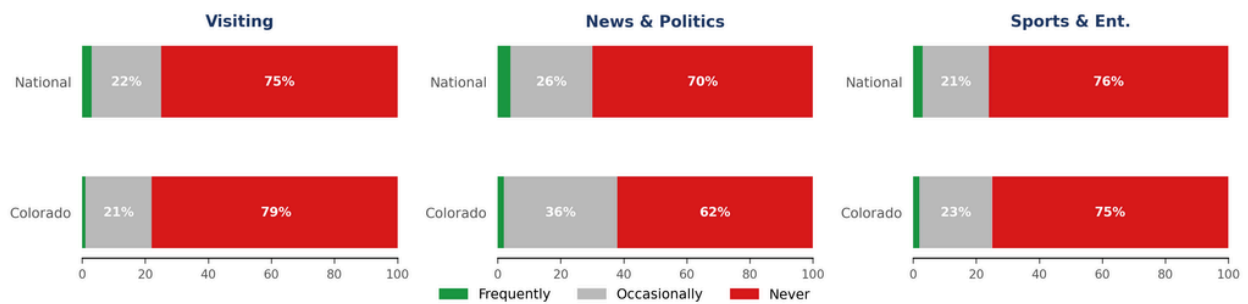
Mexico shows a partisan gap of similar size (24 per cent of Republicans favourable versus 64 per cent of Democrats) but adds a second, geographic divide that Canada does not have: favourability drops from 40 per cent in urban Colorado to 29 per cent in rural Colorado, an 11-point gap, though not statistically significant. Moreover, given rural Colorado's Republican lean, this could be an effect of both partisanship and rural factors. Canada's image in Colorado seems to be a partisan phenomenon; Mexico's is both partisan and geographic.



Direct engagement with Canada remains limited and close to the national pattern. Seventy-nine per cent of Colorado residents say they never visit Canada for vacation or work, similar to the 75 per cent national figure. Seventy-five per cent never follow Canadian sports or entertainment, essentially identical to the 76 per cent national figure.

The one measure where Coloradans surveyed depart from the national pattern is following Canadian news or politics: only 62 per cent of Colorado residents say they never do, compared with 70 per cent nationally, suggesting that **Coloradans are somewhat more likely to occasionally follow Canadian news than Americans overall**, despite not sharing a border with Canada.

“Do you do any of the following frequently, occasionally, or never?”
Visiting Canada, following Canadian news/politics, following Canadian sports/entertainment

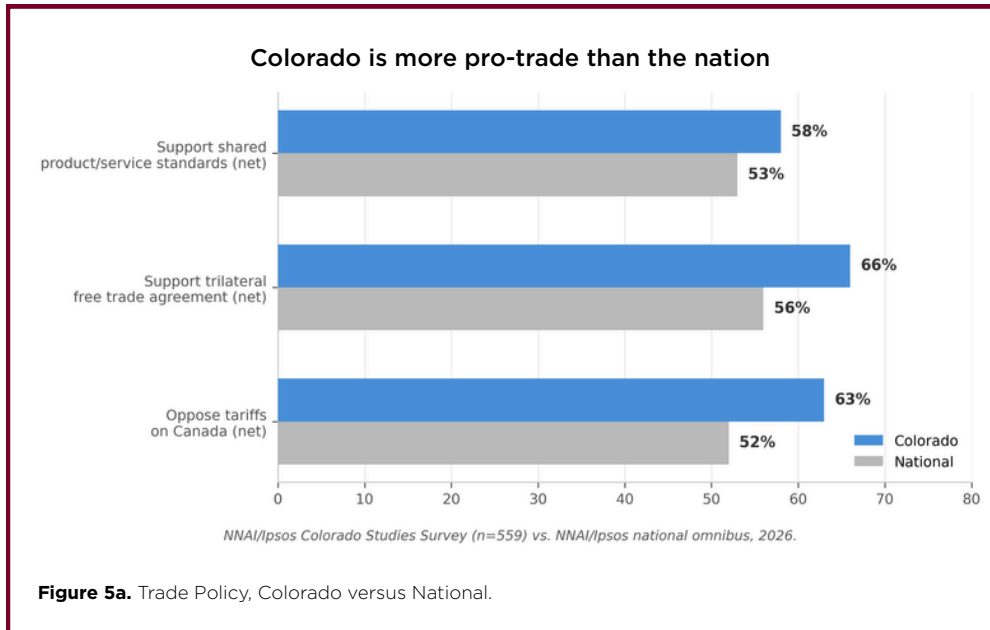


NNAI/Ipsos Colorado Studies Survey (n=559) vs. NNAI/Ipsos national omnibus, 2026.

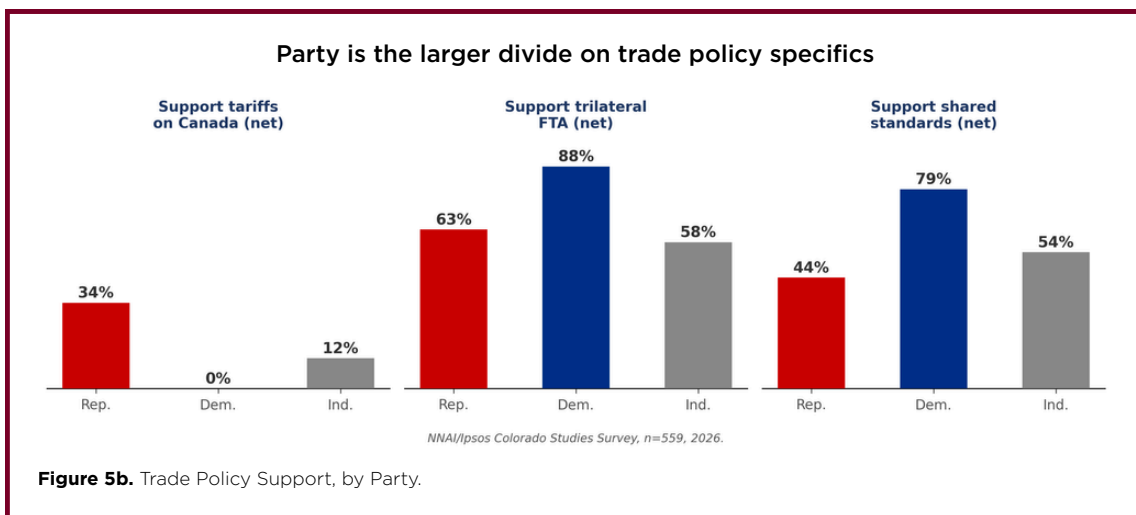
Figure 4. Engagement with Canada, Colorado versus National.

SECTION 3: TRADE POLICY & CO-OPERATION

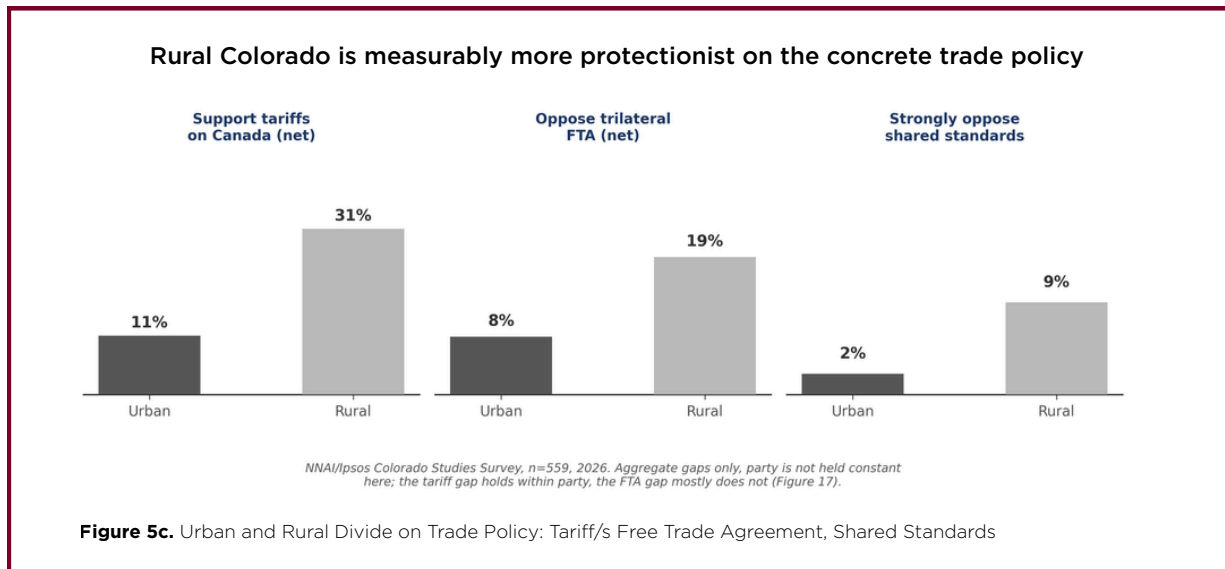
When it comes to more concrete issues like trade policy, **a clear majority of Coloradans surveyed oppose tariffs on Canadian goods overall** (63.6 per cent total). Among them, close to 40 per cent strongly oppose tariffs, a higher total opposition than the national average.



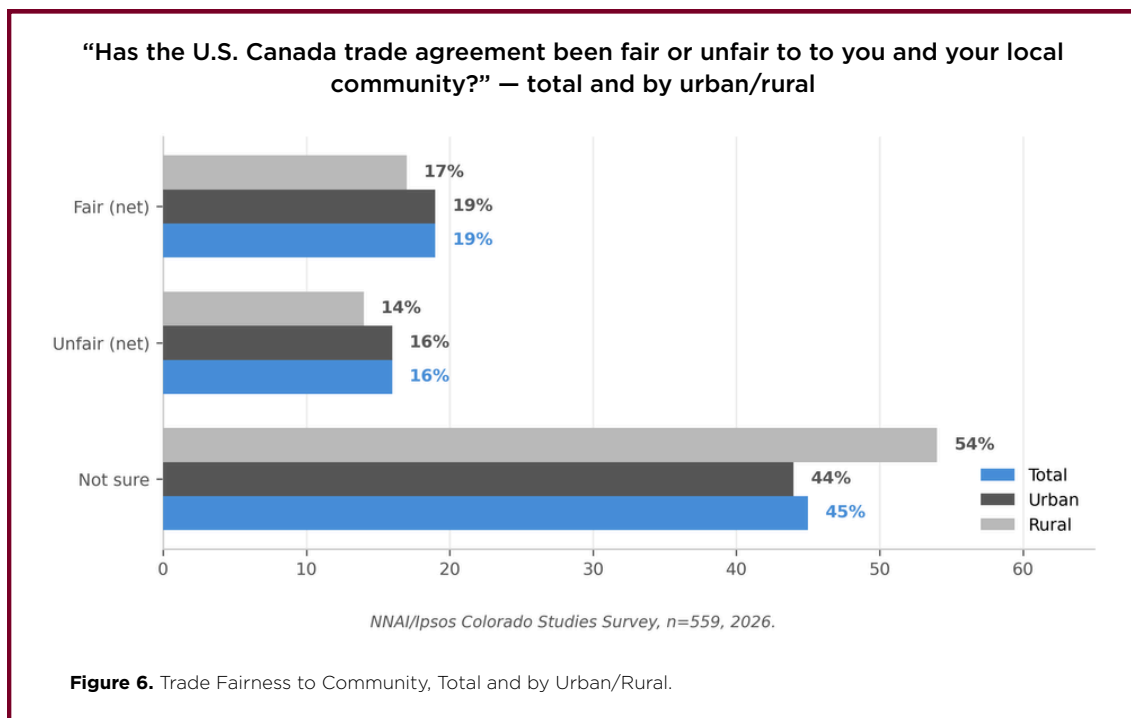
All three trade items split sharply by party. Republicans support tariffs at 34 per cent, Democrats at effectively zero per cent. Independents fall much closer to Democrats than to Republicans (12 per cent support). The partisan gap is narrower on CUSMA/USMCA, with 63 per cent of Republicans supporting it, versus 88 per cent of Democrats, and on shared product and service standards (44 per cent versus 79 per cent), though Democrats remain far more supportive on both.



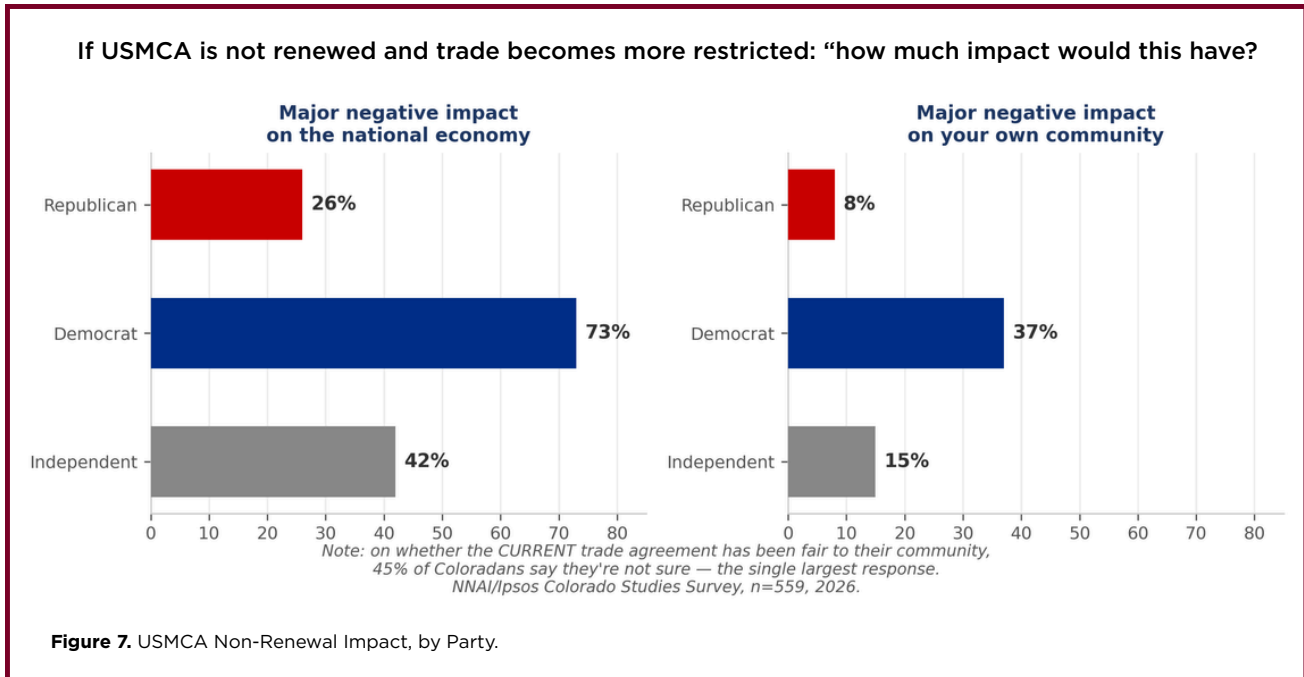
The clearest urban-rural divide on trade policy is on tariffs: rural Colorado supports tariffs on Canada at nearly three times the rate of urban Colorado (31 per cent versus 11 per cent), a statistically significant gap. Rural Colorado also reports somewhat lower support for CUSMA/USMCA (54 per cent versus 68 per cent urban) and shared standards (50 per cent versus 59 per cent urban), though these differences are not statistically significant at this sample size and should be read as directional.



Asked directly whether the U.S.-Canada trade relationship has been fair or unfair to them personally, most Coloradans do not have a settled view: 45 per cent say not sure. Among those with a view, opinion splits close to evenly between fair (19 per cent) and unfair (16 per cent), with far less separation by party or geography than on tariffs, the FTA or shared standards.

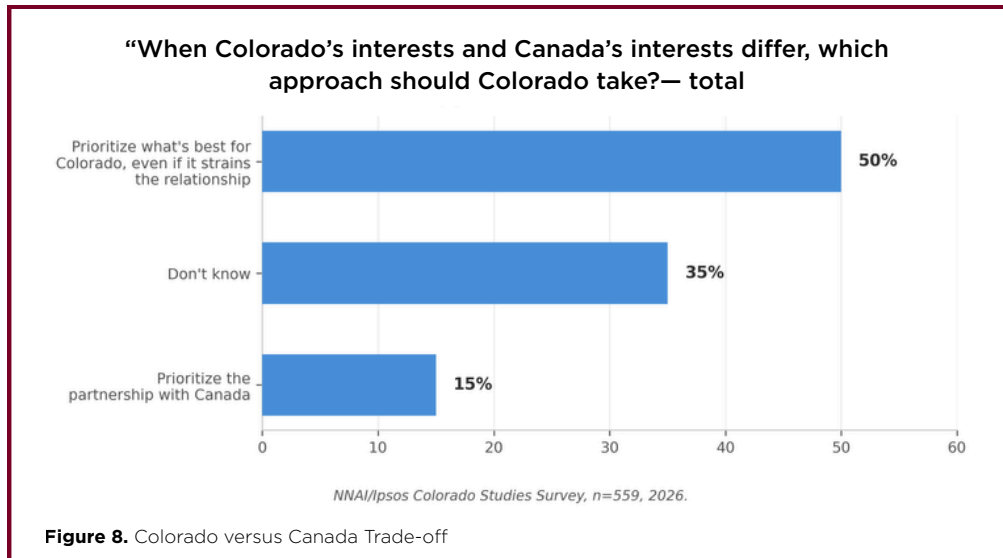


If CUSMA/USMCA is not renewed, most Coloradans surveyed expect real economic harm, more so for the national economy than for themselves personally. Seventy per cent expect a negative impact nationally, compared with 49 per cent who expect a negative impact on themselves and their community.

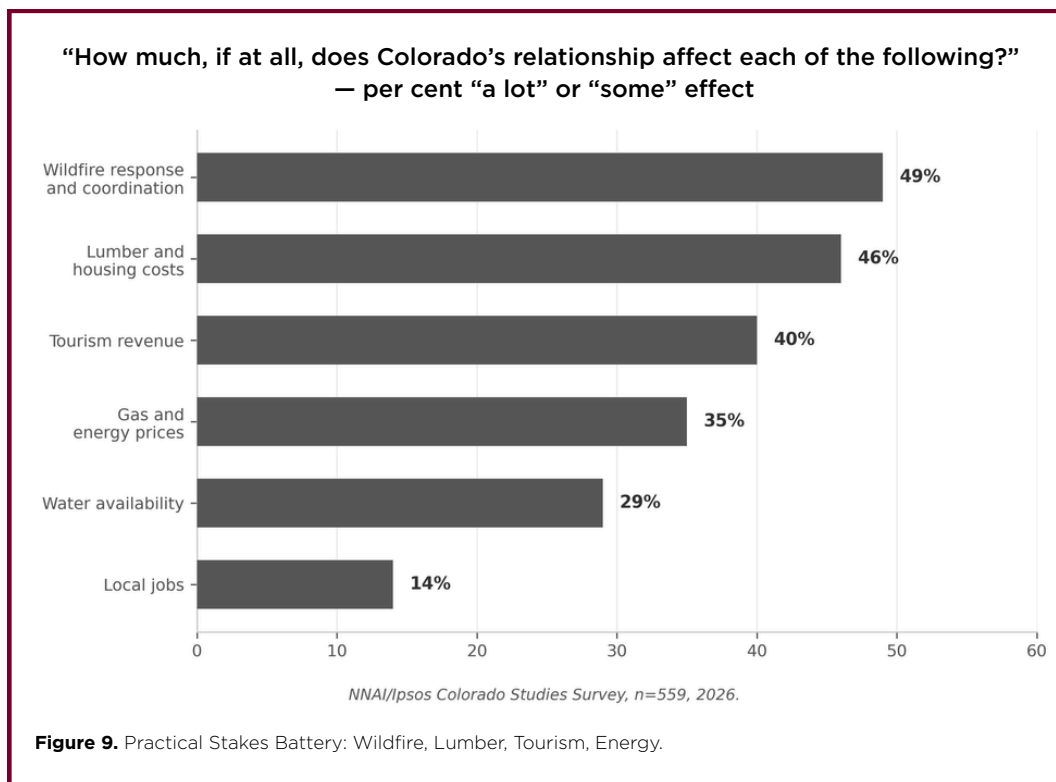


Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to foresee negative impacts both nationally (87 per cent versus 65 per cent) and personally (72 per cent versus 35 per cent). The drop from national to personal concern is also wider among Republicans, a 30-point difference, than among Democrats, a 15-point difference. This means Republicans who expect national harm are comparatively less likely to expect it to reach them directly.

Beyond trade policies, we asked Coloradans their views on co-operation with Canada. When asked directly whether Colorado should prioritize its partnership with Canada or its own interests when the two conflict, 50 per cent say Colorado should prioritize its own interests even if it strains the relationship, 15 per cent indicate that they would prioritize the partnership, while 35 per cent are unsure.

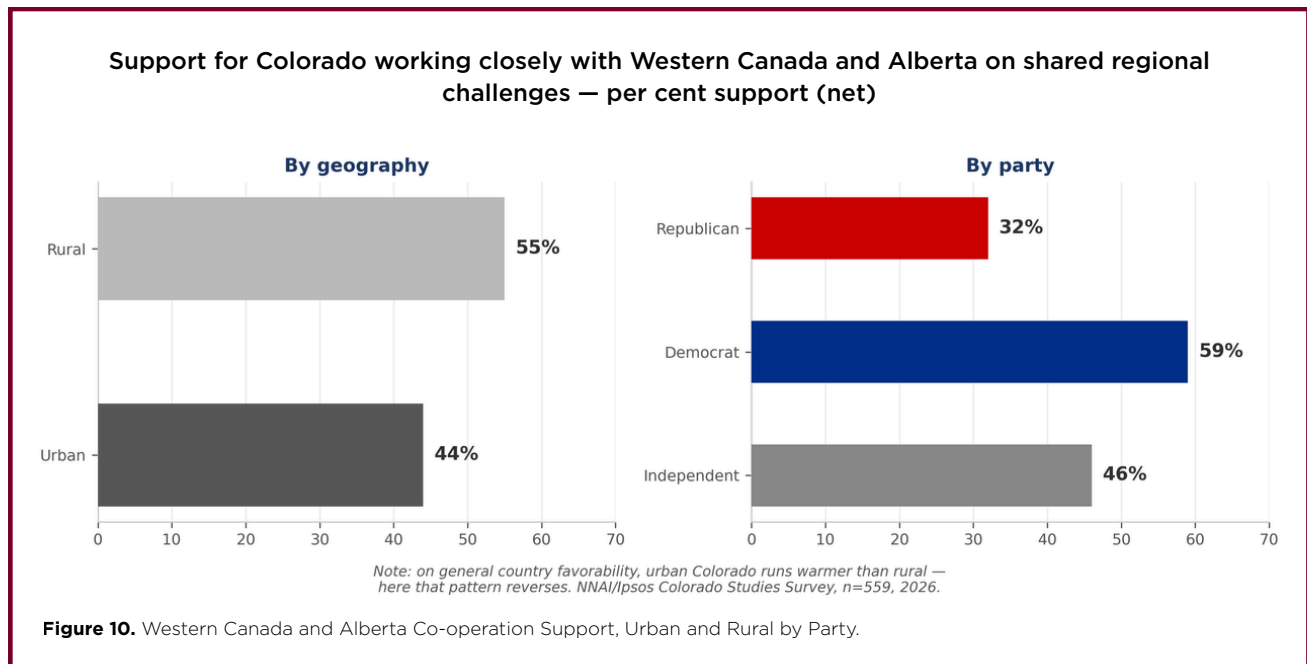


On concrete issues, respondents were asked how much, if at all, Colorado’s relationship with Canada affects six practical, place-based concerns. **Wildfire response and co-ordination** (49 per cent), **lumber and housing costs** (46 per cent) and **tourism revenue** (40 per cent) rank highest; gas and energy prices (35 per cent) and water availability (29 per cent) follow, with local jobs seen as least affected (14 per cent).



Looking at regional co-operation, Colorado residents surveyed lean toward **supporting closer co-operation with Western Canada and Alberta specifically**. Forty-five per cent support Colorado working closely on shared regional challenges, even if it requires adjusting some state policies, compared with 10 per cent opposed, with a large 28 per cent neither-support-nor-oppose middle and 16 per cent not sure.

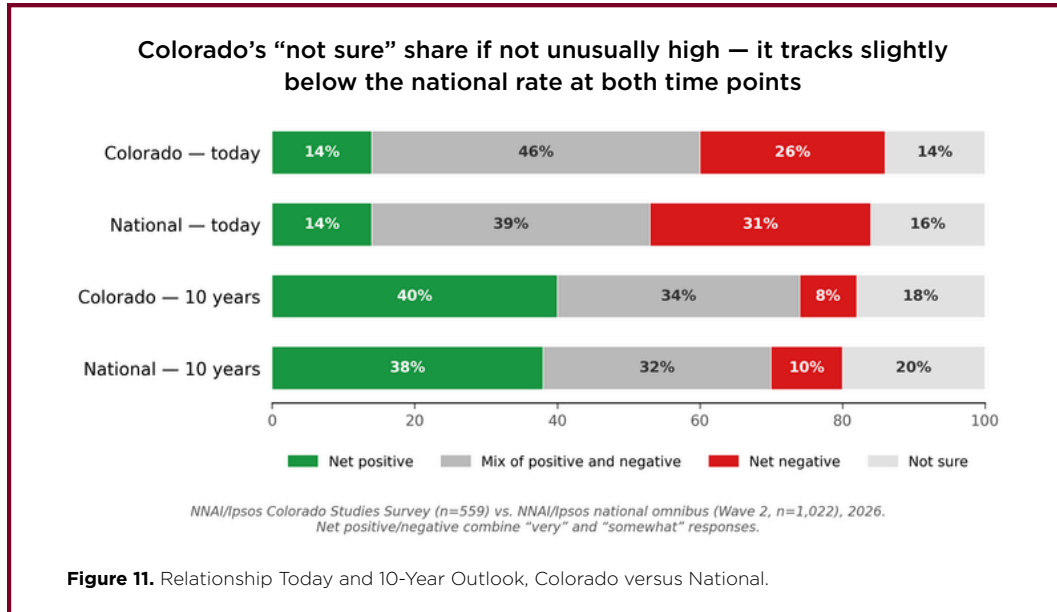
This support splits by party in the expected direction (Democrats 59 per cent support versus Republicans 32 per cent). Rural Colorado residents also report somewhat higher support than urban residents (55 per cent versus 44 per cent), though this gap should be read as directional given the high margins of error.



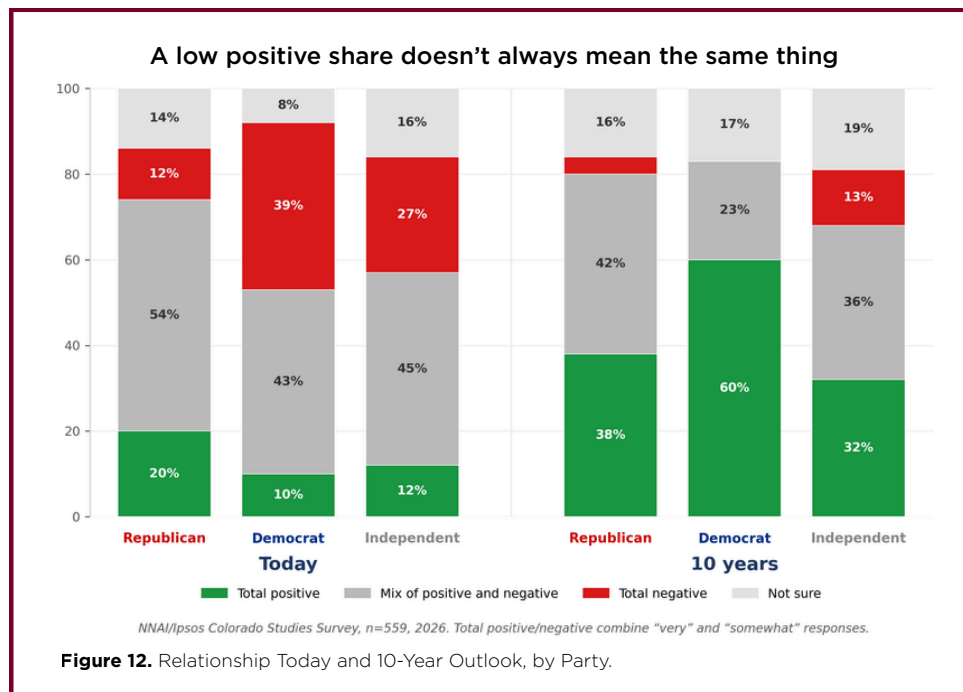
WHAT THIS MEANS:

- Canada and cross-border trade sit outside of what Colorado residents spontaneously think about;
- Attitudes towards Canada should be read as attitudes about a low-salience topic, though low salience and firmly held views are not mutually exclusive. Coloradans may not think about Canada often, but the opinions they do hold, favourable or partisan, are not necessarily provisional just because they are rarely revisited;
- Colorado residents lean open on trade with Canada, with majorities supporting CUSMA/USMCA and shared standards and opposing tariffs. At the same time, 50 per cent of Coloradans surveyed still say the state should prioritize its own interests if a real conflict with Canada arose; and
- Rural Colorado is significantly more supportive of tariffs than urban Colorado, though this gap is closely bound up with rural Colorado's stronger Republican lean rather than a fully independent geographic effect; other apparent urban-rural differences on trade are not statistically significant at this sample size.

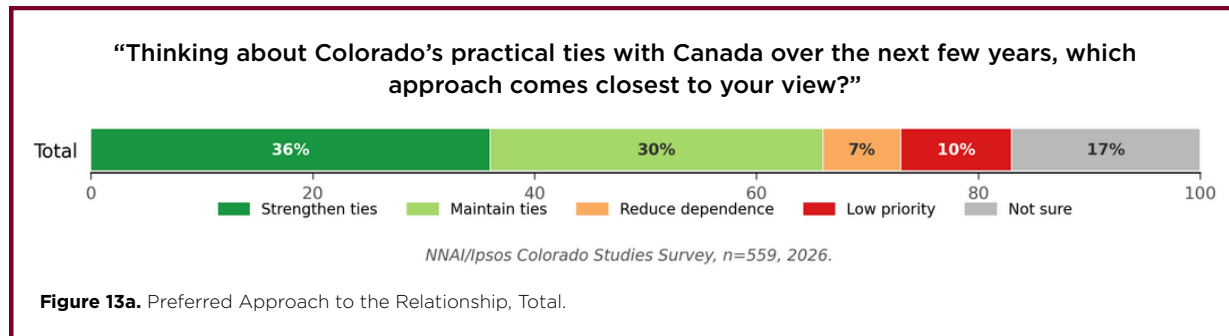
SECTION 4: LOOKING AHEAD



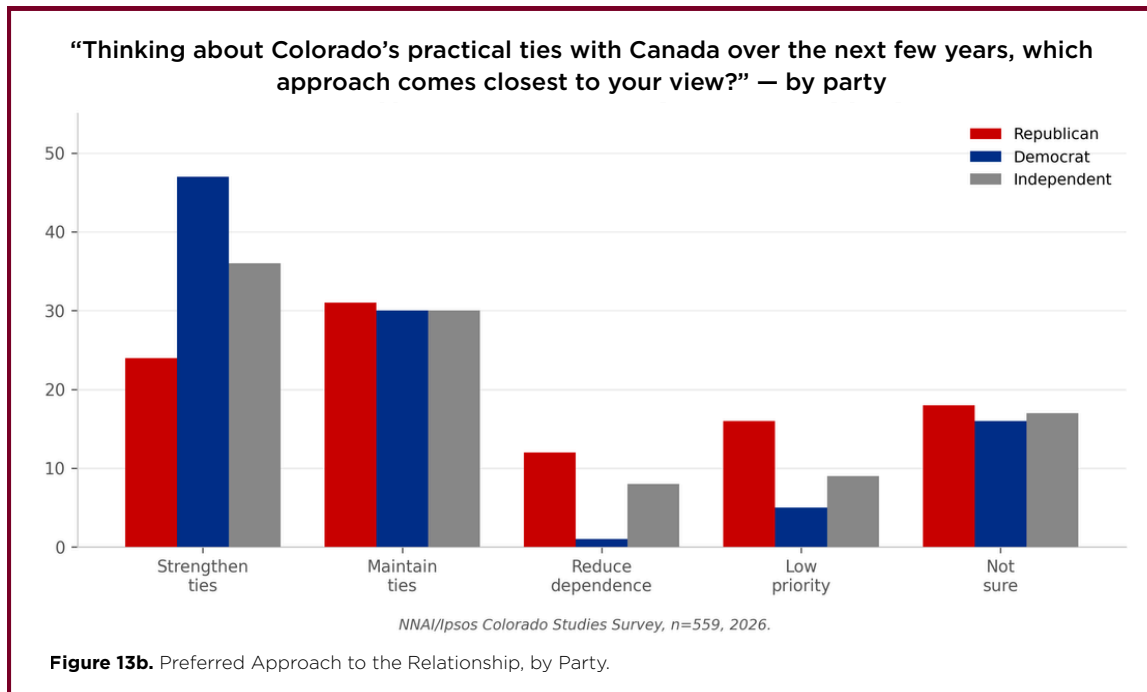
Colorado residents **describe the U.S.-Canada relationship today in mixed terms**: Forty-six per cent call it a mix of positive and negative, 26 per cent describe it as negative and 14 per cent positive, with 14 per cent unsure. Looking 10 years ahead, the picture turns more optimistic: 40 per cent expect a positive relationship, only eight per cent expect a negative one and the mixed categories shrink. The share of those who are unsure grew somewhat from 14 per cent to 18 per cent.



Republicans are the most positive group today about the bilateral relationship (20 per cent positive) and Democrats the least (10 per cent positive), although the difference is not statistically significant at this sample size. But 10 years out, that order flips, with Democrats the most optimistic by a wide margin (60 per cent positive) and Republicans and Independents rising more modestly (38 per cent and 32 per cent). As Figure 13 shows, a low positive share does not usually mean the rest is negative. Indeed, for Republicans and Independents at both time points, the largest remaining group calls the relationship a mix of positive and negative.



When asked about which practical approach to Canada comes closest to their own view, Coloradans tend to be supportive of engagement. Thirty-six per cent say Colorado should strengthen ties with Canada, 30 per cent say maintain them, seven per cent say reduce dependence and 10 per cent say make it a low priority.



Even among Republicans, the most cautious group, only 12 per cent favour reducing dependence on Canada outright. Among Republicans, 55 per cent still choose strengthening or maintaining ties.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

- The relationship outlook among Coloradans surveyed improves markedly moving from today to 10 years out, especially among Democrats, who move from among the least positive today to the most optimistic group by far about the future; and
- A majority of Colorado residents favour engagement, strengthening or maintaining ties, over disengagement, but the size of that majority varies substantially by party.

CONCLUSION

Altogether, this report tells a consistent story. Canada and cross-border trade barely register when Colorado residents are asked, unprompted, what challenges matter to them, today or 10 years out. But that low salience has not translated into indifference or hostility: Coloradans surveyed view Canada more favourably than the national average, lean toward engagement rather than withdrawal on practical ties and grow more optimistic rather than more pessimistic when asked to look a decade ahead. Where divides exist, they run mostly along party lines; the one clear urban-rural split is on tariffs, where rural Colorado is more protectionist than urban Colorado.

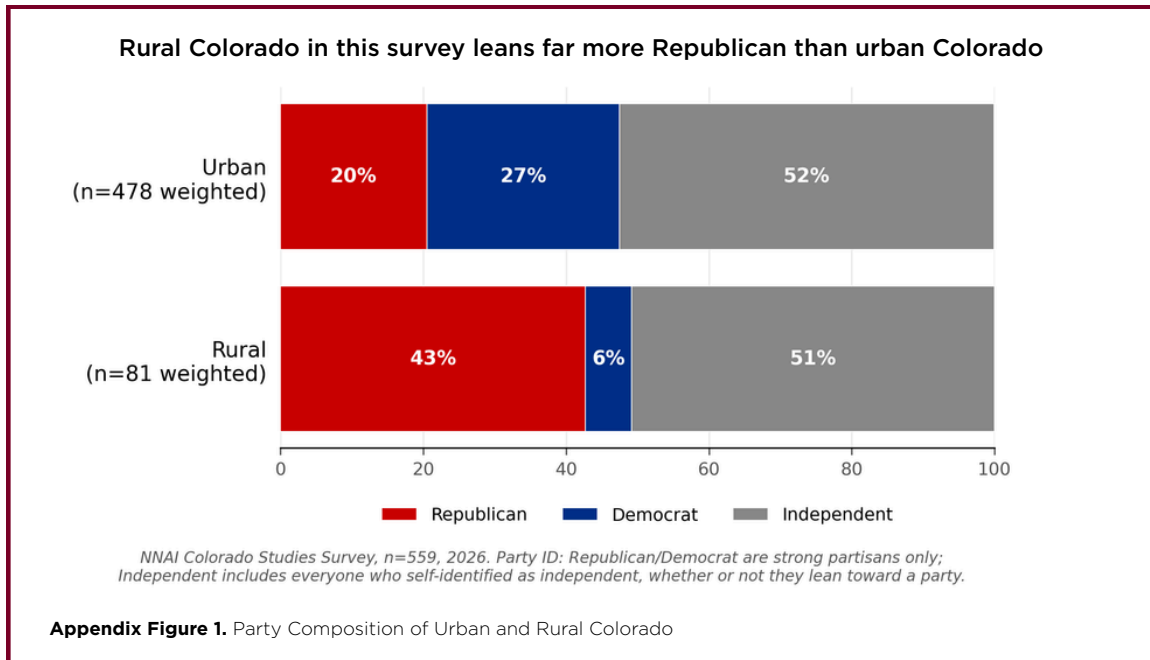
This report is only a first baseline. To understand whether these patterns are stable and what underlying factors shape these preferences, we must go into the communities and talk directly to the people. NNAI's next step is to conduct structured focus groups and talk to policy insiders and community leaders across the state. The result and full report will be released in 2027.

APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1. Sample Composition, Weighted and Unweighted

	Unweighted N	Unweighted %	Weighted N	Weighted %
Gender				
Male	239	42.8%	280	50.1%
Female	320	57.2%	279	49.9%
Age				
18-44	119	21.3%	251	44.9%
45-59	137	24.5%	137	24.6%
60+	303	54.2%	171	30.5%
Household income				
Less than \$50k	155	27.7%	97	17.3%
\$50k-\$100k	153	27.4%	152	27.2%
\$100k+	251	44.9%	311	55.6%
Education				
HS or less	78	14.0%	131	23.4%
Some college	144	25.8%	153	27.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	337	60.3%	275	49.2%
Race/ethnicity				
White, Non-Hispanic	458	81.9%	386	69.1%
Non-White	101	18.1%	173	30.9%
Urban/rural				
Urban	483	86.4%	478	85.5%
Rural	76	13.6%	81	14.5%
Party ID				
Republican	144	25.8%	133	23.8%
Democrat	161	28.8%	134	24.0%
Independent	254	45.4%	292	52.2%
Total	559	100%	559	100%

Party identification and urban/rural definitions follow this survey's own coding, used consistently throughout this report.



Of those who stated a party affiliation, rural Colorado in this sample leans far more Republican than urban Colorado, consistent with the state's broader political geography. But it should be noted that half of both urban and rural respondents reported being independent. Because party and geography are entangled, a rural-urban gap anywhere in this report may reflect the partisan gap rather than a distinct rural or urban effect; this report checks specific findings against party wherever the microdata allow it.

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ABOUT THE NEW NORTH AMERICA INITIATIVE

The New North America Initiative (NNAI) is a multi-year initiative based at the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary launched in 2025 with initial funding from the Government of Alberta. It focuses on building a ground-up vision for cooperation, training the next generation of “North Americanists” through experiential learning in partnership with the province and academics to improve relationships with new political actors in the U.S.

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