



Magellan Strategies

Colorado Fire Protection Policy Opinion Survey Summary

Magellan Strategies are pleased to present a summary of an online survey of 441 Colorado voters regarding their opinions of state and local fire protection policies and programs. The interviews were conducted from October 6th to 12th, 2022. The topline survey results have a +/- 4.67% margin of error at the 95 percent confidence interval. The survey data were weighted to be representative of the demographics of the Colorado registered voter population.

The survey summary, topline, crosstabs, verbatim responses, and presentation can be viewed and downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3CYUBD8>. This survey was funded by Magellan Strategies. Any questions about this survey can be directed to David Flaherty. He can be reached by email at DFlaherty@MagellanStrategies.com or by phone at 303-861-8585.

Colorado Fire Protection Opinion Survey Objective and Purpose

Since 2007, Magellan Strategies has managed hundreds of opinion surveys for Colorado fire districts, local governments, school districts, special districts (fire, recreation, water), and public policy organizations. From time to time, we conduct surveys with our own resources to measure and understand the opinions and impressions of Colorado voters and residents regarding a pressing public issue or policy. State and local fire prevention, mitigation, resources, and funding plans meet that criteria.

All Colorado residents in the past few years who live in our mountain communities, the suburban Front Range, and the rural Eastern Plains have experienced the fear and tragic consequences of wildland and grassland fires. Therefore, we believed a statewide survey of residents and voters would be of interest or beneficial to Colorado's fire protection professionals and policymakers.

Key Findings

Fire risk and its concerns are top of mind for many Coloradans. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority believe fire risk will increase in the next five years.

- Among all respondents, 79% say fire risk in the state has increased, and 55% think it has increased in their community.
- 42% of voters say the risk of a wildland, forest, or open space grassland fire in their community is a big concern, and 33% it is somewhat of a concern.

- 81% of respondents think the risk of wildland, forest, or open space grassland fires will likely increase in the next five years.
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Key Findings

Strong majorities of Coloradans approve of the job their local fire department or district is doing in providing fire protection services. However, a majority think their local fire department or district does not have the financial resources needed to provide an acceptable amount of fire protection services. That is a positive measurement for fire districts considering a ballot measure to generate additional funding. Yet, 55% of respondents agreed with the statement that “their local fire department or district is fiscally responsible and spends taxpayer money wisely.”

- 73% of respondents said they approve of the job their community’s fire department or district is doing providing services, just 6% disapprove, and 21% do not have an opinion.
 - Just 29% of respondents think their local fire department or district has the financial resources needed to provide an acceptable amount of services. Furthermore, a majority of respondents, 52%, do not think their fire department or district has the financial resources to provide an acceptable amount of fire protection services.
 - 67% of Coloradans would support a tax increase to generate additional funding for their local fire department or district, and 23% would oppose it.
 - When presented with an exercise to prioritize and allocate the expenditures of a fire department’s budget, respondents ranked firefighter salaries, training, protective clothing, and equipment at the top of their lists. Conversely, salaries for fire investigators and building safety inspectors ranked toward the bottom.
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Key Findings

After being educated and informed of the Colorado Fire Commission’s mission, duties, and responsibilities, respondents overwhelmingly approve of the Commission. Furthermore, Coloradans strongly approve of the Commission’s recommendations to create and fund a State Fire Coordination Center and increase funding for firefighter certification and training programs. Finally, a slight majority of respondents were familiar with the term “Wildland Urban Interface,” and a majority supported the creation of a Wildland Urban Interface Code Board.

Following is a survey topline document showing the responses to each question. To download the complete topline, crosstabs, verbatim responses and presentation click here <https://bit.ly/3CYUBD8>.





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Colorado Fire Protection Policy Opinion Survey Topline Results

Magellan Strategies is pleased to present the topline results of an online survey of 441 registered voters in the state of Colorado. The interviews were conducted from October 6th – 12th, 2022. This survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.67% at the 95 percent confidence interval. The survey data was weighted to be representative of voter registration demographics within the state of Colorado.

T1. For statistical purposes only, could you first verify that you are a Colorado resident?

Yes..... 100%

*T2. Do you think fire risk **in Colorado** has increased, stayed about the same, or decreased in the past few years?*

- Total Increased 79%
- About the Same 15%
- Total Decreased..... 3%
- Unsure or No Opinion..... 3%

- Definitely Increased 55%
- Probably Increased 24%

- Definitely Decreased 0%
- Probably Decreased..... 3%

*T3. Do you think fire risk in **your community** has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the past few years?*

Total Increased	55%
About the Same	35%
Total Decreased.....	7%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	3%
Definitely Increased	31%
Probably Increased	24%
Definitely Decreased	3%
Probably Decreased.....	4%

T4. How much of a concern is the risk of a wildland, forest, or open space grassland fire in your community?

Big Concern.....	42%
Somewhat of a Concern.....	33%
Not Too Much of a Concern	17%
No Concern at All.....	7%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	1%

T5. Do you think the risk of wildland, forest, and open space grassland fires is likely to increase, stay about the same, or decrease in the next five years?

Total Increase	81%
About the Same	14%
Total Decrease.....	3%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	2%
Definitely Increase	44%
Probably Increase	37%
Definitely Decrease	1%
Probably Decrease.....	2%



T6. Do you approve or disapprove of the job your local fire department or fire district is doing providing fire protection services to your community?

Total Approve	73%
Total Disapprove	6%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	21%
Strongly Approve	47%
Somewhat Approve.....	26%
Strongly Disapprove.....	3%
Somewhat Disapprove	3%

T7. Please describe the reasons why you approve of the job your local fire department or fire district is doing.

**Verbatim responses attached in separate document.*

T8. Please describe the reasons why you disapprove of the job your local fire department or fire district is doing.

**Verbatim responses attached in separate document.*

T9. Do you think your local fire department or fire protection district has the financial resources needed to provide an acceptable amount of fire protection services in your community?

Total Yes.....	29%
Total No	52%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	19%
Yes, Definitely	8%
Yes, Probably.....	21%
No, Definitely Not	13%
No, Probably Not.....	39%



T10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “Our local fire department or fire protection district is fiscally responsible and spends taxpayer money wisely.”

Total Agree	55%
Total Disagree.....	9%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	36%
Strongly Agree	26%
Somewhat Agree.....	29%
Strongly Disagree.....	4%
Somewhat Disagree	5%

T11. Would you support or oppose a tax increase to generate additional funding for your local fire department or fire protection district?

Total Support	67%
Total Oppose	23%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	10%
Strongly Support	31%
Somewhat Support.....	36%
Strongly Oppose	14%
Somewhat Oppose.....	9%



T12. Your local fire department or fire district has an annual budget to fund fire protection services and programs. Please rank the following fire department expenditures in the order you think should be the top priority and funded the most. Ranking an option #1 indicates it is the most important funding priority. Ranking an option #10 indicates it is the least important funding priority. (Percentage of respondents who chose option as #1, most important funding priority.)

Salaries to attract, retain experienced, professional, firefighters	18%
Firefighter training, certification for wildland, forest, open space fires	17%
Fire resistant clothing, breathing equipment for firefighters	14%
Firefighter training, certification for residential, hazardous material, emergencies .	13%
A high-quality dispatch system, improve response times for 911 calls.....	12%
A public emergency communication, warning system	9%
Purchasing, maintaining fire engines and vehicles	7%
Providing fire prevention and safety education to the community	6%
Salaries for fire investigators and dogs.....	2%
Salaries for fire safety building inspectors.....	2%



T13. Changing topics now. The Colorado Fire Commission was established in 2019 by the General Assembly. They recognized the state needed a dedicated group of fire protection professionals and public officials to address the complex and growing fire risk challenges. Some duties and responsibilities of the Commission are:

- Evaluate fire programs across the state and identify areas where the state can better support its partners and develop long-term strategies and recommendations on complex fire issues.*
- Help the state to be proactive on wildfire issues and develop a comprehensive approach that embraces statewide fire mitigation, prevention, and preparedness.*
- Enhance public safety through an integrated statewide process focused on the capacity to conduct fire management, preparedness, prevention, and fire response activities while increasing the resiliency of local and regional communities.*
- Develop an accurate understanding of Colorado’s fire problems, including the number of injuries, fatalities, fire losses, and the causes of structural and wildland fires.*
- Evaluate funding sources for effective response to large fires, with consideration of cost-sharing agreements, financial contributions, mitigation and preparedness costs, mutual aid participation, and local action plans.*
- Forecast short and long-term funding challenges and trends that affect fire services and the ability of state and local fire protection organizations to respond to fire and mitigation hazards.*

Knowing this information, do you approve or disapprove of the mission, duties, and responsibilities of the Colorado Fire Commission?

Total Approve	83%
Total Disapprove	6%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	11%
Strongly Approve	50%
Somewhat Approve.....	33%
Strongly Disapprove.....	2%
Somewhat Disapprove	4%



T14. One recommendation by the Colorado Fire Commission was to create a Colorado State Fire Coordination Center with a 24-hour/7 days week capability to dispatch and coordinate state, local, and federal resources for fires across the state.

In Colorado, the fiscal responsibility and resources allocated to a fire begin at the local fire department level. When a fire grows beyond the capabilities of the local department, the county assumes fiscal responsibility. If the fire exceeds the county’s financial resources, state and federal fire protection and financial resources assume responsibility.

In the last decade, the number of “interagency” wildfires that grow beyond the local level has increased significantly. Often the coordination of fire resources between different fire agencies has been difficult. The Colorado State Fire Coordination Center will reduce these coordination problems and provide a more efficient approach to fighting large fires.

The state approved this committee recommendation in May and authorized the \$2.2 million in annual funding to get the Coordination Center up and running. Knowing this information, do you approve or disapprove of the state creating and funding the Colorado State Fire Coordination Center?

Total Approve	84%
Total Disapprove	9%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	7%
Strongly Approve	51%
Somewhat Approve.....	33%
Strongly Disapprove.....	5%
Somewhat Disapprove	4%



T15. Colorado has about 16,000 firefighters working across 375 fire departments and districts. Some departments have a full-time firefighting staff while others are all volunteers. In fact, half of all fire departments in Colorado are staffed with volunteer firefighters.

The Colorado Fire Commission believes all firefighters deserve high-quality training and equipment to protect themselves from the hazards of the job. However, firefighter certification in Colorado is voluntary, and the costs associated with certification are the primary reason many departments do not work toward certifying their firefighters.

Therefore, the Commission recommended that the state fund additional firefighter training programs, the hiring of additional training officers, multiple mobile training units, and subsidize the cost of firefighter certification for some fire departments.

This recommendation has an estimated \$2.7 million in start-up costs and an annual budget of \$2.2 million. Knowing this information, do you approve or disapprove of the state funding this Commission recommendation?

Total Approve	81%
Total Disapprove	12%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	7%
Strongly Approve	52%
Somewhat Approve.....	29%
Strongly Disapprove.....	5%
Somewhat Disapprove	7%

T16. Another issue being studied by the Colorado Fire Commission is the fire risk to Colorado’s population that lives within the “Wildland Urban Interface.” How familiar are you with this term and what it is?

Very and Somewhat Familiar	56%
Very Familiar	27%
Somewhat Familiar	29%
Not Too Familiar.....	20%
Not Familiar at All	19%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	5%



T17. A Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is an area where man-made structures border or are within wildland vegetation. This includes forests and grassland areas. Colorado’s Wildland Urban Interface is more than 50% of the state population and has grown significantly in the past few years.

Last year, the Commission was asked to develop a statewide policy for land use planning, development, and building resiliency to wildland fires in WUI areas. After extensive research, the Commission recommended the creation of a “Wildland Urban Interface Code Board.” This Board would have building code authority over residential and commercial construction, remodels, and land development in WUI areas.

Supporters of the Wildland Urban Interface Code Board say wildfire building regulations are an urgent fix to a danger magnified by climate change, population growth, and inconsistent local policies. The National Fire Protection Association says voluntary actions by communities are not enough to counter increasing wildfire danger.

Opponents of the WUI Code Board say a statewide building code, regardless of its good intentions, will be costly, cumbersome, and an unreasonable burden on local governments. They say building codes are best determined by communities and local governments, and a state-mandated one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

Knowing this information, do you support or oppose the creation of a Wildland Urban Interface Code Board and its authority to determine building codes in WUI communities across Colorado?

Total Support	58%
Total Oppose	29%
Unsure or No Opinion.....	13%
Strongly Support	32%
Somewhat Support.....	26%
Strongly Oppose	16%
Somewhat Oppose.....	13%

And now we have some questions for statistical purposes only.

T18. Are you:

Female.....	51%
Male	49%
Identify Differently	<1%



T19. Are you between the ages of:

18-34.....	32%
35-44.....	18%
45-54.....	15%
55-64.....	15%
65 or Older.....	20%

T20. Do you rent or own your home?

Own	64%
Rent.....	28%
Prefer Not to Say.....	8%

T21. Are you married or single?

Married.....	55%
Single.....	38%
Prefer Not to Say.....	7%

T22. What is your race or ethnicity?

White.....	74%
Hispanic or Latino(a).....	18%
Black or African American	4%
Asian	2%
Other Race or Ethnicity.....	2%

T23. For statistical and weighting purposes only, are you registered to vote as an unaffiliated voter, a Democrat, or a Republican, or are you registered with another party?

Unaffiliated.....	45%
Democrat.....	28%
Republican	25%
Other Party	2%



T24. How would you describe your household income?

Less than \$75,000.....	31%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	33%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	15%
More than \$200,000	8%
Prefer Not to Say	13%

Survey Methodology

This data collection for this survey employed MMS text messages to registered voters in the state of Colorado. The survey response data was weighted to reflect the voter registration demographics for the state of Colorado. The interviews were conducted from October 6th – 12th, 2022. This survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.67% at the 95 percent confidence interval.

