



OPPORTUNITY STARTS AT HOME COLORADO

Workforce, Wages, and Housing

According to NLIHC's 2022 Gap report,¹ no state in the US has an adequate supply of affordable rental housing for low-income renters. This lack of affordable housing significantly disadvantages low-income and essential workers in our community.

- The state minimum wage is \$12.56/hr, but a living housing wage in Colorado is \$20.40/hr,² making **housing out of reach for many low-income and essential workers** like childcare workers, home health and personal care aids, food preparation workers, and janitorial staff.
- Of the 20 most common occupations in Colorado, more than half, pay less than Colorado's housing wage. Some of these occupations include home health aide, janitor, cashier, and food server, among others.³
- In Colorado, a minimum wage worker would have to work at least 72 hours a week, or the equivalent of almost two full-time jobs, to afford a modest one-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent.⁴
- **Three out of ten Coloradans are worried they might lose their home** in the next year because they cannot afford rent or mortgage, and 86% Coloradans say cost of housing is a serious problem.⁵
- Across Colorado, housing costs have severely outpaced wage growth, with many Coloradans reporting that they are financially worse off today compared to the last two years.⁶

¹ The GAP | National Low Income Housing Coalition (nlihc.org)

² <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/colorado>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://www.copulsepoll.org/>

⁶ Ibid 9

Housing, Economic Security, and Racial Equity

- In Colorado, over 30% of people of color work in low-wage jobs, leading to difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care and compromising a household's ability to maintain adequate housing.
- Over 30% Coloradans have worked multiple jobs or more than they wanted to pay the rent or mortgage. People of color are far more likely to have worked more to be able to pay for housing, including 50% of Native Americans, 45% of Asian American and Pacific Islander respondents and 41% of African American/Black Coloradans.
- Black Coloradans are 50% less likely than white Coloradans to own a home; less than half of Latino Coloradans own a home compared to 65% of the total population; and Indigenous people have the lowest homeownership rates and are most likely to live in poverty than any other race.
- In 2020, the unemployment rate nationally for Latino workers was 18.9% and 16.7% for Black workers compared to 14.2% for white Americans, leading to increased housing insecurity.
- As a result of COVID-19, low-wage workers, who are disproportionately people of color, experienced decreased economic security, eviction and loss of housing.



To live a decent life is expensive. There are many jobs that want you to work, but they do not want to give you a raise or pay you more. So, you must work two jobs and work like a donkey, like we say, just to survive.

Alejandra, a Durango resident and mobile home tenant advocate, says low-income workers in her community have their hands tied without any money left in their pockets after rent and utilities.

Moving Forward

With housing costs far outpacing wage growth in Colorado, it is crucial to advance more robust and equitable policies. Policy solutions may include:

- Developing housing affordable to individuals and families with limited income and assets;
- Funding universal housing vouchers so all eligible households can access subsidies;
- Investing in housing for specific workers/sectors to ensure people are able to live where they work;
- Increasing wages, wage transparency, and wage equity; and
- Strengthening protections for workers.

Housing is a human right and a foundational need for workers. Wages and housing access are deeply intertwined and must be addressed through intersectional public policy.

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\$12.56/hr

but a living housing wage is

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**MAKING HOUSING
OUT OF REACH
FOR MANY
LOW-INCOME AND
ESSENTIAL WORKERS**



Opportunity Starts at Home: Colorado

From better health to food security to good education, housing is foundational to every aspect of well-being, building stronger communities, promoting economic growth, and providing opportunities for everyone to thrive.

Our Colorado-based, multi-sector coalition is working in coordination with the National Low-Income Housing Coalition to generate widespread support for local, state, and federal policies that correct long-standing racial inequities and economic injustices that have prevented access to affordable, quality housing for people with low incomes.

Learn more and see coalition partners at www.ColoradoCoalition.org/OSAH