

2019 Colorado Political Climate Survey

Topline Report: Keller Center-Sponsored Items on Threats to the First Amendment



The LeRoy Keller Center
for the Study of the First Amendment
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About the Study:

The 2019 Colorado Political Climate Survey was conducted by the American Politics Research Lab in Fall, 2019. The CPC is a statewide, representative survey designed to gauge adult-Coloradans' opinions on a variety of public figures and political issues. Items on Coloradans' views on threats to the 1st Amendment appeared on the 2019 survey; these were sponsored by the Keller Center for the Study of the 1st Amendment.

The Leroy Keller Center for the Study of the First Amendment

The Keller Center for the Study of First Amendment is housed in the department of Political Science at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The Keller Center is non-partisan academic unit, and supports and encourages teaching, research and community outreach on topics and issues relating to the nature, meaning, and contemporary standing of First Amendment rights and liberties. Through undergraduate classes, public events, and scholarly conferences, the Center seeks to educate students, faculty and the community about the protections of free speech, press, association and religion under the First Amendment. The Keller Center also seeks to inform the public about the historical, legal and philosophical foundations of First Amendment rights and about contemporary threats to those liberties.

American Politics Research Lab

The American Politics Research Lab (APRL) is housed in the Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. APRL is a non-partisan academic unit that supports basic research, educational activities, and public engagement on issues related to American politics. Lab faculty, student fellows, and affiliates pursue scholarly activities over a broad range of topics, utilizing a wide variety of research methodologies and analysis. Current lab projects include research on political behavior, state and local politics, and political agendas and recurring legislation in the U.S. Congress. The Lab is also home to the annual Colorado Political Climate Survey. APRL hosts a seminar series that includes talks by lab associates as well as distinguished scholars doing work related to the study of American politics.

Colorado Political Climate Survey

In October/November 2019, the American Politics Research Lab (APRL) conducted the fourth annual Colorado Political Climate (CPC) survey. The CPC is a survey of the political and policy attitudes of Coloradans. The study is designed to gauge the public's political and partisan leanings, their opinions on a number of key issues facing the state, their attitudes toward major statewide and national political figures, and the outlook for the 2019 and 2020 elections.

Methodology

The sample consists of 800 individual responses and has an overall simple (unweighted) margin of error of +/- 3.5%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger due to smaller sample sizes. The sample is weighted to be representative of adult Colorado residents/the general state population. The weighted margin of error for a registered voter analysis would be +/- 4.4%; the weighted margin of error for the general population analysis is +/- 4.6%.

The survey instrument was developed by APRL in the fall of 2019; it was administered online to a panel of Coloradans by the company YouGov between October 23 and November 1, 2019. YouGov selected respondents from its internet panel using sample matching. A random sample – stratified by gender, age, race, education, and region – was selected from the 2016 American Community Study. Voter registration information was included from the 2016 Current Population Survey Registration and Voting Supplement.

To generalize to Colorado residents, YouGov employed a weighting procedure based on demographics and political characteristics (specifically, gender, age, race, education and ideology). We use YouGov's weights for all analysis. The average time it took a respondent to complete the survey was approximately 10 minutes. More information on the sampling methodology employed by YouGov – similar to that used in previous years– can be found at: https://www.colorado.edu/lab/aprl/sites/default/files/attached-files/yougov_sampling_2018.pdf

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We would like to acknowledge the undergraduate students in the PSCI 3155: Survey Design and Analysis class at the University of Colorado Boulder, who provided valuable assistance in the development and execution of this survey. We also wish to thank the CU Boulder Department of Political Science, and the LeRoy Keller Center for the Study of the First Amendment, for their financial support.

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Coloradans are Split on the Status of First Amendment Freedoms

Between October 23rd and November 1, 2019 APRL conducted a full survey of Colorado voters, with questions ranging from propositions on the 2019 ballot, to evaluations of state and national figures, to public opinion about a variety of issues. However, in this short topline report we focus on public opinion regarding the security of different freedoms and liberties protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Regarding **press freedoms**, about half (50%) of the Coloradans we surveyed felt that these freedoms were under threat, while 41% felt that they were secure. Looking to the partisan breakdown of perceptions of press freedoms, it is evident that Republicans and Democrats feel differently about this issue: 64% of Republicans felt that these freedoms were secure (and 30% felt that they under threat), though we see almost the exact opposite pattern for Democrats.

We find similar results regarding Coloradans' attitudes toward the security of the **freedom of religion**. Overall, about half of the Coloradans find the freedom of religion to be secure (50%). However, we again find a deep partisan divide on this matter: While 65% of Coloradan Democrats responded that they felt the freedom of religion was secure in the U.S., only 36% of Republicans in the state felt the same way. Independents were more evenly split, with 53% finding religious freedoms to be secure and 42% seeing them as threatened.

Coloradans, overall, felt that the **freedom of speech** was not secure in the U.S. today (55%). Looking to the partisan breakdowns, however, one can see that Democrats in the state actually have more positive feelings towards the security of the freedom of speech (53%). Conversely, only 33% of Republicans and 34% of independents saw this right as secure.

On the matter of the **freedom to petition**, we find similar – albeit less striking – results to press freedoms. While about half (49%) of respondents found the freedom to petition to be under threat, slightly fewer (41%) found it to be secure. Additionally, the partisan breakdown shows that Republicans have more positive evaluations of the security of the freedom to petition than Democrats or independents, with 54% of Republicans evaluating this freedom as secure, while only 44% of Democrats and 41% of independents reporting the same evaluation. These results are similar to those regarding the **freedom of assembly**, where half of Coloradans (50%) found this civil liberty to be under threat. Republicans found the freedom of assembly to be less threatened than Democrats or independents –whereas only a minority (42%) of Republicans saw this freedom as under threat, 50% of Democrats and 53% of independents felt that assembly was threatened.

Perceptions of the Security of First Amendment Rights - Press

Question: Thinking about some rights that are guaranteed by the US Constitution, how secure or threatened do you think each of the following are in the United States today?¹

Item 1: Freedom of the press

Note: Sample = Colorado Residents (not just registered voters)

Perceptions of the Security of Press Freedoms

Very Secure	18%
Somewhat Secure	23%
Somewhat Threatened	24%
Very Threatened	26%
Not Sure	9%
Secure Combined	41%
Threatened Combined	50%
Observations	799

Perceptions of the Security of Press Freedoms by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Other
Secure	31%	64%	38%	46%
Threatened	65%	30%	56%	51%
Not Sure	5%	6%	6%	3%
Observations	310	211	243	35

¹ This question wording follows a similar item asked on a Gallup/Knight Foundation Survey in 2016 and 2017. For details, see: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/229259/college-students-less-secure-first-amendment-rights.aspx>

Perceptions of the Security of First Amendment Rights - Petition

Question: Thinking about some rights that are guaranteed by the US Constitution, how secure or threatened do you think each of the following are in the United States today?

Item 2: Freedom to petition the government, meaning presenting requests to the government without fear of punishment.

Note: Sample = Colorado Residents (not just registered voters)

Perceptions of the Security of the Freedom to Petition

Very Secure	16%
Somewhat Secure	26%
Somewhat Threatened	30%
Very Threatened	19%
Not Sure	9%
Secure Combined	42%
Threatened Combined	49%
Observations	798

Perceptions of the Security of the Freedom to Petition by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Other
Secure	44%	54%	41%	31%
Threatened	50%	40%	52%	66%
Not Sure	5%	6%	7%	3%
Observations	310	210	243	35

Perceptions of the Security of First Amendment Rights - Speech

Question: Thinking about some rights that are guaranteed by the US Constitution, how secure or threatened do you think each of the following are in the United States today?

Item 3: Freedom of speech

Note: Sample = Colorado Residents (not just registered voters)

Perceptions of the Security of Free Speech

Very Secure	16%
Somewhat Secure	25%
Somewhat Threatened	23%
Very Threatened	32%
Not Sure	4%
Secure Combined	41%
Threatened Combined	55%
Observations	800

Perceptions of the Security of Free Speech by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Other
Secure	53%	33%	34%	29%
Threatened	45%	66%	63%	69%
Not Sure	3%	2%	2%	3%
Observations	310	212	243	35

Perceptions of the Security of First Amendment Rights - Religion

Question: Thinking about some rights that are guaranteed by the US Constitution, how secure or threatened do you think each of the following are in the United States today?

Item 4: Freedom of religion

Note: Sample = Colorado Residents (not just registered voters)

Perceptions of the Security of Religious Freedoms

Very Secure	27%
Somewhat Secure	23%
Somewhat Threatened	21%
Very Threatened	22%
Not Sure	6%
Secure Combined	50%
Threatened Combined	44%
Observations	800

Perceptions of the Security of Religious Freedoms by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Other
Secure	65%	36%	53%	51%
Threatened	29%	62%	42%	46%
Not Sure	6%	2%	5%	3%
Observations	310	212	243	35

Perceptions of the Security of First Amendment Rights - Assembly

Question: Thinking about some rights that are guaranteed by the US Constitution, how secure or threatened do you think each of the following are in the United States today?

Item 5: Freedom for people to assemble peacefully

Note: Sample = Colorado Residents (not just registered voters)

Perceptions of the Security of the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Very Secure	17%
Somewhat Secure	26%
Somewhat Threatened	28%
Very Threatened	22%
Not Sure	7%
Secure Combined	44%
Threatened Combined	50%
Observations	799

Perceptions of the Security of the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Other
Secure	46%	55%	43%	37%
Threatened	50%	42%	53%	57%
Not Sure	4%	2%	5%	6%
Observations	310	211	243	35