

Cañon City Voter Analysis

Voter Characteristics & Demographics



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Introduction

The Royal Gorge Area Recreation and Aquatics Center Next Step Analysis is a multi-part study to assess public opinion among Cañon City Area Parks and Recreation District Residents. As a part of that process is a Voter Analysis which includes a secondary-data collection of voting trends, resident characteristics, and summaries of past voting behavior. The purpose of this document is to explore Cañon City and Fremont County’s voter base to better understand not only past preferences but also to assess how the Detailed Issue Survey compares to the known population. Since surveys only capture a sample of the population, it is best to identify a set of population-level results to compare against. In the case of Cañon City, there are not demographics and characteristics specific to the District; thus, Cañon City and Fremont County data is used as the closest proxy to the District.

Several different data sources are considered and summarized in this Voter Analysis. To assess the voter affiliation and other voting-specific characteristics, the State of Colorado provides characteristics at the county-level for voter affiliation and additional information. Since city-level data is not possible, Fremont County will represent the true population of party affiliation. American Community Survey and U.S. Census Data will be used as the primary data sources to explore and understand the resident population of Cañon City and the surrounding area. These two data sources are commonly used in community research to benchmark survey data. This is because both data sources are very comprehensive and provide representative benchmarking data to compare against.

Voter Affiliation and Past Election History

The first topic to cover in this Voter Analysis is the voter affiliation statistics and election history in Cañon City. Both of these topics are of high importance for a potential ballot measure as voter affiliation is a critical aspect to understand how initial response to a measure could look. Throughout this section, a series of maps and graphs are presented to continue to build the database.

Registered Voters:

Fremont County	Active	Inactive	Total
Registered voters	27,039	3,057	30,096
Extrapolated Cañon City	11,357	1,284	12,641

Fremont County reports a total active registered voter count of 27,039 with an inactive count of 3,057. Inactive voters are those who are registered but have not recently voted in an election. This total of 30,096 suggests that approximately 89% of voter-eligible residents are active while 10-11% are inactive. Using this same breakout for the total population of Cañon City over 18, there are approximately 11,357 active voting residents and 1,284 inactive. Although active vs. inactive total residents is a useful metric to examine, a more complete picture is understood through voter turnout in each election cycle.

Fremont County keeps detailed records for voter turnout for each of the past elections. County-wide, voter turnout has been relatively steady over time. However, there are fluctuations each year depending on the scale of the election. Instead of looking at the county-wide turnout, we examined Cañon City turnout over the past four years. Below are highlights found for Fremont County and Cañon City’s past elections.

Voter Turnout:

In 2019, Fremont County reported a total of 13,705 voters cast from a total of 30,468 registered voters, a turnout of 45%. This is not uncommon for non-presidential voting years. For instance, 2016 saw over 22,000 votes cast, an difference of nearly of 9,000 votes compared to 2019. As indicated, it’s clear that Presidential Election years garner a much higher voter turnout in Fremont County than in off-years. In 2018 (the Mid-term election cycle), approximately 19,960 votes were cast, a slight decrease from 2016, but much higher than in 2019. Overall, voter turnout in Fremont County is similar to other regions where non-presidential and mid-term years see much lower turnout than presidential.

Fremont County	Ballots cast	Approximate Turnout*
2019	13,705	45%
2018	19,960	66%
2017	11,574	38%
2016	22,484	73%

*Note: Approximate turnout using available information

Voter Affiliation:

Voter affiliation is a somewhat challenging metric to pindown. The main reason is that voter affiliation is fluid as people can change their registration at any time and may not vote with the party with which they are affiliated. Colorado has historically been a state mixed with shares of Democrat, Republican, and many other party affiliations. Fremont County has historically been a conservative, Republican/Independent-majority county. Fremont Couty’s actual distribution is presented below and references current data:

Fremont County	Count	Percent
Republican	12,043	43%
Democrat	4,814	17%
Unaffiliated (Independent)	10,458	38%
Other	501	2%

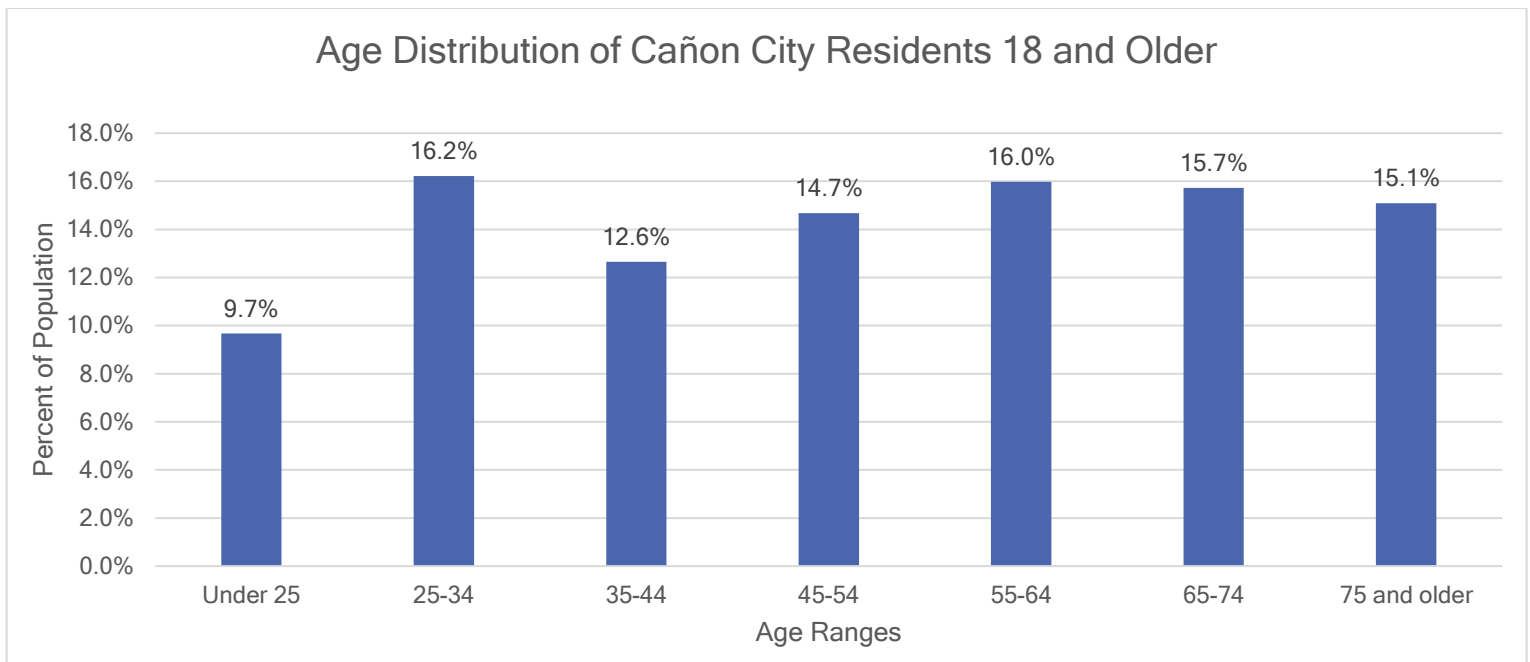
As shown, Fremont County is primarily Republican (43%), but there are a large number of unaffiliated voters as well (38%). Democrats represent a smaller segment than compared to more urban counties in Colorado (17%) while 2% identify as some other affiliation. Overall, party-line votes generally favor Republicans in Fremont County based on current affiliations. Despite many residents being defined as “unaffiliated” the voting history for Cañon City identifies that many of those residents are likely to vote Republican given past voting history.

In general, party affiliation does play a role in voting issues. Most of Cañon City’s political offices are held by Republican candidates and Fremont County’s voting history is right-leaning in recent years. Thus, the affiliation statistics are an accurate reflection of typical election results.

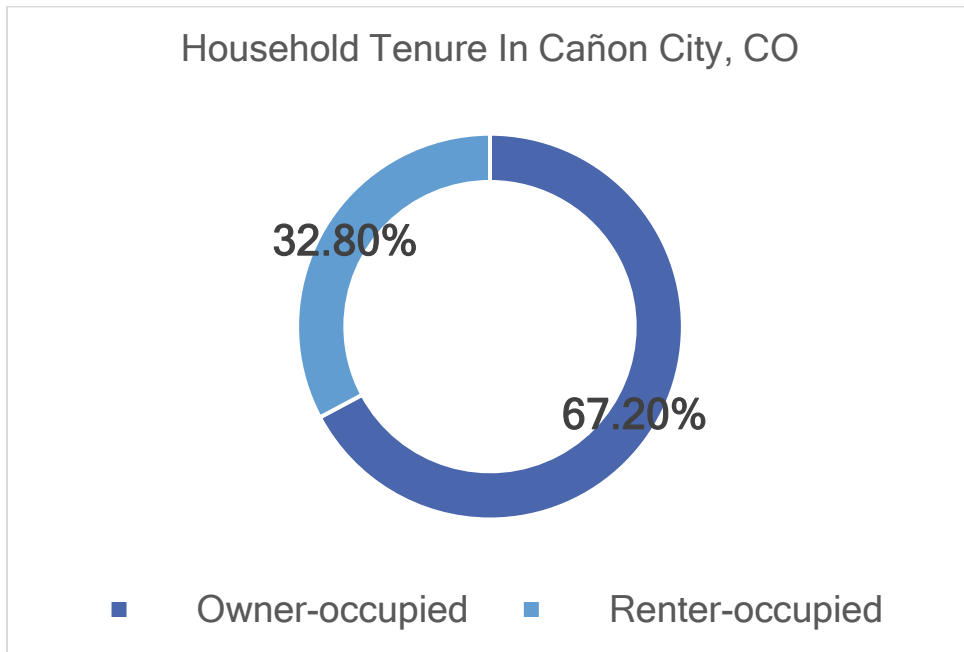
Resident Characteristics

In addition to voter information, turnout, and affiliation, resident characteristics of Cañon City were assessed and analyzed. This includes age, gender, housing characteristics, income, and more from Cañon City. This data is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and is reported typically on an annual basis. Data is reported and summarized below.

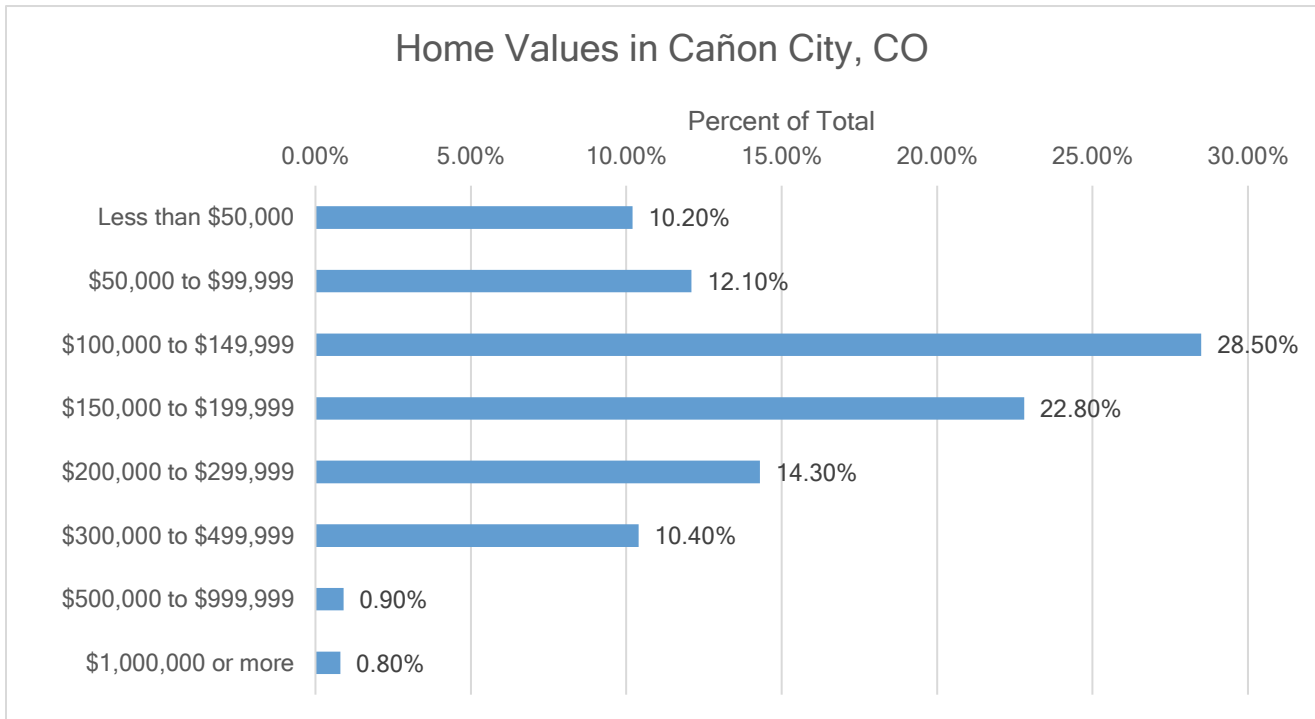
Age of residents in Cañon City trends towards a slightly older demographic in Cañon City. All age ranges are well represented by those aged 18 and older. However, there’s a smaller number of residents under 25 years old and a larger percentage of 55+. The median age in Cañon City is 44 years old. This is nearly 8 years older than the Colorado average at 37 years old. Smaller communities such as Cañon City have tended to have a relatively older demographic of residents. This is due to urban migration, younger generations moving to college, and non-returning residents who move away for one reason or another.



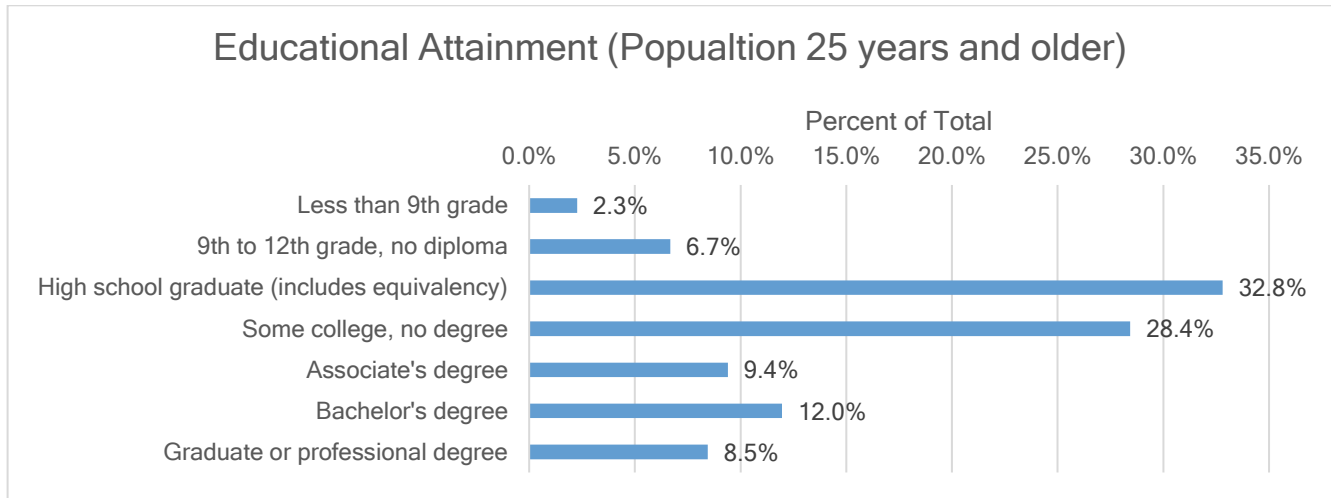
Household tenure in Cañon City trends towards a 2/3rd split of owner-occupied and 1/3rd renter-occupied. This is a common split seen in many smaller communities. In general, smaller and rural communities tend to have a larger percentage of homes owned by the occupant as dense urban areas have downtown property values that lead to a larger percentage of renters. However, there is still a sizeable share of the population that rents their homes in Cañon City.



Home values in Cañon City are important to understand because the two primary options for funding the recreation/aquatics center focus on property taxes. As displayed, the majority of homes in Cañon City are between the value of \$100k-\$149,999 (28.5%). Following are homes between \$150k-\$199,999 (22.8%). Homes above \$200k represent approximately 26% of all homes in Cañon City. Home values are an important piece to explore whether certain levels of property taxes impact homeowners differently.



Educational attainment of residents in Cañon City leans towards high school and some college experience (61% of the population). The Fremont Campus of Pueblo Community College is housed in Cañon City, but those who wish to attend a university are likely to move away. Thus, many in the area have not completed or not yet completed a 4-year degree. Approximately 30% of Cañon City have a college degree.



Household Income in Cañon City is significantly lower than the state average. The median income in Cañon City is estimated at \$44,400 as of 2018. Colorado as a state has a median income of approximately \$70,000. Cañon City likely has a lower cost of living, which balances out the difference somewhat. That said, combined with lower educational attainment, Cañon City residents are generally under the state average in both income and education.

