

Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire

THE SUNDAY DENVER POST



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Colorado Divide

Rural-urban chasm runs through culture, economy and politics of state



The sun sets over a long-vacated farmhouse in Lycan. Baca County’s population peaked in 1930 then lost two-thirds of its population. RJ Sangosti, *The Denver Post*

By Kevin Simpson and Jennifer Brown
The Denver Post

In remote Baca County, locals have a pet peeve about city-based TV weathercasters: They often deliver the statewide forecast while blocking the far-southeast corner of the Colorado map.

“They stand right in front of us,” says Sarah Steinman, who grew up in Springfield and now runs the county’s weekly newspaper. “That’s the mind-set. We don’t exist. We’re down in the flatland, in the middle of nowhere. We get ignored like that.”

The irritation, though sometimes recounted with a slight grin, traces a cultural fissure between rural and urban Colorado, a chasm that reveals itself across a range of issues and clouds a collaborative vision of the state’s future.

From the Eastern Plains to isolated mountain towns, from the Western Slope to the upper northeast hard by Nebraska, it’s often said there are two Colorados. There is the Denver metropolis and, with it, the string of cities along the Front Range corridor, from Fort Collins to Pueblo.

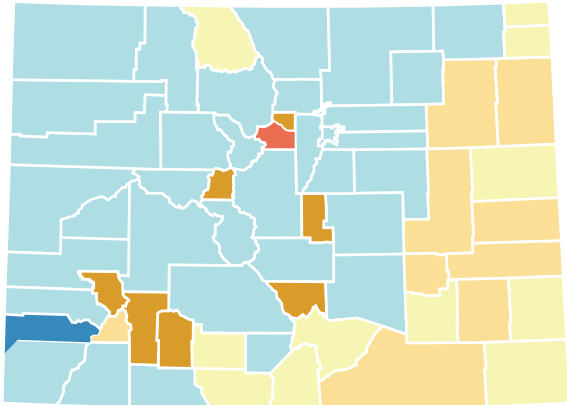
And then there is rural Colorado.

DIVIDE » 14A

Peak population years for Colorado counties

This map shows which year a county had the most people. Some counties are still growing and have not reached their peak population.

1875-1900 1901-1925 1926-1950 1951-1975
1976-2000 2001-2015



Source: CensusReporter

Kayla Robertson, *The Denver Post*

Video. Memories of growing up on Colorado’s Eastern Plains. »denverpost.com



This is the first in an occasional series of stories examining the “Colorado Divide,” the issues, values and attitudes that can leave rural and urban residents feeling they live in two Colorados.

Next Sunday: Rural residents, whether living in the mountains or on the Eastern Plains, wrestle with shifting economic and cultural landscapes.

DENVER & THE WEST FATHER ARRESTED IN DYLAN REDWINE CASE

Mark Redwine, whose 13-year-old son Dylan disappeared while visiting him at his home near Durango in November of 2012, was arrested on Saturday in connection with the boy’s death. »1B

BUSINESS EMINENT DOMAIN CLASHES RISE WITH POPULATION

As property values rise and a growing state population demands infrastructure, the agency is trying to address the need to complete projects with the lengthy — and often emotionally distressing — eminent domain process. »1K



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