

# Higher Prices, Lower Quality

## 2025 CHAS Reveals Growing Financial Strain and Displeasure in Colorado's Individual Market

Affordable Care Act (ACA) enhanced subsidies for insurance premiums were a bargaining chip in the [fall 2025 government shutdown](#) that ended without a resolution. These subsidies, which were introduced in 2021, expired on December 31, 2025, leaving many Coloradans enrolled in the individual market — health insurance bought directly from an insurance company, not through an employer or government program like Medicare and Medicaid — in a financial bind.

The Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS) has been tracking the individual market landscape since before the ACA was implemented in 2014. The 2025 CHAS data provided insights into who is going to be most affected without these subsidies and also revealed ongoing displeasure with individual market insurance coverage and access.

### About the Individual Market and Subsidies

People who don't get insurance through a job and don't qualify for public programs like Medicaid can use the individual market to get health insurance. About 6.7% of Coloradans get their coverage this way.

It's expensive because consumers don't have an employer to share the cost of premiums. The ACA addressed these high prices by creating the Premium Tax Credit for people who buy coverage through a marketplace like Connect for Health Colorado. In 2021, Congress passed enhanced subsidies to extend tax credits to people who earn more than 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which in 2025 was \$128,600 for a family of four.

### Middle class and aging enrollees may be impacted the most by the expired subsidies.

Not every individual market customer uses Connect for Health Colorado, but it is the only place to get subsidized premiums. With the addition of the enhanced subsidies, [about 80%](#) of Connect for Health Colorado users received help paying for their premiums.

Data from the 2025 CHAS show that almost 100,000 Coloradans reported getting their coverage through Connect for Health Colorado and having incomes above 400% of the poverty line. People in this group are seeing significantly higher costs for their coverage. While many of these Coloradans are considered middle-income, the loss of the enhanced subsidies can be substantial because some of these families are still not earning what is considered a living wage in Colorado — [\\$136,867 annually for a family of four](#) (two working adults and two children).

Enrollees who are nearing retirement but not yet eligible for Medicare may also see savings plummet without the enhanced subsidies. Over half of Connect for Health Colorado enrollees (51.1%) are ages 50-64, and an unexpected increase in health insurance costs could impact their savings for upcoming expenses, like long-term care. High premium costs might cause some older Coloradans to drop coverage altogether, reducing access to important health care services before they age into Medicare.

## Individual market enrollees were not thrilled with their insurance coverage.

Data from the 2025 CHAS indicated that individual market enrollees were less happy with the health care system, likely because of the high costs of care, barriers to accessing providers, and coverage stability — issues that have been ongoing in [Colorado](#).

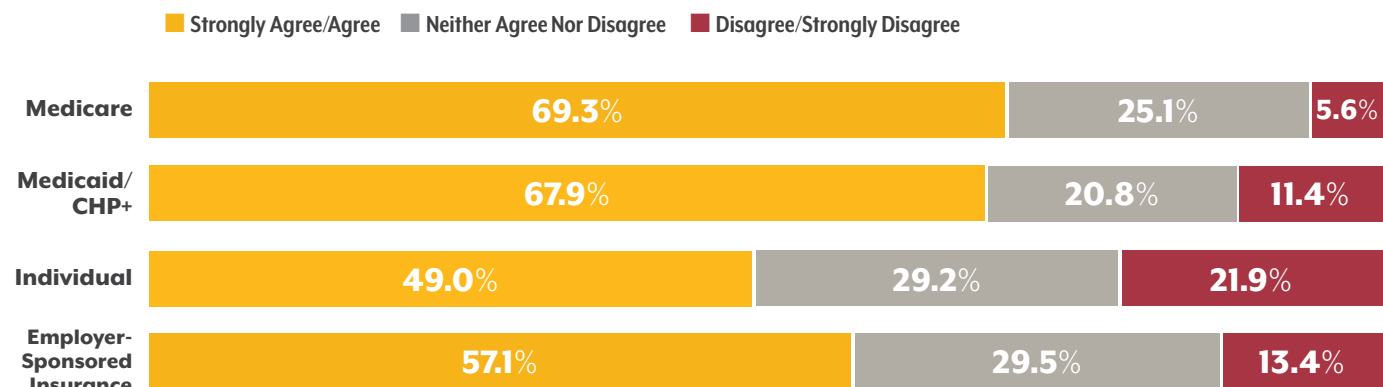
The health care system has continued not meeting the needs of many individual market enrollees. Since 2023, about half of individual market enrollees reported satisfaction with the health care system,

lower than those covered by job-based insurance, Medicaid/Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+), and Medicare (see Figure 1).

► **Cost of Care.** In 2025, individual market enrollees were almost always more likely than those covered by other insurance types to report cost being a barrier to getting needed prescription medications or getting care from a dentist, doctor, or specialist (see Figure 2). Struggles with cost are likely to be exacerbated without the enhanced ACA subsidies, as Coloradans have to choose cheaper plans with less coverage or pay more for premiums and have less left over for care and medications.

**Figure 1. Coloradans with public health coverage were more satisfied with the health care system.**

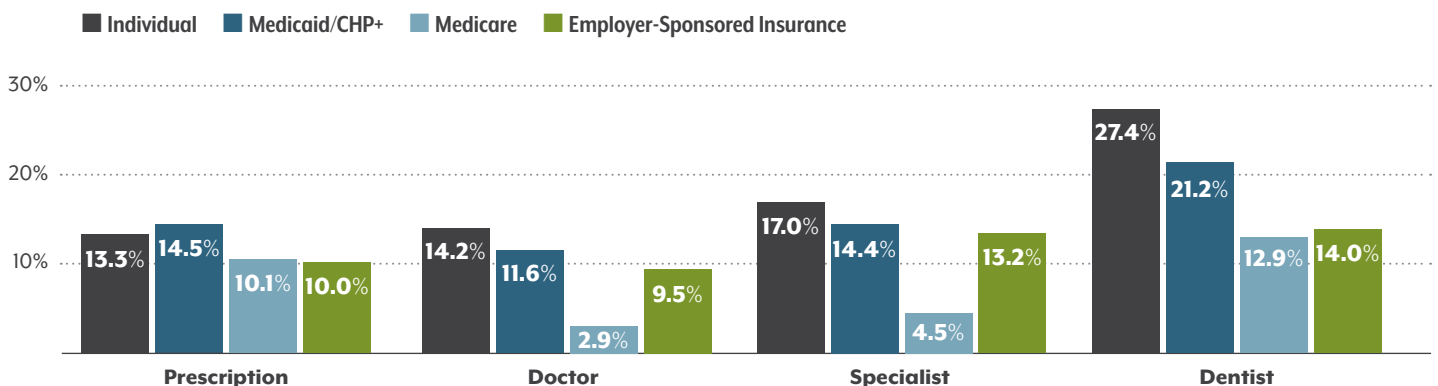
**Topic:** Extent to which they agree or disagree that the current Colorado health care system meets their needs or the needs of their family. **Population:** Coloradans with health insurance, by coverage type. **Year:** 2025.



**Figure 2. Coloradans with individual market coverage were more likely than those with other insurance types to skip medical care because of cost in 2025.**

**Topic:** Percentage of Coloradans who reported not getting care because of cost.

**Population:** Coloradans with health insurance, by coverage type. **Year:** 2025.



► **Access to Care.** Individual market enrollees had an easier time finding a provider that accepted their insurance in 2025, but had a harder time finding a usual source of care, which is important for receiving preventive services and [managing health conditions](#) (see Figure 3).

While some progress has been made with accessing care, Coloradans with individual market insurance and people enrolled in Medicaid were still more likely than those with other insurance types to report not having a usual source of care or not getting needed care because a provider didn't take their insurance (see Figure 4).

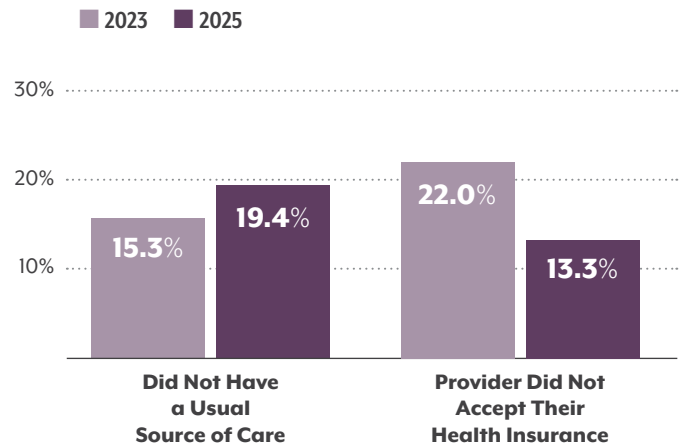
► **Coverage Stability.** Insurance churn — the disruption of coverage during the year — occurred the most among individual market enrollees compared with other insurance types (see Figure 5). About one in four individual market enrollees (24.2%) were not insured continuously for the prior 12 months, following a similar trend from 2023 (26.4%). Coverage instability can disrupt access to preventive or continuous health care services, leading to poorer health outcomes.

**Figure 3. A fifth of individual market enrollees lacked a usual source of care.**

**Topic:** Percentage of individual market enrollees who reported not having a usual source of care or a provider not accepting their insurance.

**Population:** Individual market enrollees.

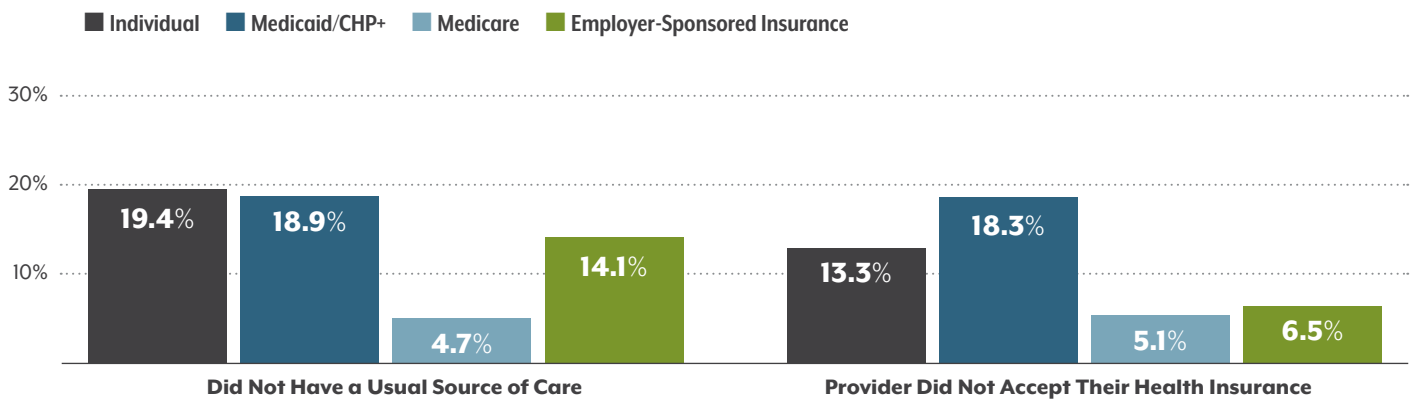
**Years:** 2023-2025.



**Figure 4. Individual market and Medicaid members lag in access to care.**

**Topic:** Percentage of Coloradans who reported not having a usual source of care or a provider not accepting their insurance.

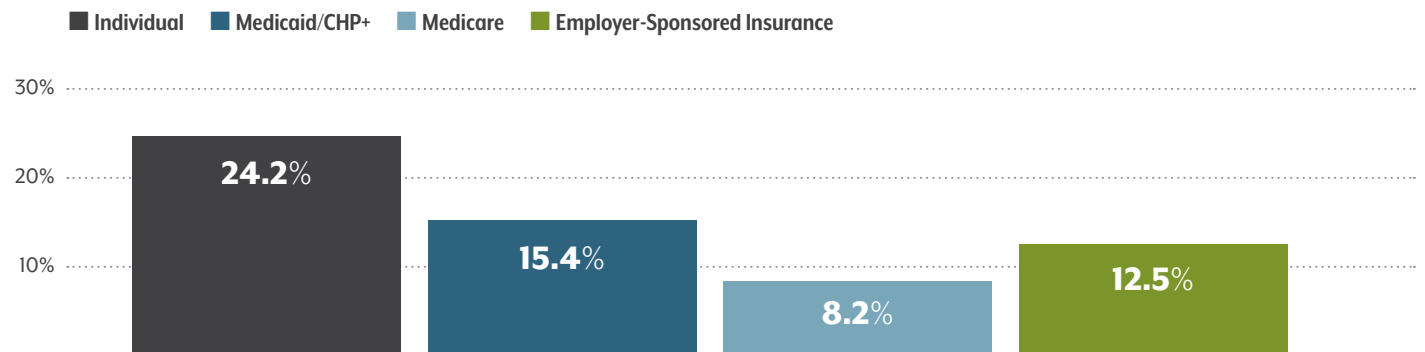
**Population:** Coloradans with insurance by coverage type. **Year:** 2025.



**Figure 5. Individual market enrollees were more likely to have coverage disruptions.**

**Topic:** The percentage of Coloradans who reported not having health insurance for all prior 12 months.

**Population:** Coloradans with health insurance, by coverage type. **Year:** 2025.



## Looking Ahead

The ACA's enhanced subsidies expired on December 31, 2025, leaving many Connect for Health Colorado enrollees with expensive premiums unless Congress reinstates the subsidies. The CHAS highlights that even with financial support, individual market enrollees were not faring as well as their peers with employer-sponsored or public insurance. CHI will be releasing an in-depth report that digs into this issue and Colorado's health insurance affordability crisis across all payer types in 2026.



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