



La Plata County Healthcare Workforce Housing Survey Report

Survey Overview

Total Responses: 70

1. Who do you work for?

- Pediatric Partners of the Southwest: 27 (38.6%)
- La Plata County Public Health Department: 13 (18.6%)
- La Plata Family Medicine: 11 (15.7%)
- Durango Dermatology: 9 (12.9%)
- Axis Health System: 3 (4.3%)
- Animas Surgical Hospital: 1 (1.4%)
- CommonSpirit Health: 1 (1.4%)

2. Which of the following best describes your job category?

- Healthcare Provider (MD, DO, PA, PharmD, RPh, NP, RN, etc.): 20 (28.6%)
- Administration: 20 (28.6%)
- Allied health professional: 17 (24.3%)
- Management: 10 (14.3%)
- Other: 3 (4.3%)

3. What is your current combined annual household income?

- Less than \$20,000 to \$39,000: 18 (25.7%)
- \$40,000 to \$79,000: 16 (22.9%)
- \$80,000 to \$119,000: 15 (21.4%)
- \$120,000 to \$159,000: 8 (11.4%)
- Over \$159,000: 13 (18.6%)

4. Where do you currently live?

- Durango: 41 (58.6%)
- Bayfield: 6 (8.6%)
- Ignacio: 3 (4.3%)
- Other (including Aztec, Farmington, Cortez): 20 (28.6%)

5. How long is your commute to work?

- Less than 15 minutes: 24 (34.3%)
- 15-29 minutes: 23 (32.9%)
- 30 minutes or more: 23 (32.9%)

6. How many people (including yourself) live in your household?

- 1 person: 7 (10%)
- 2-3 people: 39 (55.7%)
- 4-5 people: 21 (30%)
- 6+ people: 3 (4.3%)

7. How many children, age 6 or younger, live in your household?

- None: 50 (71.4%)
- 1-2 children: 19 (27.1%)
- 3 or more: 1 (1.4%)

8. Do you currently own or rent a home in La Plata County?

- Own: 35 (50%)
- Rent: 28 (40%)
- Neither (includes those living outside La Plata County): 7 (10%)

9. What is your monthly rent payment amount? (28 responses)

- \$500 - \$999: 4 (14.3%)
- \$1000 - \$1499: 9 (32.1%)
- \$1500 - \$1999: 7 (25%)
- \$2000 - \$2499: 4 (14.3%)
- \$2500 or more: 4 (14.3%)

10. What is your monthly mortgage payment? (35 responses)

- Less than \$999: 4 (11.4%)
- \$1000 - \$1999: 14 (40%)
- \$2000 - \$2999: 9 (25.7%)
- \$3000 - \$3999: 5 (14.3%)
- \$4000 or more: 3 (8.6%)

Breakdown by Income Distribution

Less than \$20,000 to \$39,000 (18 respondents, 25.7% of total)

- Housing: Predominantly renters
- Location: Mix of Durango residents and those commuting from outside
- Job Types: Primarily administrative staff and allied health professionals
- Challenges: Many express inability to afford homes in Durango

\$40,000 to \$79,000 (16 respondents, 22.9% of total)

- Housing: More balanced mix of renters and owners
- Location: Spread across Durango, Bayfield, Ignacio, and surrounding areas
- Job Types: Varied, including administrative, allied health, and some management roles
- Challenges: Some mention difficulty balancing housing costs with other basic needs

\$80,000 to \$119,000 (15 respondents, 21.4% of total)

- Housing: Majority are homeowners, but still a significant number of renters
- Location: Primarily Durango, with some in Bayfield and other nearby areas
- Job Types: Mix of allied health professionals, management, and healthcare providers
- Challenges: Some mention stretching budgets to afford mortgages

\$120,000 to \$159,000 (8 respondents, 11.4% of total)

- Housing: Mostly homeowners, with a few renters
- Location: Primarily Durango
- Job Types: Management and healthcare providers
- Challenges: Some mention high housing costs despite higher incomes

Over \$159,000 (13 respondents, 18.6% of total)

- Housing: Predominantly homeowners
- Location: Mostly Durango, some in Bayfield
- Job Types: Primarily healthcare providers (MD, DO, PA, etc.)
- Challenges: While generally more stable, some mention concerns about overall area affordability

Key Themes from Comments

Housing Affordability (30 mentions)

Most frequently mentioned concern across all income levels

Examples: "Cannot afford to live in Durango", "The rent and cost of living is outrageous"

Commuting from Outside La Plata County (12 mentions)

Primarily mentioned by lower and middle-income respondents

Example: "I live in San Juan county NM"

Satisfaction with Current Living Situation (10 mentions)

Mostly from homeowners or those with stable housing

Example: "Happy where I am"

Interest in Homeownership (9 mentions)

Expressed by current renters across various income levels

Example: "I would like to stay in my rental for a few years to fix my credit and be able to qualify for a mortgage"

High Interest Rates and Home Prices (7 mentions)

Noted as a barrier to homeownership or refinancing

Example: "Cannot afford to move due to high interest rates and the cost of a house in Durango"

Impact on Quality of Life (6 mentions)

Mentions of how housing costs affect other aspects of life

Example: "We are unable to afford mortgage, groceries, utilities, car payments, childcare expenses, and other general basic needs"

Key Findings

1. **Widespread Affordability Concerns:** Housing affordability is a significant concern across all income levels, with 25.7% of respondents in the lowest income bracket.
2. **Homeownership Challenges:** While 50% of respondents own homes, affordability remains a concern even for some homeowners. High interest rates and home prices are barriers to homeownership for many.
3. **Commuting as a Solution:** A substantial portion (28.6%) of respondents live outside the main areas of La Plata County, likely due to housing costs. Long commutes are common, with 32.9% of respondents commuting 30 minutes or more.
4. **Income-Housing Mismatch:** Despite higher incomes in many healthcare professions, housing costs strain budgets across income levels, suggesting a mismatch between wages and local housing market.
5. **Desire for Proximity:** Many respondents express a desire to live closer to work in Durango, but find it financially challenging.
6. **Impact on Workforce:** The housing situation affects recruitment, retention, and quality of life for healthcare workers, potentially impacting the overall healthcare system in the area.
7. **Varied Experiences by Income:** While all income levels express concerns, the nature of these concerns varies. Lower income groups struggle with basic affordability, middle income groups face challenges transitioning to

homeownership, and higher income groups worry about long-term community sustainability.

8. **Limited Role of Childcare:** Childcare doesn't appear to be a primary concern for most respondents, with 71.4% not having young children at home. However, for those with young children, it adds to the financial strain.
9. **Future Outlook:** Even those satisfied with their current housing express concerns about future affordability in the area, suggesting a need for long-term solutions.

Recommendations

This report highlights the complex housing challenges facing healthcare workers in La Plata County, affecting workers across various roles, income levels, and life stages. It suggests a need for multi-faceted solutions that address both immediate affordability concerns and long-term community sustainability.

The high number of respondents commuting from outside the county or considering moving for affordability reasons also indicates potential misalignment between healthcare wages and local housing costs.

Because of the critical importance of healthcare workforce recruitment and retention, local workforce housing initiatives may want to compare these survey results to other housing data sources in La Plata County.

Median Home Prices: Compare the mortgage amounts reported in the survey to median home prices in La Plata County. This could help determine if healthcare workers are able to afford homes at or below the median price.

Rental Rates: Compare the reported rent amounts to average rental rates in the county. This would show whether healthcare workers are paying above or below average rent.

Housing Affordability Index: Look at La Plata County's housing affordability index and see how the survey respondents' situations align with it.

Homeownership Rates: Compare the 50% homeownership rate from the survey to the overall homeownership rate in the county.

Commute Times: Compare the reported commute times to county averages to see if healthcare workers are commuting further than the typical resident.

Income Levels: Compare the income distribution of survey respondents to the overall income distribution in the county, particularly focusing on how healthcare salaries

relate to housing costs compared to other industries.

Housing Burden: Look at what percentage of income survey respondents are spending on housing and compare this to county-wide data on housing cost burden.

Geographic Distribution: Compare where survey respondents live to general population distribution in the county to see if healthcare workers are more concentrated in certain areas.