

FACT-CHECK: ECONOMY

Do half of US adults under 30 live with their parents?

One-quarter of young people said in a 2025 federal survey they weren't working or were working part-time because of a sluggish job market



Cassis Tingley

3:45 AM MDT on Jul 20, 2026



(Photo provided by Gigafact.)

Yes.

Fact Brief



The Federal Reserve's most recent annual household survey found 49% of adults under the age of 30 still live with their parents. That's up from 43% in 2022 and

37% in 2019.

The 2025 survey also found that just under half of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 received some outside financial help last year and that financial well-being declined for young adults, as well as for low-income families and Black Americans, from a year earlier.

The job market posed another barrier, with 25% of people under 30 saying they weren't working at all or were working part-time because they couldn't find adequate work.

Eleven percent of Denver adults ages 25-34 lived with a parent in 2023, census data shows. Nationally, that share has increased since 1970, peaking for men at 22% in 2020 and for women at 13.6% last year.

See full source list below.

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- U.S. Federal Reserve [2025 Report on the economic well-being of U.S. households](#)
- U.S. Federal Reserve [Employment and job quality](#)
- U.S. Census Bureau [Table AD-1: Young adults living at home](#)
- Pew Research Center [Shares of young adults living with parents](#)

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<https://www.wsj.com/economy/housing/baby-boomer-home-sales-real-estate-879614be>

ECONOMY • HOUSING

Boomers Were Supposed to Downsize. They Are Buying Bigger Homes Instead.

Wealthy, older Americans are ripping up the traditional script for aging

By Rachel Louise Ensign

July 16, 2026 8:30 pm ET



Angela and Victor Martino and their home in Denair, Calif. VIVIAN GREENE



Angela and Victor Martino and their home in Denair, Calif. VIVIAN GREENE

Quick Summary



- Wealthy baby boomers are increasingly upsizing their homes in retirement, reversing the traditional expectation that older Americans downsize.

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Angela and Victor Martino raised their two daughters decades ago in a ranch house measuring less than 2,000 square feet. The empty-nesters recently bought the 5,000-square-foot house next door.

After a year-long renovation, the Denair, Calif., home has a huge kitchen with space for the commercial meat slicer that Victor uses to cut a leg of prosciutto at family events. There is a playroom with polished concrete floors meant to withstand damage from their seven grandchildren. The primary bathroom tub has features to help them get in and out more easily as they get older.

“We’ll downsize when they plant me 6 feet into the ground,” said Victor, 64.

Well-off boomers are increasingly upsizing their homes as they age, either buying bigger ones or financing additions to their existing properties. They are building guesthouses for family members and gourmet kitchens for entertaining, alongside such features as high-end grab bars and first-floor primary bedrooms for aging in place.

In the process, they are rewriting the rules of retirement and aging, when people are expected to move into smaller homes to save money.

Boomers make up the largest share of home buyers in the U.S.—an aspect of a housing market that is out of reach for younger buyers, but well within the economic powers of an older generation that controls the bulk of the nation's wealth. Downsizers account for a slightly larger share of older home buyers, but the upsizers are quickly gaining momentum. About 7% of buyers ages 61 to 70 said the main reason they chose their new home was because they wanted more space, up from 4% for that age group in 2016, according to the National Association of Realtors.

The practice is even more common among affluent people. This generation's considerable wealth is making upsizing possible. Baby boomers and those who are older hold around \$110 trillion in total wealth, far more than younger Americans. Many bought homes and stocks decades ago and have benefited from the appreciation of those assets.

This year, eight of the clients of Merrill Lynch financial adviser April Tardiff retired. Every single one of them upsized. Only one client has downsized in the past five years.



Angela and Victor Martino are helping to rewrite the rules of retirement and aging. DEBRA GILFORD



The interior of the Martinos' new home. MARK VERSCHULDEN

“The historic retirement play of sell your home and buy a smaller one just isn’t happening,” said Tardiff.

Boomers already own a lot of the country’s large homes. Empty-nest baby boomers owned 28% of U.S. homes with three bedrooms or more in 2024, compared with 16% for millennials with children, according to Redfin.

The new demand for even bigger properties is another way boomers dominate the housing market. They account for about 42% of home buyers, the largest share of any generation, according to the National Association of Realtors. They are often cash buyers, giving them an advantage over younger purchasers who need mortgages.

Boomers think about aging differently compared with their parents. They hope to live active lives into their 90s and want to spend freely on hosting family and friends. They have few qualms about giving to their children, in the form of a spare bedroom (or three) of their own.

Wendy Glaister, an interior designer who worked on the Martinos' home, noticed her empty-nest clients starting to upsize after the Covid-19 pandemic. Lockdowns made them appreciate time with loved ones, and the spread of remote work made it possible for adult children to visit for longer stretches. The bull run in stocks and big increases in home prices didn't hurt either.

Couples now see their late-in-life residences as their dream homes. "It is a celebration of their life and achievements and being able to invest in themselves," Glaister said. "If it's not the right thing and you downsize, it's almost like a sentence." One client who downsized struggled to fit an art collection into the new home.

The upsized homes are often designed with family in mind. Sometimes, homeowners are accommodating adult children who still live with them or are making room for their own elderly parents. Often, they are building beautiful guest quarters for their families to visit.

The Martinos, who own a farm and dried-fruit business, host Thanksgiving, Christmas and birthday parties for their two adult daughters and grandchildren, who all live nearby. The grandkids, ages 1 to 14, stay over when their parents are away. They also host business associates at their home regularly.



The Martinos' bathtub is easier to get in and out of than a free-standing one. MARK VERSCHULDEN

“Victor and I are both high on life,” said Angela, 63. Still, she said, sometimes, “I look around and think, ‘Oh goodness, how long can we do this?’”

Other empty-nesters are using the opportunity to buy bigger homes near children and grandchildren, or relocate to a dream location—with hopes of luring friends and family to visit.

Ed and Mary Smith's three adult kids all settled in the Boston area, a roughly five-hour drive from the couple's home in suburban New Jersey. It was tough for the kids to make the trip regularly, especially once they started having children of their own.

So in 2022 the couple bought a 4,000-square-foot home in Falmouth, Mass.—about 500 square feet bigger than the house they left. Proceeds from selling their New Jersey home and a smaller vacation home in Falmouth, which is on Cape Cod, more than covered the nearly \$2 million purchase price.

The Smiths have a primary-bedroom suite on the first floor. The second floor is for their kids and six grandchildren when they come to visit, which they do often. In the summer, at least one of their children is there every other weekend with their families.

“We live in a place they want to come to,” said Ed Smith, an 81-year-old retired partner at an accounting firm. “That’s a big draw.”

Advisers used to work in the windfall from downsizing and lower housing costs into clients’ financial plans. Now they have to help their clients to afford the home of their dreams, said Tardiff, the financial adviser, who is based in Portland, Maine. Sometimes that means telling them they have to work longer than they planned. “Financial planning postretirement has flipped,” she said.

Other factors keep boomers from downsizing. Many want to avoid paying large capital-gains taxes on the sale of a long-held home that has appreciated a lot in value. Others are finding the housing stock of smaller homes is minimal, and relatively expensive.

Older people who are upsizing are opting for features that they hope will help them age comfortably in their big homes, said Samara Goodman, an interior designer based in the Washington, D.C., area. They are building bathrooms with high-end grab bars that match the finishes of the other fixtures.

They also want homes that give everyone ample personal space, building primary-bedroom suites that are set off from common areas and backyard accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, where adult children stay when they visit, Goodman said.

Kit Stolz and Valerie Levett moved into their home in a rural area outside Ojai, Calif., in 1991 with two young daughters. Four years ago, they spent \$200,000 converting a backyard office into an ADU for when their children, now 41 and 36, visit. The building has a kitchenette, bedroom and bathroom.



A backyard office on Kit Stolz and Valerie Levett's property was converted into an accessory dwelling unit. KIT STOLZ



KIT STOLZ

Their younger daughter and her husband, who live in Washington, D.C., but could work remotely, stayed in the unit when their baby was born in 2024. Stolz and Levett, who are 71 and 75, would go over and rock the baby for a few hours to give them a break. "It was a great experience," Stolz said.

Last year, the couple spent another \$200,000 overhauling their kitchen, which was untouched from the 1970s, and porch. Now he enjoys trying out seafood recipes on his new induction range. They used money that Stolz, a journalist, inherited from his parents and an insurance payout for wildfire damage to finance both projects.

There is a nice retirement community nearby, but all of the couple's local friends are staying put so far. "We've got this whole generation of people who are not going to want to move," Stolz said.

Appeared in the July 18, 2026, print edition as 'Downsize? No Thanks. Boomers Buy Bigger Homes.'

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Big Tech Has Suddenly Flipped on the AI Jobs Wipeout Scenario

As public opinion of AI shifts into negative, warnings of mass employment reductions diminish

By Katherine Bindley

July 5, 2026 9:00 pm ET



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman says the industry 'underestimated how much we're going to be able to keep people at the center of everything.' NATHAN LAINE/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Quick Summary



- Business leaders have shifted their public stance on AI's impact, now emphasizing job creation and productivity boosts over job elimination.

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A year ago, the message from many business leaders was that AI was going to wipe out jobs. For the past month or so, tech CEOs have been striking a more optimistic tone.

In late May, OpenAI Chief Executive Sam Altman—who has long predicted that AI will lead to seismic shifts in the workforce—said during a conference, “We’ve been roughly right on technological predictions and pretty wrong on the social and economic implications.”

Soon after, he told CNBC, “Our industry underestimated how much we’re going to be able to keep people at the center of everything.”

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, who warned in May 2025 that artificial intelligence could eliminate half of entry-level jobs, a year later highlighted more-positive scenarios for AI-adopting businesses: “They can do the same thing with less resources, and that leads to things like layoffs, or they can do more with the same amount of resources. But that requires creativity.”

In a June essay, the executive wrote that in giving warnings of job displacement, he wanted policymakers and the private sector to have the best chance at adapting—he wasn’t trying to be a “prophet of doom.” (He also wrote that the possibility of “enduring job loss” remains.)

Is the sunnier outlook a move to win back customers and the public who are souring on AI’s world-upending promise? Or is the role of AI in the workplace now just better understood?

Some comments about AI’s potential to create jobs are coming amid layoffs intended to funnel more money to AI spending. Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently said in an interview with Complex that if businesses focus on making people more productive at a faster rate than automation, “in theory there should be more jobs in the future, not less.” In May, the company started laying off 8,000 workers, flattening teams.

In February, Amazon.com CEO Andy Jassy spoke of AI’s job-creating potential in an interview on CNBC. A year ago, he announced that the company would reduce head count in the coming years because of AI. Amazon has said the subsequent layoffs of 16,000 workers weren’t related to AI adoption, but to the continuing effort to reduce layers and reinvigorate company culture.

Collectively, the narrative has shifted from worker-light doomsday scenarios caused by AI to a future in which workers keep their jobs—and get a productivity boost.



Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has warned of AI-related job displacement, but in a recent essay said he wasn't trying to be a 'prophet of doom.'

The sentiment change isn't limited to tech leaders: A survey by EY-Parthenon found that the percentage of CEOs who believe AI investments will result in significant reductions in head count fell from around 46% in January 2025 to 20% this May.

"They may have noticed that the labor market is genuinely not changing (i.e., imploding) as rapidly as they expected," said David Autor, a professor of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "They may have realized it was simply bad business to say that your great new product will destroy the economy."

One recent study by financial-technology company Ramp and workforce-intelligence firm Revelio Labs found that companies making the largest AI investments grew employment by roughly 10% more than otherwise similar companies that hadn't yet adopted AI.

"The companies that I know that have adopted AI the most are also the ones hiring the most," Altman said in the CNBC interview. AI is even creating new

demand for certain jobs, and more will come that don't yet exist, some tech leaders say.

Many of the world's most prominent economists disagree on AI's long-term impact on jobs.

Ford Motor CEO Jim Farley said last year AI would replace “literally half of all white-collar workers in the U.S.” The company recently hired several hundred engineers and attributed the move to concerns over the quality of work that had been automated. (The hirings were earlier reported by Bloomberg.)

“Engineers with deep technical expertise leveraging the power of AI is a powerful combination that is driving quality gains at Ford,” a Ford spokesman said.



Ford, led by CEO Jim Farley, recently hired several hundred engineers over concerns about work that had been automated. AARON M. SPRECHER/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Meanwhile, negative public sentiment about AI has been building. Around 30% of Democrats think America should accelerate AI innovation as fast as possible, compared with roughly half of Republicans and 77% of tech founders, according to a recent poll by researchers at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley.

“The tenor of the conversation has changed,” said Maurice Schweitzer, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School who

researches leadership and decision-making. “There was a lot of early hype.”

Between efforts to build data centers and the potential for government regulations around AI, “there’s a political component to what they’re trying to do,” he said.

Then there is how AI is actually performing in businesses. Companies in tech and beyond are learning how long it can take to effectively implement new AI tools and working to better understand how well it handles tasks and workflows.

Companies have a hard time telling which of their AI investments are panning out, according to a survey of corporate executives conducted by the technology and management-consulting firm Emergn. Around 20% of U.S. leaders said the AI deployment reports they receive paint a rosier picture than the facts support, with some reporting “softened” bad news and staff keeping quiet about failures.

It might sound nice on an earnings call when a CEO says what AI is capable of and the type of returns to expect, according to Stephen Henriques, a senior research fellow with the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute. “How it actually gets spread throughout the economy is a really different story,” he said.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has a history of predicting that AI will create new jobs. In June, he went so far as to say AI could lead to a labor shortage. When asked on CNBC in May about people being afraid of AI taking jobs, he said the reason they were afraid was because “all these smart people keep saying that.”

Fewer people are saying it now.

Appeared in the July 6, 2026, print edition as ‘Tech CEOs Flip on AI Jobs Wipeout Scenario’.

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June 1, 2026



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Artificial intelligence will almost certainly be the most transformational technology in the history of the world. It will profoundly affect the life of every man, woman and child in our country. It will bring — and is already bringing — unimaginable changes to our economy, our democracy, our emotional well-being, our environment and how we educate and raise our children. Further, there is a very real fear that as A.I. becomes smarter than humans it could eventually function independently, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

The question, then, is not whether A.I. will change the world. It will. The question is: Who will own and control that future? Who will benefit from it, and who will be hurt by it? Will A.I. be used to make life better for working families? Will it enrich

our quality of life? Will it help us eliminate poverty, extend life expectancies and solve the climate crisis? Or will the future of humanity be determined by a handful of billionaires who have promoted and developed A.I., with virtually no democratic input, who stand to become even richer and more powerful than they are today?

That is the choice before us.

Let us be clear. Artificial intelligence was not created out of thin air. The data and language used by generative A.I. tools didn't just pop into Sam Altman's head or Elon Musk's imagination. A.I. is built on our collective intelligence: our books, songs, artwork, journalism, computer code, scientific research, videos, conversations, images and ideas spanning generations. That is not just the opinion of Bernie Sanders. According to Mr. Altman, the head of OpenAI, A.I. models were trained on our "collective experience, knowledge" and "learnings of humanity."

For the most part, tech oligarchs have fed this knowledge into their A.I. models without permission, without acknowledgment, without compensation. In other words, the creative work of millions of people — writers, artists, musicians, journalists, teachers, scientists and ordinary citizens — has essentially been stolen by some of the wealthiest people in the world. It's time for us to reclaim it.

Since A.I. is built on the collective knowledge of humanity, the wealth it generates must benefit humanity. Not just Mr. Musk, Mr. Altman, Dario Amodei and other moguls whose companies are positioned to dominate the industry. Not just venture capitalists in Silicon Valley or money managers on Wall Street who undoubtedly see A.I. as the next great wealth-extracting machine.

That is why I will soon be introducing the American A.I. Sovereign Wealth Fund Act. This legislation would give the public a direct ownership stake in the largest A.I. companies in our country. How? It would create a sovereign wealth fund through a one-time 50 percent tax — not on the profits of OpenAI, Anthropic, xAI and other companies, but paid with something far more valuable than that: the stock.

If passed, this legislation would do two crucial things. First, it would give the public a direct role in determining the future of this technology. No longer would the future of A.I. and the transformation of human life that it will bring be dictated by a handful of Big Tech oligarchs. The federal government would have the power, through its voting shares and an equal representation on each company's board, to block decisions that hurt our citizens and to push for policies that help them.

Second, this legislation would guarantee that the trillions of dollars potentially generated by A.I. are used to improve the lives of all of us — not simply to make the richest people in the world even richer. If the big A.I. companies continue to grow as rapidly as many analysts expect, then the value of the sovereign wealth fund will grow as well — and the benefits to the American people will grow along with it.

This is not an original idea. It has been proposed by scholars. It has been endorsed by some of the leading A.I. companies in America. OpenAI, for example, recently proposed creating a “public wealth fund that provides every citizen — including those not invested in financial markets — with a stake in A.I.-driven economic growth.” Anthropic, led by Mr. Amodei, similarly proposed the creation of “national sovereign wealth funds with stakes in A.I.” Mr. Musk, who runs xAI, wrote, “Universal HIGH INCOME via checks issued by the Federal government is the best way to deal with unemployment caused by AI.”

Dozens of sovereign wealth funds exist all over the world to ensure that ordinary people benefit from national wealth. Norway's sovereign wealth fund, one of the largest in the world, was funded from the country's oil wealth and is now worth more than \$2 trillion. Instead of a few oil executives pocketing all the benefits of this national resource, Norway made the decision that this wealth should be used to improve life for all of its people.

This concept has already been put into practice right here at home. Fifty years ago, Alaska created a sovereign wealth fund from the state's oil revenues. For decades, it has paid annual dividends directly to Alaskans. Moreover, public pension funds in

states across the country already hold hundreds of billions of dollars in the stock of companies throughout America. Even President Trump, in an executive order, has proposed establishing an American sovereign wealth fund.

To start, the billions, if not trillions, of dollars generated by this fund would provide direct payments to the American people. And as the fund generates more and more wealth, the proceeds would be used to ensure that every man, woman and child in our country has a decent and dignified standard of living, including health care, education and housing.

Needless to say, I recognize that for the government to have a major stake in a company, particularly one for which A.I. is only part of its business, is complicated. More details — including the specific spending priorities and the mechanics of implementation — will be included in the legislation I unveil in the coming weeks.

But the principle is simple: When a public resource generates wealth, the public should share in that wealth. A.I. is being built on a public resource far more valuable than oil: the accumulated knowledge, creativity and labor of mankind.

The future of A.I. and the fate of humanity must not be decided behind closed doors in Silicon Valley. It must not be dictated by billionaires seeking to maximize their power and profit. It must be decided by workers, parents, teachers, artists, scientists, communities and the American people. It's our future. We must decide it.

Bernie Sanders is the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 23 of the New York edition with the headline: A.I. Belongs to the People, Not to Billionaires

GUEST ESSAY

The Housing Crisis Is Also a Retirement Crisis

July 14, 2026



Listen · 8:01 min

By Kyla Scanlon

Ms. Scanlon, a contributing Opinion writer, is the author of “In This Economy? How Money & Markets Really Work” and Kyla’s Newsletter.

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It’s no secret that we don’t have enough housing in the United States. Even Congress agrees: The biggest housing bill in decades recently became law and should help. Supply is outmatched by demand, and the young can’t get into areas with dynamic and expansive economies.

We certainly have a housing crisis. But hiding inside it is a retirement crisis — and that is the one the new law doesn’t touch.

A home has stopped being just a place to live — it has also become an asset that has to appreciate in value to underwrite the homeowner’s retirement. The value of a home now serves double-duty as a nest egg. Homeownership became, in short, the typical American retirement plan.

But this creates a trap. Young Americans want to be homeowners, too. So owners need home prices to rise to provide for their retirement; buyers need them to fall.

The house can't do two contradictory jobs at once. The link between retirement and home prices is pitting the old against the young.

Break that link, and housing can become something that you live in, because it no longer has to double as a nest egg.

Housing was not always this way. It was once an enormous opportunity, built on purpose in the aftermath of World War II, by a country that was actively defining the American dream through home ownership. As Tahra Hoops, the director of economic analysis at Chamber of Progress, put it, the postwar generation, the boomers, are “the only American cohort ever handed a starter-home ecosystem by federal policy.”

Housing began its turn toward scarcity during the stagflationary 1970s. It became a stable place to invest when everything else was melting down. Home prices nearly tripled from 1970 to 1980 and kept climbing, with only brief pauses, until the market peaked in the mid-2000s. They have since blown past that high.

What created the bind that we have now was the disappearance of the pension. In 1980, almost 40 percent of private-sector workers had a defined-benefit pension. Today, only about 14 percent even have access to one.

The 401(k) was never designed to replace the pension. The provision entered the Internal Revenue Code through the Revenue Act of 1978, intended for a narrow kind of deferred-bonus arrangement that existed mostly at banks. Ted Benna, a benefits consultant, realized it could become something much bigger: a plan that let workers defer part of their salary pretax, with an employer match. Companies adopted it in droves and started dropping pensions. The do-it-yourself retirement became a default, which retirement economist Anthony Webb called “a historical accident.” By 2011, Mr. Benna was calling his creation a “monster,” though his complaint was less the idea itself and more about what factors like Wall Street's fees had made of it.

A pension bet on rising markets, too, but the employer carried much more of the risk. The 401(k) handed the downside to the worker.

And the upside is not evenly held. About 65 percent of households own a home, but even counting retirement accounts, the top tenth of households own about 80 percent of stock wealth, and the bottom half holds just 2 percent.

Americans now hold more wealth in stocks than in their homes — a bigger tilt toward the market, relative to housing, than at the height of the dot-com bubble. On the whole, the wealth engine has shifted from the house to the stock market — but for the typical household, wealth still means a house.

The Federal Reserve's Distributional Financial Accounts shows what that has meant. Since 2010, Americans 55 and older added roughly \$20 trillion in real estate wealth. Americans under 40 added \$3.5 trillion. Of the housing wealth America added since then, two of every three dollars now sit with Americans 55 and older. Empty nesters own about 28 percent of large homes in the U.S. Millennials with children own about 16 percent.

The pitch hasn't changed, even though the math has: buy a house; watch it get expensive; sell it to someone for a lot of money. The whole machine depends on the people not yet inside paying for the people already in.

There is no shortage of proposed fixes for more housing, and some places have delivered. Berkeley, Calif., spent years barely building — permits averaged 173 homes a year from 2001 to 2014, even as the city kept growing. Since then, production has more than tripled, to an average of 579 units a year, and rents have fallen back to 2018 prices despite the inflationary bursts of recent years.

Building works. It's the simplest thing, and it's most of what the new law does. But building fixes the place-to-live problem without touching the nest-egg problem. People with more places to live still lean on home-price appreciation to retire. We can't construct our way out of the retirement half of this.

So the next nest egg has to be something other than the house. The postwar generation got its floor from the boom of its era, deliberately steered into housing. The boom of this era is the only pool of new wealth big enough to matter: artificial intelligence, and the data centers being built across the country to house it.

Washington has spent the past year acquiring pieces of corporate America. The Trump administration converted billions in CHIPS Act and related grants into a roughly 10 percent stake in Intel.

The government also holds stakes in critical-minerals companies, a “golden share” in U.S. Steel, and a cut of Nvidia’s and AMD’s chip sales to China.

Earlier this month, The Financial Times reported that OpenAI has discussed handing the government a 5 percent stake, over \$40 billion at its latest valuation, as part of a proposal in which every major A.I. lab would contribute equity to a vehicle modeled on the Alaska Permanent Fund. Senator Bernie Sanders wants far more: a one-time 50 percent tax on major A.I. companies, paid in stock, deposited in a sovereign wealth fund. Washington, from Mr. Sanders’s wing to Mr. Trump’s, is converging on the idea that the public should hold a piece of the A.I. boom.

What they are fighting about is what the public deserves.

But is there a way to develop these proposals to help solve the housing crisis? There is: give both retirees and the young a nest egg that isn’t a house.

A fund created by Congress (not negotiated by the labs) could take over the job we’ve forced the house to do. It would be seeded from the A.I. boom and invested broadly, the way Norway took oil money and bought diversified shares of the world economy — so the floor can come from the boom without entirely depending on it.

The returns should flow to households as dividends, similar to the Alaska model. A fund like this would give Americans a floor — on top of Social Security, which was never enough to carry the weight alone. That is the whole point. Keep it boring.

Young people are reading the room here. They are scrambling for a claim on the boom any way they can: founding companies, buying high-fee slivers of OpenAI, betting on Polymarket — all to try and win the lottery because they see nothing below them.

A public fund would protect people already inside, too. A homeowner banking on selling at the absolute top is only doing it because that is their only reliable asset. Give a floor that doesn't depend on a buyer overpaying for a two bedroom, and the zero-sum logic that is dividing generations — my retirement versus your first home — could disappear.

Data centers are, in the end, homes for computers. The American future requires a new consensus — one where they help pay for the security of the people living next to them. The postwar ladder was built on purpose. The next one will have to be, too.

Kyla Scanlon, a contributing Opinion writer, is the author of “In This Economy? How Money & Markets Really Work” and Kyla's Newsletter.

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By The Editorial Board

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For the health of the American economy, tax rates on wealthy Americans will need to rise in the coming years. The rates have fallen over the past half-century even as the incomes of the wealthy have soared. And the United States has a large and growing federal debt that will require a mix of tax increases and spending cuts to reduce. Raising taxes on the very rich is among the most obvious, least economically damaging and most politically popular ways to address the problem.

Yet any attempt to raise taxes on the wealthy inevitably inspires political pushback from the wealthy. The core argument tends to be the same: Tax increases on us will end up hurting the economy and, by extension, everybody else. The argument is not always wrong, but it often is.

The recent debate over a tax on high-priced second homes in New York City, known as the pied-à-terre tax, offers a useful case study. The State Legislature approved the tax in May, with the support of both Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and it has gone into effect this month, helping to pay for priorities such as expanded preschool.

The pied-à-terre tax involves local and state governments, rather than the federal government. Still, it has inspired a version of an argument that the country will need to have repeatedly in the coming years — overtaxing the wealthy. The outcome should offer hope to anybody who is concerned about government deficits or inequality. In New York, the better economic argument prevailed.

The tax, imposed only on expensive second homes, is not a new idea. In New York, its advocates began pushing for it more than a dozen years ago. The city of Vancouver, British Columbia, enacted its version, known as the Empty Homes Tax, in 2017. Toronto, Montana and Rhode Island followed in the last several years, with Rhode Island's version known as the Taylor Swift tax, after her mansion on the state's coast. Singapore and Paris have had such taxes for even longer.

In New York, the tax applies to homes that are not the owner's primary residence and are worth about \$5 million and above. Part of the rationale is that the owners of these homes often do not have to pay the city's income tax, which applies only to people who spend at least 184 days a year in the city. As a result, these part-timers benefit from New York's services and infrastructure — garbage collection, snow plowing, public transportation, policing and so on — without paying their fair share.

The tax addresses a pernicious form of tax avoidance. Many top earners carefully structure their lives to spend fewer than 184 days in New York while basing much of their activity here. The new tax tells them they can no longer have it both ways. It also takes a small step toward reducing the city's vast income inequality.

The tax will be assessed annually, and by the second half of 2028 it will impose a rate of 0.8 percent on homes with a sales value between \$5 million and \$15 million. Somebody who owns a \$10 million second home, for example, will face an annual bill of \$80,000, on top of the existing property tax rate. The new rate will rise to a maximum of 1.3 percent a year, for homes worth more than \$25 million.

The most notorious home involved in the debate is the 24,000-square-foot apartment on Central Park South that Ken Griffin, the hedge fund manager, bought for \$238 million in 2019, the most expensive home sold in the United States. Mr.

Mamdani singled out the apartment in a video about the pied-à-terre tax, infuriating Mr. Griffin. When added to Mr. Griffin's current property tax bill, the new tax means that he will pay a total property rate of about 1.7 percent, which is only slightly above the city average for apartments. Until now, because the property tax system has been too lenient for expensive homes, Mr. Griffin has paid far below the average rate.

Nonetheless, he is one of the people who claim that the tax will significantly harm the city's economy. He was so angry about it and the video that he briefly threatened to reconsider the construction of a \$6 billion tower his company plans to build on Park Avenue. Real estate executives and lobbyists have spread their own scare stories. They say that the tax will lead wealthy people to flee, hurting the city's finances and causing a slowdown in construction that will raise home prices for everybody.

Those claims make little sense. For one thing, the tax will apply to a tiny share of New York City's housing units — fewer than 13,000 out of 3.6 million, according to the city's most recent housing survey. The market for these luxury homes is too niche to shape the broader market. And the luxury market itself may not weaken much. The soaring inequality of recent decades means that many of these apartment owners have more money than they can easily spend. A modestly higher tax bill will not cause them to abandon their second home in New York's pre-eminent social, cultural and business scene.

Mr. Griffin, after all, has not fled the city. He still owns his apartment and is proceeding with his new corporate tower.

The exaggerated claims about the pied-à-terre tax fit with a long history of anti-tax arguments. Whenever the federal government raises taxes on the wealthy, opponents claim that the economy will tank. They are usually wrong. Indeed, gross domestic product growth and job growth have been faster under Democratic presidents (who tend to raise taxes) in recent decades than under Republican presidents.

It is true that tax increases can bring trade-offs. If taxes rise too high, especially state and local taxes, wealthy people sometimes flee to other places. But New York's pied-à-terre tax is both modest in size and narrowly targeted.

The tax leaves many problems unresolved. It will not pay for anywhere near all of the city's needs, and the city still faces a large budget gap in the coming years. Nor will the tax solve the city's convoluted and deeply unfair property tax system, which effectively taxes high-end brownstones and condos at a lower rate than single-family homes in working-class neighborhoods. The effective tax rate on rental units is also unfairly high.

The new tax will also not solve the city's dire housing shortage. City and state leaders should take other steps to stimulate the construction of apartment buildings and to ease building regulations. As we have noted in recent editorials, the biggest determinant of a region's housing costs is its supply, and New York has fallen behind other major cities.

But the appropriate yardstick of a new policy is not whether it solves every problem but whether it represents progress, and the pied-à-terre tax does. Ms. Hochul and Mr. Mamdani deserve credit for finding common ground between them. On several policy issues, the mayor has shown an admirable tendency for pragmatic compromise since taking office.

The state legislators who voted for the tax deserve praise, too. They did not allow themselves to be intimidated by fearmongering from some of New York's most influential people. Most New Yorkers will benefit as a result.

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The American E.V. Has Been Crushed. Will It Take the U.S. Auto Industry With It?

The largest U.S. automakers have backed away from electric vehicles, even as global sales are booming. The decision may make them obsolete.



By Matthew Shaer

Matthew Shaer spoke with dozens of auto industry analysts and academics for this article.

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The first sign of real trouble arrived two years ago, in the guise of an electric S.U.V. so new it did not yet have an official name. Fast and capacious, sleek and quiet, with plenty of comfortable seating and enough juice to carry a family 350 miles on a single charge, the vehicle was unveiled in May 2023, at a Ford investor event in the Michigan factory town of Dearborn. “It’s beautiful,” Doug Field, the head of Ford’s E.V. unit, promised the audience. “And it’s unlike anything else in the segment so far.” A “personal bullet train,” he called it.

He had good reason to be optimistic. Buoyed by billions of dollars in federal investment in charging infrastructure and a generous \$7,500 consumer tax credit, the electric vehicle market in the United States had recently hit historic highs, climbing from annual sales of roughly 490,000 in 2021 to more than 800,000 in 2022 — an increase of approximately 60 percent. Many experts believed that the United States was now poised to enter the fruitful second phase of what’s commonly known as an S-curve, in which early interest in an emerging technology gives way

to widespread adoption. If they were right — and data from other parts of the globe suggested they were — the rollout of a long-range electric S.U.V. was more than savvy thinking. It was an investment in the future.

And yet the project seems to have been cursed from the outset. Unlike many of the earlier Ford E.V.s, the “bullet train” was not merely a retrofitted version of an existing vehicle with an internal combustion engine — ICE, in the industry parlance. It was an entirely new car, requiring a large and complicated battery to match the vehicle’s projected heft. In April 2024, Ford pushed back the sale of the “bullet train” by two years, to “enable Ford to take advantage of emerging battery technology”; that August, it confirmed it was killing it entirely. “These vehicles need to be profitable,” Ford’s chief financial officer, John Lawler, explained in a conference call with reporters. “If they’re not profitable, based on where the customer is and the market is, we will pivot and adjust and make those tough decisions.”

At the time, his comments went relatively unnoticed. But it soon became clear that Ford — which went on to retire the Lightning, an electric variant of its best-selling F-150 pickup — was not the only manufacturer to have suddenly developed a case of cold feet. In July 2024, General Motors said it was delaying the introduction of a Buick E.V. S.U.V., and the following September, Volvo dialed back plans for an all-electric lineup of vehicles that would have debuted in the United States. In 2025, Dodge followed suit, axing a battery-powered Charger and its long-anticipated E.V. Ram pickup truck. Two plug-in hybrid Jeeps were sent to the scrap heap in the sky, as were several e-sedans that Honda and Nissan had designed for the U.S. market. Acura pulled the plug on an electric S.U.V. built at a G.M. plant in Tennessee.

The cancellations accumulated at such a rapid clip that the industry press often struggled to keep up: Late last year, for example, MotorTrend published an effusive review of the BrightDrop, a cutting-edge electric van from Chevrolet. The cargo hold of the vehicle was “cavernous,” the magazine’s writers noted approvingly, and the pedal feel supple. As for visibility, it was akin to “looking out of a giant terrarium.” The only problem was that the BrightDrop was no longer

available, having been discontinued by Chevy two weeks after its press team dropped the thing off at MotorTrend headquarters. (“Well, this is awkward,” the article begins.)

And the carnage was far from over: Under the second Trump administration, the E.V. tax credit was eliminated and tailpipe-emission standards were gutted, which more or less instantly drove down sales of new battery-powered vehicles and encouraged the so-called Big Three — Ford, G.M. and Stellantis North America, the maker of the Dodge, Chrysler, Ram and Jeep brands — to refocus their considerable resources on trucks and plus-size S.U.V.s. Assembly lines at E.V. plants went dormant, and the battery plants that had sprung up around the country in the Biden years were unceremoniously closed or repurposed for other tasks, like the manufacture of industrial battery storage units. Thousands of workers lost their jobs. One of them was Doug Field, the brain behind Ford’s three-row “bullet train,” who departed the company this spring as part of an internal restructuring.

In purely financial terms, the combined cost of this industry about-face remains nothing short of staggering: This year, Stellantis alone was forced to write down \$26 *billion* in E.V.-related losses. (Ford reported a slightly less ghastly \$19 billion loss.) But somehow, it’s the long-term repercussions that look worse. “The way I’d put it,” the auto journalist Martin Padgett told me recently, “is that we pulled a U-turn while the rest of the world was pushing forward.”

According to the International Energy Agency, a Paris-based policy group, one of every four vehicles sold globally in 2025 was battery-powered. Analysts with Bloomberg have predicted that in the next decade, that number will more than double, putting gas-powered cars — for the first time ever — in the minority of overall new vehicle sales. Overseas, Asian and European manufacturers have spent years preparing for this eventuality, dumping billions into the development of battery technology. With predictable results: China now makes 75 percent of all E.V.s sold anywhere on earth. (The United States makes around 5 percent.) Many of those vehicles are produced by BYD, a Chinese company that recently became the largest manufacturer of battery-powered cars in the world.

“Already, the technological gap is getting dangerously wide,” says Stephen Ezell, a senior economist with the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, or I.T.I.F., a Washington-based nonprofit. “Today, China can get a new E.V. from blueprint to launch about 33 percent faster than a U.S. company, give or take. But that will accelerate, right? The speed of innovation, the speed of the production cycles at these foreign companies, is just going to get faster and faster. And at some point, the gap will get pretty close to fully impossible for American automakers to close.”

For Detroit, the timing could not be worse. Since the 1960s, the U.S. auto industry’s once-dominant stake in the domestic car business has been slowly chewed up by foreign manufacturers, sinking from a near monopoly of 92 percent in 1965 to 46 percent in 2015. As of 2024, Ezell estimates, only a third of new cars purchased in the United States were built by the Big Three. The E.V. revolution was seen by its proponents as a way to reverse that trend. It was an opportunity for Detroit to rediscover its capacity for ingenuity and to re-establish credibility in an industry it helped to create.

Instead, whipsawed back and forth by shifting political headwinds and afflicted by all manner of self-enforced error, it appears to be in the process of sealing its own doom — at the precise moment interest in E.V.s is surging in the United States. In April, the analytics firm JD Power conducted a survey showing that 26 percent of prospective buyers in the United States were “very likely” to consider an E.V. for their next car. And that was *before* the chaos in the Strait of Hormuz helped push the price of unleaded gasoline to a four-year high.

“We’ve reached a genuinely existential moment,” Ezell told me. In a best-case scenario, Detroit manages to meet it by crafting a viable, long-term E.V. strategy while also servicing the still dependably lucrative existing market for ICE trucks. In the worst, it retreats onto what the economist Susan Helper calls a “shrinking island of ICE,” churning out outlandishly large trucks and not much else. At which point, the obsolescence of the mighty U.S. automobile industry — a sector once inextricably associated with American know-how and economic might — would be

all but guaranteed. As Ford's chief executive, Jim Farley, recently acknowledged in a statement that could apply to any member of the Big Three, "If we don't put our chips on the right number and the right color, Ford could maybe not exist."

The Struggling American E.V.

A few of the electric offerings that the Big Three have killed.



Chevrolet Bolt:
Ending



Ram 1500 REV, fully electric:
Canceled



Chevrolet BrightDrop:
Discontinued



Ford F-150 Lightning:
Discontinued

“Is Detroit resigned to its fate? Has it accepted the role of subordinate in the world of cars?” Somewhat remarkably, these lines were not published this year but nearly half a century ago, in 1983, in the last chapter of a book called “The Decline and Fall of the American Automobile Industry.” Its author was the legendary journalist Brock Yates; the eerily resonant topic was the threat posed by a new breed of fuel-efficient Asian sedan — in this case, the Honda Accord, which would go on to become one of the most popular vehicles ever sold in the United States.

To Yates, there was little question that the Accord was deserving of its popularity. The vehicle was a “masterpiece,” he wrote, “the *ne plus ultra* of small cars.” But he was far more interested in the Big Three’s reaction to its release, which he characterized as alternately cocky and flat-footed. Trapped in their corner offices, coasting on the fumes of earlier successes, many executives had hoped that Americans would eventually go back to their preference for heavy gas guzzlers. By the time they realized their error, Yates argued, Detroit had found itself in a position analogous to today: lapped by outsiders, left flailing in the wake of technological advances and cultural currents that it should have anticipated — forced to play catch-up.

“I remember it as basically all the stages of grief,” says Helper, who wrote her 1987 doctoral dissertation at Harvard on the rise of the Japanese auto industry. Denial — how could the collective experience of Detroit come up short against an overseas rival? Then anger. Why would anyone in their right mind prefer a small car to a full-size one? Then bargaining, in the form of a few ill-considered sedans designed to compete with the Accord and subsequently rejected by consumers for being too pricey, too ugly and far too slow. Sales of imports, meanwhile, were rising every year, as Honda and another Japanese powerhouse, Toyota, established a bigger foothold in the U.S. market.

To the Big Three — and to the American public — this was unacceptable. Detroit had long been the defining force in American industry, contributing billions of dollars to the domestic economy and regularly making up close to 5 percent of the annual G.D.P. “When you think about it, it was the original American start-up,” Ezell says. “I mean, look at what it unleashed in our society: The Interstate

highway system, the rise of the suburbs and so on. That's the coming-of-age story of our entire country." It was a machine that had remade cities and towns, lifted millions of Americans into the middle class and fueled an array of downstream industries, from steelwork to the manufacture of radial tires and antennas. It would have to be preserved, and the U.S. government would have to help.

In the early 1980s, under pressure from Detroit, President Ronald Reagan negotiated a "voluntary" quota that restricted the number of Japanese imports that could be sold in the United States; he also gave Toyota and Honda permission to build a few factories in America, providing they were staffed by local workers. In addition to stemming the loss of American jobs, these moves were designed to buy time for the domestic auto industry — to allow executives to study (and ideally, to ape) how the Japanese were able to produce their vehicles so efficiently.

But even with the assist from the White House, Detroit was never able to recover anything like its previous market clout. In the United States, unlike Asia, manufacturers had to contend with a layered corporate bureaucracy that hindered innovation. More than that, they had to contend with their own history. In a paper on the convulsions of the era, Helper noted that "problems of perception — or of the failure to recognize that the world is changing — flow from the fact that senior managers tend to become overly reliant on the mental models and beliefs that undergirded the firm's success in the first place." A well-grooved track can transform, with enough traffic, into a rut.

Through the 1990s, sales figures continued to slide, as more foreign automakers targeted U.S. consumers — Nissan, BMW, a Korean newcomer called Kia, all apparently more in tune with what Americans wanted than the American companies themselves.

What recovery there was for Detroit came in fits and starts. The Dodge Neon, introduced in 1994, was a smart and cheap clone of the top-selling Honda Civic subcompact and a certified hit, generating millions in revenue. ("The Japanese, then, had created a new American auto industry," the authors Paul Ingrassia and Joseph B. White quipped in "Comeback: The Fall and Rise of the American

Automobile Industry.” “In the end, Detroit decided to join in.”) And an investment in the growing market in pickups, along with a focus on “shared platform” vehicles — cars and trucks that used the same underlying architecture, thus reducing production costs — helped the Big Three hit record profits in 2000. Still, despite the stockpiles of cash it was accumulating, Detroit entered the new millennium in a defensive crouch, low on innovation and lower still on daring.

For every Ford Focus — a compact car that sold well both domestically and overseas, through a partnership with the Japanese company Mazda — there was an embarrassing stumble, like the Dodge Avenger, a cartoonishly proportioned, strangely underpowered pseudo-muscle car introduced in the European market in 2007 with predictable results. Rather than choosing to refine their export strategy or encouraging their engineers to think more creatively, the Big Three responded to these setbacks, as they would in 2024, by pouring more capital into trucks and S.U.V.s. “Basically, the paragons of the American vehicle — the sort of products that manage to persist even in the midst of financial messes and industry catastrophes,” says Martin Padgett, the auto reporter. “It was blinkered thinking, of course. It was an attempt to maximize profits.”

The downsides of the approach became abundantly clear in the mid-2000s, when a global energy crisis drove up the price of gas. To many American consumers, all those heavy trucks were no longer so appealing — not if they were going to cost a day’s pay to fill up. Sales of new S.U.V.s and pickups slid precipitously. And there was little diversification to offset the losses: Of the small handful of sedans and subcompacts that Detroit was still making, many had been plagued with wiring and engine issues, requiring sweeping, expensive recalls to rectify. (Today, the Big Three have all but fully ceded the category to foreign manufacturers.) The rest were blandly designed, their cabins lined with cheap and coarse plastics. “What we were seeing, I’d argue, was the ‘enshittification’ of American vehicles,” Padgett told me, referring to a term coined by the technologist Cory Doctorow to describe a purposeful, profit-minded degradation in product quality. “We were being told to expect and accept less.”

Still, it took the financial crisis of 2008, and the ensuing global recession, to truly push Detroit to the brink. Americans stopped spending; reasonable auto loans were close to impossible to find. In a single year, sales of new cars in the United States fell by an astonishing 40 percent. Facing the very real prospect of bankruptcy, the Big Three chief executives traveled to Washington to plead for federal assistance. (They opted to fly private, a tragicomic detail that did not go unignored by journalists or lawmakers.) Not everyone was in a listening mood. As the presidential hopeful Mitt Romney wrote in a now-famous editorial in *The Times*, there were plenty of good reasons to turn the executives away. Assenting to a bailout, argued Romney, the Michigan-born son of a former auto industry exec, was practically a guarantee that “automakers will stay the course — the suicidal course of declining market shares, insurmountable labor and retiree burdens, technology atrophy, product inferiority and never-ending job losses.”

To Romney, the solution was obvious: Allow the Big Three to go broke and push them to rebuild more wisely. “The federal government,” Romney wrote, “should invest substantially more in basic research — on new energy sources, fuel-economy technology, materials science and the like — that will ultimately benefit the automotive industry.”

But Romney wasn’t in Congress. He didn’t get a vote. And in late 2008, after months of pitched debate on Capitol Hill, President George W. Bush authorized the use of Troubled Asset Relief Program funds to bail out the automakers. G.M. and Chrysler were forced into a structured bankruptcy, and Washington allocated \$17.4 billion to keep them afloat. (Ford was in better shape, having mortgaged its assets ahead of the financial crisis.) An estimated 1.5 million jobs were preserved; sales gradually rebounded as automakers were pushed to embrace more fuel-efficient options. “The auto industry has proved that any comeback is possible,” President Barack Obama, who tied ongoing federal support for the Big Three to a commitment to fuel efficiency, said in 2012. “And by the way, so has Motor City.” Unfortunately, the comeback proved short-lived.



Photo illustration by Justin Metz

In February 2008, several months before the Big Three chief executives threw themselves on the mercy of the federal government, a Silicon Valley start-up called Tesla unveiled its inaugural E.V., which it named the Roadster. Effectively a Lotus Elise sports coupe with an electric motor in place of the original four-cylinder engine, the car was far from the first E.V. to be built in America: As early as the late 19th century, inventors had been experimenting with battery-powered people carriers. But it was, as the car site Edmunds noted, “the first car to prove that electric power and high performance need not be mutually exclusive.”

The Roadster had a range of 220 miles and traveled from a standstill to 60 m.p.h. in about six seconds. The handling was supple, the torque neck-jerking. (Quite literally: Many of the early articles on the car likened the driving experience to being strapped into the cockpit of a fighter jet.) More important, it had curb appeal. If the Toyota Prius resembled a hyphen on wheels, the Roadster was Ferrari-

pretty, with swooping curves, an aggressive stance and a removable targa top. You could picture yourself piloting it through the undulating switchbacks of a slot canyon.

No matter, as Elon Musk later admitted, that the car “didn’t really work.” (As with many first-generation E.V.s, the software was cantankerous, the reliability abysmal.) Nor that the price tag — \$150,000 in today’s dollars — was out of reach for most consumers. The Roadster was a statement piece: an advertisement for the E.V. industry writ large. And in subsequent years, Tesla used what it learned in making the Roadster to develop the considerably more affordable Model S — a sedan, as the cognoscenti at Top Gear magazine had it, that “almost single-handedly forced mainstream manufacturers to embrace electricity.”

In 2012, Tesla sold fewer than 3,000 Model S sedans. In 2013, aided by a drumbeat of positive press — including the top prize in MotorTrend’s Car of the Year awards, a first for an E.V. — it sold more than 22,000. Other early E.V.s, like the Chevrolet Volt and the Nissan Leaf, proved more popular still, to the extent that G.M. had to revise its production capacity to keep up with demand. And the fuel-efficient Toyota Prius — a hybrid that paired an ICE powertrain with an electric motor — surpassed 200,000 in U.S. sales for the second year in the row.

Encouraged by the consumer response, the Obama administration proposed creating a \$2 billion Energy Security Trust to fund the development of non-ICE vehicles. “With more research and incentives, we can break our dependence on oil,” said Obama, who predicted that by 2015, the United States would “become the first country to have a million electric vehicles on the road.”

During his second term in office, production and sales of E.V.s did indeed climb steadily, flattening temporarily when fuel prices stabilized and reaching a respectable 1 percent of the total U.S. new car market in 2016. But it wasn’t until 2018 that the millionth E.V. was finally sold in the United States — by which point the dynamics of the global market had been all but set. Even with the temporary boost engendered by the Biden administration’s \$7,500 tax credit, American E.V. adoption, according to Pew, has repeatedly lagged behind the international

average of 25 percent of new car sales — to say nothing of the 53 percent recorded by China, or the 68 percent in Nepal. Last year, 97 percent of all vehicles sold by dealers in Norway were electric. The United States has stalled out at 10 percent.

The most straightforward explanation for the discrepancy can be found in an innovative paper published in 2024 in *Green Energy and Intelligent Transportation*, a peer-reviewed journal. Titled “Barriers and Motivators to the Adoption of Electric Vehicles: A Global Review,” the meta-analysis illustrated what compels new-car buyers to go electric — and the fears, including “range anxiety,” that kept them away. Tellingly, regardless of region and nationality, consumers were far more likely to buy an E.V. if reliable incentive programs were in place. Hence the rates of adoption in a place like Norway, which has long offered E.V. subsidies — and the comparably pitiful numbers in the United States, which adopted its own federal incentive program only to retract it three years later, leaving both consumers and manufacturers in the lurch.

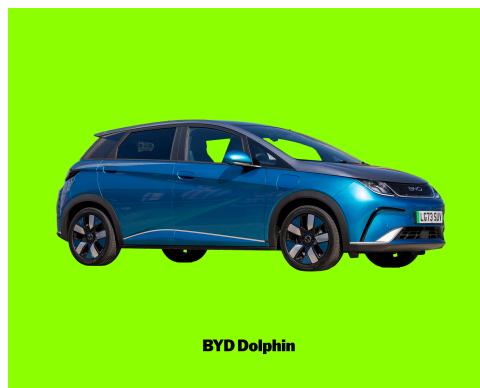
Executives are “essentially being asked to maneuver a giant warship in a space that changes every four years, if not every four days, in terms of tariffs,” says Helper, the economist. For an industry that thinks in specific increments of time, that’s a recipe for disaster. “Most legacy automakers put a business case together up to four years ahead of launch, based on how many cars they expect to sell and the price of goods and labor,” says Adam Bernard, a former G.M. strategist and the founder of AutoPerspectives, a Michigan-based consultancy. “You’re anticipating what everything will cost and where the vehicle will be assembled. The price of steel. The price of computer chips. You’re making a bet, but it’s an educated bet. You have to be able to gauge where things are headed to get it right.”

And you have to do it in an environment almost comically disadvantaged to widespread E.V. adoption. The United States comprises roughly four million square miles of forest, desert and farmland, strung together by 4.1 million miles of paved road and an uncountable number of winding dirt lanes, making the construction of a national charging network considerably more difficult than it would be in a smaller country.

“If you think the longest distance you’re going to drive on a regular basis is 50 miles,” Helper says, “you might not worry as much about that. But if you’re regularly commuting sizable distances, like a lot of Americans, your anxiety about battery life is going to be heightened.” Especially when the alternative — an ICE vehicle — can run on fuel that is often not only more readily available than a charging station but also deeply discounted courtesy of a variety of indirect governmental subsidies.

In general, Helper told me, “I think that sometimes people overlook what we’re up against here. If you’re an automaker, you’re basically starting out with one hand tied behind your back.”

This year, a group of researchers combed through new E.V. registrations in the United States and discovered that from 2012 to 2023, close to *half* of them had been logged in the 10 most Democratic counties in the country, while a third were made by buyers in ultraliberal enclaves like California’s Bay Area and Cambridge, Mass. “Here’s where my pessimism comes from,” says Nate Jensen, a University of Texas professor who studies the auto industry. “We had a rush of early adopters, right? They lived in cities. They were tech savvy. But now you’re asking: Well, OK, how do you get to the more marginal consumer, without any incentives? How do I persuade a person with range anxiety, or who’s worried about paying an electrician to rewire their house for the right charger?”





Foreign-made U.S. Electric vehicles are vastly more popular outside the United States than they are here.

To a large degree, the answer may reside with cost: In 2026, many E.V.s sold in the United States are considerably pricier than the typical ICE car. But the more investment Detroit makes in battery technology, and the more it experiments with purpose-built E.V.s, rather than modified ICE cars, the cheaper those vehicles will become. If some sort of price parity can be achieved, as it has been in Asia and Europe — and if prices at the pump keep yo-yoing — the hesitancy of many holdouts is likely to erode.

“I talk to a lot of car dealers, a lot of automakers in the U.S.,” says Scott Case, the chief executive of Recurrent, an E.V. analytics company. “And I think all of them would agree with the statement that we’re headed toward a fully electric future.” Good E.V.s, he pointed out, are superior products to ICE cars in nearly every way: They accelerate faster; they’re quieter; maintenance costs are lower. “The debate isn’t about that,” he went on. “The debate is about the rate at which we’ll get there. The whole globe is aimed in one direction.” Which to Case demonstrates that market receptivity is less of a lasting problem than the quality of the cars themselves.

Next time you’re driving on the highway, take a tally of the E.V.s hurtling past you. Many will be built by Tesla. A few by Rivian, a California-based start up. But a surprising number will most likely carry the badge of Hyundai, a Korean automaker that last year sold twice as many E.V.s in the United States as Ford, thanks in large part to several reasonably priced offerings, like the \$35,000 Ioniq 5 compact.

“It’s funny to me, because if you look at U.S. sales right now, the single hottest category in E.V.s is the three-row, full-size electric S.U.V.,” Case said, laughing, when I brought up the three-row “bullet train” unveiled by Doug Field at the Ford

investor event in 2023. “The Kia EV9 is totally crushing it. Toyota and Subaru are both rushing out new three-row competitors. And the most desirable cars in the used E.V. market are the Tesla Model X and the three-row Model Y,” he said.

“Look, I don’t envy the job of the planners for these manufacturers,” he continued. “But it just feels to me like the Big Three have been so overreactive to the government swings and overreactive to small demand shifts — when, really, if they had just picked a path and stuck with it, and hadn’t jammed the rudder to one side, they would have been a whole lot better off.”

Predicting the downfall (or resurgence) of the Big Three is practically a national sport. There should be a semiannual award devoted to it. In addition to Brock Yates’s “The Decline and Fall of the American Automobile Industry” (1983) and Paul Ingrassia and Joseph B. White’s “Comeback” (1994), there is Micheline Maynard’s “The End of Detroit: How the Big Three Lost Their Grip on the American Car Market” (2003), Kenneth Whyte’s “The Sack of Detroit: General Motors and the End of American Enterprise” (2021), as well as “Wrecked: How the American Automobile Industry Destroyed Its Capacity to Compete” (2019), by the sociologists Joshua Murray and Michael Schwartz. Throw in “American Icon: Alan Mulally and the Fight to Save Ford Motor Company” — the reporter Bryce G. Hoffman’s 2012 chronicle of the company’s efforts to recover from the bailouts — and the apparently endless stream of academic papers on the topic, and you’ve got enough reading material to last you years.

What kind of books will be written about the current crisis? And what will they be called? If history and the current industry headwinds are any indication, the answer is probably something along the lines of “Should Have Seen It Coming: How the United States Lost the Last of Its Automobile Industry to Asia.” As Stephen Ezell, the I.T.I.F. economist, noted in a trio of white papers published this year, manufacturers in Korea, Japan and China now dominate large parts of the global car business.

For the time being, China is being held back from the U.S. market courtesy of a 100 percent tariff on its E.V.s. But Mexico imposes no such tax on the Chinese, and new data indicates that around 15 percent of new cars sold in that country are made by the likes of BYD and Geely, another Beijing-based automotive powerhouse. (“If you see a new car on the road here now, it’s likely to be Chinese,” a Mexican analyst recently told *The Financial Times*. “We clearly haven’t reached the peak.”) This spring, 2,900 Chinese E.V.s landed at a port in Canada, where the government has lowered the tariff on the imports to 6.1 percent. In the next five years, the country could import as many as 70,000 more.

It may be true, as Musk once warned, that if “trade barriers” were not established against Chinese E.V.s, BYD and Geely would “pretty much demolish most other companies in the world.” But our neighbors seem less concerned, and it’s a short drive from Mexico to the United States, as evidenced by the flood of social media footage of influencers carting their sleek new BYD sedans over the border. Even if more restrictive measures, like a proposed bill in Congress that would fully ban Chinese imports in the United States, were to pass to the president’s desk for signing, China would still be able to exercise free rein in the rest of the globe. (In June, Polestar, an E.V. company owned by Geely, was informed by American regulators that it could no longer sell new cars in the United States.)

And as companies like BYD build more vehicles, refining battery life and efficacy, they would steadily improve on an economy of scale. “They’ll be able to innovate more rapidly and keep costs down,” Ezell told me. “Then there’d be us, over here in Fortress America,” warding off the Chinese but not other Asian manufacturers. “You also need to think about the side effects of protecting yourself from China,” says Jensen, the University of Texas professor. “Yeah, you preserve a bit of your market for now, but what happens to the products we make? Are you going to want to go out, in 10 years, and buy a new Ford or G.M. truck that has been completely shielded from real competition? Maybe not.”

The “fortress” approach would leave the American auto industry isolated in more ways than one. Left with masses of trucks and S.U.V.s unappealing to the rest of the world, and reliant on domestic sales of gas-powered vehicles, Detroit would

inevitably be forced to shrink further. And this time around, Washington might not come riding to the rescue. “I don’t know exactly who is going to be part of Detroit 10 years from now,” Case says. “But I don’t think it’s going to be the same as the companies that are here now.”

It’s not necessarily too late to abandon hope: In the wake of the cancellation of the “bullet train” and the F-150 Lightning, Ford has put its weight behind a line of smaller, more affordable E.V.s that it hopes will prove more palatable to American buyers. (The first of those cars, a light pickup, will retail for around \$30,000 and debut next year.) And in late June, Slate Auto, a start-up backed in part by Jeff Bezos, began taking preorders for its own bargain e-truck; prices start at less than \$25,000. For that amount, says Slate’s chief executive, Peter Faricy, consumers will “get the most beautiful, simplified, E.V. pickup that’s ever been built. And it’s a game changer.”

But the vehicles would have to be phenomenally successful to have a truly transformative effect on a market that is no longer goosed by the federal tax credit — or supported in any meaningful way by the Trump administration. Even Tesla, which saw its European sales skyrocket in the early months of this year, has watched its U.S. presence dwindle. (The backlash to Musk’s politics didn’t help.)

To Helper, a coherent national strategy is needed — and fast. “Coming from a trailing position,” she and several colleagues note in a new paper, “America’s Retreat in E.V.s: Economic Security, Prosperity and the Industrial Future,” “we must establish a forward-looking agenda that invests in American innovation,” starting with battery research, private-public partnerships and joint ventures with Asian corporations.

In short, the United States will require the same type of incentive and investment programs that have paved the way for E.V. growth in other parts of the world.

“The precedent that comes to mind for me is semiconductor chips,” Ezell told me. From 1990 to 2020, he pointed out, China’s share of the global market increased substantially, compelling the U.S. government to pass the CHIPS Act — a 2022 package of incentives for manufacturers that allowed the industry to rebound. “We

saved ourselves,” Ezell went on. “And I think something like that is the only thing that saves Detroit — Congress wakes up and realizes we’re about to lose this industry.”

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General Motors

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What's next for GM and commercial EVs after Chevy BrightDrop gets scrapped

**[Jackie Charniga](#)**

Detroit Free Press

Dec. 19, 2025, 5:30 p.m. ET

Key Points

General Motors has ceased production of its BrightDrop electric commercial vans.

The decision follows slow sales and a broader company shift toward gas-powered vehicles.

Automakers like GM and Ford are scaling back EV investments due to high costs and market shifts.

Following numerous [failed attempts to resuscitate BrightDrop](#), General Motors' [pricey electric vans](#) produced in Canada, the automaker decided in late October to cut production for good — just as the vehicle found its niche in the overcrowded commercial van marketplace.

Dropping BrightDrop wasn't an easy decision, as Ian Hucker, vice president of GM Envolve, the Detroit automaker's fleet and commercial business line, said that after a slow sales ramp-up for the van, GM discovered a variety of applications that went “well beyond the initial concept and design of last-mile parcel delivery.”

GM has spent much of this year recalibrating its production toward gas-powered vehicles produced in the United States in response to President [Donald Trump's](#) tariffs and initiatives geared toward stripping fuel-economy standards and removing federal tax credits for electric vehicles.

Electric vehicle investments cost GM \$1.6 billion in the third quarter, [according to a government filing](#), between unused equipment destined for EV production and supplier contract fees.

Automakers across the country have rolled back EV production. Ford Motor Co. said Dec. 15 that it [is taking a \\$19.5 billion charge](#) to downsize electric offerings and supercharge production of hybrid vehicles.

Stephanie Brinley, associate director of Auto Intelligence at S&P Global Mobility, said those events together helped fuel BrightDrop's failure. With so much pressure on other parts of the business, she said GM had to make a difficult decision to prioritize other vehicles.

"GM is looking to continue down the EV path. This isn't a failure," she said. "Sometimes regrouping is the best thing you can do, but that doesn't mean it was a mistake to go through with it."

In-depth coverage from Detroit: [GM sees potential for commercial EVs even after dropping BrightDrop](#)

Here's what to know:

Dropping BrightDrop plunges EV plant into chaos

Initially launched as a stand-alone brand for commercial and fleet services, BrightDrop was consolidated under the Chevrolet brand last year to help it gain ground against competitors Ford Motor Co. and Rivian. The bid to boost sales through its dealer network failed, however, and as the Detroit Free Press first reported, a glut of those slow-selling delivery vans has built up on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border.

U.S. sales for BrightDrop reached 3,976 through the first three quarters of 2025, essentially double what it sold in all of 2024. But that's far less than what CAMI Assembly is meant to do, with a production capacity for about 50,000 vans per year. GM ended production on Oct. 21.

Meanwhile, the confusion over what to do since BrightDrop hasn't sold nearly what GM planned has thrust CAMI Assembly, Canada's — and GM's — first full-scale all-electric vehicle manufacturing plant, into chaos.

General Motors missed the deadline imposed by the government of Canada to submit a plan outlining the future of the plant. On Oct. 23, Canadian Industry Minister Melanie Joly told the automaker she expected “a full update within 15 days.”

GM Canada did not clarify a timeline for CAMI's next steps when requested for comment.

What's next for GM's EVs

GM's fleet and commercial business arm was unable to provide an average mile traveled by fleet customers, but a spokesperson noted that each use case varies depending on whether the vehicles are used locally for a specific service area or cover larger geographic region.

Still, the business proposition for last-mile delivery vehicles like BrightDrop is just that — trucks designed to travel short distances such as making home deliveries to set neighborhoods. Electric vehicles are ideal for those types of businesses, Hucker said.

So, what were those best applications for the Chevrolet BrightDrop?

“A lot of food trucks,” Hucker said. “It makes sense, if the vehicle is at the event, to have an electrically powered vehicle rather than something running off a generator or an ICE engine. We've had all sorts — from mobile dog grooming to garbage trucks.”

While there are currently no plans to resuscitate BrightDrop, Hucker said GM is still eyeing the electric van space with the benefit of hindsight.

GM plans to continue supporting the available stock of BrightDrop vans, which Hucker said will continue into 2026.

At the end of the day, he said, “It’s a Chevrolet product. The powertrain is the same as a Silverado EV, so it’s straightforward for our dealers to service and maintain into the future.”

Jackie Charniga covers General Motors for the Free Press. Reach her at jcharniga@freepress.com.

NEWS: HEALTH

Bad summer air quality is likely here to stay in Colorado. It's time to make a plan to deal with it.

Experts suggest being mindful of changes in air quality, knowing your risk and having an emergency plan for when it gets too bad



John Ingold

3:10 AM MDT on Jul 9, 2026



Wiley Guinn sprays down brush at the Mountain Shadows Mobile Home Park amid ash and smoke from the Aspen Acres fire on June 29, 2026, just east of Beulah. (Mike Sweeney, Special to The Colorado Sun)

When Dr. David Beuther began working as a pulmonologist — that’s a lung doctor — in Colorado two decades ago, summer used to be the easy time.

In winter, his patients, holed up indoors and crowded together with others, caught viruses and developed coughs and struggled to breathe. Summer brought the relief of fresh air.

“They would look forward to the summer when they were generally better,” he said. “The stories we are hearing are different now. Now, you hear stories like, ‘I was doing fine until those fires.’”

For much of this week, Colorado has ranked among the worst places to breathe in the world. Wildfire smoke has blanketed much of the state. In the Denver metro area, especially, that smoke has combined with hot temperatures and high levels of ground-level ozone, which **can also damage lungs** and exacerbate breathing conditions like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

On Monday and Tuesday, Denver had the worst air quality of any U.S. city **tracked by the company IQAir**, and, at times, it broke into the top 10 globally. Wednesday brought a break, with weather changes and thunderstorms **limiting fire growth** and **whisking away ozone**. But parts of central and southern Colorado remained under an air quality alert for wildfire smoke.

With high temperatures forecast across Colorado by the weekend, the air quality woes are expected to return. Already this summer, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment **has issued 20 ozone action alerts**, compared with 30 for all of last year. (The ozone season officially runs until Aug. 31, though the state does sometimes issue alerts in September.)



A traffic sign warns of an ozone alert as motorists head southbound on Interstate 25 into the center of downtown during evening rush-hour Friday, July 23, 2021, in Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

To Beuther, who works at National Jewish Health, all of this suggests two things.

First, this year isn't an anomaly — previous years have also brought periods of wildfire smoke and ozone. Patches of bad summer air quality are likely here to stay in Colorado.

So, second, it's time to treat air quality the same way you would any other potential disaster you would prepare in advance for, like a fire or a flood.

“It's time that people make this type of emergency plan for bad air quality,” Beuther said.

How can wildfire smoke affect my health?

In recent research, wildfire smoke is emerging as a significant public health threat with a wide variety of impacts.

“One of the problems with wildfire smoke is we always see the fire as an emergency, which it is,” said Sheryl Magzamen, an epidemiologist at Colorado State University who studies the effects of smoke on human and animal health. “But the smoke is an emergency as well. We've been calling that a silent epidemic.”

In that epidemic, it's the small particles that get you.

The little bits of stuff wafting through smoke — known as PM 2.5, for how small they are — can penetrate deep within your lungs and lead to inflammation. They can also spread throughout the body, potentially worsening other types of chronic disease or **even leading to cognitive changes**.

Magzamen said smoke can be harmful in an acute sense — for instance, a wildfire nearby is flooding your neighborhood with smoke. But it can also be harmful when the fires are farther away, in part because people may not be as vigilant about protecting themselves.

Exactly how these risks measure up isn't clear, in part because researchers are only just beginning to wrap their heads around the dangers of wildfire smoke. In the past, air quality studies and protections focused on human-created pollution like from smokestacks or vehicles.

"This is a huge paradigm shift for us," Magzamen said.

Who is most at risk from bad air quality?

In general, people who suffer from chronic disease are most at risk, along with people who are older and people who are very young. (That last group is vulnerable because their lungs are still developing.)

For people with asthma, COPD or other chronic respiratory diseases, smoke and ozone pollution can make it hard to breathe.



Smoke from the Aspen Acres fire billows skyward near Colorado City July 2, 2026. (Mike Sweeney, Special to The Colorado Sun)

But because the small particles in wildfire smoke are able to spread throughout the body, others are at heightened risk, too. Beuther said people with cardiovascular disease may suffer an increased risk of stroke or heart attack. Magzamen said people with **other types of chronic disease** may also see a worsening of those conditions due to greater inflammation and other harms.

Luke Montrose, a professor at CSU, has been studying the impacts on the reproductive health of male wildland firefighters. He's found that firefighters see a decline in sperm quality during wildland fire season, though how much of that is due to smoke exposure versus other reasons is uncertain.

"That sperm quality rebounds to an extent in the post-season, but not fully," Montrose said.

What symptoms are most concerning?

Beuther said for typically healthy people who don't have a chronic condition common symptoms may include a scratchy throat, itchy eyes or even a little chest tightness. Those aren't too worrisome but they are warning signs to heed.

“First thing is to be aware of it, slow down, get yourself indoors,” he said. “It’s probably not a time to start exercising more or pushing yourself too much.”

People can use a saltwater nasal rinse — either a **homemade version** or a store-bought version. Staying well hydrated can help, too.

But if symptoms turn more severe, such as having difficulty catching your breath, that’s when it’s time to go see a doctor. Beuther said approximately one-third of people with asthma don’t realize they have it, and bad air quality days can sometimes trigger their first big attack.

For people with a chronic condition, self-awareness and staying on top of their disease become more important.

“We try to control chronic conditions so that minor irritations and disturbances don’t cause immediate problems,” he said.

Sometimes, this means that problems caused by wildfire smoke expose underlying problems — Are people taking their medications? Does their prescription need to be adjusted?

“If we’ve maximized or optimized therapy, then it’s about avoidance,” he said.

In other words: Time to make a plan to escape the bad air.

How do I make a plan for bad air quality?

Everybody’s plan to avoid unhealthy air is going to be different.

“I think there’s probably no perfect strategy,” Beuther said. “We just have to empower people with all these different ideas.”

Step one is evaluating your needs and your resources.

Are you especially vulnerable to cruddy air quality? Then make sure you have plenty of medication on hand and have made a gameplan with your healthcare provider on what to do when the smoke hits.

That could include hunkering down indoors or upping your dose of medication if it’s safe. Or it could include heading out of town to stay with a friend or family member. Beuther

suggested people who are especially vulnerable could even have a packing list or a prepacked bag — **similar to a go-bag** that folks in wildfire-prone areas keep.



Smog from forest fires in northern Alberta obscures areas of downtown Denver on May 22, 2023. The Canadian smoke added to Denver's existing ozone problems and created high pollution warning days for the Front Range. (Olivia Sun, The Colorado Sun via Report for America)

For people who aren't as vulnerable or for folks who can't travel to avoid bad air, keeping your indoor air clean is important. Montrose conducted research at skilled nursing facilities in Idaho during a bad wildfire smoke year and found that the air quality inside could be worse than the air quality outside.

So, if you are able, keep the windows shut and run the air conditioning. Outdoor exercise can be shifted to the early morning hours, when air quality is generally better, or moved indoors entirely.

If you can't avoid the outside air — for instance, you work outdoors — a properly fitted N95 or KN95 mask can help, Magzamen said. Beuther said taking indoor breaks is also important to limit exposure.

How do I know how bad the air quality is?

There are a number of ways to check air quality.

Websites such as [AirNow](#), [PurpleAir](#) and [IAQAir.com](#) provide live and local looks at air quality. Weather apps on your phone often come with air quality measures, too.

And for an even more local look, Montrose recommends a small, portable air quality monitor. (He uses this one, but there are others available.)

While the monitors aren't as accurate as more professional models, he said they can provide a general sense of whether the air quality around you is good or bad.

"Data is one of the first things we can do to empower ourselves," he said.

How do I keep my house cool and my indoor air healthy without air conditioning?

This is the double-whammy many Coloradans face in the summer. When it's hot and smoky outside and you don't have air conditioning, what do you do?

"I don't know if there's a great solution if you don't have air conditioning," Beuther said.

Magzamen said people in this situation should consider where they can go during the day to escape the heat — a public library, a rec center, a cooling center or some other indoor space.

Beuther said people can try to keep the heat down in their homes by closing shades and running fans. But there comes a point where the heat is more dangerous than the smoke, so opening windows to bring in cool air may be a tradeoff worth making.

"We really have to be careful about not being too strict on keeping your windows shut," he said.

"Some people don't have the means," he said. "We talk about doing the best you can."

How do I keep the air clean inside my house during wildfire smoke?

Filtration is the foundation.

If you have air conditioning, this means making sure you have a good filter in your HVAC system. Magzamen recommends one that's rated MERV 13 or higher. That's on the upper end of what you'll find in the hardware store, so expect to spend a little more money.

Evaporative coolers may also come with filters that can be upgraded, she said.

Indoor air purifiers can also help. And if you don't have one of those, you can make **an ad-hoc version from a box fan and a furnace filter**.

Do I need to move out of Colorado because of the air quality?

Who among us has not looked at the sky during a fire and wondered what the future holds for our state? And Beuther does sometimes advise patients that they may want to relocate — but not often.

"It's a rare day when I say you have to move out of Colorado," he said. "This stuff is happening globally."

By that, he means climate-related disasters are increasing across the globe. But also that wildfire smoke can drift and cause harm far from where the fire is burning. At one point in 2021, for instance, Denver **had the worst air quality of any city in the world** — and it was due to fires burning outside the state, not inside it.

"It's getting hard to outrun this," Beuther said. "There's probably no perfect place to live and if there is it's probably too expensive."

Is there anything to be hopeful about?

Let's just acknowledge that this can all feel pretty bleak.

"I think climate grief is real," Magzamen said.

But, on Wednesday, she was not hunkered inside her house, hiding from the outside air. Instead, she reminded others that fires and smoky air aren't the only things that define our state.

"We have shown we are an adaptable species, and we will need to continue to adapt," she said. "But I think there is also this wonderful collective spirit in Colorado to protect and enjoy our environment. So I think that gives me hope."

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