

Tracking the COVID-19 Economy's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships



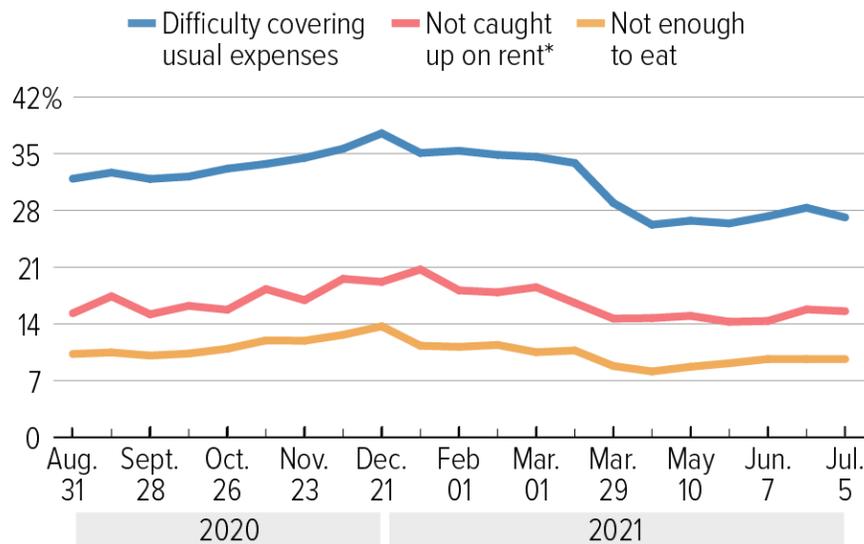
While employment is rising and strains on household budgets have eased in recent months, the employment rate remains low and millions still report that their households did not get enough to eat or are not caught up on rent payments. We are able to track the extent of the nation's progress against hardship thanks to nearly real-time data from several sources on the ongoing economic crisis.

Key hardship indicators show strong improvement since December, Census Bureau data show, aided by job growth and government benefits. Hardship rates fell especially fast after the enactment of the American Rescue Plan on March 11, which included \$1,400 payments for most Americans as well as other assistance to struggling households. (See Figure 1.) Nonetheless, 20 million adults live in households that did not get enough to eat, 11.4 million adult renters are behind on rent, and some of the progress from late March appears to be waning.

FIGURE 1

Hardship Is Below December 2020 Peak, Yet Still Widespread

Share of adults



*Percent of adults in renter households.

Note: Dates shown are the last day of each 13-day data collection period. Data collection was paused between December 21, 2020, and January 6, 2021, and between March 29 and April 14, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

The impacts of the pandemic and the economic fallout have been widespread, but remain particularly prevalent among Black adults, Latino adults,¹ and other people of color. These disproportionate impacts reflect harsh, long-standing inequities – often stemming from structural racism – in education, employment, housing, and health care that the current crisis has exacerbated. Households with children also continue to face especially [high hardship rates](#). Considerable evidence suggests that reducing childhood hardship and poverty would yield improvements in education and health, higher productivity and earnings, less incarceration, and other lasting benefits to children and society.²

Census Bureau Data Show High Rates of Hardship

The Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey, launched in April 2020, has provided nearly real-time data on how the unprecedented health and economic crisis is affecting the nation. Data from this and other sources, such as unemployment data from Census’ Current Population Survey and the Department of Labor, show that millions of people are out of work and struggling to afford adequate food and pay the rent. The impacts on children are large (see Figures 2, 7, and 8).

For more on our methodology and data by state, see tables 1-4 at the end of this document.

Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Data from several sources show a dramatic increase in the number of households struggling to put enough food on the table.³ Some 20 million adults – 10 percent of all adults in the country – reported that their household sometimes or often didn’t have enough to eat in the last seven days, according to Household Pulse Survey data collected June 23–July 5.

By contrast, 3.4 percent of adults reported their household had “not enough to eat” at some point over the full *12 months* of 2019, according to our analysis of a separate Census Bureau survey conducted in December 2019. (Methodological differences between the two surveys explain some, but not all, of the increase.⁴) When asked why, 77 percent said they “couldn’t afford to buy more food,” rather than (or in addition to) non-financial factors such as lack of transportation or safety concerns due to the pandemic.

¹ Federal surveys generally ask respondents whether they are “of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.” This report uses the term “Latino.”

² Claire Zippel and Arloc Sherman, “Bolstering Family Income Is Essential to Helping Children Emerge Successfully From the Current Crisis,” CBPP, updated February 25, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/bolstering-family-income-is-essential-to-helping-children-emerge>.

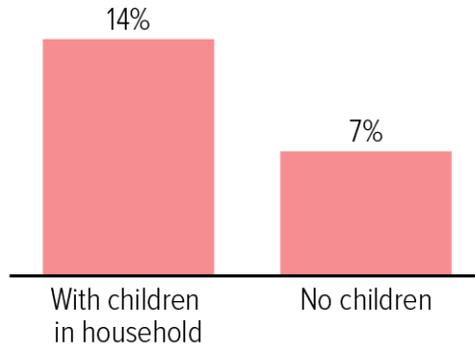
³ Multiple data sources find similarly high levels of food hardship. See Brynne Keith-Jennings, Catlin Nchako, and Joseph Llobrera, “Number of Families Struggling to Afford Food Rose Steeply in Pandemic and Remains High, Especially Among Children and Households of Color,” CBPP, April 27, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/number-of-families-struggling-to-afford-food-rose-steeply-in-pandemic-and>.

⁴ Differences between online and other (in-person or telephone) surveys explain some of the difference between food hardship rates in the Pulse Survey and in the December 2019 survey (the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement). One comparison found that, before the pandemic, respondents in an online survey were [38 percent more likely](#) to report food insecurity than comparable respondents in a different survey with a live interviewer.

FIGURE 2

For 1 in 7 Adults With Children, Household Lacked Sufficient Food in Last 7 Days

Share of adults reporting that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat



Note: Chart excludes individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for June 23-July 5, 2021

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Adults in households with children were likelier to report that the household didn't get enough to eat: 14 percent, compared to 7 percent for households without children. (See Figure 2.) And 9 to 14 percent of adults with children reported that their *children* sometimes or often didn't eat enough in the last seven days because they couldn't afford it, well above the pre-pandemic figure. Households typically first scale back on food for adults before cutting back on what children have to eat. (The 9-14 percent range reflects the different ways to measure food hardship in the Household Pulse Survey.)

Also, analysis of more detailed data from the Pulse Survey collected June 9-21 shows that between 5 and 9 million children live in a household where children didn't eat enough because the household couldn't afford it. These figures are approximations; the Pulse Survey was designed to provide data on adult well-being, not precise counts of children.

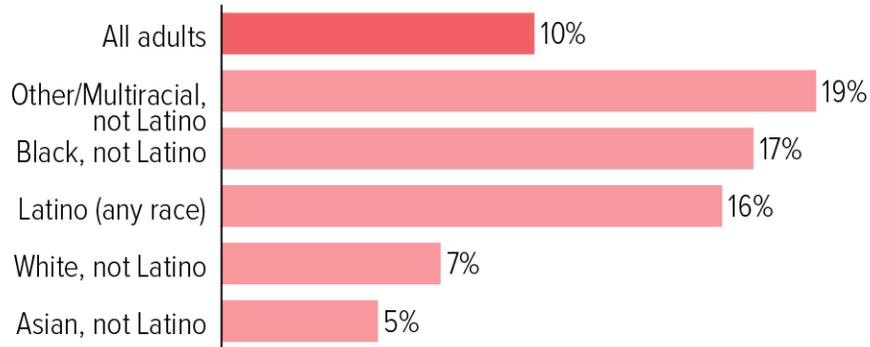
Black and Latino adults were more than twice as likely as white adults to report that their household did not get enough to eat: 17 percent for Black adults and 16 percent for Latino adults, compared to 7 percent of white adults. Adults who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or as multiracial, taken together,⁵ were more than twice as likely as white adults to report that their household did not get enough to eat, at 19 percent. (See Figure 3.)

⁵ The Pulse Survey does not provide data for these groups individually.

FIGURE 3

Households of Color Likelier to Lack Sufficient Food During Pandemic

Share of adults saying that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the last 7 days



Note: Other/multiracial, not Latino = people identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or more than one race. Percentages are based on reporting distributions and do not include individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for June 23-July 5, 2021

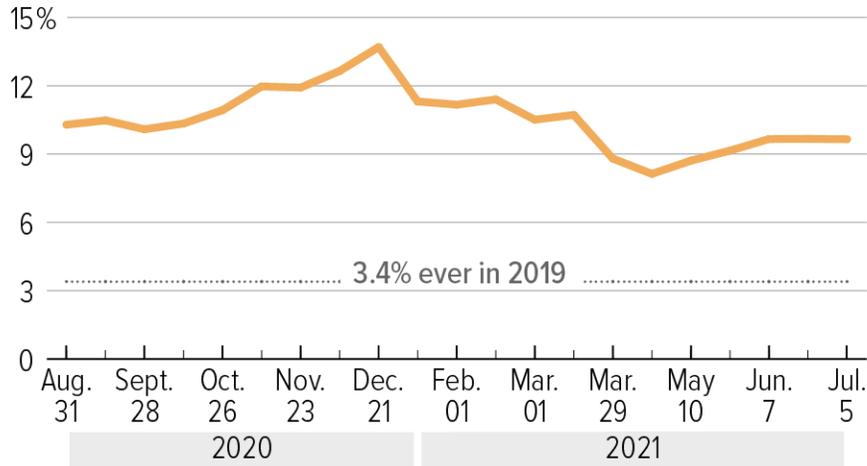
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The share of adults reporting that their households did not get enough to eat rose in the fall of 2020, reaching a peak of nearly 30 percent in mid-December of 2020. It fell sharply in March 2021 after the enactment of the December relief package and the mid-March enactment of the American Rescue Plan. More recently, food hardship has edged up again as the impact of these relief measures appears to be lessening. In addition, food hardship remains substantially higher than prior to the pandemic, with adults being at least twice as likely to report lacking sufficient food than in 2019, in a separate Census survey.

FIGURE 4

Food Hardship Higher During Pandemic Than in 2019

Share of adults reporting that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in last 7 days



Note: Dates shown are the last day of each Household Pulse Survey 13-day data collection period. Data collection was paused between December 21, 2020, and January 6, 2021, and between March 29 and April 14, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question. The Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS) asks about food insufficiency experiences over the last 12 months, and the Pulse survey asks about food insufficiency experiences over the last seven days. Differences in data collection methods mean the CPS-FSS and Pulse figures may not be precisely comparable.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables and December 2019 CPS-FSS

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Inability to Pay Rent or Mortgage

The Household Pulse data also show that millions are not caught up on their rent or mortgage payments. Unfortunately, there are two concerns with the housing questions. First, the Census Bureau reworded the rent payment question starting with the late-August 2020 survey, making the results non-comparable to earlier weeks of the survey. Second, Census at the same time made the entire survey longer, which led more respondents to skip questions toward the end of the survey, including the housing questions. This “non-response” is higher among groups that are younger, have lower levels of education, and identify as Black or Latino – groups that are more likely to struggle to afford rent, due to long-standing inequities often stemming from structural racism in education, employment, and housing. For these reasons, the Pulse data likely understate the number of people struggling to pay rent.

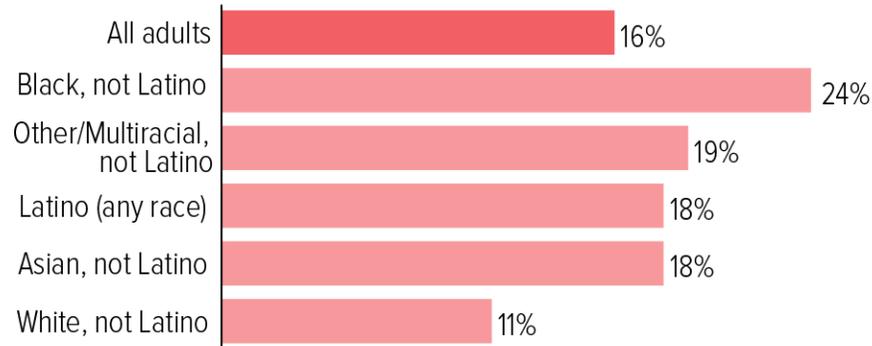
Even with these issues, however, the data indicate that millions are having difficulty paying rent. An estimated 11.4 million adults living in rental housing – 16 percent of adult renters – were not caught up on rent, according to data collected June 23–July 5.⁶ Here, too, renters of color were more likely to report that their household was not caught up on rent: 24 percent of Black renters, 18 percent of Latino renters, and 18 percent of Asian renters said they were not caught up on rent, compared to 11 percent of white renters. The rate was 19 percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults taken together. (See Figure 5.)

⁶ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 7.4 million adults live in households not caught up on rent. To adjust for non-response in the survey, we apply the share not caught up on rent (15.6 percent) to the total number of adult renters (73 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

FIGURE 5

Over 1 in 7 Renters Not Caught Up on Rent During Pandemic, With Renters of Color Facing Greatest Hardship

Share of adult renters saying their household is not caught up on rent



Note: Other/Multiracial, not Latino = people identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or more than one race. Chart excludes renters who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for June 23 - July 5, 2021

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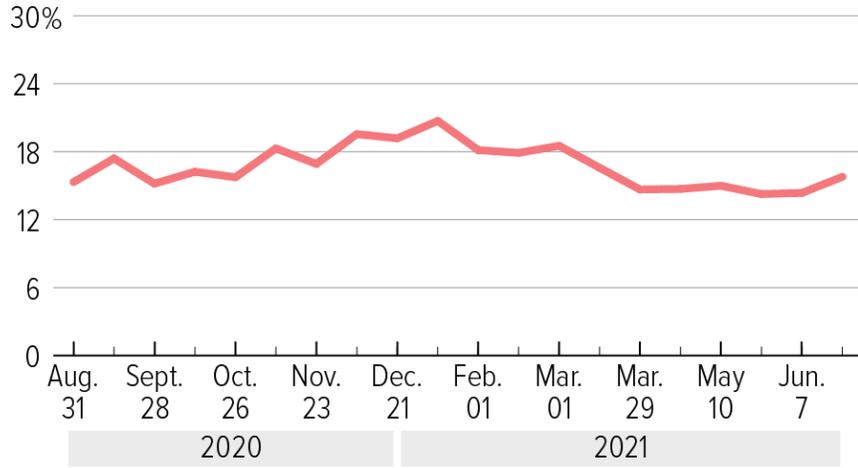
The number of adult renters reporting to the Census Bureau that their household was not caught up on rent has fallen from a peak of 15 million people — 1 in 5 adult renters — in January 2021 but has remained above 10 million people — about 1 in 7 adult renters — since the end of March. (See Figure 6.) These households, particularly those who have lost employment during the pandemic, may be accumulating debt from multiple months of back rent and late fees. Renters of color and families with children have consistently reported higher rates of rent hardship throughout 2020 and 2021.

The December relief package and the American Rescue Plan included over \$46 billion in emergency rental assistance, designed to help people who are struggling to pay their rent and avoid eviction. However, this emergency aid is still making its way to people behind on rent. States and localities are working to get these funds to renters in need, but many communities did not have adequate systems in place to distribute emergency rental assistance funds quickly. As a result, some states and localities are now building the infrastructure for people to apply for and receive emergency assistance. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's eviction moratorium, which expires at the end of July, is meant to keep people in their homes while giving states and localities more time to distribute much-needed aid.

FIGURE 6

Rent Hardship Below January 2021 Peak, Yet Still Widespread

Share of adult renters reporting that their household is not caught up on rent



Note: Dates shown are the last day of each 13-day data collection period. Data collection was paused between December 21, 2020, and January 6, 2021, and between March 29 and April 14, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

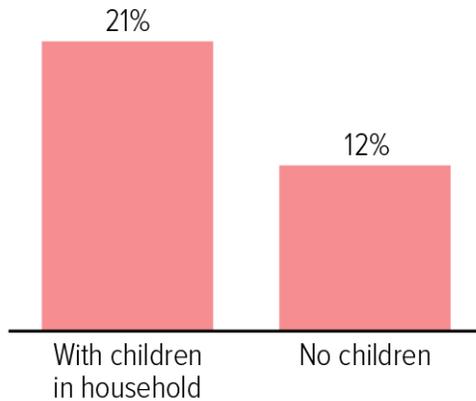
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In addition, 21 percent of renters who are parents or otherwise live with children reported that they were not caught up on rent, compared to 12 percent among adults not living with anyone under age 18. (See Figure 7.)

FIGURE 7

1 in 5 Renters Living With Children Are Not Caught Up on Rent

Share of adult renters saying household is not caught up on last month's rent



Note: Chart excludes renters who did not respond to question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for June 23 - July 5, 2021

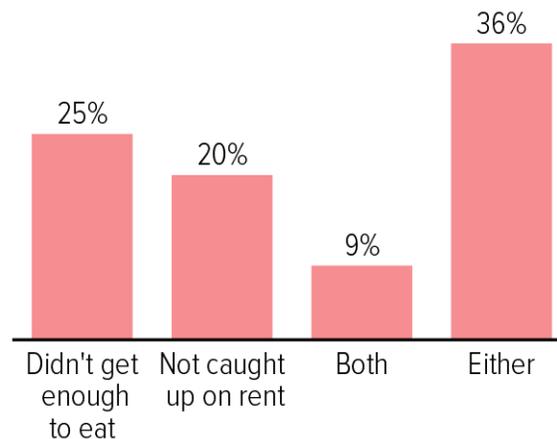
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Children in renter households also face high rates of *food* hardship. One in 4 children living in rental housing live in a household that didn't have enough to eat, according to data for June 9-21. And over 1 in 3 children living in rental housing live in a household that either isn't getting enough to eat or is not caught up on rent. (See Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8

Over 1 in 3 Children in Renter Households Face Food and/or Housing Hardship

Percent of children in households that:



Note: Didn't get enough to eat = household had "not enough to eat" sometimes or often in last 7 days. Figures omit children in households that do not pay cash rent, such as those in employer-provided housing, as well as those who did not respond to one or both hardship questions. Survey does not collect data on children directly; figures for children are estimated based on number of children in each household.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census' Household Pulse Survey public use file, data collected June 9-21, 2021

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While households that don't rent their homes but have mortgage payments typically have higher incomes than renters, they, too, can face difficulties, especially if they have lost their jobs or seen their incomes fall significantly. An estimated 7.4 million adults are in a household that is not caught up in its mortgage payment.⁷

Difficulty Covering Household Expenses

Since late August 2020, the Household Pulse Survey has provided data on the overall number of adults struggling to cover usual household expenses such as food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, or student loans. Some 63 million adults – 27 percent of all adults in the country – reported it was somewhat or very difficult for their household to cover usual expenses in the past seven days, according to data collected June 23–July 5.

The share of adults reporting difficulty covering usual expenses rose through the fall of 2020, reaching a peak of 38 percent in mid-December. (See Figure 9.) This likely reflected, in part, weaknesses of the relief packages enacted in the spring of 2020, including increased jobless benefits that expired over the summer, stimulus payments whose impact faded later in the year, and inadequate nutrition and housing assistance.

⁷ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 6.0 million adults are in households not caught up on their mortgage. To adjust for non-response in the survey, we apply the share not caught up on their mortgage (7.4 percent) to the total number of adult homeowners (about 100 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

In early 2021, the share of adults with trouble covering expenses stabilized as aid from the end-of-year relief package — including renewed jobless benefits and another round of stimulus payments — reached households.

Following the enactment of the American Rescue Plan on March 11, and as the economy added jobs, the share of adults who had trouble covering usual expenses fell dramatically. The share ticked upward in May, likely due to the fading impact of the third round of stimulus payments. The Child Tax Credit payments which began on July 15 provide needed resources to most families with children, and could lead to renewed progress against financial hardship.

FIGURE 9

Down from December Peak, More Than 1 in 4 Adults Still Have Trouble Covering Expenses

Share of adults reporting that it was somewhat or very difficult for their household to pay for usual expenses in last 7 days



Note: Dates shown are the last day of each 13-day data collection period. Data collection was paused between December 21, 2020, and January 6, 2021, and between March 29 and April 14, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

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Adults in households with children were more likely to report difficulty paying for usual expenses than those without children: 35 percent, compared to 22 percent. Financial hardship can have serious effects on children’s long-term health and education, research shows.⁸

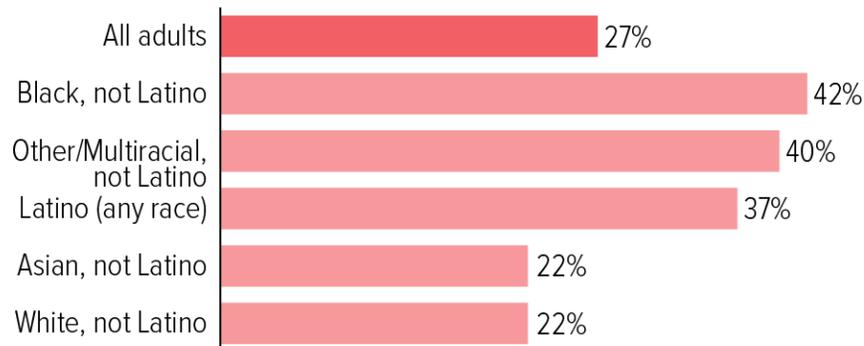
In addition, Black and Latino adults reported difficulty covering expenses at higher rates: 42 percent and 37 percent respectively, compared to 22 percent for Asian adults and white adults. (See Figure 10.) The rate was 40 percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults taken together.

⁸ Ajay Chaudry and Christopher Wimer, “Poverty is Not Just an Indicator: The Relationship Between Income, Poverty, and Child Well-Being,” *Academic Pediatrics*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, April 1, 2016, [https://www.academicpediatrics.net/article/S1876-2859\(15\)00383-6/fulltext](https://www.academicpediatrics.net/article/S1876-2859(15)00383-6/fulltext).

FIGURE 10

Over 1 in 4 Adults Had Trouble Paying for Usual Household Expenses in Last 7 Days

Share of adults reporting that it was somewhat or very difficult for their household to pay for usual expenses



Note: Other/multiracial, not Latino = people identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or more than one race. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for June 23–July 5, 2021

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An estimated 37 percent of children live in households that have trouble covering usual expenses, according to our analysis of detailed data from the Pulse Survey collected June 9-21. They include 51 percent of children in Black households, 47 percent of children in Latino households, 30 percent of children in white households, and 27 percent of children in Asian households. (The Pulse Survey asks the race of the adult respondent, not the children.)

Many Workers Remained Sidelined, With Job Losses Concentrated in Low-Paid Industries

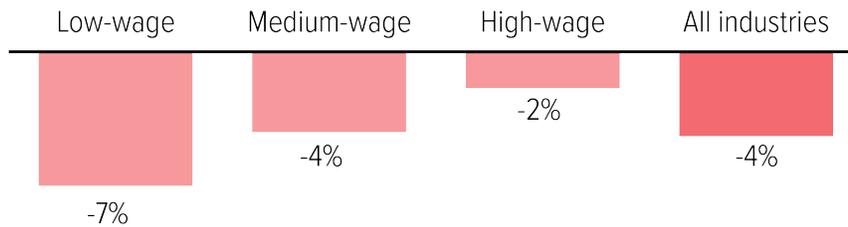
The unemployment rate jumped in April 2020 to a level not seen since the 1930s – and still stood at 5.9 percent in June 2021, compared with 3.5 percent in February 2020. The official unemployment rate, however, understates current job losses.

While the economy has added jobs in recent months, there were still 6.8 million fewer jobs in June 2021 than in February 2020. The majority of jobs lost in the crisis have been in industries that pay low average wages, with the lowest-paying industries accounting for 30 percent of all jobs but 53 percent of the jobs lost from February 2020 to June 2021, according to the latest month of Labor Department employment data. Jobs were down nearly twice as much in low-paying industries (7.0 percent) as in medium-wage industries (4.2 percent) and over three times as much as in high-wage industries (1.9 percent) during this period. (See Figure 11.)

FIGURE 11

Job Losses Largest in Low-Wage Industries

Percent change in number of jobs, February 2020 to June 2021



Note: Industries were ranked by average wages in February 2020 and divided into three groups containing roughly the same number of jobs.

Source: CBPP calculations of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

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Black and Latino workers have experienced a far slower jobs recovery than white workers – reflecting historical patterns rooted in structural racism.⁹ Some 9.2 percent of Black workers and 7.4 percent of Latino workers were unemployed in June, compared to 5.2 percent of white workers. Workers who were born outside the United States (this includes individuals who are now U.S. citizens) have experienced larger job losses than U.S.-born workers.

Data from the Census Bureau’s basic monthly Current Population Survey released July 7, 2021, provide more detail on unemployed workers and their family members. Some 25.7 million people either met the official definition of unemployed (meaning they actively looked for work in the last four weeks or were on temporary layoff) or lived with an unemployed family member in June. This figure includes 6.4 million children.

The official definition of unemployed leaves out many workers deprived of pay amid the pandemic,¹⁰ including some 1.6 million workers in June who reported they did not look for work because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Labor Department. The official definition also omits 300,000 workers who reported that they had a job but that they were absent from work without pay and lost pay in the last four weeks “because their employer closed or lost business due to the coronavirus pandemic,” we calculate.

When family members are considered, some 29.8 million people in June, including 7.4 million children, lived in a family where at least one adult did not have paid work in the last week because of unemployment or the pandemic, we estimate.

While policymakers have expanded unemployment insurance eligibility and enhanced benefits during the COVID-19 emergency, these measures are temporary. Some 72 percent of unemployment claims for the week ending July 10, 2021, were in programs set to expire in September. Permanent reforms are needed to fix an underlying system in which too many unemployed workers get inadequate benefits or no benefits at all.¹¹

⁹ Chad Stone, “Robust Unemployment Insurance, Other Relief Needed to Mitigate Racial and Ethnic Unemployment Disparities,” CBPP, August 5, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/robust-unemployment-insurance-other-relief-needed-to-mitigate-racial-and-ethnic>.

¹⁰ Many analysts reach a similar conclusion using a slightly different approach, noting that the official unemployment rate is too low because it omits workers who have exited the labor force in the last 12 months and are no longer looking for work, and because it ignores workers whom the Labor Department says are improperly classified as employed in its survey data but are in fact absent from work. When these two factors are corrected using an approach recommended by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, the unemployment rate for June 2021 could be as high as 8.6 percent. Jerome H. Powell, “Recent Economic Developments and the Challenges Ahead,” speech at the National Association for Business Economics Virtual Annual Meeting, October 6, 2020, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/powell20201006a.htm>.

¹¹ Chad Stone, “Congress Should Heed President Biden’s Call for Fundamental UI Reform,” CBPP, May 5, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/congress-should-heed-president-bidens-call-for-fundamental-ui-reform>.

State-by-State Food, Housing, and Employment Hardship Data

Data by state show that hardship is widespread. The following tables provide state-level data on:

- the share of adults reporting that their household didn't have enough to eat (Table 1);
- the share of adults saying children in their household were not eating enough because they couldn't afford enough (Table 1);
- the share of adults not caught up on rent (Table 2);
- the share of adults saying their household had difficulty paying for their usual expenses (Table 3); and
- the three-month moving average unemployment rate and recent jobless claim data (Table 4).

For data from the Pulse Survey we average data collected June 9-21 and June 23–July 5 to improve the accuracy of the state estimates.

Differences in Pulse hardship rates between states may reflect sampling error, so we suggest not drawing strong conclusions from modest differences between states. The data do show, however, that high levels of hardship are widespread across the country.

Difficulty Getting Enough Food

The Pulse Survey asks adult respondents if their household did not have enough to eat and if children in the household were not eating enough because the household couldn't afford it.

TABLE 1

High Shares of Households Report Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Among adults; data collected June 9–July 5.

How to read this table: In the United States, some 20 million adults reported that their household sometimes or often didn't have enough to eat in the last seven days. This represents 10 percent of all adults in the country. Nearly 10 million adults living with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” This represents 13 percent of adults living with children.

State	Adults Reporting That Household Didn't Have Enough to Eat		Adults Reporting That Children in Household Weren't Eating Enough Because Household Couldn't Afford Enough	
	Number	As a Percent of Adults	Number	As a Percent of Adults Living with Children
United States	20,177,000	10%	9,967,000	13%
Alabama	494,000	16%	225,000	19%
Alaska	45,000	10%	29,000	15%
Arizona	445,000	9%	253,000	14%
Arkansas	231,000	12%	126,000	19%
California	2,578,000	11%	1,509,000	16%
Colorado	266,000	7%	116,000	8%
Connecticut	219,000	10%	103,000	13%
Delaware	60,000	9%	25,000	11%
District of Columbia	43,000	9%	17,000	12%
Florida	1,344,000	10%	698,000	14%

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State	Adults Reporting That Household Didn't Have Enough to Eat		Adults Reporting That Children in Household Weren't Eating Enough Because Household Couldn't Afford Enough	
	Number	As a Percent of Adults	Number	As a Percent of Adults Living with Children
Georgia	943,000	14%	434,000	17%
Hawai'i	95,000	10%	77,000	22%
Idaho	96,000	8%	46,000	10%
Illinois	634,000	8%	276,000	10%
Indiana	453,000	11%	151,000	11%
Iowa	188,000	9%	77,000	10%
Kansas	176,000	9%	77,000	11%
Kentucky	302,000	11%	113,000	10%
Louisiana	422,000	15%	201,000	18%
Maine	68,000	7%	23,000	8%
Maryland	303,000	8%	210,000	13%
Massachusetts	288,000	7%	169,000	11%
Michigan	512,000	8%	194,000	8%
Minnesota	181,000	5%	124,000	10%
Mississippi	242,000	13%	127,000	16%
Missouri	404,000	10%	153,000	10%
Montana	60,000	8%	22,000	10%
Nebraska	116,000	9%	57,000	12%
Nevada	240,000	12%	143,000	17%
New Hampshire	66,000	7%	21,000	7%
New Jersey	379,000	7%	223,000	12%
New Mexico	178,000	13%	107,000	20%
New York	911,000	8%	507,000	11%
North Carolina	715,000	10%	353,000	14%
North Dakota	48,000	10%	19,000	10%
Ohio	723,000	10%	389,000	14%
Oklahoma	311,000	12%	105,000	11%
Oregon	276,000	9%	114,000	12%
Pennsylvania	720,000	9%	250,000	9%
Rhode Island	62,000	9%	30,000	13%
South Carolina	474,000	14%	220,000	16%
South Dakota	49,000	9%	27,000	12%
Tennessee	404,000	9%	129,000	8%
Texas	2,010,000	11%	963,000	13%
Utah	138,000	7%	70,000	7%

TABLE 1

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State	Adults Reporting That Household Didn't Have Enough to Eat		Adults Reporting That Children in Household Weren't Eating Enough Because Household Couldn't Afford Enough	
	Number	As a Percent of Adults	Number	As a Percent of Adults Living with Children
Vermont	28,000	7%	9,000	6%
Virginia	410,000	7%	269,000	12%
Washington	474,000	9%	216,000	11%
West Virginia	133,000	11%	50,000	11%
Wisconsin	184,000	5%	107,000	9%
Wyoming	35,000	9%	16,000	12%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected June 9-21 and June 23–July 5. In the latest data, collected June 23–July 5, 9.7 percent of all adults reported that their household “sometimes” or “often” in the last seven days had “not enough to eat,” while 13.3 percent of adults living with children reported that the children sometimes or often in the last seven days were “not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” As recommended by the Census Bureau, percentages exclude persons not replying to the question.

Source: Calculated by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities from Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey published tables “food2,” “food3,” and “food5,” for survey weeks 32 and 33, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

Not Caught Up on Rent

Table 2 shows the estimated number of adults whose household was not caught up on rent by state. The Census Bureau reworded the Pulse Survey’s rent payment question starting with the late-August 2020 survey, so these rent hardship figures results are not comparable to data from earlier weeks of the Pulse Survey. In addition, Census at the same time made the entire survey longer, which led more respondents to skip questions toward the end of the survey, including the housing questions. Non-response is higher among groups that are younger, have lower levels of education, and identify as Black or Latino — groups that are more likely to struggle to afford rent, due to longstanding inequities that often stem from structural racism in education, employment, and housing. Therefore, the Pulse data likely understate the number of people struggling to pay rent.

TABLE 2

Over 1 in 7 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected June 9–July 5

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
Alabama	150,000	17%
Alaska	25,000	16%
Arizona	253,000	15%
Arkansas	85,000	14%
California	1,651,000	14%
Colorado	121,000	9%
Connecticut	171,000	21%
Delaware	17,000	9%
District of Columbia	43,000	15%
Florida	679,000	13%
Georgia	563,000	24%
Hawai'i	26,000	7%
Idaho	20,000	6%
Illinois	459,000	17%
Indiana	252,000	20%
Iowa	99,000	18%
Kansas	50,000	8%
Kentucky	125,000	14%
Louisiana	154,000	17%
Maine	35,000	15%
Maryland	228,000	18%
Massachusetts	204,000	12%
Michigan	237,000	13%
Minnesota	93,000	10%
Mississippi	157,000	29%
Missouri	161,000	13%
Montana	19,000	9%
Nebraska	71,000	18%
Nevada	102,000	11%
New Hampshire	31,000	13%
New Jersey	390,000	18%
New Mexico	72,000	17%
New York	1,270,000	21%

TABLE 2

Over 1 in 7 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected June 9–July 5

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
North Carolina	399,000	17%
North Dakota	27,000	15%
Ohio	407,000	17%
Oklahoma	139,000	17%
Oregon	129,000	12%
Pennsylvania	484,000	19%
Rhode Island	43,000	17%
South Carolina	265,000	28%
South Dakota	30,000	19%
Tennessee	240,000	17%
Texas	1,008,000	15%
Utah	44,000	8%
Vermont	10,000	8%
Virginia	269,000	14%
Washington	290,000	15%
West Virginia	52,000	20%
Wisconsin	108,000	9%
Wyoming	17,000	17%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected June 9-21 and June 23–July 5. To adjust for non-response in the Pulse Survey, the estimated number is calculated as the Pulse Survey's estimated share not caught up on rent multiplied by the total number of adult renters ages 18 and older from the American Community Survey.

Source: Calculated by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities from Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey published table "housing1b" for survey weeks 32 and 33, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>; and 2019 American Community Survey public use file

Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses

The Pulse Survey asks adult respondents if their household had difficulty paying for usual expenses such as food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, or student loans in the last seven days. Table 3 shows the estimated number and percent of adults reporting that it was somewhat or very difficult for their household to pay for their usual expenses in the last seven days.

TABLE 3

Over 1 in 4 Adults Nationwide Have Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses

Among adults; data collected June 9–July 5

	Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses	
	Number	Percent
United States	64,065,000	28%
Alabama	1,174,000	34%
Alaska	131,000	27%
Arizona	1,492,000	27%
Arkansas	669,000	32%
California	8,031,000	29%
Colorado	978,000	23%
Connecticut	644,000	25%
Delaware	191,000	27%
District of Columbia	136,000	27%
Florida	4,757,000	30%
Georgia	2,292,000	31%
Hawai'i	287,000	28%
Idaho	308,000	24%
Illinois	2,197,000	26%
Indiana	1,202,000	26%
Iowa	577,000	27%
Kansas	497,000	24%
Kentucky	974,000	31%
Louisiana	1,085,000	35%
Maine	215,000	21%
Maryland	1,127,000	26%
Massachusetts	985,000	20%
Michigan	1,620,000	23%
Minnesota	791,000	20%
Mississippi	819,000	40%
Missouri	1,133,000	26%
Montana	177,000	23%
Nebraska	317,000	24%
Nevada	764,000	34%
New Hampshire	244,000	24%
New Jersey	1,531,000	26%
New Mexico	534,000	36%
New York	3,695,000	28%
North Carolina	1,999,000	27%
North Dakota	139,000	26%

TABLE 3

Over 1 in 4 Adults Nationwide Have Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses

Among adults; data collected June 9–July 5

	Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses	
	Number	Percent
Ohio	2,329,000	28%
Oklahoma	967,000	36%
Oregon	819,000	26%
Pennsylvania	2,209,000	25%
Rhode Island	185,000	25%
South Carolina	1,153,000	31%
South Dakota	121,000	20%
Tennessee	1,453,000	29%
Texas	6,335,000	32%
Utah	493,000	22%
Vermont	94,000	20%
Virginia	1,502,000	25%
Washington	1,373,000	24%
West Virginia	388,000	30%
Wisconsin	817,000	20%
Wyoming	117,000	28%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected June 9–21 and June 23–July 5. In the latest data, collected June 23–July 5, 63 million adults nationwide (27 percent) reported difficulty paying for usual household expenses.

Source: Calculated by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities from Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey published table "spending1" for survey weeks 32 and 33, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

High Unemployment

Table 4 provides state-by-state data on the unemployment rate over the April–June 2021 period and data on ongoing unemployment benefit claims.

Unemployment in most states has been highly elevated since April 2020, as has the number of people claiming unemployment insurance benefits.

TABLE 4

Unemployment, Jobless Claims High Across Most of the Country

States	Unemployment rate (April–June average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending July 10 ^b
Alabama	3.4	25,000
Alaska	6.6	23,000
Arizona	6.7	131,000
Arkansas	4.4	24,000
California	7.9	3,493,000
Colorado	6.3	131,000
Connecticut	8.0	142,000
Delaware	6.0	22,000
District of Columbia	7.2	34,000
Florida	4.9	95,000
Georgia	4.1	116,000
Hawai'i	8.1	68,000
Idaho	3.0	6,000
Illinois	7.1	701,000
Indiana	4.0	244,000
Iowa	3.9	25,000
Kansas	3.6	29,000
Kentucky	4.5	62,000
Louisiana	7.1	208,000
Maine	4.8	34,000
Maryland	6.2	185,000
Massachusetts	5.5	461,000
Michigan	5.0	470,000
Minnesota	4.0	208,000
Mississippi	6.2	23,000
Missouri	4.2	49,000
Montana	3.7	9,000
Nebraska	2.6	8,000
Nevada	7.9	186,000
New Hampshire	2.9	10,000
New Jersey	7.3	683,000
New Mexico	8.0	83,000
New York	7.9	1,968,000
North Carolina	4.8	224,000

TABLE 4

Unemployment, Jobless Claims High Across Most of the Country

States	Unemployment rate (April–June average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending July 10 ^b
North Dakota	4.1	4,000
Ohio	5.0	407,000
Oklahoma	4.0	37,000
Oregon	5.8	179,000
Pennsylvania	7.1	880,000
Puerto Rico	8.2	246,000
Rhode Island	6.1	64,000
South Carolina	4.7	44,000
South Dakota	2.8	2,000
Tennessee	5.0	66,000
Texas	6.6	263,000
Utah	2.7	10,000
Vermont	3.0	15,000
Virgin Islands	8.1*	1,000
Virginia	4.5	89,000
Washington	5.3	159,000
West Virginia	5.5	13,000
Wisconsin	3.9	95,000
Wyoming	5.4	2,000
United States	5.9	12,756,000

^a All rates are the April–June 2021 average and are seasonally adjusted, except for the Virgin Islands.

^b Compiled from data for regular state UI benefits, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation. Including other smaller programs, 13,156,252 people were claiming benefits in that week. Per GAO recommendations, the Department of Labor now says about these data, “Continued weeks claimed represent all weeks of benefits claimed during the week being reported, and do not represent weeks claimed by unique individuals.”

* Rate is not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment for Virgin Islands from Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System; Unemployment Weekly Claims Report, Department of Labor, July 29, 2021.