

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



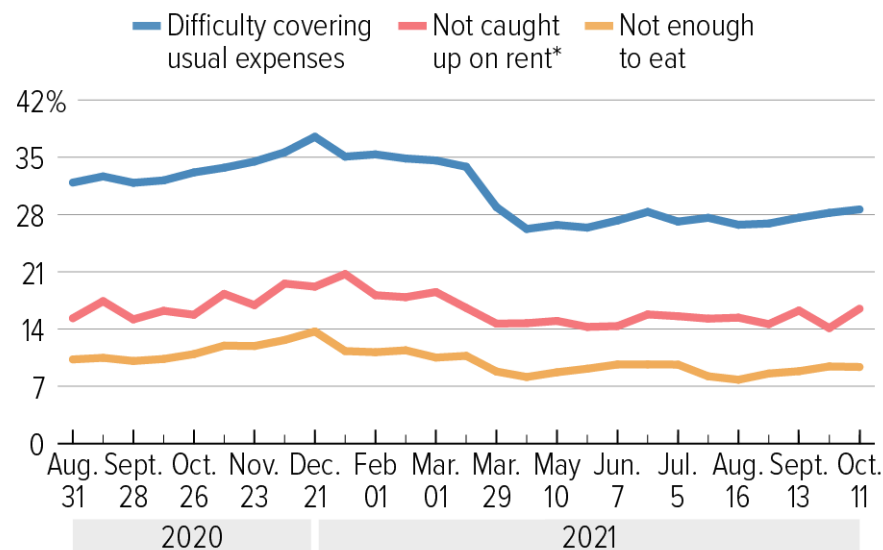
While employment is rising and strains on household budgets have eased in recent months, the employment rate remains below pre-pandemic levels, and millions still report that their households did not get enough to eat or are not caught up on rent payments. We are able to track the extent of the nation's progress against hardship thanks to nearly real-time data from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey and other sources.

Key hardship indicators show strong improvement since December 2020, 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, 2021, which included \$1,400 payments for most Americans as well as other assistance to struggling households. (See Figure 1.) Food hardship among adults with children also fell after the federal government began issuing monthly payments of the expanded Child Tax Credit on July 15, along with improvements in food assistance. Still, nearly 20 million adults live in households that did not get enough to eat, 12 million adult renters are behind on rent, and some of the progress from late March appears to have stalled.

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, between March 29 and April 14, 2021, and between July 5 and July 21, 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.

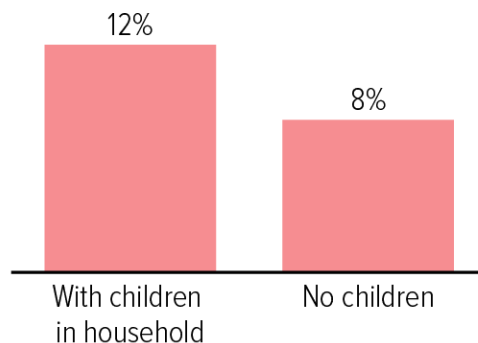
Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Nearly 20 million adults — 9 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 September 29–October 11. When asked why, 82 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.

FIGURE 2

For Nearly 1 in 8 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 September 29 - October 11, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

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>.

Adults in households with children were likelier to report that the household didn't get enough to eat: 12 percent, compared to 8 percent for households without children. (See Figure 2.) And 7 to 13 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. Households typically first scale back on food for adults before cutting back on what children have to eat. (The 7-13 percent range reflects the different ways to measure food hardship in the Household Pulse Survey.)

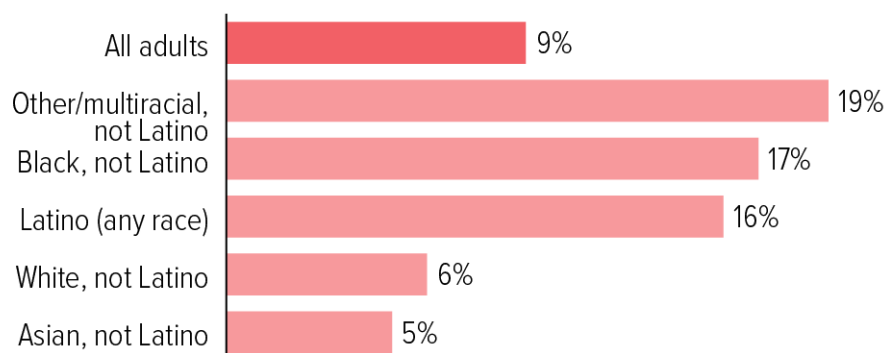
Also, analysis of more detailed data from the Pulse Survey shows that between 5 and 9 million children live in a household where children didn't eat enough because the household couldn't afford it. These figures are approximations; the Pulse Survey was designed to provide data on adult well-being, not 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 6 percent of white adults. Adults who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or as multiracial, taken together,³ were more than three times as likely than white adults to report that their household did not get enough to eat, at 19 percent. (See Figure 3.)

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 September 29 - October 11, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

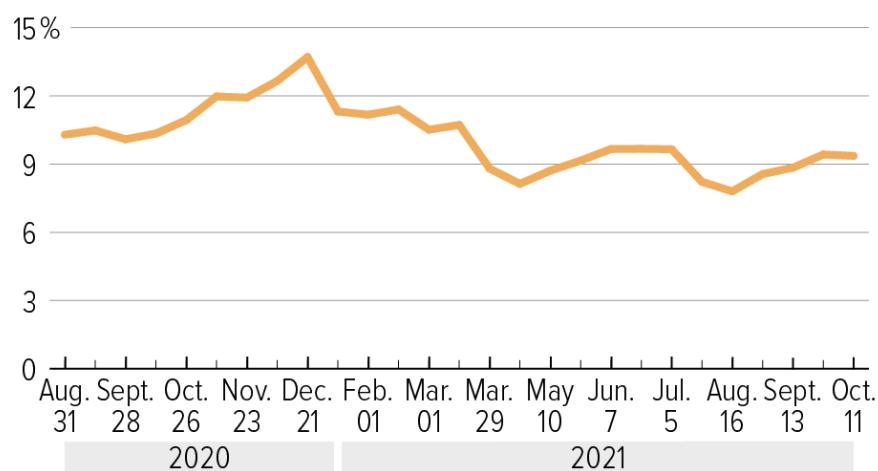
The share of adults reporting that their households did not get enough to eat rose in the fall of 2020, reaching a peak of nearly 30 percent in mid-December of 2020. It fell sharply in March 2021 after the enactment of the December relief package and the mid-March enactment of the American Rescue Plan. Food hardship among adults with children [improved significantly](#) following the issuance of the first monthly Child Tax Credit payment on July 15, as well as continuing economic growth and improvements in food assistance.

³ The Pulse Survey does not provide data for these groups individually.

FIGURE 4

Food Hardship Is Below December 2020 Peak, Yet Still Widespread

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, between March 29 and April 14, 2021, and between July 5 and July 21, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

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.

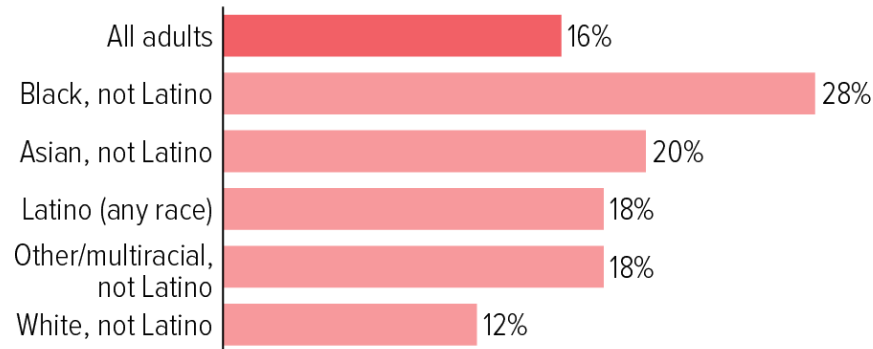
Even with these issues, however, the data indicate that millions are having difficulty paying rent. An estimated 12 million adults living in rental housing — 16 percent of adult renters — were not caught up on rent, according to data collected September 29–October 11.⁴ Here, too, renters of color were more likely to report that their household was not caught up on rent: 28 percent of Black renters, 18 percent of Latino renters, and 20 percent of Asian renters said they were not caught up on rent, compared to 12 percent of white renters. The rate was 18 percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults taken together. (See Figure 5.)

⁴ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 8.4 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 (16.5 percent) to the total number of adult renters (73 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

FIGURE 5

1 in 6 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 September 29 - October 11, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

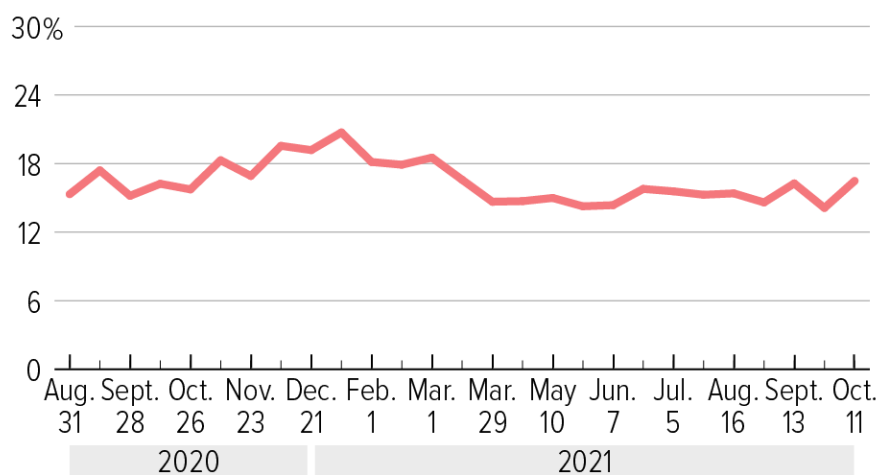
The number of adult renters reporting to the Census Bureau that their household was not caught up on rent has fallen from a peak of 15 million people — 1 in 5 adult renters — in January 2021 but has remained above 10 million people — about 1 in 7 adult renters — since the end of March. (See Figure 6.) 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 Supreme Court's ruling ending the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's eviction moratorium places people behind on rent who have not received the much-needed aid at immediate risk of losing their homes.

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, between March 29 and April 14, 2021, and between July 5 and July 21, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

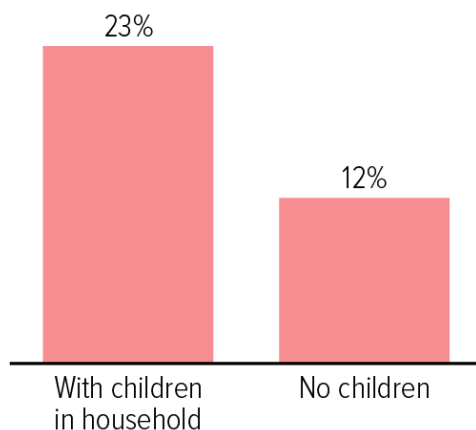
CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

In addition, 23 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

Over 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 September 29–October 11, 2021

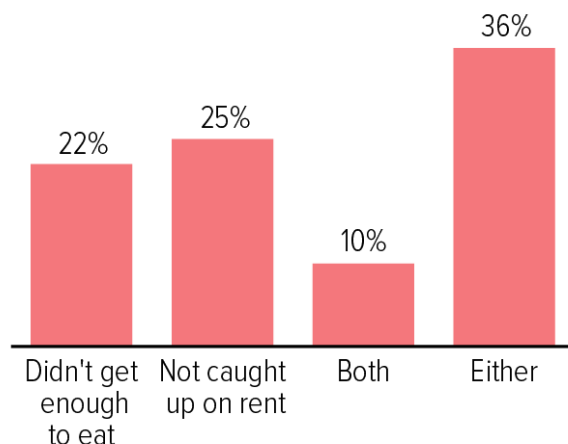
CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Children in renter households also face high rates of *food hardship*. Over 1 in 5 children living in rental housing live in a household that didn't have enough to eat, according to detailed Pulse data. 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 seven 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 September 29 - October 11, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

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 7.5 million adults are in a household that is not caught up in its mortgage payment.⁵

Difficulty Covering Household Expenses

Since late August 2020, the Household Pulse Survey has provided data on the 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 — 29 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 September 29–October 11.

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

⁵ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 6.5 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 (7.5 percent) to the total number of adult homeowners (about 100 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

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.

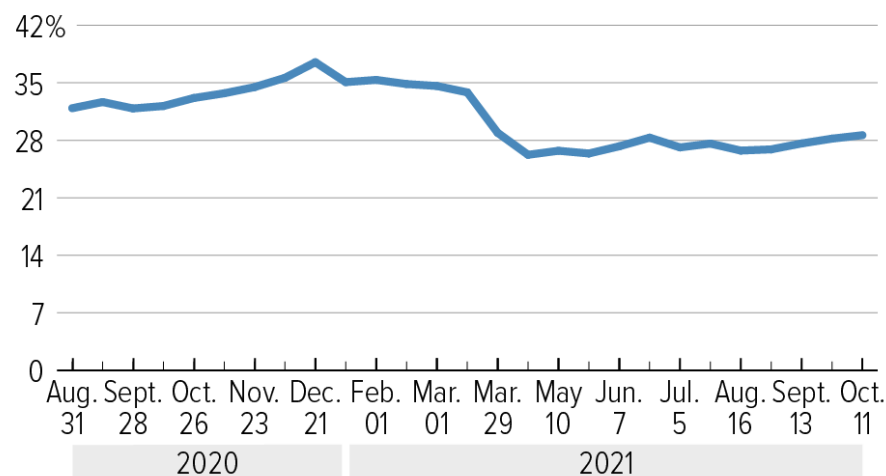
In early 2021, the share of adults with trouble covering expenses stabilized as aid from the end-of-year relief package — including renewed jobless benefits and another round of stimulus payments — reached households.

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, but it has remained statistically unchanged in recent months.

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, between March 29 and April 14, 2021, and between July 5 and July 21, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Adults in households with children were more likely to report difficulty paying for usual expenses than those without children: 36 percent, compared to 24 percent. Financial hardship can have serious effects on children's long-term health and education, research shows.⁶

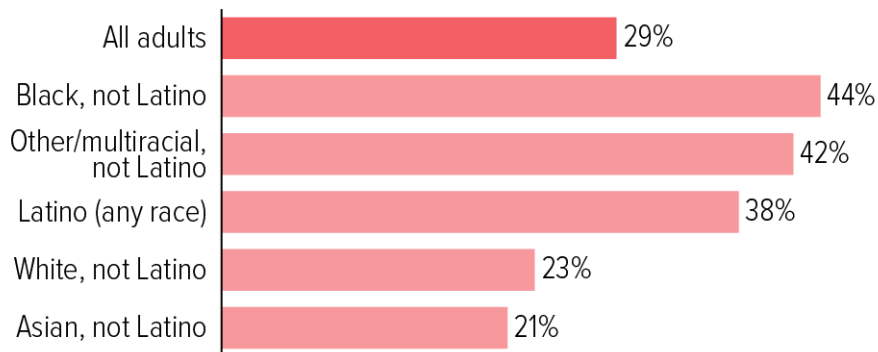
Black and Latino adults reported difficulty covering expenses at higher rates: 44 percent and 38 percent respectively, compared to 23 percent for white adults and 21 percent for Asian adults. (See Figure 10.) The rate was 42 percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults taken together.

⁶ 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.academicpediatricsjournal.net/article/S1876-2859\(15\)00383-6/fulltext](https://www.academicpediatricsjournal.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 September 29–October 11, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Adults with a disability⁷ were more than twice as likely to report difficulty paying for usual expenses than adults without a disability: 54 percent compared to 23 percent, according to detailed Pulse data. In addition, LGBT⁸ adults were likelier than non-LGBT adults to live in households with difficulty covering expenses: 34 percent compared to 27 percent.

An estimated 38 percent of children live in households that have trouble covering usual expenses, according to detailed data from the Pulse Survey. They include 57 percent of children in Black households, 46 percent of children in Latino households, 30 percent of children in white households, and 24 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 4.8 percent in September 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 5.0 million fewer jobs in September 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 56 percent of the jobs lost from February 2020 to September 2021, according to the latest month of Labor Department employment data. Jobs were down nearly twice as much in low-paying industries (5.3 percent) as in medium-wage industries (3.2 percent) and more than six times as much as in high-wage industries (0.8 percent) during this period. (See Figure 11.)

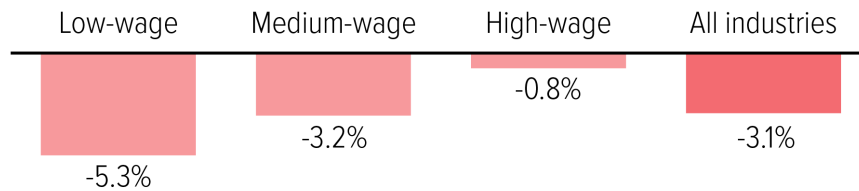
⁷ Starting in mid-April 2021, the Pulse survey asks respondents whether they have difficulty seeing, hearing, remembering or concentrating, or walking or climbing stairs. In this report, adults with a disability are those who reported “a lot of difficulty” with, or “could not do at all”, one or more of these four activities. This definition, like others, may not accurately reflect the identities and experiences of all disabled people.

⁸ Starting in late July 2021, the Pulse survey asks respondents about their sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The Census Bureau categorizes Pulse respondents as LGBT if they identify as gay, bisexual, transgender, or as having a gender identity that doesn’t align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Respondents whose sex at birth aligns with their gender identity and who identify as straight are categorized as non-LGBT.

FIGURE 11

Job Losses Largest in Low-Wage Industries

Percent change in number of jobs, February 2020 to September 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

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Black and Latino workers have experienced a far slower jobs recovery than white workers — reflecting historical patterns rooted in structural racism.⁹ Some 7.9 percent of Black workers and 6.3 percent of Latino workers were unemployed in September, compared to 4.2 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 October 13, 2021, provide more detail on unemployed workers and their family members. Some 19.7 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 September. This figure includes 5.2 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 September who reported they did not look for work because of the pandemic, according to the Labor Department. The official definition also omits some 200,000 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 24.1 million people in September, including 6.3 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 expanded unemployment insurance eligibility and enhanced benefits during the COVID-19 emergency, these measures were temporary. Some 31 percent of all unemployment claims for the week ending September 18, 2021, comprising temporary, pandemic-related programs, regular state unemployment insurance, and other permanent programs were in the pandemic-related programs, which terminated on September 6.¹¹

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 September 2021 could be as high as 7.7 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 For programs that terminated September 6, unemployed workers could still submit claims after that date for weeks of unemployment that predated the programs' expiration.

Permanent reforms are needed to fix an underlying system in which too many unemployed workers get inadequate benefits or no benefits at all.¹²

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 September 15-27 and September 29–October 11 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 September 15–October 11.

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 9 percent of all adults in the country. Some 9 million adults living with children reported that "the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food." This represents 12 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	20,008,000	9%	9,346,000	12%
Alabama	341,000	11%	163,000	15%
Alaska	53,000	11%	15,000	8%
Arizona	410,000	8%	235,000	12%
Arkansas	196,000	10%	95,000	13%
California	2,424,000	10%	1,180,000	13%
Colorado	263,000	7%	128,000	10%
Connecticut	183,000	8%	90,000	11%

¹² 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>.

TABLE 1

High Shares of Households Report Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Among adults; data collected September 15–October 11.

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 9 percent of all adults in the country. Some 9 million adults living with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” This represents 12 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
Delaware	87,000	13%	29,000	12%
District of Columbia	40,000	8%	23,000	15%
Florida	1,610,000	11%	613,000	12%
Georgia	897,000	13%	507,000	18%
Hawai'i	100,000	11%	68,000	19%
Idaho	81,000	7%	35,000	8%
Illinois	621,000	8%	406,000	15%
Indiana	397,000	9%	132,000	9%
Iowa	181,000	9%	47,000	7%
Kansas	187,000	10%	59,000	9%
Kentucky	313,000	11%	109,000	11%
Louisiana	414,000	14%	213,000	19%
Maine	64,000	7%	19,000	6%
Maryland	312,000	8%	213,000	14%
Massachusetts	371,000	8%	119,000	8%
Michigan	534,000	8%	273,000	12%
Minnesota	198,000	5%	132,000	10%
Mississippi	253,000	14%	112,000	16%
Missouri	418,000	10%	124,000	9%
Montana	58,000	8%	23,000	10%
Nebraska	74,000	6%	42,000	9%
Nevada	143,000	7%	102,000	13%
New Hampshire	57,000	6%	28,000	9%
New Jersey	464,000	8%	291,000	14%
New Mexico	132,000	9%	52,000	10%
New York	1,400,000	12%	628,000	15%
North Carolina	698,000	10%	321,000	13%
North Dakota	39,000	8%	17,000	8%
Ohio	587,000	8%	224,000	8%
Oklahoma	347,000	13%	147,000	15%
Oregon	266,000	9%	84,000	8%
Pennsylvania	656,000	8%	305,000	11%
Rhode Island	63,000	9%	32,000	13%
South Carolina	308,000	9%	123,000	11%
South Dakota	45,000	8%	25,000	12%

TABLE 1

High Shares of Households Report Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Among adults; data collected September 15–October 11.

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 9 percent of all adults in the country. Some 9 million adults living with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” This represents 12 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
Tennessee	426,000	10%	168,000	11%
Texas	2,079,000	12%	1,145,000	17%
Utah	151,000	7%	47,000	6%
Vermont	20,000	5%	7,000	6%
Virginia	336,000	6%	144,000	8%
Washington	405,000	8%	146,000	8%
West Virginia	108,000	9%	31,000	8%
Wisconsin	177,000	5%	70,000	6%
Wyoming	22,000	6%	8,000	5%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected September 15-27 and September 29–October 11. In the latest data, collected September 29–October 11, 9.4 percent of all adults reported that their household “sometimes” or “often” in the last seven days had “not enough to eat,” while 12.9 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 “food1,” “food2,” and “food4,” for survey weeks 38 and 39, <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

One in 6 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected September 15–October 11

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
Alabama	150,000	17%
Alaska	20,000	13%
Arizona	159,000	9%
Arkansas	101,000	16%
California	1,557,000	13%
Colorado	106,000	8%
Connecticut	118,000	15%
Delaware	52,000	28%
District of Columbia	39,000	13%
Florida	912,000	18%
Georgia	542,000	23%
Hawai'i	41,000	11%
Idaho	21,000	7%
Illinois	463,000	17%
Indiana	187,000	15%
Iowa	91,000	16%
Kansas	44,000	7%
Kentucky	192,000	22%
Louisiana	163,000	18%
Maine	28,000	12%
Maryland	265,000	20%
Massachusetts	188,000	11%
Michigan	241,000	14%
Minnesota	115,000	12%
Mississippi	111,000	20%
Missouri	137,000	11%
Montana	16,000	8%
Nebraska	53,000	13%
Nevada	79,000	9%
New Hampshire	26,000	11%
New Jersey	328,000	15%
New Mexico	99,000	24%
New York	1,257,000	21%

TABLE 2

One in 6 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected September 15–October 11

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
North Carolina	397,000	17%
North Dakota	15,000	8%
Ohio	329,000	13%
Oklahoma	202,000	24%
Oregon	123,000	12%
Pennsylvania	274,000	11%
Rhode Island	71,000	28%
South Carolina	180,000	19%
South Dakota	29,000	18%
Tennessee	202,000	14%
Texas	1,401,000	21%
Utah	31,000	6%
Vermont	8,000	7%
Virginia	213,000	11%
Washington	178,000	9%
West Virginia	32,000	12%
Wisconsin	125,000	10%
Wyoming	8,000	8%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected September 15-27 and September 29–October 11. 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 38 and 39, <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 September 15–October 11

Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses		
	Number	Percent
United States	62,845,000	28%
Alabama	1,046,000	33%
Alaska	150,000	31%
Arizona	1,476,000	29%
Arkansas	674,000	34%
California	7,970,000	30%
Colorado	963,000	24%
Connecticut	646,000	26%
Delaware	221,000	31%
District of Columbia	119,000	24%
Florida	4,852,000	32%
Georgia	2,308,000	33%
Hawai'i	304,000	31%
Idaho	271,000	22%
Illinois	2,142,000	26%
Indiana	1,155,000	26%
Iowa	489,000	23%
Kansas	451,000	23%
Kentucky	822,000	28%
Louisiana	1,100,000	37%
Maine	239,000	24%
Maryland	1,142,000	28%
Massachusetts	1,173,000	25%
Michigan	1,757,000	27%
Minnesota	651,000	17%
Mississippi	723,000	38%
Missouri	1,231,000	29%
Montana	207,000	27%
Nebraska	303,000	23%
Nevada	622,000	28%
New Hampshire	202,000	21%
New Jersey	1,667,000	29%
New Mexico	438,000	30%
New York	3,793,000	30%
North Carolina	2,072,000	29%
North Dakota	102,000	20%

TABLE 3

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

Among adults; data collected September 15–October 11

Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses		
	Number	Percent
Ohio	1,815,000	23%
Oklahoma	958,000	36%
Oregon	813,000	27%
Pennsylvania	2,319,000	26%
Rhode Island	210,000	29%
South Carolina	980,000	29%
South Dakota	143,000	25%
Tennessee	1,465,000	32%
Texas	6,095,000	32%
Utah	493,000	23%
Vermont	72,000	16%
Virginia	1,477,000	26%
Washington	1,244,000	23%
West Virginia	347,000	29%
Wisconsin	825,000	21%
Wyoming	106,000	27%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected September 15-27 and September 29–October 11. In the latest data, collected September 29–October 11, 63 million adults nationwide (29 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 38 and 39, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

Unemployment

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

TABLE 4

Unemployment, Jobless Claims Remain Elevated Across Most of the Country

States	Unemployment rate (July–September average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending September 18 ^b
Alabama	3.1	7,000
Alaska	6.4	9,000
Arizona	6.2	27,000
Arkansas	4.2	14,000
California	7.5	1,230,000
Colorado	5.9	32,000
Connecticut	7.1	34,000
Delaware	5.4	5,000
District of Columbia	6.6	14,000
Florida	5.0	59,000
Georgia	3.5	65,000
Hawai'i	7.0	23,000
Idaho	2.9	3,000
Illinois	7.0	259,000
Indiana	4.1	54,000
Iowa	4.1	11,000
Kansas	3.8	9,000
Kentucky	4.3	15,000
Louisiana	6.2	43,000
Maine	4.9	7,000
Maryland	5.9	60,000
Massachusetts	5.0	88,000
Michigan	4.7	81,000
Minnesota	3.8	55,000
Mississippi	6.0	10,000
Missouri	4.0	31,000
Montana	3.5	4,000
Nebraska	2.2	4,000
Nevada	7.6	35,000
New Hampshire	2.9	3,000
New Jersey	7.2	183,000
New Mexico	7.2	18,000
New York	7.4	296,000
North Carolina	4.3	36,000
North Dakota	3.7	2,000
Ohio	5.4	154,000

TABLE 4

Unemployment, Jobless Claims Remain Elevated Across Most of the Country

States	Unemployment rate (July–September average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending September 18 ^b
Oklahoma	3.2	19,000
Oregon	4.9	80,000
Pennsylvania	6.4	145,000
Puerto Rico	8.3	85,000
Rhode Island	5.6	10,000
South Carolina	4.2	22,000
South Dakota	2.9	1,000
Tennessee	4.6	36,000
Texas	5.9	152,000
Utah	2.5	7,000
Vermont	3.0	4,000
Virgin Islands	9.4	1,000
Virginia	4.0	77,000
Washington	5.0	74,000
West Virginia	4.8	8,000
Wisconsin	3.9	48,000
Wyoming	4.9	1,000
United States	5.1	3,749,000

^a All rates are the July–September 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, 4,172,943 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, October 7, 2021.