

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 have been trending downward since December, Census Bureau data show, aided by job growth and government benefits. Hardship rates fell especially fast in April 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. Nonetheless, 20 million adults live in households that did not get enough to eat and 10.5 million adult renters are behind on rent.

The impacts of the pandemic and the economic fallout have been widespread, but are particularly prevalent among Black adults, Latino adults,¹ and other people of color. These disproportionate impacts reflect harsh, longstanding inequities — often stemming from structural racism — in education, employment, housing, and health care that the current crisis is exacerbating. 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 1, 4, and 5).

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 May 26–June 7.

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.

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>.

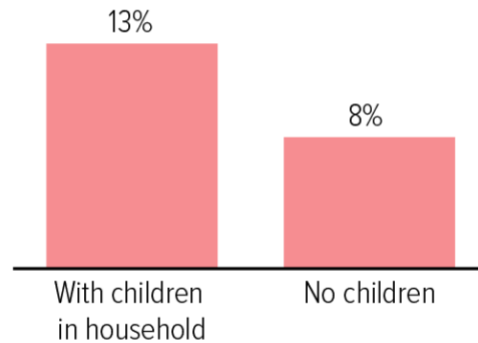
³ Multiple data sources find similarly high levels of food hardship. See Brynne Keith-Jennings, Catlin Nchako, and Joseph Llobrera, “Number of Families Struggling to Afford Food Rose Steeply in Pandemic and Remains High, Especially Among Children and Households of Color,” CBPP, April 27, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/number-of-families-str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

(Methodological differences between the two surveys explain some, but not all, of the increase.⁴) When asked why, 74 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 1

For 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 May 26 - June 7, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Adults in households with children were likelier to report that the household didn’t get enough to eat: 13 percent, compared to 8 percent for households without children. (See Figure 1.) And 8 to 12 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 8-12 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 May 12–24 shows that between 6 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: 15 percent for Black adults and 17 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 18 percent. (See Figure 2.)

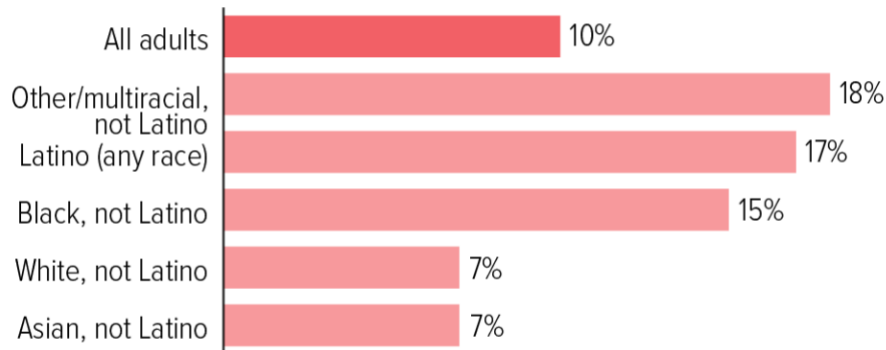
⁴ Differences between online and other (in-person or telephone) surveys explain some of the difference between food hardship rates in the Pulse Survey and in the December 2019 survey (the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement). One comparison found that, before the pandemic, respondents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

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

FIGURE 2

Households of Color Likelier to Experience Food Insufficiency 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 the populations that did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for May 26 - June 7, 2021

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 longstanding 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.

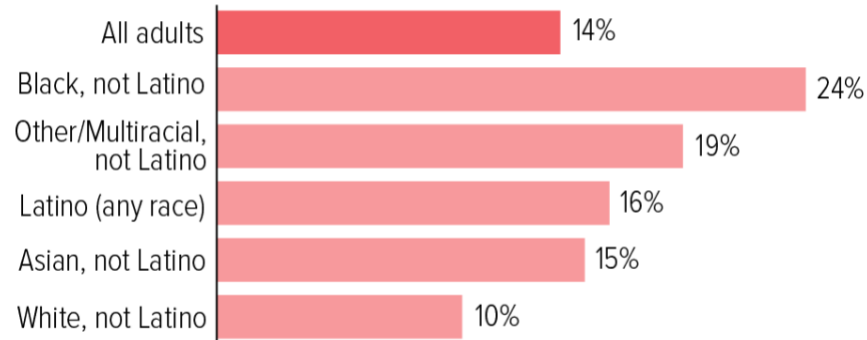
Even with these issues, however, the data indicate that millions are having difficulty paying rent. An estimated 10.5 million adults living in rental housing — 14 percent of adult renters — were not caught up on rent, according to data collected May 26–June 7.⁶ Here, too, renters of color were more likely to report that their household was not caught up on rent: 24 percent of Black renters, 16 percent of Latino renters, and 15 percent of Asian renters said they were not caught up on rent, compared to 10 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 3.)

⁶ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 7.1 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 (14.4 percent) to the total number of adult renters (73 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

FIGURE 3

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 May 26 - June 7, 2021

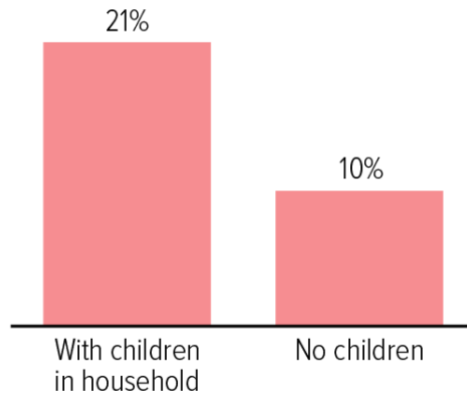
CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

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 10 percent among adults not living with anyone under age 18. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4

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 May 26 - June 7, 2021

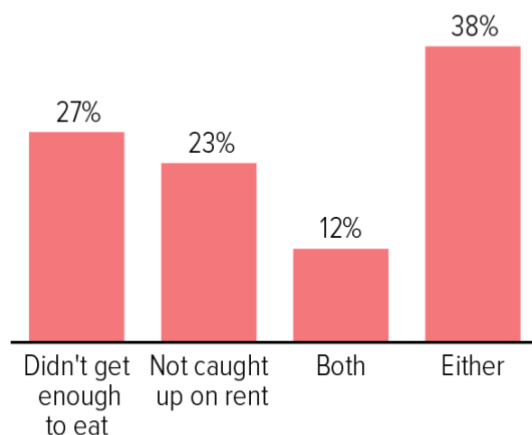
CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Children in renter households also face high rates of *food* hardship. Over 1 in 4 children living in rental housing live in a household that didn't have enough to eat, according to data for May 12–24. And nearly 4 in 10 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 5.)

FIGURE 5

Nearly 4 in 10 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 May 12-24, 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 8.2 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 May 26–June 7.

Adults in households with children were more likely to report difficulty paying for usual expenses: 34 percent, compared to 23 percent for adults without children. Financial hardship can have serious effects on children's long-term health and education, research shows.⁸

⁷ The latest Pulse Survey estimates that 6.6 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 (8.2 percent) to the total number of adult homeowners (about 100 million) in the March 2020 Current Population Survey to calculate an adjusted estimate.

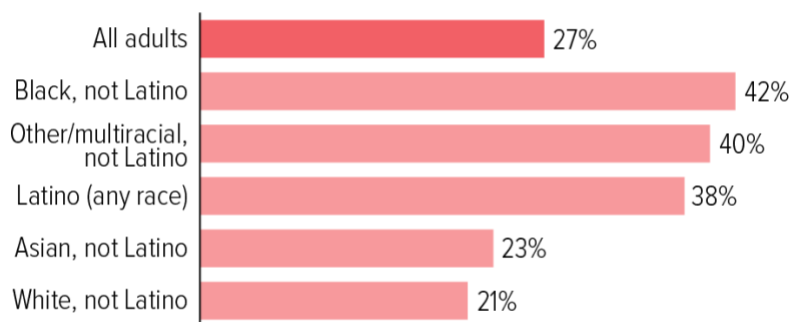
⁸ Ajay Chaudry and Christopher Wimer, "Poverty is Not Just an Indicator: The Relationship Between Income, Poverty, and Child Well-Being," *Academic Pediatrics*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, April 1, 2016, [https://www.academicpedsinl.net/article/S1876-2859\(15\)00383-6/fulltext](https://www.academicpedsinl.net/article/S1876-2859(15)00383-6/fulltext).

In addition, Black and Latino adults reported difficulty covering expenses at higher rates: 42 percent and 38 percent respectively, compared to 23 percent for Asian adults and 21 percent for white adults. (See Figure 6.) The rate was 40 percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults taken together.

FIGURE 6

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 May 26 – June 7, 2021

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

An estimated 35 percent of children live in households that have trouble covering usual expenses, according to our analysis of detailed data from the Pulse Survey collected May 12–24. They include 56 percent of children in Black households, 45 percent of children in Latino households, 26 percent of children in white households, and 25 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

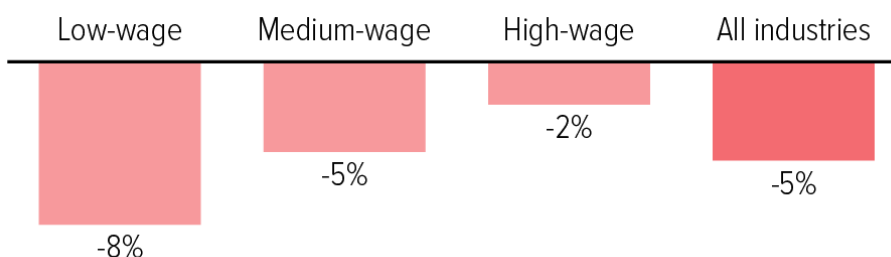
The unemployment rate jumped in April 2020 to a level not seen since the 1930s – and still stood at 5.8 percent in May 2021, compared with 3.5 percent in February 2020. The official unemployment rate, however, understates current job losses.

While the economy has added jobs in recent months, there were still 7.6 million fewer jobs in May 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 54 percent of the jobs lost from February 2020 to May 2021, the latest month of Labor Department employment data. Jobs were down roughly twice as much in low-paying industries (8.1 percent) as in medium-wage industries (4.5 percent) and nearly four times as much as in high-wage industries (2.1 percent) during this period. (See Figure 7.)

FIGURE 7

Job Losses Largest in Low-Wage Industries

Percent change in number of jobs, February 2020 to May 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 9.1 percent of Black workers and 7.3 percent of Latino workers were unemployed in May, compared to 5.1 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 June 9, 2021 provide more detail on unemployed workers and their family members. Some 23.1 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 May. This figure includes 5.3 million children.

The official definition of unemployed leaves out many workers deprived of pay amid the pandemic,¹⁰ including some 2.5 million workers in May who reported they did not look for work because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Labor Department. The official definition also omits 400,000 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 29.7 million people in May, including 7.0 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. Three-quarters of unemployment claims for the week ending May 22, 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 April 2021 could be as high as 8.9 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 May 12–24 and May 26–June 7 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 May 12–June 7.

How to read this table: In the United States, nearly 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 7 million adults living with children reported that "the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food." This represents 9 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	19,814,000	9%	7,181,000	9%
Alabama	388,000	13%	100,000	9%
Alaska	40,000	9%	15,000	8%
Arizona	458,000	9%	125,000	7%
Arkansas	215,000	11%	110,000	13%
California	2,388,000	10%	967,000	9%
Colorado	244,000	6%	84,000	6%
Connecticut	198,000	9%	70,000	9%
Delaware	35,000	5%	24,000	10%
District of Columbia	49,000	10%	11,000	8%
Florida	1,543,000	11%	645,000	13%

TABLE 1

High Shares of Households Report Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Among adults; data collected May 12–June 7.

How to read this table: In the United States, nearly 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 7 million adults living with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” This represents 9 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
Georgia	689,000	10%	254,000	10%
Hawai'i	56,000	6%	36,000	10%
Idaho	111,000	9%	34,000	8%
Illinois	597,000	8%	264,000	9%
Indiana	319,000	8%	168,000	10%
Iowa	159,000	8%	43,000	6%
Kansas	134,000	7%	51,000	7%
Kentucky	271,000	10%	79,000	8%
Louisiana	284,000	10%	115,000	10%
Maine	76,000	8%	38,000	13%
Maryland	369,000	9%	140,000	9%
Massachusetts	238,000	5%	102,000	7%
Michigan	497,000	8%	179,000	8%
Minnesota	240,000	7%	58,000	5%
Mississippi	255,000	14%	67,000	8%
Missouri	369,000	9%	90,000	7%
Montana	84,000	11%	22,000	8%
Nebraska	90,000	7%	44,000	9%
Nevada	208,000	10%	67,000	8%
New Hampshire	54,000	6%	20,000	8%
New Jersey	517,000	9%	168,000	8%
New Mexico	116,000	9%	66,000	13%
New York	1,649,000	14%	494,000	11%
North Carolina	554,000	8%	168,000	7%
North Dakota	36,000	8%	12,000	7%
Ohio	695,000	9%	207,000	8%
Oklahoma	270,000	11%	195,000	18%
Oregon	252,000	9%	92,000	9%
Pennsylvania	546,000	7%	229,000	8%
Rhode Island	48,000	7%	24,000	10%
South Carolina	393,000	12%	102,000	7%
South Dakota	37,000	7%	25,000	13%
Tennessee	468,000	10%	124,000	7%
Texas	2,215,000	12%	717,000	9%
Utah	113,000	6%	61,000	6%

TABLE 1

High Shares of Households Report Difficulty Getting Enough Food

Among adults; data collected May 12–June 7.

How to read this table: In the United States, nearly 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 7 million adults living with children reported that “the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.” This represents 9 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
Vermont	25,000	6%	13,000	10%
Virginia	501,000	9%	190,000	9%
Washington	363,000	7%	160,000	8%
West Virginia	104,000	9%	18,000	5%
Wisconsin	233,000	6%	88,000	7%
Wyoming	20,000	5%	11,000	8%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected May 12–24 and May 26 – June 7. In the latest data, May 26 – June 7, 9.7 percent of all adults reported that their household “sometimes” or “often” in the last seven days had “not enough to eat,” while 12.2 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 30 and 31, <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

1 in 7 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected May 12–June 7

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
Alabama	236,000	27%
Alaska	17,000	11%
Arizona	131,000	8%
Arkansas	119,000	19%
California	1,393,000	11%
Colorado	231,000	17%
Connecticut	127,000	16%
Delaware	13,000	7%
District of Columbia	44,000	15%
Florida	770,000	15%
Georgia	455,000	19%
Hawai'i	57,000	16%
Idaho	29,000	9%
Illinois	379,000	14%
Indiana	169,000	13%
Iowa	93,000	17%
Kansas	59,000	10%
Kentucky	110,000	12%
Louisiana	150,000	17%
Maine	26,000	11%
Maryland	199,000	15%
Massachusetts	256,000	15%
Michigan	203,000	11%
Minnesota	98,000	10%
Mississippi	119,000	22%
Missouri	156,000	13%
Montana	21,000	10%
Nebraska	33,000	8%
Nevada	128,000	14%
New Hampshire	36,000	15%
New Jersey	410,000	19%
New Mexico	57,000	14%
New York	1,064,000	18%

TABLE 2

1 in 7 Renters Nationwide Not Caught Up on Rent

Among adults in rental housing; data collected May 12–June 7

Not Caught Up On Rent

	Estimated Number	Percent
North Carolina	328,000	14%
North Dakota	24,000	13%
Ohio	330,000	13%
Oklahoma	130,000	16%
Oregon	99,000	9%
Pennsylvania	397,000	16%
Rhode Island	36,000	14%
South Carolina	247,000	26%
South Dakota	14,000	9%
Tennessee	135,000	9%
Texas	1,112,000	17%
Utah	46,000	8%
Vermont	19,000	17%
Virginia	275,000	15%
Washington	196,000	10%
West Virginia	33,000	12%
Wisconsin	99,000	8%
Wyoming	19,000	19%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected May 12–24 and May 26–June 7. 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 30 and 31, <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

1 in 4 Adults Nationwide Have Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses

Among adults; data collected May 12–June 7

	Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses	
	Number	Percent
United States	62,032,000	27%
Alabama	997,000	29%
Alaska	126,000	25%
Arizona	1,509,000	28%
Arkansas	661,000	31%
California	7,906,000	29%
Colorado	1,039,000	25%
Connecticut	697,000	28%
Delaware	162,000	23%
District of Columbia	119,000	23%
Florida	4,356,000	27%
Georgia	2,342,000	32%
Hawai'i	280,000	28%
Idaho	269,000	21%
Illinois	2,206,000	25%
Indiana	1,210,000	26%
Iowa	490,000	22%
Kansas	449,000	22%
Kentucky	761,000	25%
Louisiana	991,000	32%
Maine	224,000	22%
Maryland	1,041,000	24%
Massachusetts	1,057,000	21%
Michigan	1,638,000	23%
Minnesota	800,000	20%
Mississippi	748,000	38%
Missouri	1,034,000	24%
Montana	179,000	22%
Nebraska	282,000	21%
Nevada	691,000	31%
New Hampshire	224,000	22%
New Jersey	1,663,000	27%
New Mexico	443,000	30%
New York	4,289,000	32%
North Carolina	1,978,000	26%
North Dakota	118,000	23%

TABLE 3

1 in 4 Adults Nationwide Have Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses

Among adults; data collected May 12–June 7

	Difficulty Covering Usual Household Expenses	
	Number	Percent
Ohio	2,044,000	25%
Oklahoma	837,000	31%
Oregon	758,000	24%
Pennsylvania	2,225,000	25%
Rhode Island	150,000	20%
South Carolina	1,073,000	29%
South Dakota	128,000	21%
Tennessee	1,400,000	29%
Texas	5,749,000	29%
Utah	421,000	19%
Vermont	95,000	21%
Virginia	1,573,000	26%
Washington	1,304,000	23%
West Virginia	322,000	25%
Wisconsin	885,000	21%
Wyoming	91,000	22%

Note: Figures are averages of data collected May 12–24 and May 26–June 7. In the latest data, collected May 26–June 7, 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 30 and 31, <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 February–April 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 (February–April average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending May 22 ^b
Alabama	3.8	72,998
Alaska	6.7	34,086
Arizona	6.8	216,173
Arkansas	4.4	83,518
California	8.4	2,854,606
Colorado	6.4	144,589
Connecticut	8.3	182,443
Delaware	6.4	32,199
District of Columbia	7.8	34,312
Florida	4.7	112,861
Georgia	4.5	277,382
Hawai'i	8.9	85,355
Idaho	3.2	15,359
Illinois	7.2	715,675
Indiana	3.9	231,461
Iowa	3.7	56,406
Kansas	3.7	33,981
Kentucky	5.0	53,734
Louisiana	7.4	211,994
Maine	4.8	39,149
Maryland	6.2	309,343
Massachusetts	6.7	534,613
Michigan	5.1	845,561
Minnesota	4.2	291,207
Mississippi	6.2	55,398
Missouri	4.2	143,097
Montana	3.8	26,299
Nebraska	2.9	14,746
Nevada	8.2	203,492
New Hampshire	3.0	29,050
New Jersey	7.6	677,235
New Mexico	8.3	96,286
New York	8.5	2,090,439
North Carolina	5.3	289,576

TABLE 4

Unemployment, Jobless Claims High Across Most of the Country

States	Unemployment rate (February–April average) ^a	Current jobless benefits claims for week ending May 22 ^b
North Dakota	4.5	12,116
Ohio	4.8	484,487
Oklahoma	4.3	68,489
Oregon	6.0	213,394
Pennsylvania	7.4	1,010,001
Puerto Rico	8.8	254,697
Rhode Island	6.9	72,298
South Carolina	5.1	146,069
South Dakota	2.9	3,893
Tennessee	5.0	153,741
Texas	6.8	974,316
Utah	2.9	23,904
Vermont	2.9	22,637
Virgin Islands	8.2*	748
Virginia	5.0	185,289
Washington	5.5	177,994
West Virginia	6.0	40,969
Wisconsin	3.8	121,470
Wyoming	5.3	8,376
U.S.	6.1	15,069,511

^a All rates are the February–April 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, 15,349,465 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, June 10, 2021.